

*MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATES AS MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION,
AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "MHPSD" AND/OR "DIVISION"*

SECTION 600 – Students

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: SERVICE AND EDUCATION ASSISTANCE
ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

PROCEDURE CODE:	630 P 001
Policy Reference: 630 – Service and Education Assistance Animals in Schools	Exhibits: 630 E 001 – Request for a Certified Service Animal 630 E 002 – Request for an Education Assistance Animal

BACKGROUND

There may be circumstances when the presence of a Service Animal, Education Assistance Animal or Classroom Pet in the classroom or school supports student learning. The benefits of the animal's presence must be carefully weighed against the possible impact on the education environment and the health and safety of the school community.

DEFINITION

Service Dog: a dog trained as a guide for a person who requires this support and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations (Service Dogs Act of Alberta, 2009). For the purposes of this Administrative Procedure, the service animal definition would include animals that have been trained by a recognized program such as Canine Vision Dog Guides, Special Skills Dog Guides, Hearing Ear Dog Guides, Seizure Response Dog Guides, and Autism Assistance Dog Guides, etc.

Education Assistance Animal (EAA): an animal that works with its owner/handler as a team to improve a student's physical, social, emotional or cognitive functioning. An EAA can be useful for educational and motivational effectiveness for participants. An EAA is not a "certified service dog". Provisions that apply to protecting service animals and the people requiring them do not apply to therapy animals and their handlers. Although therapy dogs are specially evaluated, trained and registered for their volunteer work, they do not undergo the same extensive specialized and unique training required of guide dogs, hearing dogs and service dogs. Examples of EAAs are library dogs and therapy animals.

Classroom Pet: an animal chosen by a teacher, with the prior approval of the school principal, to be kept in their individual classroom for some type of educational value, such as a means to stimulate

learning and/or teach students about responsibility and compassion through their care and upkeep. The teacher is ultimately responsible for the care and maintenance of the classroom pet within the classroom and to ensure the health and safety of the school community.

PROCEDURE

1. Service Animals

1.1. Parents/guardians of students requesting the support and assistance of a service animal while at school shall:

1.1.1. Provide a letter outlining the benefits of having the service animal attend school with their child, descriptions of the service animal's activities, and the duration of the support. Parents/guardians need to complete the 630 E 001 - Request for a Certified Service Animal form and attach it to the letter.

1.1.2. Provide a letter from a physician confirming the diagnosis, recommendation and confirmation that the student's need for the use of a service animal in school is essential and directly related to the learning needs of the student.

1.1.3. Provide a copy of the Service Animal/Dog Team Identification Card issued by the Government of Alberta. All financial costs to obtain this card are the sole responsibility of the family. Parents/guardians can apply to Alberta Human Services for a service animal licence.

1.1.4. Provide up-to-date (annual) proof of vaccinations, licensing, and adequate insurance, and ensure the animal is in good health.

1.1.5. Work with the principal to develop a mutually agreed upon plan that addresses the handling of the dog (both inside and outside the school) and the personal care and physical needs of the service animal.

1.1.6. Work with the principal to schedule training as required for the student's school team and bus driver(s) by the service animal organization, and to educate the student body in the school and those on the bus on the role of the service animal and on the rules of conduct concerning the animal. This process will be ongoing as staff changes, grade changes, and other circumstances warrant it.

1.1.7. Provide the school with signage (generally provided by the service animal organization) alerting visitors/emergency service providers to the service animal's presence.

1.1.8. Be responsible for any financial implications regarding the training, use, and care of the service animal.

1.2. When a principal receives a written request for permission to have a service animal accompany a student to school, the principal shall:

1.2.1. Inform the Associate Superintendent of Student Services of the request.

1.2.2. arrange a case conference involving parents/guardians, teacher(s), educational assistant(s), transportation staff if appropriate, a representative of the service



animal organization if appropriate, and appropriate Student Services representatives to:

