



SECTION:	Student Management and Welfare	APPROVAL DATE:
SUBSECTION:	Student Welfare	January 7, 2008
POLICY NAME:	Service Dogs in Schools	LAST REVISED:
POLICY NUMBER:	APP.A.SMW.G.11	January 7, 2008

SERVICE ANIMALS

Service dogs are provided by either the Canadian Guide Dogs or National Service Dogs. Service animals must be registered in Canada. They will generally have a black leather Special Skills Dog (SSD) harness and leash, and/or saddlebag or vest. Labrador and Golden Retrievers are generally the breeds used for service dogs. They are given to individuals with the following disabilities: Physical, Blind or Low Vision, Autism Spectrum Disorder or a seizure disorder. For specific disabilities, service dogs provide the following supports:

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Service dogs are trained to assist students who have lifelong physical challenges such as Spina Bifida or Cerebral Palsy. As well, those with acquired disabilities such as Multiple Sclerosis, a seizure disorder or a disorder from a permanent injury are candidates for a service dog. Dogs matched with physically disabled clients may be trained to pull wheelchairs, turn light switches on and off, open doors, take laundry out of the dryer, or retrieve dropped items. They may assist students into or out of bed, help them dress or undress, or even change their position in bed, if needed. As well, they can assist students who have seizures by barking to get help or activating an alert system.

BLIND

Service dogs may be provided to blind or visually impaired students. Emphasis during the training and placement of Guide Dogs is on safety with the aim of increasing the student's independence and mobility. Guide Dogs will help lead a person safely across streets, around obstacles, and overhangs.

AUTISM

Service dogs have been shown to improve the student's communication skills, lifestyle and behaviour both in the home and school settings. Service dogs also help to increase the student's levels of safety, independence, confidence and social acceptance. A Service dog provides independence, dignity, and confidence to the handler. These dogs become part of the family. Praise and reward is given by the client to establish a loving working relationship. Students can sometimes wait up to 2 years for a service animal. Ideally, once the parent has been informed by Guide Dogs of Canada or National Service Dogs that their student has been offered the opportunity to have a service dog, they should inform the school so that the school can prepare for the arrival of the animal.