

ATTENTION:**TCDSB Placed Under Supervision by Minister of Education**

On Friday, June 27, 2025, the Minister of Education placed the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) under supervision. While under supervision, all decisions that would normally be made by Trustees, with the exception of denominational matters, will now be made by the Ministry appointed Supervisor. The Supervisor will refer such denominational matters to the Board of Trustees for decision.

Revisions to Policy made to reflect the role of the Ministry appointed Supervisor will apply while the TCDSB is under Ministry Supervision. All other revisions remain in effect beyond Supervision.

**POLICY NAME:****GUIDE DOGS AND SERVICE ANIMALS FOR STUDENTS****POLICY SECTION:**

Schools, Students, and Learning

DATE APPROVED:

December 12, 2019

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:

2031

DATES OF AMENDMENTS:

February 2026

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:

Special Services

Policy:

Policy/Program Memorandum 163 (PPM 161): School Board Policies on Service Animals require school boards to develop, implement, and maintain a policy on student use of service animals in schools. The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities as required by the Ontario Human Right Codes. This policy addresses the TCDSB's position on requests to have Guide Dogs or Service Animals attend school or school-related activities.

The policy is in alignment with the Toronto Catholic District School Board's TCDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and reflects Catholic values rooted in the love of Christ.

Scope and Responsibility:

This policy applies to all TCDSB elementary and secondary schools, facilities, and programs including extended-day programs operated by the TCDSB. It does not apply to community partners such as licensed child-care providers operating on TCDSB premises or permit holders

Responsibilities as directed by PPM 163:

- Students are responsible for following the expectations outlined in their accommodation plan.
- Parent/Guardian or adult students are responsible for providing all necessary documentation and engaging in the consultation process for the purpose of considering and implementing, if appropriate, the request for a Guide Dog/Service Animal attend school or school-related activities with their child.
- School Staff are responsible for supporting students that require a Guide Dog/Service Animal as appropriate.
- School principals are responsible for the management of the school premises, the staff providing educational programs, and the safety of all students.

The Director of Education, with the support of the Superintendent of Special Services, is responsible for this policy.

Regulations:

1. This policy will be implemented in accordance with PPM 163 as reflected in the TCDSB's Operational Procedures Guide Dogs and Service Animals for Students (Appendix A).
2. In accordance with the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) will provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.
3. Requests for accommodation related to Guide dogs or Service Animals will be treated and assessed on a case-by-case basis in light of individual needs.
4. A student requesting accommodation involving a Guide Dog or Service Animal should make the request to the School Principal who will assess the request.
5. In assessing a particular request for accommodation, the principal will meet with the parents/guardians and students to understand the students' individual needs. It is expected that the parents/guardians and students work with the principal to allow the principal to understand the nature of the disability and the accommodation needed.

6. The operational procedures form part of this policy (see Appendix A). They will outline consistent and transparent processes for the consideration of Guide Dog/Service Animal requests, the communication of the presence of a service animal to affected parties, the implementation of the service animal accommodation, the roles and responsibilities of the involved parties, and health and safety-related concerns.
7. Where a parent/guardian or adult student requests that the student's Guide Dog/Service Animal accompany the student while attending school or a school-related event, the TCDSB will review each individual request considering the student's dignity, integration, independence and disability-related learning needs and the accommodations available to enable meaningful access to education.
8. When considering Guide Dog/Service Animal requests, the TCDSB will bear in mind that pursuant to the *Education Act* and regulations, a school building is not a place to which the public is customarily admitted.
9. The process of accommodation shall also consider the needs and competing rights of other students and of staff; the impact of the Guide Dog or Service Animal on the learning environment; and the health and safety of individuals who are or might be in the school, on school grounds or at a school-related event.
10. The TCDSB will retain data regarding the requests for Guide Dogs and Service Animals.
11. The TCDSB will ensure timely, appropriate, and confidential communication with affected members of the school community regarding the presence of a student's Guide Dog/Service Animal.

Cross References:

Legislation

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, 2005
- *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, R.S.O. 1990
- *Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act*, 2019
- *Dog Owners' Liability Act*, R.S.O. 1990
- *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.E2, s.170(1), s.265(1); O.Reg. 298, s.11
- *Food Safety and Quality Act* 2001, S.O. 2001
- *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, R.S.O.1990
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990

Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum

- PPM 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools, 2013
- PPM 163: School Board Policies on Service Animals, 2019
- Learning for All, 2013

TCDSB Policy /Procedure

- Accessibility Standards for Services and Facilities
- Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy
- Fair Practices in Hiring and Promotion
- Fire Safety Plans and Drills
- Special Education Programs and Services
- Transportation
- Toronto Catholic District School Board Operational Procedures - Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Other

- OHRC Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities, 2018 Special Education in Ontario K-12 Policy and Resource Guide, 2017.

Definitions:

Guide Dog: A dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations pursuant to the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, 1990.

Service Animal: An animal that provides support to a person with a disability. The types of functions performed by service animals are diverse, and may or may not include sensory, medical, therapeutic, and emotional support services. Service animals can allow individuals to achieve greater independence in daily tasks and promote safety, mental well-being, and learning.

Evaluation and Metrics:

1. Data will be gathered annually regarding the number of requests for students for students to be accompanied by Guide Dogs/Service Animals for students, as well as approvals, and details.
2. The policy will be reviewed every five years.