
AP 390– Animals and Assistance Dogs in Schools and District Facilities

Background:

The School District (the "**District**") recognizes that animals may be in schools or other District buildings in certain circumstances and that animals can both complement the educational program and support the well-being of students. A commonsense approach must be used when admitting animals to the classroom for educational purposes for any length of time.

General:

1. Animals shall not be allowed to roam freely within a school or a District facility setting.
2. Animals shall not be left in schools or other District facilities during weekends or holiday periods.
3. Animals shall be housed in suitable sanitary self-contained enclosures appropriate to the size of the animal.
4. Teachers or other designated staff will be responsible for ensuring that all animal enclosures are kept in acceptable sanitary conditions.
5. All refuse or waste pertaining to classroom animals shall be removed using gloves; double plastic bagged and placed in the appropriate receptacle (NB: it must not be left in the room overnight).
6. Every owner of an animal, other than a special needs assistance animal, while in a public place must obey all posted signs and this administrative procedure.
7. Failure to adhere to posted signage may result in fines levied by the municipality.

Dogs on School District Property:

1. No dogs are allowed on District property during school days from 8am to 5pm, with the exception of:
 - a. Dogs on leash with a parent/guardian during student drop off and pick up; and
 - b. Assistance Dogs (see below).
2. At all times during student drop off and pick up, all dogs on District property must be:
 - a. Licensed;
 - b. Cleaned up after and have their waste removed;
 - c. Leashed and under adult control (assistance dogs exempt); and
 - d. Kept away from building entrances and play areas.

Assistance Dogs:

Assistance Dogs are trained to assist children and adults with their daily living activities and provide physical safety and emotional support. Use of an Assistance Dog by a student with designated special needs, in school or on District property, may be approved by the District when it has been determined by the District that it helps develop independence or when the student requires such use to have equal access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school, and when the District's criteria have been met to the satisfaction of the Board of Education.

1. Definition

As used in this Policy & Regulation, "**Assistance Dogs**" include:

- 1.1 "Autism Support Dogs" which are dogs trained as assistants for persons with autism.
- 1.2 "Hearing Dogs" which are dogs that alert individuals who are deaf and/or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- 1.3 "Seizure Response Dogs" which are dogs trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.
- 1.4 "Service Dogs" (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) which are dogs trained to assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair.
- 1.5 "Guide Dogs" (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) which are dogs trained as a guide for a blind or visually impaired person.

2. Criteria

- 2.1 A student may be eligible to receive the support of an Assistance Dog if he/she has a low incidence designated special need (e.g., Chronic Health Condition, Visual/Hearing Impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder), as defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education.
- 2.2 The Assistance Dog must be trained and certified by a training school accredited by either or both the International Guide Dog Federation ("**IGDF**") or Assistance Dogs International ("**ADI**") or certified by the Justice Institute of British Columbia. In any all cases the dog/team should be able to present the British Columbia Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card.
- 2.3 The introduction of the Assistance Dog to the school community must not create barriers to other students' learning.

3. Application

Prior to the admittance of an Assistance Dog to a school, a student's parent/guardian must:

- 3.1 Provide a letter to the District requesting Assistance Dog admittance. The letter must outline the benefits of having an Assistance Dog attend school with their child and include their plan for the care and supervision of the Assistance Dog while at school.
- 3.2 Provide a copy of the letter of recommendation from an appropriate professional confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of an Assistance Dog.

- 3.3 Provide a Certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog and the Handler from the appropriate agency.
- 3.4 Agree to pay for any additional costs incurred by the District and/or school related to the Assistance Dog (e.g., appropriate training for School District staff members, bus and/or classroom modifications).
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 Develop an alternative dog handler for instances when the primary dog handler is absent.
- 3.7 Accept responsibility for the actions of the Assistance Dog by signing a District release of liability.
- 3.8 Annually, provide the 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.

4. School District/School Responsibilities

The 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 under this policy. The District must approve any person who is authorized to assist in the care and supervision of the Assistance Dog while on school property.

The District shall:

- 4.1 Ensure that the use of an Assistance Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the student's Individual Education Plan ("IEP") by way of:
 - a) school community (staff and parents minimum) consultation and
 - b) an assessment of all information and a decision notification to the family.
- 4.2 Arrange a case conference with parents/guardians, the dog handler, classroom teachers(s), appropriate District Inclusive Education staff, a representative from the appropriate agency, the student (when appropriate), other consultants if necessary, and the Director of Inclusive Education to discuss:
 - a) The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog;
 - b) The role/duties of the Assistance Dog handler;
 - c) 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;
 - d) Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements;
 - e) Any necessary changes in routine and procedures and program changes;
 - f) 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;
- g) A transition plan for the Assistance Dog and the student;
- h) A timetable for, and outline of, 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.); including rules of conduct around the Assistance Dog for students, staff and the public; and
- j) Disseminating and regulating such rules.

