



<p style="text-align: center;">Animals in Schools and Worksites (Including Therapy, Emotional Support, and Service Animals)</p>

Board Received: _____ Review Date: _____

Accountability

1. Frequency of Reports – As needed
2. Criteria for Success – Proper documentation provided to the school/Board
 - Animal behaviour is consistent with the needs of the student/employee
 - The introduction or continuing presence of any animal into a classroom, school or worksite must take into account and mitigate for wherever possible any allergies, asthma or phobia concerns.

Definition

The word “animal” or “animals” in this memo is used to include birds, fowl, reptiles, snakes, amphibians, mammals, or, generally, any living thing that is not human or plant.

Procedure – Animals in Schools

Living things can enhance the education of students. Through caring for animals, students learn about their needs and characteristics, and begin to recognize the great variety of living beings that exist in the world.

Animals in schools refer to general animals brought in to school on an individualized basis to support or enhance educational programming. The study of specific animals and their habitats may take place in classrooms or in whole school presentations.

In order to foster concern and respect for living things, it is essential that all animals be properly cared for and their habitats well maintained. There must always be proper planning for the correct care and maintenance of them, including the potential difficulties of providing care on weekends and holidays.

In order to allow for a positive learning experience with animals, teachers must obtain approval from the Principal and create a plan for the practice of responsible animal management before bringing animals into a classroom or school.

The following checklist must be reviewed before bringing an animal into a school or classroom:

- Do students or staff have any allergies to certain types of animals?
- Are there any students or staff fearful of a certain type of animal?
- Are there religious beliefs that may impact on the presence of a living thing in a classroom or school?
- Are there appropriate habitats for the animals?
- Is all electrical equipment, in good condition, proper working order, Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved and used in a method that does not create a trip or electrical hazard?
- Are classroom teachers aware of the responsibility to clean and maintain animal enclosures?
- Are appropriate steps in place to ensure a clean and healthy environment for animals over weekends and holidays?

If any one of the above cannot be positively resolved before the animal is brought into the school/classroom, it will not be permitted.

General Precautions

1. Avoid keeping turtles, birds or fowl, as they are prone to parasite infections.
2. A limited number of animals should be kept in the school at any time.
3. All cages/habitats must be located in a well ventilated area and should not be exposed to
4. extreme weather conditions.
5. Do not let animals roam freely in classrooms.
6. Animals must be well fed and must have a constant supply of fresh drinking water.
7. All animal waste and soiled bedding material must be removed by the responsible staff member at least daily and replaced with fresh bedding. Waste material must be placed in a sealed plastic bag for disposal, following local regulations for animal waste disposal.
8. Caretakers or Custodians are not responsible for the care or clean-up of animals in schools.
9. If an animal scratches or bite breaks the surface of the skin, immediately clean the affected area and report the incident to the Principal.
10. ALWAYS wash hands thoroughly after handling animals.
11. Cats, dogs (with the exception of service dogs), snakes and other reptiles are not to be kept in schools but may be welcomed as occasional supervised visitors only after approval of the Principal.
12. The exhibition of exotic animals, including poisonous amphibians, requires approval of the Family of Schools Superintendent.

Procedure – Emotional Support, Therapy and Service Animals in Schools and Worksites

Emotional support animals provide comfort and support to people with emotional concerns. Emotional support animals are not specifically trained to perform particular tasks to assist with a disability.

Therapy animals are generally understood to be animals with specific training, although the training is focused on allowing the animal to interact with many people other than its handler. Therapy animals may be present in schools or worksites at particular times to provide comfort to people with psychological, emotional or social challenges. All protocols regarding interaction with the working animal must be adhered to.

Service animals assist their handlers with a wide range of disabilities. In Ontario, there are four statutory regimes that address the use of service animals:

- The Blind Persons' Rights Act applies to guide dogs for people who are blind, low vision, or have vision loss, and provides public access and housing protections for the users of these animals.
- The Human Rights Code protects people with various disabilities from discrimination, harassment, and reprisal in all of the areas covered by the Code, including services, goods and facilities, accommodation, contracts, employment, and vocational associations. The definition of disability includes people who rely on guide dogs and service animals.
- The Integrated Accessibility Standards regulations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) contain protections for the users of both guide dogs and service animals, by allowing service animal teams to access premises where goods, services, or facilities are provided to members of the public or third parties.
- The Food Premises regulations under the Health Protection and Promotion Act allows guide dogs and service dogs (but not service animals) into premises where food is served, sold, or offered for sale.

Guide dogs are trained specifically to guide people who are blind or partially sighted. The guide dog is qualified via a regulated training program. For all other service animals, including service dogs, there is no certification requirement for training.

An animal is defined as a service animal or service dog if it can be “readily identified” as assisting a person with a disability, or if the person using the animal provides documentation from a medical professional that confirms they require a service animal or require the animal for reasons relating to a disability.

The following checklist must be reviewed before bringing an emotional support, therapy or service animal into a classroom, school or worksite;

- Have handlers disclosed any incidents of aggressive behaviour displayed by the animal?
- Have handlers submitted formal documentation confirming annual vaccines?
- Have handlers provided a letter from a medical professional recommending the use of the animal?
- Do students or staff have any allergies to certain types of animals?
- Are there any students or staff fearful of a certain type of animal?
- Are there religious beliefs that may impact on the presence of a living thing in a classroom/school/worksite?
- Are there appropriate spaces for the animals for feeding and care?
- Are handlers aware of their responsibility to clean and maintain animal care spaces?
- Have students and staff members been made aware of how to interact appropriately with the animal?
- Have handlers made transportation arrangements for the animal, either privately or with school board transportation?

If any one of the above cannot be completed or positively resolved before the animal is brought into the school/classroom/worksite, it will not be permitted.

A sign alerting visitors to the service animal’s presence will be placed on the doors of the school/worksite.

It is recommended that parent(s)/guardian(s)/staff member refer to their home or tenant insurance policy to determine whether it covers any liability in the event of a claim pertaining to the service animal. If no such coverage exists, consideration should be given to amending the policy.

On an annual basis, the principal will inform the Superintendent of Education responsible for Special Education that the animal will be present at the school. The site supervisor will inform the Superintendent of Human Resources that the animal will be present at the worksite.

Exclusion of Animals from Schools/Worksites

An animal may be excluded from access to the premises or parts of the premises where:

1. Exclusion is required by another statute, such as *the Health Protection and Promotion Act* and/or 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).
2. The animal is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the Ontario Dog Owner's Liability Act, which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.
3. Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of the animal that cannot be addressed by providing reasonable accommodations.
4. There has been a material change in the circumstances that led to the original approval of the use of the animal in the school or worksite.
5. Exclusion is otherwise required by law.

When a request for a service animal to accompany a student to school/employee to worksite is not approved, the Board will continue to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to the student/employee.

References

[Lending a Helping Paw: An Overview of the Law of Service Animals in Ontario](#), May 2017, (Doctor, Kelly, Meggs, Caitlin, Goldblatt Partners LLP)