
106 General AP – Use of Facility Dogs, Therapy Dogs, and/or Service Dogs (Individual)

Preamble

Prairie Rose Public Schools (PRPS) recognizes that specially trained canines can provide educational, mental health, and other benefits for Division students and staff. **Although there are many individuals with well trained “pet” dogs, such canines are not approved to be in a school setting, nor to be interacting with school personnel (students and/or staff).** As such, the presence of a dog in a PRPS school environment requires specific guidelines and general assurances for: the purpose of the dog in the building, around the accredited training for the dog (and handler), and for the overall use/handling of the dog in the educational setting. This procedure addresses the minimum standards/expectations for the use of Facility Dogs, Therapy Dogs, and/or Service Dogs (Individual) within a school environment (whether at the school site or at an off-site, school-sponsored event).

1. For the purpose of this procedure, the words “service dog” includes guide dogs, specialized-assistance dogs, skills dogs, facility dogs, and service dogs.
2. Service dogs must be certified and registered in Canada. The special Skills Dog (SSD) or National Service Dogs (NSD) will have a distinctive harness, saddlebag or vest and will always be on a leash.
3. A trained service dog may assist physically challenged students or those with behaviour/emotional disabilities such as Autism Spectrum disorders. They can assist individuals with seizures, diabetes, asthma, etc. Service dogs may also have specialized training allowing them to interact freely with any/all individuals in the school. Facility dogs, although included within the Service Dog definition, may have other more generally trained skillsets to be utilized for a broader “audience” within the school setting.
4. In the case of a specific client-service dog match, once the parent has been informed that their child has been offered the opportunity to have a service dog they should inform the Principal, who will inform the Coordinator of Student Experiences and the Superintendent or designate.
 - It should be noted that not all clients are successful with the training of a service dog. Although the school should be alerted of the potential for a service dog, the actual process should not begin until the candidate has graduated from the program.
5. Therapy dogs must be tested/certified through an accredited Therapy Dog Training Organization, with handler able to provide appropriate documentation indicating a passing evaluation specific to Therapy Dog Training, including the level of certification for both the handler and the dog, reporting on obedience and aptitude credentials.
 - An accredited Dog Obedience Training Organization must have the Therapy Dog Training component to be considered a valid training organization.
6. Service dogs, by legislation, do not need approval to enter school premises. If the service dog is to be a regular visitor at the school, a courtesy notification to the principal and Superintendent or designate, should occur.
 - Therapy Dogs are not “certified service dogs” and do not have the same level of training. As such, any/all therapy dogs must have approval from the

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Superintendent and/or designate, before entering school premises for any regular, active purposes.

Other Important Considerations:

- *As indicated on the Alberta Government website:*
 - *Public access for **service dogs in training** (including facility dogs in training) is not the same as for dogs that are fully qualified. Service dogs in training, when accompanied by a trainer (owners included) under the supervision of a qualified organization, have the same public access rights as fully qualified service dogs. If the owner or trainer is not associated with any qualified organization, public access for the dog will rely on ‘good will’ access – meaning they will only be able to access locations that will voluntarily allow them access. Notification/Approval from the Principal of a school should take place before such dogs enter the school setting.*
- Without the approval of the Superintendent or designate, **therapy dogs in training** should NOT be in schools on a regular basis, until appropriate testing and credentials have been established, as indicated within this procedure.
 - For the purposes of **supporting the training efforts of a therapy dog handler and a dog-in-training**, if the handler is able to provide supporting documentation of having been certified with a different dog (as per guidelines in this procedure), then allowing the training dog in the building, for limited, very controlled interactions with students, will be permissible, upon Principal approval only.
 - Such approval will need to be requested for each and every time the handler/dog-in-training would like access within the school setting, until such time as the handler/dog team meet the specific requirements as outlined within this procedure for a Therapy Dog.
- Any other “designated canine support animals” and/or dogs in schools for “show and tell” type purposes, for a single-event visitation, are not included in this procedure and are to be approved, in advance, through the principal, for each and every specific activity/event. Dogs to be regularly permitted on school premises (more than a single-event purpose) or regularly present at school activities (more than a single-event purpose) must meet the guidelines of this procedure before entrance into school premises or general interaction with students is permitted.
- The Superintendent has the right to exclude any/all animals, at any time, from attending school premises or school-sponsored functions.

