



AP A4 Assistance Dogs

Legislative References: *BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*

Policy Reference: *None*

Collective Agreement References: *None*

Date: January 10, 2024

1. Animals in schools that are not included in this Administrative Practice:
 - 1.1. Students and staff who qualify for an emotional support animal.
 - 1.2. Animal visitors, as outlined in Administrative Practice A2 Animal Visitors in Schools.
 - 1.3. Animals supporting instruction, as outlined in Administrative Practice A3 Animals as Part of the Instructional Program.

2. Types of Assistance Dogs
 - 2.1. The following types of Assistance Dogs encompassed in this administrative practice include:
 - 2.1.1. Autism Dogs – Dogs trained as assistants for persons with autism.
 - 2.1.2. Hearing Dogs – Dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
 - 2.1.3. Seizure Response Dogs – Dogs trained to provide emergency response for persons with epilepsy.
 - 2.1.4. Service Dogs – (as defined by the [BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#)) are Dogs trained to assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair.
 - 2.1.5. Guide Dogs – (as defined by the [BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#)) are Dogs trained as a guide for a blind or visually impaired person.

3. All assistance dogs that will be permitted in district facilities must be certified in accordance with the *BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*.

4. Assistance Dogs will wear a dog vest to ensure it is clearly identified as a guide and service animal.

5. Prior to the admittance of an Assistance Dog to the school, the employee/parents must:
 - 5.1. Provide a written request to the school district for Assistance Dog admittance. The request must outline the benefits of having an Assistance Dog attend school and include the plan for the care and supervision of the Assistance Dog while at school.
 - 5.2. Provide confirmation from an appropriate professional confirming the diagnosis of a recognized disability, including a recommendation for the use of an Assistance Dog.



- 5.3. Provide a Certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog from an accredited agency such as the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI).
 - 5.4. Agree to pay for any additional costs incurred by the school district and/or school related to the Assistance Dog (e.g. appropriate training for school district staff members, transportation and/or classroom modifications).
 - 5.5. Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog, including at least one bio-break procedure per day and providing appropriate bedding (e.g., bed or blanket) and water bowl.
 - 5.6. Annually, provide the school district with proof of a municipal Dog license, proof of annual re-certification from the appropriate agency and proof of up-to-date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine confirming that the Assistance Dog is in good health.
6. School and District Responsibilities
- 6.1. The school district shall not be responsible for the training, feeding, grooming or care of any Assistance Dog permitted to attend school or ride on school buses or water taxis under this Practice.
 - 6.2. With regard to students, under the direction of the Principal, school staff will:
 - 6.2.1. Ensure that the use of an Assistance Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
 - 6.2.2. Arrange a case conference with parents/guardians, classroom teachers(s), appropriate student support staff, a representative from the appropriate agency, the student (when appropriate), other consultants if necessary, and the district staff, to discuss:
 - 6.2.2.1. The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog.
 - 6.2.2.2. The personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog including:
 - The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance Dog to relieve itself.
 - Removal and disposal of animal waste
 - Provision of a suitable container for waste, and
 - Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
 - 6.2.2.3. Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements.
 - 6.2.2.4. Any necessary changes in routine, procedures, or program .
 - 6.2.2.5. Arrangement for the Assistance Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site prior to commencement of services.
 - 6.2.2.6. A transition plan for the Assistance Dog and the student.



- 6.2.2.7. A timetable for the introduction of the Assistance Dog to the school and class and for the training of the student's school team (Principal, Teacher(s), Education Assistant(s), etc.).
 - 6.2.2.8. Rules of conduct around the Assistance Dog for students, staff and the public; and disseminating and regulating such rules.
- 6.3. With regard to employees, district staff will:
- 6.3.1. Ensure that the use of an Assistance Dog is consistent with the needs or outlined in the accommodation plan.
 - 6.3.2. Arrange a staff meeting to discuss:
 - 6.3.2.1. The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog.
 - 6.3.2.2. The personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog including:
 - The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance Dog to relieve itself.
 - Removal and disposal of animal waste
 - Provision of a suitable container for waste, and
 - Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
 - 6.3.2.3. Classroom or workplace considerations.
 - 6.3.2.4. Any necessary changes in routine and procedures.
 - 6.3.2.5. Arrangement for the Assistance Dog to visit the school without staff or students present in order to familiarize it with the school site prior to commencement of services.
 - 6.3.2.6. A transition plan, if necessary, for the Assistance Dog.
7. Rules of conduct around the Assistance Dog for students, staff and the public; and disseminating and regulating such rules.
- 7.1. Ensure the following letters are provided to all students attending the school, to inform:
 - 7.1.1. The school community of the arrival of the working Assistance Dog, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the existence of the Assistance Dog at the school.
 - 7.1.2. The students in any of the classes where the Assistance Dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, or extreme phobias from the students' parents/guardians.
 - 7.1.3. The students who will be sharing transportation where the Assistance Dog will be present.
 - 7.2. For students, retain all letters regarding the Assistance Dog in the student's cumulative file, for staff retains all letters in the payroll/personnel file.



