

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER CARE: USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

PURPOSE

The Rainy River District School Board will welcome all members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing our staff and volunteers to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities. Such services incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of a service animal.

RATIONALE

The Board welcomes all members of the school and broader community to our facilities with service animals.

GUIDELINES

1.0 General Guidelines

1.1 Supervisory officers, principals and departmental managers will ensure that all staff, volunteers, and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

2.0 Access to Board Premises

- 2.1 Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed on Board and/or school premises with his or her service animal and will be accompanied by the service animal while on the premises. Access will be in accordance with normal security procedures.
- 2.2 This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the school or board offices where the public does not have access.

2.3 This procedure deals solely with the individual's right to be accompanied by a service animal.

3.0 Exclusion of a Service Animal

- 3.1 A service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples include the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Food Safety and Quality Act*.
- 3.2 Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of a service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal. It is the Board's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to

eliminate the risk be considered, e.g. creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.

- 3.3 A service animal can be excluded if it is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

4.0 Alternative measures if a Service Animal must be excluded

- 4.1 In the rare instance where a service animal must be excluded, the Board must make every effort to put alternative arrangements in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability.
- 4.2 This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the person how best to serve them, e.g., a person with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them.

5.0 When it is necessary to confirm an animal is a Service Animal

- 5.1 Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the school or Board staff member may ask the person using the service animal for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the animal is needed because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.
- 5.2 Where the person using the service animal regularly attends at the school or Board facility, the principal or departmental manager may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service animal may be asked to bring a letter with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The principal or department manager shall preserve the confidentiality of the letter and information contained in the letter, and shall not use or disclose the letter or information except as provided for in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, cM56, or as otherwise required by law.

DEFINITIONS

A **service animal** is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either "readily apparent" or is supported by a letter from a physician or nurse. It is "readily apparent" that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by its action. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The customer service standard's provisions also apply to animals providing other services to people with disabilities.

CROSS-REFERENCES

Policies

- 2.30 Accessibility Standards

Procedures 2.32 AS for Assistive Devices

- 2.33 AS for Use of Service Animals
- 2.34 AS for Use of Support Person
- 2.35 AS for Monitoring
- 2.36 AS for Employment
- 2.37 AS for Info and Communications

Other

- RRDSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Legal/Ministry of Education

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*
- *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*