- 1.2.2.1. Review the purpose and function of the service animal in relation to successful learning and/or safety for the student;
 - 1.2.2.2. Discuss the notification and involvement of school staff;
 - 1.2.2.3. Clarify all responsibilities of the family, school and Division;
 - 1.2.2.4. Discuss transportation of the student and service animal, if appropriate;
 - 1.2.2.5. Discuss other concerns, including potential interference with delivery of an educational program; possibly changes to in-class routines and procedures; increased demands on staff; other children and staff who are allergic to animals; recognition of children with fear of animals; and cultural sensitivities to groups that will not share space with an animal.
- 1.3. Development of a comprehensive transition plan for the introduction of the animal may involve the use of social stories and/or visits by the animal to the school/classroom and may also include:
- 1.3.1. Informing school staff, school council representatives, and parents/guardians via written notice of the potential arrival of a service animal to the school;
 - 1.3.2. Sending a specific letter home to the parents/guardians of students who will be in any of the classes where the animal will possibly be present in case of allergies, anxieties, or other concerns; and
 - 1.3.3. Working with appropriate personnel to revise emergency and safety procedures as required to include the service animal.
 - 1.3.3.1. Upon completion of the above, the principal will forward a copy of all relevant information to the Associate Superintendent of Student Services.
- 1.4. The approval of the service animal into the learning environment shall be determined by the principal based on information gathered through the processes above, as well as a review of submitted documentation pertaining to the:
- 1.4.1. Student's educational needs;
 - 1.4.2. Fulfilment of family responsibilities;
 - 1.4.3. Fulfilment of school and Division responsibilities to all stakeholders, including liability; and
 - 1.4.4. Eligibility for transportation, which is determined by the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Blind Person's Rights Act establishing the right for the service animal to be allowed to accompany the student on the bus.
- 1.5. At the end of each year, the student's learning team shall review the student's program needs related to the service animal.
- 1.5.1. The review shall include the school's input with regard to monitoring the service animal's capacity to provide the target service.



- 1.5.2. Decisions regarding the appropriate use of the service animal, program planning and training need to be considered.
- 1.5.3. If the service animal is deemed essential, comprehensive transition planning for future teachers, staff, students, transportation providers, and the wider community needs to occur.
- 1.6. A copy of all service animal request documentation shall be placed in the student record.
- 1.7. The principal shall inform school staff, school council representatives, and parents/guardians of the arrival of a service animal to the school(s), including feeder schools as required.
- 1.8. An assembly may be arranged for the student body involving representatives from the service animal organization, the parent/guardian, and possibly the handler to explain the role of the service animal.
- 1.9. An appropriate emergency exit plan shall be put into place and the fire department shall be alerted as to the existence of an animal in the school.
- 1.10. A sign (generally provided by the service animal organization) shall be placed on the doors of the school alerting visitors/emergency service providers to the animal's presence.
- 1.11. The service animal organization shall provide training to the student's school team (principal, teacher, educational assistant, etc.).
2. Education Assistant Animals (EAA)
 - 2.1. Anyone wishing to use an EAA in a school must complete 630 E 002 – Request for an Education Assistance Animal form. Parents/guardians shall also provide a letter outlining the benefits of having the EAA work with the children, descriptions of the EAA's activities, and the duration of the support.
 - 2.2. Additionally, those wishing to use an EAA to support children's programs shall:
 - 2.2.1. Provide documentation that the EAA is a certified therapy animal;
 - 2.2.2. Provide up-to-date proof of vaccinations, adequate insurance, and ensure the EAA is in good health;
 - 2.2.3. Provide for the responsibility of care of the EAA, including the need for "bio-breaks", disposal of waste, and provision of food and water;
 - 2.2.4. Provide the school with signage (generally provided by the EAA organization) alerting visitors/emergency service providers to the EAA's presence;
 - 2.2.5. indicate who will accompany and handle the EAA both inside and outside the school and what arrangements have been made with regard to alternate handlers when necessary;
 - 2.2.6. pay for any financial implications regarding the training, use, and care of the EAA; and
 - 2.2.7. ensure the EAA is appropriately leashed, caged, or harnessed while on school property.