Facility Dog – General Guidelines

A facility dog is a working dog that has been specially trained to act in a supportive role in a specific organization.

Unless the dog is owned by PRPS (which will implement their specific ownership use/training guidelines), if there is a request for a facility dog to become an active support in a school, the following guidelines must take place and agreed upon, prior to the admittance of the facility dog within any PRPS school building:

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- a. The individual/handler of the facility dog will request a meeting with the Superintendent and/or designate(s). Included at the meeting should be the handler and the facility dog. The principal of the school may wish to be present.
 - b. The following discussion items will take place at the initial meeting:
 - i. Presentation of government issued certification for the dog.
 - ii. The desired purpose/function of the facility dog while attending the school(s).
 - iii. Previous experience(s) of the handler/dog team.
 - iv. Understanding, if approved, that while in a school environment, the facility dog will:
 - i. Be identifiable as a working canine (vest, cape, and/or marked harness)
 - ii. Be on a leash/harness
 - iii. Always be under the supervision of a qualified handler; no free roaming of the school facilities
 - iv. Not have students acting as an independent handler in any fashion
 - c. The Superintendent and/or designate(s) will provide a follow-up communication to the principal(s) and the handler, indicating approval or denial for the request. Consideration for approval will include, but is not restricted to, the following:
 - i. Proposed need/purpose for the facility dog
 - ii. Suitability of involvement for individual/handler
 - iii. Possible interactions with other approved dogs in use within PRPS and/or the particular school
 - iv. Employment distractions – if the handler is employed by PRPS for a different role other than associated with the facility dog purpose
- 1. If approval is not granted, the expectation will be that the facility dog does not come to the school premises in any regular formal or informal manner.
 - 2. If approval is granted, the principal will inform school staff, students, school council representatives, and parents of regular attendance of a facility dog at the school.
 - a. An assembly or other explanatory interactions, involving the handler and the facility dog, may be arranged for the student body, in order to explain the role and interactions with the facility dog while working in the school.

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Therapy Dog – General Guidelines

A therapy dog is typically a personally owned canine that has undergone specific training, which includes training specific for the handler/dog team.

If there is a request for a therapy dog to become an active support in a school, the following guidelines must take place and agreed upon, prior to the admittance of the therapy dog to the school:

- a. The handler of the therapy dog will request a meeting with the Superintendent and/or designate(s). Included at the meeting should be the handler and the therapy dog. The principal of the school may wish to be present, if they are not the designate for the meeting.
- b. The following discussion items will take place at the initial meeting:
 - i. Presentation of accredited documentation, indicating appropriate, **successful, evaluation credentials** (reporting on obedience and aptitude credentials) for the handler/therapy dog team – as per #5 in the preamble information.
 - ii. Presentation of up-to-date health/vaccination information
 - iii. The desired purpose/function of the therapy dog while attending the school(s)
 - iv. Previous experience(s) of the handler/dog team
 - v. Understanding, if approved, that while in a school environment, the therapy dog will:
 1. Be identifiable as a working canine (vest, cape, and/or marked harness)
 2. Be on a leash/harness
 3. Always be under the supervision of the handler; no free roaming of the school facilities
 4. Not have students acting as an independent handler in any fashion
- c. The Superintendent and/or designate(s) will provide a follow-up communication to the principal(s) (if principal is not the designate) and the handler indicating approval or denial for the request. Approval considerations will include, but are not restricted to, the following:
 - i. **Evaluated level** of credential clearance for handler/therapy dog team
 - ii. Desired purpose/need for the therapy dog
 - iii. Suitability of involvement for handler/therapy dog team
 - iv. Other canines already in use within PRPS and the particular school(s)
 - v. Employment distractions – if the handler is employed by PRPS for a different role other than associated with the therapy dog purpose
 1. If approval is not granted, the expectation will be that the therapy dog does not come to the school premises in any regular formal or informal manner.
 2. If approval is granted, the principal will inform school staff, students, school council representatives, and parents of regular attendance of a therapy dog at the school.
 - a. If appropriate, an assembly or other explanatory interactions, involving the handler and the therapy dog, may be arranged for the student body, in order to explain the role and interactions with the therapy dog while working in the school.

