

Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services

Operational Procedures



Title: Use of Service Animals and Support Persons
Procedure: HWSTS-OP-0120-12
Adopted: November 2018
Revised:

1.0 Scope

HWSTS is committed to providing services for students that respect the independence and dignity of students with disabilities. HWSTS is committed to ensuring the provision of plans and/or services that will enable students with health or medical needs to attend and participate in school. Services incorporate measures that include the use of specially trained Service Animal and/or a Support Person to accommodate particular needs.

HWSTS will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that services for the use of a Service Animal and/or a Support Person are administered in a manner that respects, to the degree possible in the circumstances, the student's right to privacy and sensitivity.

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2.0 Responsibility

2.1 Parental Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to:

- Facilitate the request for transportation through the School Principal and Board(s) Special Education Department(s);
- Provide the required equipment and Service Animal care items; and,
- Be solely responsible for the care of the service animal.

2.2 Special Education Department(s) Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Special Education Department(s) to:

- Where service animal transportation is required, the member Boards Special Education Department will facilitate through HWSTS;
- Provide the special requirements of the students and service animal to HWSTS.

2.3 HWSTS Responsibility

It is the responsibility of HWSTS to:

- Consult with the Special Education Coordinator/Consultant, Assistant Superintendent of Education and/or principal regarding the special requirements of the student and Service Animal;
- Organize transportation for the student with a Service Animal and/or a Support Person;
- Confirm with the bus operator how the Service Animal will be transported with the passengers; and,
- Coordinate any training of the student, Service Animal, school and driver for transporting students with Service Animals. This may include a trial run where the bus transports the student and Service Animal from the student's home to school and return.

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3.0 Procedure

Each Member Board shall determine the requirement for the use of a Service Animal and/or a Support Person by a student as outlined by their respective Policies and Procedures. To be considered a Service Animal, it must be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the use is supported by a letter from one of the professionals listed in Section 4.

HWSTS will inform the appropriate bus operator contact that a request has been made and will receive and forward their input.

The Board will advise HWSTS of Service Animals and/or Support Persons that are approved for transportation.

In the case of Service Animals on a bus, the Principals will be responsible to send a letter informing the parents of students of their school when a Service Animal will be present on the vehicle. Many bus routes are shared and can provide service to multiple schools. HWSTS will advise those principals and provide a list of students in the respective schools.

Transportation will be provided for Service Animals and/or Support Persons on a school purposed vehicle when the transported student is approved to have the support of a Service Animal at school.

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4.0 Service Animals

4.1 Definition of Service Animal

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 member of Regulated health professionals, who can provide medical documentation to support the need for a service animal, these include members of the following:

- the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
- the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
- the College of Nurses of Ontario;
- the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
- the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
- the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
- the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
- the College of Psychologists of Ontario; and
- the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

4.2 Examples of Service Animals

Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened 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.

It is "readily apparent" that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing. 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 and/or has a certificate or identification card from the National Service Dogs Training Centre 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.