

FACILITIES

Policy 703.5-G

Animals and Certified Assistance Dogs in Schools and District Facilities

School District No. 38 recognizes that animals may be in schools or other district facilities in certain circumstances and that animals can both complement and support the well-being of individuals and educational program(s). A commonsense approach must be used when admitting animals to schools and district facilities for support purposes for any length of time.

General Guidelines

1. Animals shall not be allowed to roam freely within a school or a district facility setting.
2. Animals shall not be left in schools or other district facility settings during weekends or holiday periods.
3. Animals shall be housed in suitable sanitary self-contained enclosures appropriate to the size of the animal.
4. Students should not handle rodents or reptiles due to the potential health hazards (i.e. salmonella, hantavirus) associated with these animals.
5. Teachers or other designated employees responsible for the animal(s) will be responsible for ensuring that all animal enclosures are kept in acceptable sanitary conditions.
6. All refuse or animal waste shall be removed daily using gloves, double plastic bagged and placed in the appropriate receptacle (NB: it must not be left in the classroom, school, or facility overnight).
7. All animal owners or handlers, other than those with a certified assistance animal, while in a public place must obey all posted signs and this administrative procedure.
8. Failure to adhere to posted signage may result in fines levied by the municipality.

Dogs on School District Property

1. Dogs are not allowed on district (school or facility) property during school days from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the exception of:
 - a. Certified guide dogs and/or service dogs
 - b. Certified therapy dogs
 - c. Dogs with a parent/guardian during student drop off and pick up (short visit). At all times during student drop off and pick up, all dogs on district property must be:
 - i. Licensed.
 - ii. Leashed and under adult control (assistance dogs exempt).
 - iii. Remain clear from building entrances and play areas.
 - iv. Immediately cleaned up after and have their waste removed by the owner/handler.

Certified Assistance Dogs

Certified assistance dogs are trained to assist children and adults with their daily living activities and provide physical safety and emotional support. Use of a certified assistance dog by an employee, in a school or facility building, must be approved by the district and all district criteria must be met to the satisfaction of the Board of Education.

1. Definition

As used in this Policy & Regulation, certified assistance dogs include:

- 1.1 Certified therapy dogs.
- 1.2 Certified guide and service dogs.
- 1.3 Autism support dogs which are specifically trained as certified assistants for persons with autism.

Definitions

Therapy dog (certification required)

- A certified therapy dog provides comfort and emotional support to individuals. These specially trained dogs help reduce stress and improve the individual's well-being.
- To qualify a dog as a therapy dog, the dog must meet specific behavioral and health requirements and pass training programs such as the AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test or vanecovillage.com/certification.

Guide dog and service dog (certification required)

- Certified guide and service dogs help individuals with disabilities avoid hazards or perform specific tasks to mitigate their disability. They can help an individual navigate public spaces, alert them to sounds, open doors, and warn of oncoming epileptic seizures.
 - Certified hearing support dogs alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
 - Certified seizure response dogs are trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.
 - Certified service dogs (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair or mobility device.
 - Certified guide dogs (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act) are trained as a guide for a blind or visually impaired individual.
- British Columbia's [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) and [regulation](#) govern how guide and service dogs and their handlers are certified.

Emotional support animal (not eligible for certification)

- An animal, often a dog, which an individual owns as their pet and keeps with them most of the time to address and augment their personal, emotional, or psychological state.
- Emotional support or companion animals are not equivalent to certified therapeutic or therapy dogs.

Administrative Guidelines

- A general practitioner cannot prescribe an assistance dog to their patient.

2. Criteria (All of the below criteria must be met to qualify)

- 2.1 An employee may be eligible to receive the support of an assistance dog if they have a low incidence disability or diverse ability (which may include but is not limited to, a chronic health condition, visual/hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorder), as defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education.
- 2.2 An employee may request a duty to accommodate as defined under the Human Right Code, section 13(1) legislation.
- 2.3 An employee has received treatment from a licensed mental health professional (therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.) and have been prescribed an assistance dog with certification.
- 2.4 The assistance dog must be trained and certified by a training school accredited by either, or both, of the International Guide Dog Federation ("IGDF") or Assistance Dogs International ("ADI"), or certified by the Justice Institute of British Columbia. In all cases, the guide dog or service dog team must be able to present their British Columbia Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card.
- 2.5 The introduction of the assistance dog to the school community must not create barriers to student learning and/or other employees.

