



POLICY

SO33

Animals in Schools, Including Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Board Received: February 24, 2020 Review Date: March 2024

Accountability

1. Frequency of Reports – As needed
2. Criteria for Success –
 - Proper documentation provided to the school/Board
 - The services provided by the Guide Dog / Service Dog to the student, must accommodate the student's disability-related needs and assist the student in achieving their learning goals and/or goals of daily living while at school.
 - The introduction or continuing presence of any animal into a classroom, school or worksite must take into account any competing human rights of students, staff, and community members using the school pursuant to a permit.

POLICY

- 1.1 The Grand Erie District School Board, in accordance with its obligations pursuant to the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, provides individualized accommodation to students with disabilities to enable them to have meaningful access to education services in a manner that respects their dignity, maximizes integration and facilitates the development of independence.
 - (a) Grand Erie utilizes a variety of placements, differentiated programming, and evidence-based interventions and strategies to provide meaningful access to education for students who have disability-related needs that impact their learning.
 - (b) Grand Erie does not provide Guide Dogs, Service Dogs or Service Animals to students.
 - (c) Grand Erie encourages any family considering the purchase of a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal to meet with the school principal or superintendent before making a commitment.
- 1.2 This policy identifies the individualized process to be followed when a parent or adult student applies to have a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal accompany the student while the student is attending school or a school-related event. This policy also provides guidelines about animals in schools for educational purposes.
- 1.3 Pursuant to the *Education Act* and regulations, a school building is not a place to which the public is customarily admitted. Pursuant to the *Education Act* and Ontario Regulation 474/00 *Access to School Premises*, the Grand Erie District School Board requires each school to have a process for visitors.
- 1.4 Any determination of whether a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal is an appropriate accommodation for a student while receiving education services is a decision of the Grand Erie District School Board. A regulated health professional cannot unilaterally prescribe that a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal be a specific accommodation while the student is receiving education services at school.

- 1.5 When an adult student or parent seeks to have their child attend school or school related events with a Guide Dog / Service Dog, both the Guide Dog / Service Dog *and* the Student Handler must be certified as having been successfully trained by an accredited training facility.
 - (a) Only in exceptional circumstances subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant the *Human Rights Code*, will Grand Erie consider an application for a student who will not be acting as the primary trained Handler of the Guide Dog / Service Dog.
- 1.6 Only in exceptional circumstances subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant the *Human Rights Code*, will Grand Erie consider Service Animals, other than dogs, as an accommodation for a student and only if other reasonable methods of accommodation in the school setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability-related learning needs of the student.
- 1.7 The process of accommodation shall also consider the competing human rights of other students and of staff; the impact of the Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal on the learning environment; and the health and safety of all individuals who are or might be in the school, on school grounds or at a school-related event.
- 1.8 A copy of this policy shall be available in accessible formats on Grand Erie's website upon request and may be requested by a parent or adult student in a different language through the school attended by the student.
- 1.9 Grand Erie shall retain data regarding the requests for Guide Dogs, Service Dogs and Service Animals.
- 1.10 Please also refer to the Grand Erie District School Board's policies and procedures regarding:

Policy SO14 – Equity and Inclusive Education Procedure

Policy SO31 – Accessibility

Procedure SO126 - Volunteers