

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Students

Service Dogs

STU #32

Revised: April 2025

Background

Christ The Redeemer (CTR) Catholic School Division is committed to providing a high-quality educational program for all students, including those with diverse needs, to ensure they maximize their learning and achievement. As such, CTR Catholic recognizes students may require unique accommodations to enhance their learning. These accommodations, linked to the student's Individualized Program Plan (IPP), may include the use of a service dog. Service dogs are working animals allowed full public access in Alberta and are trained to meet the specific needs of students with whom they have been partnered.

The *Alberta Services Dog Act* defines a service dog as an animal that has been trained by an Assistance Dogs International accredited school and that carries a Government of Alberta identification card as proof of qualification. Service dogs may provide services to students diagnosed with disabilities as defined in the Alberta Human Rights Code, Section 44 (1), such as physical disabilities, blind or low vision, deaf or hard of hearing, speech impediment, or epilepsy. Albertans with disabilities who use qualified service dogs now have access to all public places in the province. These are the same rights as blind and/or visually impaired persons who use a guide dog.

Procedures

1. In accordance with the *Alberta Service Dogs Act*, CTR supports the use of service dogs in schools and divisional facilities when the following conditions are met:
 - 1.1. The family of the dog has received a Service Dog Team Identification Card from the Government of Alberta.
 - 1.2. All family responsibilities have been fulfilled.
 - 1.3. All school and district responsibilities, including liability, have been met.
 - 1.4. It can be sufficiently determined that the introduction of the service dog will not compromise the attendance, education, or health of any student or staff member.
2. Service Dog identification:
 - 2.1. Service dogs provide support to students with mobility, safety and independence issues. A service dog in a school is a working animal trained to perform the skills required to meet essential needs of a student with whom it has been partnered.
 - 2.2. The Minister responsible for the *Service Dogs Act* may, on application, issue to a disabled person an identification card identifying the disabled person and that person's service dog. This identification card is proof, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the disabled person and that person's service dog identified in it are qualified for the purposes of this Act.
 - 2.3. Service dogs in school must have a Service Dog Team Identification card from the Government of Alberta. They will generally have a special skills dog harness and leash and/or saddlebag or vest.

3. Family Responsibilities:

3.1. Parents/legal guardians who wish to have a service dog accompany their child to school must:

- 3.1.1. Provide a letter to the school indicating that the student has been approved for a service dog, including descriptions of activities the dog would be involved in. This letter should be supplied to the school as early as possible in the process to allow for sufficient planning and transition of the service dog into the school setting.
- 3.1.2. Review and become familiar with this Administrative Procedure.
- 3.1.3. Ensure the service dog meets the qualification requirements under the Alberta Service Dogs Qualification Regulations (2017) which states:
*"1. A dog has the qualifications of a service dog if:
(a) the dog has successfully completed a training program delivered by a school or institution that is accredited by, or that has candidacy status with, Assistance Dogs International Inc., or
(b) the dog has successfully completed:
(i) a training program delivered by an organization identified on the Qualified List referred to in this section, or
(ii) a test administered by an organization identified on the Qualified List referred to in this section."*
- 3.1.4. Provide detailed information and contact information from the agency training and supplying the service dog.
- 3.1.5. Provide a copy of the Service Dog Team Identification Card issued from the Government of Alberta to be placed in the cumulative file.
- 3.1.6. Work collaboratively with the principal, division, and school staff to ensure successful integration and ongoing support for the service dog.
- 3.1.7. Assume all financial obligations regarding the use and care and training of the service dog.
- 3.1.8. Annually, provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal service dog license, and confirmation that the service dog is in good health.
- 3.1.9. Indicate how and when initial and ongoing training will be provided for current and new staff.
- 3.1.10. Indicate when and how frequently any required ongoing training of the service dog will be undertaken.
- 3.1.11. Provide information from the service agency indicating details around the personal care and physical needs of the service dog, including the safest and most environmentally sound place for the animal to relieve itself, removal and disposal of animal waste and considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
- 3.1.12. Arrange for the service dog to visit the school to familiarize it with the school site.

4. School Responsibilities:

- 4.1. When a principal receives a request for permission to have a service dog accompany a student to school, the principal shall:
 - 4.1.1. Inform the Superintendent responsible for student services and the Director of Student Services of the request.
 - 4.1.2. Discuss transportation of the service dog to and from school with the transportation department at division office.
 - 4.1.3. Prior to approval of having the service dog accompany the student to school, the principal will arrange and participate in a conference with the parent/legal guardian, classroom teacher, and appropriate divisional personnel to:
 - 4.1.3.1. Review this Administrative Procedure.
 - 4.1.3.2. Review the purpose and function of the service dog in relation to successful learning and/or safety for the student.
 - 4.1.3.3. Clarify all the responsibilities of the family, school, and division.

4.1.3.4. Clarify the transportation requirements for the dog to travel to and from school.

4.2. The principal will ensure a review of the student's Individualized Program Plan (IPP) with division and school personnel to ensure a service dog is consistent with the needs outlined in the IPP.

4.3. The principal will review the medical records of other staff and students regarding allergies, animal anxiety, etc. If issues are identified, accommodations requirements will be reviewed with appropriate division personnel (e.g. Human Resources, Student Services).

