



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

Philosophy

Service Dogs are trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disability with their daily living activities. The use of Service Dogs is an intervention strategy that is recognized as an aid to children with Special Needs.

Definition

The *Human Rights Code* and *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* describes "disability" as:

- a) *“any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;*
- b) *a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;*
- c) *a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;*
- d) *a mental disorder, or*
- e) *an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 ("handicap").*

Protocol

Once the school has been notified, the Protocol will be put into place prior to the admittance of a Service Dog to the school.

Parent's Responsibilities

1. Provide a letter to the school requesting permission for a Service Dog and outlining the benefits of having a Service Dog attend school with their child.



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

2. Provide a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, or from a member of the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.
3. Provide a Certificate of Training for the Service Dog from the National Service Dogs Training Centre, or from another certified training centre.
4. Pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the Service Dog.
5. Annually, provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal Service Dog licence, and confirmation that the Service Dog is in good health.
6. Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog, including a once a day bio-break procedure.

Principal's Responsibilities

1. Ensure that the use of a Service Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IPRC or the IEP process.
2. Consult with the appropriate Superintendent of Education, and the Superintendent of Program prior to arranging a case conference.
3. Arrange a case conference with parents/guardians, classroom teacher(s), appropriate Special Education staff, a representative from National Service Dogs, or other service provider, the student when appropriate, a Speech and Language Pathologist if necessary, Psychologist, and the Co-ordinator of Special Education or designate, to discuss and develop a plan to determine:
 - a) the purpose and function of the Service Dog;
 - b) who will accompany and handle the Service Dog outside;
 - c) personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog;

* the safest and most environmentally sound place for the Service Dog to relieve itself,



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

- * removal and disposal of animal waste,
 - * provision of a suitable container for waste that the dog handler can access, and
 - * considerations for seasonal changes, and inclement weather;
- d) classroom considerations such as seating arrangements;
 - e) any necessary changes in routine and procedures, and program changes;
 - f) arrangements for the Service Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site;
 - g) a transition plan for the Service Dog and the student;
 - h) a timetable for the introduction of the Service Dog to the school, and class and for the training of the student's school team (Principal, Teacher(s), Education Assistant(s), etc);
 - i) rules of conduct around the Service Dog for students, staff, and the public, and
 - j) disseminating and regulating such rules.
4. Forward the following letters (samples attached, available on First Class) home to inform:
- a) the school community of the arrival of the working Service Dog, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the existence of the Service Dog at the school;
 - b) the students in any of the classes where the Service Dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, or religious considerations from the students' parents/guardians, and
 - c) the students who will be sharing transportation where the Service Dog



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

will be present including students from another school or school board.

5. Retain all letters regarding the Service Dog in the student's Ontario School Record (OSR) for a period of one year, or until superseded.
6. Inform all staff including teachers, educational assistants, custodians, all support staff, volunteers, school council, union representatives, and health and safety representatives of the presence of Service Dogs.
7. Liaise with the Special Education Consultant and Administration to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a Service Dog.
8. Arrange for demonstrations from National Service Dogs or another certified Service Dog organization for the student body, staff, and the community as required to provide education and awareness of Service Dogs in schools.
9. Contact the Wellington-Dufferin Student Transportation Consortium regarding any transportation requirements.
10. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Service Dog, such as evacuations, and notification to the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Service Dog.
11. Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise visitors of the presence of a working Service Dog.
12. Develop an alternative dog handler for instances when the dog handler is absent.

Transportation

The following guidelines are suggested for safe transit of a Service Dog:

1. If needed, transportation must be provided as specified under the Human Rights Code.
2. The transport provider will be given proof that the Service Dog is licensed, and trained as a Service Dog.



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

3. The transport provider will ensure that there is documentation about the Service Dog with the route information for all drivers involved.
4. Drivers and passengers should have some basic training concerning conduct with the Service Dog.
5. En route, the Service Dog should be located in a seating compartment, and/or on the floor away from the aisle on a bus.
6. The Upper Grand District School Board may determine the need for another person to accommodate the student and Service Dog while using transportation.
7. The transportation department must ensure that any student(s) from other schools/school boards travelling with a Service Dog be advised of the presence of the Service Dog.