- 7.3. Inform all staff including teachers, educational assistants, custodians, support staff, volunteers, and health and safety representatives of the presence of the Assistance Dog(s).
 - 7.4. Contact the School District Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements.
 - 7.5. Arrange for demonstrations from the appropriate agency or another certified Assistance Dog organization for the student body, staff and the community as required to provide education and awareness of Assistance Dogs in schools.
 - 7.6. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Assistance Dog, such as evacuations, and notify the fire department regarding the existence of the Assistance Dog.
 - 7.7. Post appropriate signage at the school entrance, which informs visitors of the presence of an Assistance Dog.
8. Dog Handlers
- 8.1. The school district must approve any person who is authorized to assist in the care and supervision of the Assistance Dog while on school property.
 - 8.2. The term Handler refers to the adult Dog handler that was part of the certification process for a particular Dog.
 - 8.3. Responsibilities of the Handler:
 - 8.3.1. The Handler will provide evidence that they have been certified as part of the Dog team.
 - 8.3.2. The Handler will provide a police record check with vulnerable sector screening.
 - 8.3.3. At no time will the Handler and Dog be alone with students.
 - 8.3.4. The Dog will always be under the direct control and supervision of the Handler. The Handler will be aware of the Dog's behaviour at all times. If any changes in behaviour occur that may affect the safety of the children, the Handler will immediately remove the Dog from the school and notify the Principal.
 - 8.3.5. Staff members cannot, at any time, assume the role of Handler.
 - 8.3.6. The Handler will respect the confidentiality of all information received regarding students or staff members while providing services in the school. The Handler will not share or disclose any confidential or personal information that may be directly or indirectly disclosed to them.
9. Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School
- 9.1. The school district may remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance Dog for reasons it deems appropriate. This includes but is not limited to times when the Assistance Dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the employee or student or others at school, 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:

- 9.1.1. The Assistance Dog urinates or defecates in inappropriate/non-designated locations.
- 9.1.2. The Assistance Dog vocalizes unnecessarily (e.g., barking, growling or whining).
- 9.1.3. The Assistance Dog shows aggression towards people or other animals.
- 9.1.4. The Assistance Dog solicits or steals food or other items from the student body or school personnel.
- 9.1.5. The Assistance Dog is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved.
- 9.1.6. The Assistance Dog is not under the full control of the student with the disability or handler.
- 9.1.7. The Assistance Dog is a public health threat as a result of being infested with parasites or having a communicable disease of the skin, mouth or eyes.
- 9.1.8. The Assistance Dog is unclean and unsanitary.
- 9.1.9. The Assistance Dog's presence significantly impairs the learning of students.
- 9.1.10. The employee, student, or the student's parents fail to provide or maintain current documentation required; and
- 9.1.11. The employee, student, or the student's parents fail to abide by any additional conditions of the terms of an Individual Education Plan or Accommodation Plan regarding their Assistance Dog.

10. Transportation of an Assistance Dog

- 10.1. When approving an Assistance Dog, the district may need to provide directions for transporting the Assistance Dog.
- 10.2. Prior to an Assistance Dog being allowed into a school district vehicle, the driver will meet with the Assistance Dog's owner. The owner is responsible for providing information to the driver and bus assistant regarding critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation.
- 10.3. The Assistance Dog's owner should provide an orientation to students riding the bus or water taxi with the Assistance Dog regarding the Dog's functions and how students should interact with the animal; and
 - 10.3.1. The Assistance Dog should practice any bus evacuation drills with the student.
 - 10.3.2. The Assistance Dog should board the bus by the steps, not on a lift.
 - 10.3.3. The Assistance Dog should be positioned on the floor, at the student's or employee's feet.



10.4. Situations that would cause cessation of transportation of the service animal include:

10.4.1. The Assistance Dog's behaviour poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

10.4.2. The Assistance Dog urinates or defecates on the bus/water taxi.

10.4.3. The Assistance Dog does not remain in the designated area.

10.5. If transportation is suspended due to any of the above reasons, transportation may be reinstated after additional training or medical issues are resolved. Parents should be informed of these consequences prior to the first day of transportation.

10.6. Although transportation may be suspended for the Assistance Dog, the school district maintains the responsibility of transporting the student.

11. Restrictions for Assistance Dogs

11.1. Assistance Dogs may be excluded from, or have limited access to, certain areas of school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons. Areas or programs that may be considered off-limits for Assistance Dogs include, but are not limited to: laboratories, mechanical rooms, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is necessary, areas which have exposed sharp metal cutting or other sharp objects which may pose a threat to the Assistance Dog's safety, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery.

11.2. The determination to restrict the access of an Assistance Dog to specific programs or areas of that school facility will be on a case-by-case basis.

12. Conflict Resolution

12.1. Employees, students/parents of a student with medical issues that are impacted by dogs (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the school principal if they have a concern about exposure to an Assistance Dog. The employee, student/parents of a student will be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the disability and the need for an accommodation. The school principal, in collaboration with district staff, and if necessary, a representative from the accredited organization, will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the needs/accommodations of all persons involved.