



The Red River Valley School Division Board of Trustees supports and recognizes that, in certain cases, appropriate educational programming may include the services of a service dog.

A service dog means an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability.

The type of assistance a service dog may provide varies. A person may have a disability that is physical or obvious such as blindness and rely on a dog for assistance that is quite apparent. A person may also have a disability that is not as obvious, such as a mental or invisible disability such as post-traumatic stress disorder or epilepsy and rely on a dog for assistance in ways that are not readily apparent.

Dogs that provide comfort and companionship and that are not trained to assist with a person's disability-related need are *not* service dogs.

There is no standardized identification or certification of service dogs in Manitoba. Therefore, any dog that is identified as having been trained, including self-trained, to provide assistance to someone with a disability, may be a service dog for the purposes of *The Human Rights Code*.

A letter must be sent home to the students in any of the classes where the dog will be present in case of allergies or extreme phobias.

No individual student's rights and needs take precedence over any other individual student's rights and needs. In providing for Appropriate Educational Programming for students who require service dogs, other students' legal rights to an education are given equal consideration.

Once the school principal has been notified of the anticipated integration of a service dog into the school, the following procedures must be followed.

Parent/Legal guardian responsibilities

It is expected that parents/legal guardian will advise the division as soon as possible that a service dog is required.

1. Upon becoming aware of the child's need for a service dog, the parents/legal guardians shall provide a letter to the school principal from the child's medical provider recommending the use of a service dog that has received training specific to the child's medically diagnosed disability prior to the commencement of the process of appropriate educational programming.

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2. A letter shall also be provided from the parents/guardians detailing the benefits they feel their child will have by having their service dog with them at school.
3. Parents/Legal guardians will provide evidence of the dog's participation in a training program.
4. Parents/Legal guardians will supply annual updates on the health of the service dog, detailing vaccinations, examinations, illnesses and proof of licensing where required.
5. Parents/Legal guardians are responsible for the training and care of the service dog.

Principal responsibilities:

1. The school principal is responsible for working with the parents/legal guardians to arrange a timeline for the introduction of the service dog to the school.
2. The principal shall ensure that the students, school staff, school community and the Student Services Administrator are informed of the anticipated presence of the service dog in the school.
3. The principal shall ensure a sign is placed on the doors of the school building alerting visitors and/or emergency personnel to the dog's presence.
4. The principal shall ensure that all necessary training is made available to all appropriate personnel (this may include teachers, educational assistants, bus drivers, custodian and more).
5. The principal will submit a mutually agreed to implementation plan to the Student Services Administrator as soon as possible prior to the implementation of the service dog into the school.

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Animal Assisted Therapy Guidelines

Purpose

Animal Assisted Therapy is a research based practice to support students who have a variety of needs. Research shows that Animal Assisted Therapy can benefit students psychologically and physiologically. Trained facilitators and their animals such as dogs can reduce anxiety in students as well as build their confidence and empathy.

Role of School Administrator

- Administrators are involved in the student specific plan and approve the use of Animal Assisted Therapy with a student or in classroom-based program. Other team members involved in the planning may include parents/legal guardians, resource teacher, guidance counselor, classroom teacher and clinicians.
- Administrators will contact the Certified Animal Assisted Therapy Professional or St. John's Ambulance Association to arrange for a program in the school community.
- Administrators will obtain written permission from parents/legal guardians for all students who are involved in Animal Assisted Therapy (individual or whole classroom).
- Administrators will inform staff if a therapy dog or other animals will be present in the school.
- Administrators will notify staff and students with allergies that the therapy dog or other animals will be in a specific room.
- Administrators will inform the Student Services Administrator of all Animal Assisted Therapy programs in the Red River Valley School Division.
- Administrators will establish a location where Animal Assisted Therapy can take place.
- Administrators will create a plan for managing the therapy dog or other animals before and after the program.

Role of Trained Facilitator/Animal Handler:

- The trained facilitator/animal handler must be a teacher or clinician who has completed certification through St. John's Ambulance Association (for dog therapy) or has been accredited as a Certified Animal Assisted Therapy Professional.
- The trained facilitator will have experience in providing positive behaviour support to students.
- The trained facilitator and school teams will collaborate in regards to the student or classroom-based program.

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- The animal is to be under the care of the trained facilitator at all times during the program.
- After the program is complete, the trained facilitator is responsible for following the plan as outlined by the administrator.
- The trained facilitator will ensure that supplies for hand washing are available.
- The trained facilitator will control the animal so that the animal will not lick individuals, touch any toys or supplies.
- For Equine Therapy, the program must be certified by the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association or Equine Facilitated Wellness Canada.

Criteria for Therapy Dogs

- All programs using therapy dogs must be arranged with St. John's Ambulance Association.
- The facilitator and the dog shall be trained and regulated by the St. John's Ambulance Association.

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