

# AP 310-2 ASSISTANCE DOGS POLICY #310



## RATIONALE:

Assistance Dogs are trained to assist individuals with visible and non-visible disabilities with specific tasks to provide physical safety and emotional support. Use of an Assistance Dog by a student with special needs, in school or on School District property, may be approved when:

- it has been determined that it helps develop independence;
- when the student requires such use to have equal access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school; and
- when the School District's criteria have been met to the satisfaction of the Board of Education.

## 1. Definition

As used in this procedure, Assistance Dogs include:

- 1.1 "Emotional Support Dogs" are dogs that provide support for individuals suffering from an emotional or mental disability (Examples are, but not limited to, Autism Spectrum, anxiety, depression, cognitive or learning disabilities.)
- 1.2 "Hearing Dogs" are dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- 1.3 "Seizure Response Dogs" are dogs trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.
- 1.4 "Service Dogs" (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) are dogs trained to perform specific tasks to assist an individual with a disability.
- 1.5 "Guide Dogs" (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) are dogs trained as a guide for blind or visually impaired individuals.

## 2. Criteria

- 2.1 A student may be eligible to receive the support of an Assistance Dog if they have special education needs or medical conditions as defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care or a medical professional.
- 2.2 The Assistance Dog must be trained and certified by a training school accredited by either the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or certified by the Justice Institute of British Columbia. In all cases, the British Columbia Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card must be provided at the time of the application.
- 2.3 The introduction of the Assistance Dog to the school community must not create barriers to other students' learning.

### **3. Application**

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

- 3.1 Provide a letter to the school principal 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. The student who will be supported by the Assistance Dog must be capable of maintaining control of the dog at all times.
- 3.2 Provide a copy of the letter of recommendation from an appropriate professional confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need. The letter must include details supporting a recommendation for the use of an Assistance Dog.
- 3.3 Provide a Certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog from the appropriate agency.
- 3.4 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).
- 3.5 Provide details of arrangements made for the personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog, including at least one bio-break procedure per day, and providing appropriate bedding and water bowl.
- 3.6 Accept responsibility for the actions of the Assistance Dog by signing a School District release of liability.
- 3.7 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.

### **4. School District/School 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. 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 principal must:

- 4.1 Ensure that the use of an Assistance Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- 4.2 Once it has been determined that all criteria have been met in the application process, the principal will arrange a case conference with parents/guardians, classroom teacher(s), appropriate student support staff, a representative from the appropriate

agency, the student (when appropriate), other consultants as necessary, and the Director of Instruction, Inclusive Education to discuss:

- 4.2.1 The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog.
- 4.2.2 The personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog including;
  - 4.2.2.1 The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance Dog to relieve itself,
  - 4.2.2.2 Removal and disposal of animal waste,
  - 4.2.2.3 Provision of a suitable container for waste, and
  - 4.2.2.4 Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
- 4.2.3 Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements.
- 4.2.4 Any necessary changes in routine and procedures and program changes.
- 4.2.5 Arrangement for the Assistance Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site prior to the commencement of services.
- 4.2.6 A transition plan for the Assistance Dog and the student that includes a schedule 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.).
- 4.2.7 Rules of Conduct around the Assistance Dog for students, staff, and the public; and
- 4.2.8 Disseminating and regulating such rules.
- 4.3 Once it has been determined that all required planning has taken place, and prior to the Assistant Dog attending, the principal will:
  - 4.3.1 Inform all staff, students, and parents/guardians of the presence of the Assistance Dog(s) in the school.
  - 4.3.2 Contact the School District Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements, if necessary.

## **5. Familiarization within the School Community**

Arrange for informational sessions or 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.

## 6. Emergency Procedures

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.

## 7. 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.

- 7.1 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:
  - 7.1.1 The Assistance Dog does not urinate or defecate in appropriate/designated locations.
  - 7.1.2 The Assistance Dog vocalizes unnecessarily (e.g., barking, growling, or whining).
  - 7.1.3 The Assistance Dog shows aggression towards people or other animals.
  - 7.1.4 The Assistance Dog is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved.
  - 7.1.5 The Assistance Dog is not under the full control of the student with the disability.
  - 7.1.6 The Assistance Dog is a public health threat.
  - 7.1.7 The Assistance Dog is unclean and unsanitary.
  - 7.1.8 The Assistance Dog's presence significantly impairs the learning of students.
  - 7.1.9 The student or the student's parents fail to provide or maintain current documentation required by these regulations; and
  - 7.1.10 The student, or the student's parents, fails to abide by any additional conditions of the terms of an Individual Education Plan regarding their Assistance Dog.

## 8. Transportation of the 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.