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Dog Handler	All Service Dogs that are trained to assist a child with Special Needs must be accompanied by an adult dog handler. The adult (a parent or educational assistant) is trained by a staff member of National Service Dogs (NSD) during the team training process.
National Service Dogs	National Service Dogs is a member of Assistance Service Dogs International (ASDI). It is only one of two Canadian Service Dogs organizations that are members of this organization.
Service Dogs	Service Dogs are for children and adults with a physical or developmental disability to assist them with their daily living activities.
Guide Service Dog	Guide Service Dogs assist blind and visually-impaired people by avoiding obstacles, stopping at curbs and steps and negotiating traffic. The harness and U-shaped handle fosters communication between the Service Dog and the blind partner. In this partnership, the human's role is to provide directional commands, while the Service Dog's role is to ensure the team's safety, even if this requires disobeying an unsafe command.
School Community	This refers to students, parents, teaching staff, educational assistants, support staff, volunteers, school council, union representatives, and health and safety representatives.



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students.

This Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. Service Dogs are comparable to Guide Service Dogs and are included in every aspect of the student's life. The child's right to have a Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate the Service Dog into our daily routines and all our students will be instructed as to the proper procedure regarding the Service Dog. They will be informed that the Service Dog is a working Service Dog and not a pet while at school.

Already, the Service Dog has been a benefit to the student, and we look forward to a lot of growth and learning together.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc: Superintendent, OSR, Classroom Teacher, Special Education Co-ordinator



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN THE CLASS(ES)

(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students, and this student and the Service Dog will be a part of your child's class.

This Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. Service Dogs are comparable to a Guide Service Dog and are included in every aspect of the student's life. The child's right to have a Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate the Service Dog into our daily routines and all of our students will be instructed as to the proper procedure around the Service Dog. They will be informed that the Service Dog is a working Service Dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the Service Dog in your child's class, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc: Superintendent, OSR, Classroom Teacher, Special Education Co-ordinator



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students With Special Needs

SAMPLE LETTER TO THOSE SHARING TRANSPORTATION

(SCHOOL LETTER HEAD)

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students, and that the student and the Service Dog will be sharing transportation with your child daily to and from school.

This Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. Service Dogs are comparable to a Guide Service Dog and are included in every aspect of the student's life. The child's right to have a Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate the Service Dog into our daily routines and all our students will be instructed as to the proper procedure around the Service Dog. They will be told that the Service Dog is a working Service Dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the Service Dog on your child's mode of transportation, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc: Superintendent, OSR, Classroom Teacher, Special Education Co-ordinator



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students Diagnosed with Special Needs

PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST

- The parent has requested permission in writing which includes reasons, description of activity and duration of the intervention.
- The parent has provided a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or from a member of the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis of the recognized Special Needs, as well as a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.
- A copy of the parent request, as well as the medical diagnosis is in the OSR.
- The parent has been informed that the provision of the certified Service Dog is the financial responsibility of the parent.
- The parent has been informed that the care of the Service Dog, including once a day "bio-breaks" is the responsibility of the parent.
- The Principal has met with the parent to discuss the potential impact of the request on the school community.
- The Principal has consulted with the appropriate Superintendent of Education and the Superintendent of Program prior to granting permission.
- The Principal has arranged a case conference.
- The Principal has communicated with the school community to ensure that it knows that a working Service Dog will be present.
- A specific letter has been sent home to the students in any of the classes where the dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, or religious considerations from the students and/or parents/guardians.
- Specific issues of the school community have been addressed.
- The Principal has contacted the Wellington-Dufferin Student Transportation Consortium if transportation is required.



Upper Grand District School Board

Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students Diagnosed with Special Needs

PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST

- A letter from the Wellington-Dufferin Student Transportation Consortium has been sent home to the students who will be sharing transportation where the dog will be present.
- Arrangements have been made to inform the school community.
- Arrangements have been made and a timetable has been established for the training of the student's school team.
- Arrangements have been made to educate the student body on the role of the Service Dog, and to outline the rules of conduct concerning the dog.
- Demonstrations may be arranged for the school community, involving National Service Dogs, to explain the role of the Service Dog.
- An appropriate evacuation plan is in place, and the Fire Department has been alerted to the existence of the Service Dog in the school.
- A sign has been placed on each entry door of the school which informs visitors of the presence of the Service Dog.
- Arrangements have been made for the dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site.
- A transition plan has been created which will include the student and the Service Dog to help establish routines and clarify expectations.