3. Application

Prior to the admittance of an assistance dog to a school, the employee must:

- 3.1 Provide a letter to the district identifying the reason for the accommodation.
- 3.2 The letter must outline the rationale of having an assistance dog attend school with the employee.
- 3.3 Provide a copy of the letter of recommendation from an appropriate professional (therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.) confirming the diagnosis of a recognized disability or diverse ability, including the recommendation for the use of a certified assistance dog.
- 3.4 Provide a certificate of training for the assistance dog and the handler from the appropriate agency, including liability insurance.
- 3.5 Provide a detailed plan for the care and supervision of the certified assistance dog while the employee is onsite. This would include personal care, physical needs, bio-break procedure, appropriate bedding (e.g. bed or blanket), food, and water needs for the certified assistance dog.
- 3.6 Accept responsibility for the actions of the assistance dog by signing a district release of liability.
- 3.7 Annually, provide the 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

Administrative Guidelines

by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine confirming that the certified assistance dog is in good health.

4. School District Responsibilities

The district shall not be responsible for the training, feeding, grooming, care or any other costs incurred by the owner of any certified assistance dog permitted to attend school, district facility, or ride on school buses under this policy. The district must approve any person who is authorized to assist in the care and supervision of the certified assistance dog while on school property.

The district shall ensure that the use of a certified assistance dog is consistent with the needs indicated by their health professional.

4.1 Notifications

- a. The following letters shall be forwarded by the district to all students attending the school, and any employee working in the school or district facility to inform:
 - i. The school community or district facility of the arrival of the working certified assistance dog, its purpose, and rules and regulations regarding the existence of the certified assistance dog in the school or district facility.
 - ii. The parents, guardians, and students in any of the classes where the certified assistance dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, or extreme phobias from the students' parents/guardians.
 - iii. The employees in the school or facility building where the certified assistance dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, or extreme phobias from employees.
- b. The district shall retain all letters regarding the assistance dog in the employee's permanent record file.
- c. The district shall inform all employees including teachers, educational assistants, custodians, support staff, volunteers, and health and safety representatives of the presence of the assistance dog(s).

5. Familiarization within the School Community or District Facility

A school shall arrange for demonstrations from the appropriate agency or other certified assistance dog organization for the student body, employees and community, as required, to provide education and awareness of certified assistance dogs in the school or district facility.

6. Emergency Procedures

A school or district facility shall revise emergency procedures, as required to include the certified assistance dog.

7. Removing or Excluding Certified Assistance Dogs from a School or District Facility

The district may remove or exclude from school or district facilities or property any certified assistance dog for reasons it deems appropriate.

Administrative Guidelines

- 7.1 Should the district determine that a certified assistance dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of any employee or student, causes a significant disruption of school or facility activities or otherwise jeopardizes the safe operation of the school, a school event, or a district facility, the district may remove or exclude the certified assistance dog from school facilities or property. Examples of such include, but are not limited to:

The certified assistance dog

- a. Urinates or defecates in inappropriate or undesignated locations.
- b. Vocalizes unnecessarily (e.g. barking, growling or whining).
- c. Shows aggression towards people or other animals.
- d. Solicits or steals food or other items from the student body or school/district personnel.
- e. Is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved.
- f. Is not under the full control of the handler or the designated employee.
- g. Is a public health threat because of being infested with parasites or having a communicable disease of the skin, mouth, or eyes.
- h. Is unclean or unsanitary.
- i. Significantly impairs the learning of students.
- j. Significantly impairs the ability of other employees to complete their job.

8. Restrictions for Assistance Dogs

The district may impose restrictions on certified assistance dogs for safety reasons. Certified 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 certified assistance dogs include, but are not limited to:

- 8.1 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 certified assistance dog's safety, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery.
- 8.2 The determination to restrict the access of a certified assistance dog to specific programs or areas of a school or district facility will be on a case-by-case basis.

References

Guide Dog & Service Dog Certification Testing – Province of British Columbia

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/human-rights/guide-and-service-dog/certification-testing>

BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Assessment

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/human-rights/guide-animals/bc-guide-dog-service-dog-assessment.pdf>