



NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF
SERVICE ANIMALS FOR USE BY
STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS**

**FEBRUARY 2010
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Guidelines for the Use of Service Animals in Schools

References

1. Education Act
 2. Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
 3. O.Reg 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards
 4. Ontario Human Rights Code
 5. Blind Person's Rights Act
 6. Individual Education Plan: A Resource Guide 2004
 7. Niagara Catholic DSB Policies: Accessibility Standards Policy, 800.8, Accessibility Customer Service Policy, 800.8.1
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1. Purpose

The use of a specially trained service animal is one strategy used to accommodate the special education needs of some students. These guidelines provide direction to school administrators regarding the admittance and implementation of service animals into the school environment.

2. Scope and Interpretation

Under O.Reg 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards Part IV.2 Customer Service Standard, section 80.45 (3)

1. Guide Dog

Refers to the definition of guide dog in the Blind Persons' Rights Act, section 1.

2. Service Animal

For the purposes of this section, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,

- (a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- (b) the person provides a letter from an approved list of regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Exclusions: Where the use of a service animal in a school has been approved, the animal may be excluded from access to the premises only where:

- exclusion is required by another statute. Examples include the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Food Safety and Quality Act*. The former Act prohibits service animals in places where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g., kitchen of school

cafeteria or culinary arts classroom) although service animals are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g. school cafeteria or lunchroom);

- the service animal is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the Ontario *Dog Owners' Liability Act*, which places restrictions on pit bull terriers;
- there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of the service animal. Consideration should be given to options available prior to exclusion of the service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal. It is the Niagara Catholic District School Board's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate the risk be considered, e.g. creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.;
- there has been a material change in the circumstances that led to the original approval of the use of the service animal in school; or
- exclusion is otherwise required by law.

3. Background

- 3.1 The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, included in the *O.Reg 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and *Human Rights Code* provide authority for service animals to accompany their handlers in all public places including schools and buses. Service animals and their handlers receive specialized training to work together, and consequently the service animals should present minimal risk to or impact on other people. All service animals must adhere to the Standards outlined by accredited or recognized training facilities. The responsibility of care and handling routines of the service animal rests solely with the handler/family.
- 3.2 For the purpose of this guideline, a service animal is considered to be an accommodation that is required to allow a student to access the Ontario Curriculum or other alternative program. Accommodations refer to specialized supports that enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning (*The Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide, 2004*, p.25).
- 3.3 Service animals must wear the distinctive harness/saddlebag or vest. The service animal must also be on a leash at all times.

4. Individual Consideration for Approval

- 4.1 Decisions regarding the use of service animals by students in the school environment are made on a case-by-case basis. All circumstances of a particular request, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the service animal and the needs of other students and staff, will be considered. ***Where necessary in the decision making process, rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.***
- 4.2 Entry of service animals is decided after extensive consultation and in accordance with the procedures listed in Section 5 below. The request will be reviewed by the Principal with the Family of Schools Superintendent and the Coordinator of Special Education.

5. Procedures for the Implementation of a Service Animal in the School Environment (See Appendix F: Administrative Checklist for the Implementation of a Service Animal into a School Environment)

- 5.1 The Principal will request the following documentation from the family;