Service Dog (Individual need) -- General Guidelines

Once the school has been notified that there is an individual need for a service dog, the following guidelines will be followed prior to the admittance of a service dog to the school.

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1. Parents must request, in writing to the Superintendent or designate, and the school principal, for permission to use a service dog. The letter must outline the benefits of having the service dog attend with their child, descriptions of the service dog's activities and the duration of the intervention.
2. Parents must provide a letter from a member of the College of Physicians or Surgeons or the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis, as well as a recommendation on the use of a service dog.
 - Copies of the parent letter and the medical diagnosis are to be placed in the student's cumulative file.
3. A certificate of training for the dog from the service dog organization must be provided. All financial costs to obtain this certificate are the sole responsibility of the family.
4. The family must provide the school with proof that the dog has up-to-date vaccinations, municipal license, and is in good health to attend school.
5. The principal will arrange a case conference involving the parents, principal, teacher(s), teacher assistant(s), a representative from the service dog organization, and the student, when appropriate, to discuss the following: *(Note: An invitation to the Superintendent or designate to be a part of the case conference should also be extended.)*
 - (a) The purpose/function of the service dog.
 - (b) Notification and involvement of classroom staff.
 - (c) Responsibility for the care of the dog.
 - This rests 100% with the handler / family and includes the need for "bio-breaks", water/food, and general rest.
 - (d) Seating arrangements and other classroom(s) logistics.
 - (e) Other considerations may include: complications with delivery of academic programming, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on resource staff and teachers, provision of an assistant to assist the student with the dog, issues with other children who are allergic to dogs, recognition and support for students/staff with fear of dogs, cultural sensitivity to groups that will not share space with an animal.
6. The principal will inform school staff, students, school council representatives, and parents of the arrival of a service dog to the school.
7. A specific letter will be sent home to the students in any of the classes where the dog will be present in case of allergies or extreme phobias.
8. A transition plan for introduction of the dog will be created which may involve the use of social stories, visits by the dog to the school / classroom, etc.
9. An assembly may be arranged for the student body involving representatives from the service dog association, the parent, and the individually-supported student, to explain the role of the service dog.
10. An appropriate fire exit plan must be put into place and the fire department must be alerted as to the existence of a service dog in the school.
11. A sign (generally provided by the service dog organization) will be placed on the doors of the school alerting visitors / emergency service providers to the dog's presence.
12. The service dog organization may provide further information/training for the student's school team (principal, teacher, teacher assistance, etc.), as appropriate and/or necessary.

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Service Dog (Individual need) -- Transportation Guidelines

- a) If the student is eligible for transportation, the Human Rights Code and the Blind Person's Rights Act establish the right for the service dog to be allowed to ride the bus.
- b) The Transportation Supervisor must be provided with proof the service dog is a licensed trained dog.
- c) The Transportation Supervisor must ensure that bus contractors are provided with documentation about the service dog. Bus contractors must ensure that all drivers and spare drivers are informed.
- d) The service dog should not sit in the aisle of the bus. Whenever possible the dog should be in the seat compartment and/or on the floor away from the aisle to prevent the dog from becoming a projectile or tripping hazard.
- e) Basic training must be provided for the driver and other students on the bus to ensure all parties have an understanding of what is allowed or not allowed.
 - Service dogs are highly trained, skilled animals and should not be touched or fed by anyone other than the handler. The dog is working while on the bus and therefore should be very quiet and still.
- f) The Division may determine a need for another person to accommodate the student and service dog on the bus.
- g) If the bus contractor is transporting students from other Boards on that same bus while the dog is present, then the other Board must be notified so that they can in turn notify their parents and their students that are riding on the bus.

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