4.3 Notifications

- a) The following letters shall be forwarded by the District to all students attending the school, to inform:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - iii. The students who will be sharing transportation where the Assistance Dog will be present; and
- b) The District shall retain all letters regarding the Assistance Dog in the student's confidential Permanent Record file.
- c) The District shall inform all staff including teachers, educational assistants, custodians, support staff, volunteers, and health and safety representatives of the presence of the Assistance Dog(s).
- d) The District shall contact the District Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements.

5. Familiarization within the School Community

A school shall 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.

6. Emergency Procedures

A school shall 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. Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School

The District may remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance Dog for reasons it deems appropriate.

7.1 If the District determines that 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 the District may remove or exclude the Assistance Dog from school facilities or property. Examples of such include, but are not limited to:

The Assistance Dog:

- a) does not urinate or defecate in appropriate/designated locations.
- b) vocalizes unnecessarily (e.g., barking, growling or whining).

- c) shows aggression towards people or other animals.
- d) solicits or steals food or other items from the student body or school personnel.
- e) is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved.
- f) is not under the full control of the student with the disability or the designated employee.
- g) is a public health threat because of being infested with parasites or having a communicable disease of the skin, mouth, or eyes.
- h) is unclean and unsanitary.
- i) presence significantly impairs the learning of students.

The student or the student's parent:

- j) fail to provide or maintain current documentation required by these regulations; and
- k) fail to abide by any additional conditions of the terms of an Individual Education Plan regarding their Assistance Dog.

8. Transportation of the Assistance Dog

When approving an Assistance Dog for a student with a disability at school, the District may need to provide directions for transporting the student and the Assistance Dog in the event the student qualifies for bus service (for example: travel from Bowen Island to Rockridge as per AP 550).

8.1 Familiarization with Student First

- a) The driver and, if applicable, the bus assistant should 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.
- b) The Assistance Dog's owner should provide an orientation to students riding the bus with the Assistance Dog regarding the Dog's functions and how students should interact with the animal; and
- c) The Assistance Dog should practice the bus evacuation drills with the student.

8.2 Loading/Unloading.

The Assistance Dog should board the bus by the steps, not on a lift.

8.3 Seating Location

The Assistance Dog should be positioned on the floor, at the student's feet.

8.4 Cessation of Transportation

- a) Situations that would cause cessation of transportation of the service animal include:
 - i. The Assistance Dog's behaviour poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others
 - ii. The Assistance Dog urinates or defecates on the bus or
 - iii. The Assistance Dog does not remain in the designated area.
- b) 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.
- c) Although transportation may be suspended for the Assistance Dog, the School District maintains the responsibility of transporting the student provided the student is eligible for transportation per AP 550.

9. Restrictions for Assistance Dogs

The District imposes some restrictions on Assistance Dogs for safety reasons. 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:

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.

10. Staff Assistance Dogs

The District recognizes the benefit dogs can have on students. There may be District staff who wish to bring an Assistance Dog into a school. For safety reasons, staff Assistance Dogs must be accredited assistance dogs. Staff who wish to bring an Assistance Dog to school shall follow the following procedure:

- 10.1 A staff member may provide a written request to the principal of the school and the Assistant Superintendent of the District to bring a staff Assistance Dog into the School (the "**Written Request**").
- 10.2 A staff Assistance Dog must be accredited by the Pacific Assistance Dogs Society ("**Staff Assistance Dog**").
- 10.3 A staff member typically means non-classroom based staff and includes administrative staff, school counsellors, and youth workers.
- 10.4 The Written Request shall include information regarding:
 - a. identifying the school where the staff member shall bring the Staff Assistance Dog;
 - b. consultation with the school community regarding bringing a Staff Assistance Dog into the School;
 - c. how the Staff Assistance Dog will:
 - i. support students;
 - ii. improve instruction to students;
 - iii. improve learning for students; and/or
 - iv. provide emotional support to students.
- 10.5 The principal of the school and the Assistant Superintendent must provide written authorization to the staff member before the staff member may bring a Staff Assistance Dog into the school (the "**Authorization**").
- 10.6 The Authorization is only valid in the school listed in the Written Request.

- 10.7 If a staff member switches schools within the District, the staff member shall issue a separate Written Request and seek a new Authorization before bringing in a Staff Assistance Dog to the new school.

11. Conflict Resolution

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 or a Staff 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 the Director of Instruction 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.

12. Notice of Appeal

Any student/parent of a student with an Assistance Dog who is aggrieved by the school principal's decision to remove, impose restrictions on or exclude an Assistance Dog may appeal that decision to the Assistant Superintendent.

Reviewed: Sept 2022