- Appendix A – Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in the School
 - Appendix B – Request for a Service Animal
 - Appendix C – Management Plan for the Care of Service Animal
 - Letter from a Regulated Health Professional confirming that their child requires the service animal for reasons relating to their disability
 - Training certification and evaluation from an Accredited or Recognized Training Facility
 - Letter from Training facility that a service animal has been placed with this child
 - Copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the service animal
 - Proof of municipal animal (dog) license
- 5.2 The Principal will consult with the Family of Schools Superintendent and the Coordinator of Special Education prior to planning the implementation process.
- 5.3 Upon receipt of required documentation from the parents/guardians the Principal will inform all school staff members (i.e. teaching staff, educational support staff, secretarial staff, custodial staff, etc.) of the request to have a service animal in the school.
- 5.4 The Principal will schedule and chair a case conference with the Parents/Guardians, a representative from the service animal training facility, the classroom teacher(s), the Educational Resource Teacher (ERT), the Special Education Coordinator, and the support staff who work with the student. The purpose of the case conference is to review the Individual Education Plan (IEP) description of the student's strengths, needs and the required accommodations including the type of service the service animal will provide. The service provided by the service animal must be consistent with the goals identified in the IEP.
- 5.5 Discussions will also include other relevant information such as health and safety considerations (including severe allergies and staff or students with asthma), the potential impact of the involvement of the service animal on the school community, animal care requirements, handling routines and responsibilities, guidelines for staff and students, other student issues, transportation to school, the role of and communication with the Parents/Guardians, and the resources available to the school. The Principal will facilitate to complete **Appendix C: Management Plan for the Care of the Service Animal**.
- 5.6 If a decision to approve the request is made, careful consideration of all the factors will facilitate the transition of the service animal into the school environment. Attention to consistency, routines, communication, staff in-service, school assemblies, and community notification are required. An information session for the Catholic School Council and other interested community members will be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The Principal will invite the Parents/Guardians of the student requiring the service animal to participate in the information session. Prior to distribution to the community, the Principal will share **Appendix D: Sample Letter to School Community** and **Appendix E: Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom** with Parents/Guardians of the student requiring the use of a service animal.
- 5.7 Human Resources Services staff will inform the relevant employee union groups that a service animal will be in the school.
- 5.8 The Principal will ensure that signs are placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform visitors of the animal's presence.
- 5.9 The Principal will ensure that an appropriate fire and emergency exit plan is developed. Personnel from the local fire/police departments may be available to assist with the plan.
- 5.10 The right of entry of the service animal will be monitored regularly and reviewed on an annual basis by school staff.

Appendix A



Niagara Catholic District School Board

Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in the School

1. The success of the implementation of a service animal into a school setting depends on clear communication, a well-informed school community and careful planning. The information you provide will assist the Principal to make the best possible decisions for your child and other students as well as for the staff, volunteers and visitors in the school. The information will be filed in your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR).
2. The use of a service animal is considered to be an accommodation to help your child learn and to develop the necessary skills to achieve success at school. If your child already has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), it will be reviewed at a case conference, or one will be developed in consultation with you. The Principal will invite you, your child's teacher, a representative from the training facility, the Educational Resource Teacher (ERT) in the school, and the Special Education Coordinator to the case conference to discuss your child's needs, the accommodations that are already in place for your child, as well as the additional assistance that a service animal may provide.
3. The information you provide will help the Principal to facilitate or pursue your request. The Principal will investigate as to whether any student or member of staff has severe medical or psychological reactions to animals that may prevent or restrict the involvement of the service animal at the school.
4. The well-being of the service animal is also very important. Its care, handling and training needs will be addressed and your input is valuable. The Principal also needs to know what other resources are available to facilitate the transition to school and the implementation of the plan. Strategies for becoming familiar with the building and school grounds, introduction to assemblies/concerts, recess, and informing the staff about interacting with the service animal will need to be included in the planning to be as consistent and fair to the service animal as possible.
5. It is imperative that the service animal be ready for school. If the service animal exhibits any behaviours (i.e. growling, scratching, nipping, biting, etc.) or health issues (i.e. vomiting, diarrhea, open wounds, fleas, ticks, etc.) at school, the service animal will be removed until the plan is re-evaluated to ensure the safety of staff, students and visitors.
6. An information session will be held for the Catholic School Council and other interested Parents/Guardians. Important information shared in this way facilitates understanding and acceptance of new practices at the school. You will be invited to participate in the information session.
7. Parents'/Guardians' responsibilities include but are not limited to:
 - Provide the Principal with all required documentation, reports, certificates, evaluations in a timely fashion;
 - Transport or walk the service animal to and from school or facilitate the use of Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS) transportation;
 - Assume financial responsibility for the service animal's training, veterinary care, municipal license and other related costs;

- Participate in a school case conference meeting to inform the Principal of all relevant information that may affect your child, other students, staff, and/or visitors to the school;
 - Assist the Principal to communicate relevant information to the school community;
 - Work co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success;
 - Provide the required equipment and service animal care items;
 - Provide food, water and “bio-breaks” to the service animal as required;
 - Remove and dispose of service animal waste in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.
8. Once the necessary information has been discussed, the Principal will consult with the Family of Schools Superintendent and the Coordinator of Special Education prior to the admittance and implementation of the service animal into the school.
9. If the request is approved, a series of steps must take place to ensure a smooth transition for the entry of the service animal in a timely manner.
10. The right of entry of the service animal will be monitored regularly and reviewed on an annual basis by school staff.

