

AP 337

Assistance Dogs

Background

Assistance Dogs are specially trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disabilities. The use of assistance dogs is a recognized aid to children and adults with special needs. These trained dogs will be allowed in the school, on school district property and on school district buses when it has been determined that the assistance dog helps the student to have equal access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school district.

Definitions

“Assistance Dog” means a working dog specifically trained to mitigate an individual’s disabilities.

“Assistance Dogs” have the qualifications prescribed by Assistance Dogs International. Assistance Dogs include, but are not limited to:

- “Guide Dogs” are dogs trained to assist persons who are visually impaired.
- “Autism Support Dogs” are dogs trained as assistants for persons with autism and which have the qualifications prescribed by Assistance Dogs International.
- “Hearing Dogs” are dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- “Seizure Response Dogs” are dogs trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.
- “Service Dogs” are dogs trained to assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair.

Procedures

The following procedures will be put into place prior to the “Assistance Dog” being allowed into the school.

1. Parent Responsibilities
 - 1.1 Parents will make application to the School District by providing the following information:
 - 1.1.1 A letter outlining the specific benefits an Assistance Dog will have on their child’s education.
 - 1.1.2 A letter of recommendation from a professional (Medical Doctor, Psychologist, Certified Behaviour therapist etc.), recommending the use of an Assistance Dog for the child and outlining how the Assistance Dog will help improve the student’s access to learning.

- 1.1.3 A Certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog from an organization accredited by either the International Guide Dog Federation or Assistance Dogs International.
 - 1.1.4 Certification of up to date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and a letter confirming that the Assistance Dog is in good health.
 - 1.1.5 An annual copy of a municipal dog license
 - 1.1.6 Evidence that the student can maintain appropriate care and control of the Assistance Dog while it is on school property.
- 1.2 Parents will take responsibility for providing necessary training for any school staff in the use and care of the Assistance Dog.
 - 1.3 Parents will provide
 - 1.3.1 food
 - 1.3.2 water bowl
 - 1.3.3 at least one bio-break procedure per day
 - 1.3.4 suitable container for waste, the removal and disposal of the waste
2. School District/School Responsibilities
 - 2.1 The Case Manager and Principal will arrange a case conference with the parents/guardians, the student (when appropriate), appropriate school and district staff, a representative from Assistance Dogs International or other service provider, and other necessary consultants to develop a plan to define:
 - 2.1.1 The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog;
 - 2.1.2 Who will accompany and handle the Assistance Dog outside during recess and lunch breaks;
 - 2.1.3 The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance Dog to relieve itself
 - 2.2 To send information letters regarding the Assistance Dog to all staff, students and parents/guardians involved with the school. These letters, which shall be retained in the student's confidential file, would include:
 - 2.2.1 The school community. This letter will inform all staff including teachers, education assistants, custodians, support staff, lunch hour supervisors, regular volunteers, and health and safety representatives of the presence of the Assistance Dog, its purpose and rules and regulations regarding the Assistance Dog at the school.
 - 2.2.2 The parents/guardians of students in the school. This letter will elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, and other concerns from the students and parents/guardians.

- 2.2.3 The parents/guardians of students who will be sharing bus transportation with the student who owns the Assistance Dog.
 - 2.3 To screen and approve any trainers or other personnel required to assist with the care and supervision of the dog while on school property. A criminal record check may be required for these non-school district personnel.
 - 2.4 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.
 - 2.5 Contact the School District Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements.
 - 2.6 Arrange for demonstrations from Assistance Dogs International 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.
 3. Limiting, Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School
 - 3.1 The School District may limit, remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance Dog if:
 - 3.1.1 The Assistance Dog is unable to reliably perform the service for which it has been approved;
 - 3.1.2 The Assistance Dog is not under the full control of the student with the disability or the designated employee;
 - 3.1.3 The Assistance Dog's presence fundamentally alters the nature of any school program;
 - 3.1.4 The Assistance Dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of an employee, student or others at school,
 - 3.1.5 The Assistance Dog jeopardizes the safe operation of the school or a school event.
 - 3.1.6 The student's parents fail to provide or maintain current documentation ((i.e. annual proof of license and up to date inoculations) or other materials required by these regulations
 4. Transportation of the Assistance Dog by School Bus
 - 4.1 Training for bus transportation
 - 4.1.1 The owner is responsible for providing information and training to the bus regarding critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation;
 - 4.1.2 The Assistance Dog's owner provides an orientation to students riding the bus with the Assistance Dog regarding the dog's functions and how students should interact with the animal
 - 4.1.3 The Assistance Dog practices the bus evacuation drills with the student.
 - 4.2 Loading/Unloading from the school bus
 - 4.2.1 The Assistance Dog boards the bus by the steps, not the lift.

4.3 Seating Location

- 4.3.1 The Assistance Dog will be positioned on the floor, at the student's feet;
- 4.3.2 A representative of the Transportation Department will meet with the Assistance Dog's owner to determine whether the Assistance Dog should be secured on the bus with a tether or harness.

4.4 Cessation of Transportation

- 4.4.1 Situations that would cause cessation of transportation of the service animal include:
 - 4.4.1.1 The Assistance Dog's behaviour poses a threat to the health or safety of others;
 - 4.4.1.2 The Assistance Dog urinates or defecates on the bus;
 - 4.4.1.3 The Assistance dog does not remain in the designated area
- 4.4.2 If transportation is suspended due to any of the above reasons, transportation may be reinstated after additional training or other issues are resolved.
- 4.4.3 Although transportation may be suspended for the Assistance Dog, the school district maintains the responsibility of transporting the student.

5. Restrictions and Off-Limits for Assistance Dogs

- 5.1 The School District imposes some restrictions on Assistance Dogs for safety reasons. Areas or programs which may be considered off-limits for Assistance Dogs include, but are not limited to:
 - 5.1.1 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 post a threat to the Assistance Dog's safety, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery.
 - 5.1.2 The determination to deny or limit the access of an Assistance dog to specific programs or areas of that school facility will be on a case-by-case basis.

6. Conflicting Disabilities

- 6.1.1 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 will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodations of all persons involved.

7. Notice of Appeal

- 7.1.1 Any student/parent of a student with an Assistance Dog who is aggrieved by the school principal's decision to remove, limit or exclude an Assistance Dog may appeal the decision using the usual appeal process developed by the school district.

References Autism Support Dogs <http://www.autismsupportdogs.org>
Assistance Dogs International, Inc. <http://www.assistancedogsinternational.org>
BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services <http://www.bcguidedog.com>
Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind <http://www.guidedog.org>
Guide Animal Act of BC
http://www.bclasw.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96177_01

Adapted from Coquitlam School District draft Policy