- 2.3. When a principal receives a written request for permission to have an EAA brought to the school, the principal shall:
 - 2.3.1. Arrange a meeting involving staff to discuss:
 - 2.3.1.1. Notification and involvement of school staff;
 - 2.3.1.2. The purpose and function of the EAA in relation to successful learning and/or safety for the student;
 - 2.3.1.3. Clarification of all responsibilities of the trainer/handler with the school and Division; and
 - 2.3.1.4. Other concerns including interference with delivery of an educational program; possibly changes to in-class routines and procedures; increased demands on staff; other children and staff who are allergic to the EAA; recognition of children with fear of EAAs; and cultural sensitivities to groups that will not share space with an animal.
 - 2.3.2. Inform school staff, school council representatives, and parents/guardians via written notice of the potential arrival of an EAA to the school.
 - 2.3.3. Send a specific letter home to the parents/guardians of students who will be in any of the classes where the EAA will possibly be present in case of allergies, anxieties, or other concerns. Should a conflict arise, priority will be given to the health and safety of the school community and the EAA shall be excluded from that area; and
 - 2.3.4. Work with appropriate personnel to revise emergency and safety procedures, as required, to include the EAA.
 - 2.3.5. Upon completion of the above, the principal will forward all relevant information to the Associate Superintendent of Student Services.
3. Classroom Pet
 - 3.1. Upon prior approval from the principal, a classroom teacher wishing to have a pet in their classroom shall first send a specific letter home to all parents/guardians of students who will be in any of the classes where the classroom pet will be, to check for allergies, fears, or cultural concerns, and to provide information about the classroom pet.
 - 3.2. Additionally, the classroom teacher shall:
 - 3.2.1. provide proof of up-to-date vaccinations if applicable, and ensure the classroom pet is in good health;
 - 3.2.2. provide for the responsibility of care of the classroom pet, including the need for "bio-breaks" as required, disposal of waste and cleaning of cages or tanks, and provision of food and water;
 - 3.2.3. pay for any financial implications regarding the training, use and care of the classroom pet;
 - 3.2.4. ensure the classroom pet is appropriately leashed, caged or harnessed as applicable while on school property;



- 3.2.5. work with appropriate personnel to revise emergency and safety procedures as required to include the classroom pet.
- 3.3. If at any time the principal determines it is no longer safe or in the best interest of the school community to keep the classroom pet at the school, the classroom teacher will be responsible to remove the pet from the premises.
4. The Division may limit, remove, or exclude from school facilities or property any service animal, EAA, classroom pet or other animal if it poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the school community, causes a significant disruption of school activities, or otherwise jeopardizes the safe operation of the school or a school event. Examples of such include, but are not limited to, situations where the Service Animal, EAA, classroom pet or other animal:
- 4.1. urinates or defecates in inappropriate locations;
 - 4.2. solicits attention, visits, or annoys any member of the student body or school personnel;
 - 4.3. vocalizes unnecessarily (i.e., barking, growling, or whining);
 - 4.4. shows aggression towards people or other animals;
 - 4.5. solicits or steals food or other items from the student body or school personnel;
 - 4.6. is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved;
 - 4.7. is not under the full control of the student being supported by it or the designated handler;
 - 4.8. is a public health threat as a result of being infested with parasites; has a communicable disease of the skin, mouth, or eyes; is unclean; or is unsanitary.
5. The principal may impose some restrictions on the service animal, EAA, classroom pet or other animal for safety reasons. The service animal, EAA, classroom pet or other animal may be excluded or have limited access to certain areas of the school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons. Areas or programs which may be considered off limits for service animals include but are not limited to laboratories, mechanical closets, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is required, areas that have exposed sharp metal cuttings or other sharp objects, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery.
6. Staff, students, or parents/guardians of a student with medical issues that are impacted by animals (such as respiratory diseases) are to contact the principal if they have a concern about exposure to a service animal, EAA or classroom pet or other animal.
- 6.1. The staff member, student or parents/guardians of a student shall be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the need for an accommodation.
 - 6.2. The principal shall facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodations of all persons involved.
7. Any student or parent/guardian of a student with a service animal, or a staff member, student, or parent/guardian of a student who is aggrieved by the principal's decision may appeal that decision to the Superintendent. That appeal must be in writing and provide detailed information regarding the basis of the appeal.



8. Trainers/handlers where necessary are to carry a minimum of \$2,000,000 general liability insurance and provide current and up to date certificate of insurance.

REFERENCES

Blind Person's Rights Act
Alberta Human Rights Act
Alberta Human Services
Service Dog Act of Alberta

Approved: October 23, 2018

Revised: _____

