

### AP 249 – Animals in School Settings

#### Purpose

The Board of Education believes that a safe environment free of animals is desirable for its students and employees.

#### Procedure

With the exception of Assistance Dogs, animals, including all pets, should not be kept or brought onto school properties, into schools or district facilities. The presence of animals presents many problems which include safety and liability issues. It is strongly encouraged that any animals found inside a school or district facility or on school grounds be removed immediately. Classroom projects where animals are included or long-term education-focused exhibits may be excluded at this time, with principal approval.

Animals, including Assistance Dogs, must not be allowed to roam freely within the school or district facility setting.

Animals must not be left in schools or other district facilities during holiday periods.

Animals shall be housed in suitable sanitary self-contained enclosures appropriate to the size of the animal.

Principals must notify the facilities department should there be any maintenance or operations impact or needed support.

The safe and respectful removal of animals can be referred to the Nanaimo branch of the BC SPCA by calling (250) 741-0778.

#### Assistance Dogs

The following types of Assistance Dogs encompassed in this administrative procedure include:

- i. Autism Support Dogs – Dogs trained as assistants for persons with autism.
- ii. Hearing Dogs – Dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- iii. Seizure Response Dogs – Dogs trained to provide emergency response for persons with epilepsy.
- iv. Service Dogs – (as defined by the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) are Dogs trained to assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair.
- v. Guide Dogs – (as defined by the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) are Dogs trained as a guide for a blind or visually impaired person.
- vi. Therapy Dogs – Dogs trained to decrease anxiety and provide psychological or physiological therapy to individuals.

Assistance Dogs will wear a Dog vest to ensure it is clearly identified as a support animal.

## **Application for an Assistance Dog**

Prior to the admittance of an Assistance Dog to the school, parents must:

1. Provide a letter to the school district requesting Assistance Dog admittance. The letter must outline the benefits of having an Assistance Dog attend school with their child and include their plan for the care and supervision of the Assistance Dog while at school.
2. Provide a copy of the letter of recommendation from an appropriate professional confirming the diagnosis of a recognized disability, including a recommendation for the use of an Assistance Dog.
3. Provide a Certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog from an accredited agency such as the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI).
4. Agree to pay for any additional costs incurred by the school district and/or school related to the Assistance Dog (e.g. appropriate training for school district staff members, bus and/or classroom modifications).
5. Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog, including at least one bio-break procedure per day and providing appropriate bedding (e.g., bed or blanket) and water bowl.
6. Accept responsibility for the actions of the Assistance Dog by signing a school district release of liability.
7. Annually, provide the school district with proof of a municipal Dog license, proof of annual re-certification from the appropriate agency and proof of up to date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine confirming that the Assistance Dog is in good health.

## **School & District Responsibilities**

The school district shall not be responsible for the training, feeding, grooming or care of any Assistance Dog permitted to attend school or ride on school buses under this procedure.

Under the direction of the Principal, school staff will:

1. Ensure that the use of an Assistance Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
2. Arrange a case conference with parents/guardians, classroom teachers(s), appropriate student support staff, a representative from the appropriate agency, the student (when appropriate), other consultants if necessary, and the Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education, to discuss:
  - The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog.
  - The personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog including:
    - The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance Dog to

- relieve itself.
    - Removal and disposal of animal waste.
    - Provision of a suitable container for waste, and
    - Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
  - Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements.
  - Any necessary changes in routine and procedures and program changes.
  - Arrangement for the Assistance Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site prior to commencement of services.
  - A transition plan for the Assistance Dog and the student.
  - A timetable for the introduction of the Assistance Dog to the school and class and for the training of the student's school team (Principal, Teacher(s), Education Assistant(s), etc.).
  - Rules of conduct around the Assistance Dog for students, staff and the public; and disseminating and regulating such rules.
3. Ensure the following letters are provided to all students attending the school, to inform:
- The school community of the arrival of the working Assistance Dog, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the existence of the Assistance Dog at the school.
  - The students in any of the classes where the Assistance Dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, or extreme phobias from the students' parents/guardians.
  - The students who will be sharing transportation where the Assistance Dog will be present;
4. Retain all letters regarding the Assistance Dog in the student's cumulative file.
5. Inform all staff including teachers, educational assistants, custodians, support staff, volunteers, and health and safety representatives of the presence of the Assistance Dog(s).
6. Contact the School District Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements.
7. Arrange for demonstrations from the appropriate agency 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.
8. 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.
9. Post appropriate signage at the school entrance, which informs visitors of the presence of an Assistance Dog.