Appendix B



Niagara Catholic District School Board

Request for a Service Animal

This information is being collected pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and under the Authority of the Education Act, and will be used by Student Achievement K-12 Special Education. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Superintendent of Education – Student Achievement K-12 Special Education, Niagara Catholic District School Board, 427 Rice Road, Welland, Ontario L3C 7C1, 905-735-0240.

Student Name	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	Date yyyy mm dd	
Parent/Guardian		Home Phone	
Address		Work Phone	
City/Postal Code		Date of Birth yyyy mm dd	
School		Teacher	
Grade Level	<input type="checkbox"/> A.M. <input type="checkbox"/> P.M.	OEN #	

1) Reasons for request:

2) Length of time the student and service animal have worked together

3) I/We understand that it is our responsibility to:

- Provide the Principal with all required documentation, reports, certificates, evaluations in a timely fashion;
- Transport or walk the service animal to and from school or facilitate the use of Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS) transportation;
- Assume financial responsibility for the service animal's training, veterinary care, municipal license and other related costs;
- Participate in a school case conference meeting to inform the Principal of all relevant information that may affect our child, other students, staff, and/or visitors to the school;
- Assist the Principal to communicate relevant information to the school community;
- Work co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success;
- Provide the required equipment and service animal care items;
- Provide food, water and "bio-breaks" to the service animal as required;
- Immediately remove and dispose of service animal waste in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

- 4) I/We understand that if the service animal exhibits any behaviours (i.e. growling, scratching, nipping, biting etc.) or health issues (vomiting, diarrhea, open wounds, fleas, ticks, etc.) at school, the service animal will be removed until the plan is re-evaluated to ensure the safety of staff, students and visitors.
- 5) If approved, I/we give permission for this information to be shared with the school community and agree to the delivery of letters to the community.
- 6) I/We understand that the Principal shall preserve the confidentiality of all information received from me/us, and shall not use or disclose the information except as provided for in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Education Act* or as otherwise required by law. I/we consent to the use and disclosure of the information by the Principal to such other Board personnel as may be required for the performance of their duties.
- 7) I/We acknowledge having received and read a copy of the NCDSB's **Appendix A: Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in the School.**

Signature of Parents/Guardians: _____ Date: _____

For Office Use Only:


Request for Service Animal: Approved _____ Denied _____

Signature of Principal: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Coordinator of Special Education: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Family of Schools Superintendent: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

	<p>Niagara Catholic District School Board</p> <p>Management Plan for the Care of the Service Animal</p>
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This information is being collected pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and under the Authority of the Education Act, and will be used by Student Achievement K-12 Special Education. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Superintendent of Education – Student Achievement K-12 Special Education, Niagara Catholic District School Board, 427 Rice Road, Welland, Ontario L3C 7C1, 905-735-0240.

Student Name		<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> F	Date yyyy mm dd	
Parent/Guardian				Home Phone	
Address				Work Phone	
City/Postal Code				Date of Birth yyyy mm dd	
School				Teacher	
Grade Level		<input type="checkbox"/> A.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> P.M.	OEN #	

Person(s) responsible in the school environment: _____

Note: Where possible and feasible, these responsibilities should be handled by the student in the same manner as at home. In the event that the student is not able undertake these responsibilities, it is the responsibility of the Parents/Guardians to provide **total care** for the service animal. This includes the provision of food, water and “bio-breaks” to the service animal as required, supervision of the animal during rest periods, and immediate removal and disposal of service animal waste in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

Water needs: (e.g. provision of water bowl, procedures for use, cleaning etc.)

Bladder/Bowel Needs of Service Animal (e.g. – frequency, location, disposal etc.)

Other considerations (e.g. rest periods away from work, hot and winter weather, etc.)

1. Rest periods away from ‘work’ (if needed)

2. Special considerations due to weather (if needed)

Formal documentation has been provided that the service animal:

- has annual vaccines,
- has municipal license,
- is in good health to attend school.

This information must be updated on a yearly basis.