4.3.1. Identify necessary changes to routines, procedures or programming needs including preparation of the school environment to ensure the safety of all students and staff.

4.3.2. In the case of conflicting student or staff needs, the principal will first attempt to consider alternatives to schedules and routes, etc. If no such accommodation exists, the conflicting needs will be assessed and a decision will be made which imposes the least hardship on the school and affected individuals.

4.4. Prior to final approval of a service dog accompanying a student to school, the principal must have a copy of the Service Dog Team Identification Card issued from the Government of Alberta and up-to-date proof of vaccinations and licensing.

4.5. After all documentation has been obtained, the principal will arrange and participate in a second meeting with parent/legal guardian, classroom teacher and Student Services (if required) to discuss:

4.5.1. Who will handle the service dog.

4.5.2. The personal care and needs of the service dog.

4.5.3. Classroom considerations, such as program adaptations and the inclusion of the service dog in the student's IPP, the seating arrangements, routines, etc.

4.5.4. Arrangements for training the school personnel.

4.5.5. The education of the student body on the role of the service dog and the rules of conduct concerning the dog.

4.6. Once final approval to have a service dog accompany the student to school has been made, the principal will:

4.6.1. Inform, in writing, all stakeholders of the presence of the service dog in the school, including all students, staff, support personnel, volunteers, parents/legal guardians, school council, health and safety personnel, etc.

4.6.2. Arrange to have personnel from the service dog agency provide education to the student body, staff, guest teachers, and the community regarding service dogs both at the beginning of the service dog's entry into school and on an ongoing basis as staff changes, grades change or other circumstances warrant it.

4.6.3. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the dog.

4.6.4. Ensure that proper signage is used to inform visitors of the presence of a service dog.

4.6.5. Ensure students and staff are aware, through the training offered by the service dog agency, of how the dog is to be integrated into the learning environment in a way that is consistent with the service work the dog is undertaking.

4.6.6. Establish an appropriate space and plan for the removal and disposal of waste.

4.6.7. Ensure that transportation is provided for the safe transit of the service dog, including:

4.6.7.1. The provision of basic training for bus drivers, substitute bus drivers and passengers, concerning conduct with the service dog.

4.6.7.2. Ensuring the dog is located in a seating compartment or on the floor away from the aisle on a bus.

5. Implementation

5.1. The principal, parent/guardian, teacher(s) and other staff members as required will work collaboratively to create a transition plan to assist in the integration of the service dog into the school environment. This transition plan will include:

- 5.1.1. Provide for the service dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site.
- 5.1.2. Establish who will accompany and handle the service dog with the student.
- 5.1.3. Establish protocols for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
- 5.1.4. Establish the safest and most environmentally sound place for the service dog to relieve itself and who will be responsible for removal and disposal of animal waste.
- 5.1.5. Determine parent/guardian or staff member who will be responsible for the provision of a suitable container for the animal's waste.
- 5.1.6. Ensure the parent/guardian is informed that the provision of a certified service dog and any objects/care it requires is the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian of the student, or the adult student, if applicable.
- 5.1.7. Arrange for the parent/dog handler to train and instruct the support staff and teacher on the proper procedure regarding the service dog (example: specific commands, skills, etc.) Establish an alternative dog handler for instances when the dog handler is absent.
- 5.1.8. Establish any necessary changes to routine, procedures, or programming needs to be made prior to the service dog's entry. Programming needs should consider potential restructuring and preparation of the school environment and classrooms to ensure all students and staff can safely function and learn with the presence of a service dog. Administrative Procedure STU#30, Students with Severe (Anaphylactic) Allergies, should be consulted.
- 5.1.9. Establish rules of conduct around the service dog for students, staff and the public.
- 5.1.10. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the service dog, such as fire drills, evacuations, lockdowns, and notification of the fire department regarding the existence of the service dog.
- 5.1.11. Work with the transportation department as required to advise drivers and any students who may be sharing transportation where the service dog will be present.
- 5.1.12. Arrange for an assembly or meeting of all students in the school to provide education, awareness and information about the service dog and its role prior to the service dog's arrival. Once the service dog has arrived, arranged for a "Welcome Assembly" to introduce the service dog to the school community.
- 5.1.13. Arrange for signage alerting school visitors to the service dog's presence, which must be placed in a visible location on the doors to the school.
- 5.1.14. Ensure the service dog is incorporated into the IPP for the student, as appropriate.
- 5.1.15. During the year-end review, ensure appropriate divisional personnel evaluate the student's program needs related to the service dog. This includes the school's input with regard to monitoring the dog's capacity to provide the target service. Divisional personnel, in consultation with the parent/legal guardian and the service training agency will then determine what training will need to take place for future teachers, staff, students, transportation providers, and the wider community.

CTR Catholic reserves the right to deny school access to a service dog, where circumstances warrant. According to the *Alberta Education Act*, Section 2, "The exercise of any right or the receipt of any benefit under this Act is subject to the limitations that are reasonable in the circumstances under which the right is being exercised or the benefit is being received."

References:

Alberta Service Dogs Act

Service Dogs Qualifications Regulation

Alberta Human Rights Act

Alberta Education Act