

 <p> <small>DIVISION SCOLAIRE</small> LOUIS RIEL <small>SCHOOL DIVISION</small> </p>	<p align="center">Service and Non-Service Animals in Schools</p>
<p align="center"> ADMINISTRATIVE PROTOCOL Adopted: June 4, 2019 Revised: August 27, 2025 </p>	<p align="center">Supporting Policy IMG</p>

This protocol provides direction to school administrators regarding parent/guardian or employee requests for the use of service and non-service animals, in LRSD schools.

Definitions:

Non-Service Animals:

Companion Animals are an emerging support for some students. These animals may be present to assist a child in feeling comfortable or less anxious in the school environment. A companion animal is not necessarily professionally trained. A companion animal does not have designated responsibilities and provides companionship only. Companion animals are not considered service animals and are not guaranteed access to public spaces.

Therapy Animals provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, and schools. Therapy animals have a trained handler and must be under the direction of an adult who is authorized to be in the setting. See [sample forms](#) if bringing a therapy animal into your school. Therapy animals are not considered service animals and are not guaranteed access to public spaces.

Service Animals:

A **Service Animal** is an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability. The guidelines below provide more detailed information with respect to their access, handling, and interaction. The use of service animals is an intervention strategy that is recognized as an aid to students with exceptional needs.

Guide Dogs for the Blind & Visually Impaired focus on increased independent travel for the individual. The guide dog is trained for safe street crossings, using public transportation, and exposure to all environments. Users of guide dogs will have previous mobility training in the school system or adult agencies for blind and visually impaired. The handler for a Guide Dog is the individual who requires the support. The individual goes through intensive training with a trained dog. Guide Dogs are usually not provided for children and youth.

The term "service animals" includes animals that assist those with a physical disability, and include pulling, bracing, retrieving, and hearing dogs. Service animals may also be trained to provide support to individuals with non-apparent disabilities, for example: alert or protect a person who is having a seizure, calm or address other disability-related needs of a person with mental health issues, prevent children from leaving the classroom unsupervised or running into traffic, etc.

I. Roles and Responsibilities

When Parents/Guardians approach the School Principal requesting the use of a service animal for their child, the Principal must check to determine if the request is for a service animal or a companion or therapy animal.

Decisions regarding the use of service animals by students in the school environment are made on a case-by-case basis. All circumstances of a request, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the animal and the needs of other students and staff, will be considered. Where necessary in the decision-making process, the rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.

Entry of service or non-service animals is decided after extensive consultation and in accordance with the procedures listed below. The request will be reviewed by the Principal with the Director of Student and Classroom Supports, and in consultation with the Superintendent (or designate) as necessary.

Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s)' Responsibilities

- To initiate the process of having a service animal assist a student in school, speak with the Principal. The Principal will provide a copy of the [Information for Parents Requesting a Service Animal in a School Letter](#) to parents and request parents/guardians to fill out a [Request for a Service Animal Form](#), including all the attachments stated within the form.

Principal's Responsibilities

1. Consult with the Director of School and Classroom Supports and/or the Superintendent (or designate) prior to planning the school entry process to ensure that the request is consistent with the requirements for a Service Animal.
2. Schedule a meeting with the parents/legal guardians, a representative from the animal training facility (optional), the classroom teacher(s), the student services teacher, the Clinical Supervisor of Developmental Supports, and the support staff who work with the student. The purpose of the meeting is to review the student's Student Specific Plan and required accommodations including the type of service(s) the service or non-service animal will provide. The services provided by the service or non-service animal should be, or become, part of the goals of the Student Specific Plan. Discussions will include relevant information, such as:
 - health and safety considerations (including severe allergies and staff or students with asthma)
 - the potential impact of the involvement of the service or non-service animal in the school community
 - animal care requirements
 - handling routines and responsibilities
 - guidelines for staff and students
 - other student issues
 - transportation to and from school
 - the role of and communication with parents
 - the designation staff members who will be the handler and alternate handler of the animal in the school
3. Please refer to and complete the [Management Plan for the Care of a Service Animal form](#).

4. Upon approval from the Superintendent of schools (or designate), inform all school staff members (i.e. teaching staff, educational support staff, secretarial staff, custodial staff, etc.) of the service or non-service animal coming into the school.
 - An information session for interested school community members may be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The Principal may invite the parents of the student requiring the service animal to participate in the information session.
 - Prior to any information session, information should be shared with parents/legal guardians of the student requiring the use of the service or non-service animal. See resources below.
5. School division administration may inform relevant employee groups and/or the Workplace Safety & Health Committee that a service or non-service animal will be in the school.
6. Contact the school division Transportation Department (if applicable) regarding transportation and complete a personalized transportation plan.
7. Place signs on entrance doors to inform school visitors of the possible presence of a service or non-service animal.
8. Review the school Emergency Response Plan. Indicate the existence of a service or non-service animal on the school fire plan.
9. Arrange for demonstrations by the dog-training facility and/or parents/legal guardians on the rules of conduct around service or non-service animals.
10. Monitor the entry of the service or non-service animal regularly and review on an annual basis.

2. Exclusions

An animal may be excluded from access to the premises only where:

- exclusion is required by a statute
- the service animal is of a breed that is prohibited by law or municipal bylaw, e.g., Pit Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers
- there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of the service animal; an example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal; consideration should be given to options available prior to exclusion of the animal.

Resources

- [Parents Requesting a Service Animal in a School Letter](#)
- [Request for a Service Animal Form](#)
- [Management Plan for the Care of a Service Animal form](#)
- [Sample Letter to School Community](#)
- [Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom/on the School Bus](#)
- [Pet Therapy Consent Agreement](#)
- [Pet Program Sample Information](#)
- [Therapy Animal in School – Sample Parent Letter](#)