### **Dog Handlers**

The school district must approve any person who is authorized to assist in the care and supervision of the Assistance Dog while on school property.

The term Handler refers to the adult Dog handler that was part of the certification process for a particular Dog.

Responsibilities of the Handler:

- The Handler will provide evidence that they have been certified as part of the Dog team.
- The Handler will provide a police record check with vulnerable sector screening (VSS).

- At no time will the Handler and Dog be alone with students.
- The Dog will always be under the direct control and supervision of the Handler. The Handler will be aware of the Dog's behaviour at all times. If any changes in behaviour occur that may affect the safety of the children, the Handler will immediately remove the Dog from the school and notify the Principal.
- Staff members cannot, at any time, assume the role of Handler.
- The Handler will respect the confidentiality of all information received regarding students or staff members while providing services in the school. The Handler will not share or disclose any confidential or personal information that may be directly or indirectly disclosed to them.

### **Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School**

The school district may remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance Dog for reasons it deems appropriate. This includes but is not limited to times when the Assistance Dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the employee or student or others at school, causes a significant disruption of school activities or otherwise jeopardizes the safe operation of the school or a school event.

Examples of such include, but are not limited to:

- The Assistance Dog urinates or defecates in inappropriate/non-designated locations.
- The Assistance Dog vocalizes unnecessarily (e.g., barking, growling or whining).
- The Assistance Dog shows aggression towards people or other animals.
- The Assistance Dog solicits or steals food or other items from the student body or school personnel.
- The Assistance Dog is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved.
- The Assistance Dog is not under the full control of the student with the disability or handler.
- The Assistance Dog is a public health threat as a result of being infested with parasites or having a communicable disease of the skin, mouth or eyes.
- The Assistance Dog is unclean and unsanitary.
- The Assistance Dog's presence significantly impairs the learning of students.
- The student, or the student's parents fail to provide or maintain current documentation required by these regulations; and
- The student, or the student's parents fail to abide by any additional conditions of the terms of an Individual Education Plan regarding their Assistance Dog.

### **Transportation of an Assistance Dog**

When approving an Assistance Dog for a student with a disability at school, the district may need to provide directions for transporting the student and the Assistance Dog.

Prior to an Assistance Dog being allowed into a school district vehicle, the driver will meet with the Assistance Dog's owner. The owner is responsible for providing information to the driver and bus assistant regarding critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation.

The Assistance Dog's owner should provide an orientation to students riding the bus with the Assistance Dog regarding the Dog's functions and how students should interact with the animal; and

- The Assistance Dog should practice any bus evacuation drills with the student.
- The Assistance Dog should board the bus by the steps, not on a lift.
- The Assistance Dog should be positioned on the floor, at the student's feet.

Situations that would cause cessation of transportation of the service animal include:

- The Assistance Dog's behaviour poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- The Assistance Dog urinates or defecates on the bus.
- The Assistance Dog does not remain in the designated area.

If transportation is suspended due to any of the above reasons, transportation may be reinstated after additional training or medical issues are resolved. Parents should be informed of these consequences prior to the first day of transportation.

Although transportation may be suspended for the Assistance Dog, the school district maintains the responsibility of transporting the student.