Signature of Principal _____ Date _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____



Appendix D

SAMPLE LETTER TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Insert School Letterhead

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a service animal in our school supporting one of our students and the service animal will be in our school effective (*insert date*).

Service animals are trained and evaluated by an accredited or recognized training facility, and are able to assist with many of the routine activities which pose challenges for some students. The student's right to have a service animal is protected under the Ontario Human Rights legislation and other laws, as listed in Board guidelines.

There will be an upcoming information session for Parents/Guardians at the school on (*insert date*) to assist with your understanding of how the service animal will be integrated into the school. As well, a school-wide assembly will be held for all students to help them identify with the service animal and how it will fit into the daily routines of all students. They will be instructed as to the proper procedure regarding the service animal and that the service animal is a 'working' animal and not a pet while at school.

We anticipate the service animal being of benefit to the student's learning and we look forward to this new addition to our school and school community.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (*insert school phone number*).

Sincerely,

Principal



Appendix E

SAMPLE LETTER TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

Insert School Letterhead

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a service animal in our school supporting one of our students and the service animal will be in your child's classroom effective (*insert date*).

Service animals are trained and evaluated by an accredited or recognized training facility, and are able to assist with many of the routine activities which pose challenges for some students. The student's right to have a service animal is protected under the Ontario Human Rights legislation and other laws, as listed in Board guidelines. An upcoming information session for Parents/Guardians on (*insert date*) will offer more information on how the service animal will be integrated into the school setting.

Students will participate in a school-wide assembly on (*insert date*) to assist with the integration of the service animal and how the service animal will fit into the daily routines of all students. The students in this classroom will also receive more direct instruction and training as to the proper procedure and conduct when around the service animal. They will be informed that the service animal is a working animal and not a pet while at school.

We anticipate the service animal being of benefit to the student's learning and we look forward to this new addition to our school and school community.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (*insert school phone number*).

Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix F



Niagara Catholic District School Board

Administrative Checklist for the Implementation of a Service Animal into a School Environment

TASK	DATE COMPLETED
Advise Parents/Guardians and student 16 years and older, making the request that the Niagara Catholic District School Board has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide Parents/Guardians with the form Appendix A: Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in the School and Appendix B: Request for a Service Animal .	
Received Appendix B.	
Inform Family of Schools Superintendent and Coordinator of Special Education of the request.	
Inform school staff that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Convene a case conference with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parents/Guardians and/or student over the age of 16 <input type="checkbox"/> classroom teachers(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Resource Teacher (ERT) <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Coordinator <input type="checkbox"/> representative from the service animal training facility <input type="checkbox"/> support staff who work with the student Items to be discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> review the request with respect to its consistency with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) <input type="checkbox"/> safety and care considerations <input type="checkbox"/> impact on school community <input type="checkbox"/> timeline of implementation <input type="checkbox"/> transportation needs <input type="checkbox"/> communication plan 	
Receive copies of the required documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> copy of recommendation from regulated health professional <input type="checkbox"/> copy of service animal's certification and evaluation from accredited or recognized training facility <input type="checkbox"/> copy of training certification of handler/family <input type="checkbox"/> copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the service animal <input type="checkbox"/> proof of municipal animal license, if applicable 	
Meet with the Parents/Guardians and/or student 16 years or older, to inform them of the information you have received, and to review the implementation plan and complete Appendix C: Management Plan for the Care of the Service Animal .	
ONCE THE SERVICE ANIMAL HAS BEEN APPROVED:	
Prior to distribution to the community, share Appendix D: Sample Letter to School Community and Appendix E: Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom with Parents/Guardians of the student requiring the use of a service animal.	
Inform Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS) that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Prior to the arrival of the animal, determine the service the service animal will provide, i.e. safety, attention, time on task, frequency of behaviours, etc. Baseline data should be collected. After the arrival of the service animal, data should then be collected on a regular basis to determine the effectiveness of this accommodation.	
Develop a communication strategy to inform students, staff, Human Resources Services and community.	
Post signs on the entrance doors, and at any other places to advise visitors of the animal's presence.	
Develop an appropriate fire and emergency exit plan.	
File relevant documentation and correspondence in the documentation file of student's OSR.	
Update the Family of Schools Superintendent and the Coordinator of Special Education of steps completed to date.	
Monitor and review the implementation on an annual basis.	