### **Restrictions for Assistance Dogs**

Assistance Dogs may be excluded from, or have limited access to, certain areas of school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons. Areas or programs that may be considered off-limits for Assistance Dogs include, but are not limited to: 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 pose a threat to the Assistance Dog's safety, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery.

The determination to restrict the access of an Assistance Dog to specific programs or areas of that school facility will be on a case-by-case basis.

### **Conflict Resolution**

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, in collaboration with the Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education, and if necessary, a representative from the accredited organization, will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the needs/accommodations of all persons involved.



NANAIMO LADYSMITH  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Assistance Animal Agreement

### Objectives:

- To ensure the safe inclusion of Assistance animals in the school setting.
- To ensure all parties involved with the presence of an Assistance Dog in schools are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Assistance Dogs are trained to assist children and adults with their daily living activities, and provide physical safety and emotional support. Use of an Assistance Dog by a student, in school or on Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District property, may be approved when it has been determined that it helps develop independence or when the student requires such use in order to have equitable access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school, and when the school district's criteria have been met.

### Roles and Responsibilities:

- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing appropriate documentation regarding the Assistance Dog and Handler (where applicable), as per Administrative Procedure 249.
- Parents/guardians agree to pay for any additional costs incurred by the school district and/or school related to the Assistance Dog.
- Parents/guardians and/or Handler arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog, including at least one bio-break procedure per day and providing appropriate bedding (e.g. bed or blanket), and water bowl.
- Parents/guardians and/or Handler arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog, including at least one bio-break procedure per day and providing appropriate bedding (e.g., bed or blanket) and water bowl.
- Parents/guardians and/or Handler accept responsibility for the actions of the Assistance Dog by signing a school district release of liability.
- Parents/guardians and/or Handler will provide the school district with proof of a municipal Dog license, proof of annual re-certification from the appropriate agency and proof of up to date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine confirming that the Assistance Dog is in good health, annually..
- The Handler will respect the confidentiality of all information received regarding students or staff members while providing services in the school. The Handler will not share or disclose any confidential or personal information that may be directly or indirectly disclosed to them.
- The Dog will always be under the direct control and supervision of the student or Handler. The Handler will be aware of the Dog's behaviour at all times. If any changes in behaviour occur that may affect the safety of the children, the family or Handler will immediately remove the Dog from the school and notify the Principal.
- The school district may remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance Dog for reasons it deems appropriate. (refer to AP 249)
- I am aware of the protocols regarding transportation, restrictions and conflict resolution as per Administrative Procedure 249.

**I have read and agree to the above roles, responsibilities and guidelines.**

Student Name:

DOB:

Parent Name:

Signature:

Handler Name: (if applicable)

Signature:

School Name:

Date:

## **SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY (SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)**

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that, effective (date), there will be a therapy Dog in our school.

The Dog will be in the school (times/days). Dates and times may change as required without further notice.

Therapy Dogs are interactive Dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy Dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues.

(Name of Dog) is a highly trained and fully certified therapy Dog, and we are thrilled to have (him/her) become a member of our school community.

If you have any questions about (name of Dog), please feel free to contact me. There will be information sessions at the school to integrate (name of Dog) into our daily routines and all of our staff and students will be instructed as to the proper procedures regarding the therapy Dog.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the therapy Dog in the school, please contact me. Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

**SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN THE CLASS(ES) (SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)**

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that, effective (date), there will be a therapy Dog in our school assisting our students, and the therapy Dog will be present in your child's class.

Therapy Dogs are interactive Dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy Dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues.

(Name of Dog) is a highly trained and fully certified therapy Dog, and we are thrilled to have (him/her) become a member of our school community. If you have any questions about (name of Dog) please feel free to contact me.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate (name of Dog) into our daily routines and all of our staff and students will be instructed as to the proper procedures regarding the therapy Dog.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the therapy Dog in your child's class, please contact me. Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal



# NOTICE:

There is an  
**ASSISTANCE DOG**  
working in this school.

