



## **POLICY ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SERVICE ANIMALS**

### **A. PURPOSE**

Kingsway College School (KCS) has established this Policy on Service Animals in support of its commitment to providing appropriate accommodations to all students with demonstrable learning needs.

### **B. DEFINITION**

In the context of this Policy, “service animal” means an animal that provides support relating to a student’s disability to assist that student in meaningfully accessing education. Due consideration will be given to any documentation on how the service animal assists with the student’s learning needs, and disability-related needs (e.g., documentation from the student’s medical professionals). Depending on the circumstances, an animal training to be a service animal may be covered by the scope of this Policy and may be permitted to accompany a student.

Traditionally, service animals have been dogs, and dogs remain the most common species of service animal; however, other species may also provide services to individuals with disabilities. The types of functions performed by service animals are diverse, and may or may not include sensory, medical, therapeutic, and emotional support services.

### **C. POLICY STATEMENT**

KCS is committed to providing appropriate accommodations to all students with demonstrable learning needs, including special education programs and services in Ontario’s schools. KCS is further committed to empowering students, as confident and capable learners, to reach their full potential.

Nothing in this Policy detracts from other legal obligations of KCS under applicable law, including the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the “Code”), the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the “AODA”) and the *Blind Persons’ Rights Act*.

### **D. PROCESS**

Requests for students to be accompanied by service animals to school will be made to the Head of School in writing. The student’s parent/guardian must provide the Head of School with:

- the disability-related needs of the student;

- any applicable medical documentation; and
- documentation of the service animal’s training.

KCS will make a determination, on a case-by-case basis, as to whether a service animal may accompany a student, taking into account all the circumstances, including the needs of the student and KCS community and KCS’s obligation to provide meaningful access to education.

In determining whether to approve a request for a service animal, the Head of School must consider whether allowing the service animal to accompany the student would be an appropriate accommodation to support the student’s learning needs, and would meet KCS’s duty to accommodate students with disabilities under the *Code*. In reaching a determination, the Head of School’s process will be timely, equitable, and readily available, and decisions will be based on a student’s individual strengths and needs.

The Head of School will provide the parent/guardian with information about the process through which a determination will be made about whether or not a service animal is an appropriate accommodation. This information will include:

- a meeting or meetings for all appropriate parties (e.g., parent/guardian, KCS staff) to discuss the request for a service animal;
- a list of documentation that a parent/guardian must provide;
- a list identifying who must be consulted in making the determination;
- information about the factors KCS will consider when making a case-by-case determination, including:
  - any documentation on how the service animal supports the student’s learning needs and/or disability-related needs, including documentation from the student’s medical professionals;
  - the disability-related needs and learning needs of the student;
  - other accommodations available;
  - the rights of other students and the needs of the KCS community;
  - any training or certification of the service animal; and
  - any special considerations that may arise if the animal is a species other than a dog;
- consideration of privacy rights of the student seeking to bring a service animal to school; and
- information about how KCS will document its decision regarding a request. For example, if KCS approves a request, that information could be recorded in the student’s Individual Education Plan if one exists.

## **E. SERVICE ANIMAL PLAN**

If KCS approves a request for a service animal, the appropriate parties (e.g., the Head of School, parents/guardians, KCS staff) will develop a plan (the “Service Animal Plan”) that addresses:

- the ongoing documentation required for the animal (e.g., annual vaccination records);
- the type of support the service animal will provide to the student;

- who will be the handler of the service animal while at KCS;
- a plan for how the care of the animal will be provided (including supporting the safety and biological needs of the animal);
- how the animal will be readily identifiable;
- transportation of the animal to and from school; and
- the timeline for implementation.

The Service Animal Plan will be co-created, reviewed, and/or updated by the parent/guardian in consultation with the Head of School or designate, designated staff (as appropriate), and the student (as appropriate), during the first thirty school days of every school year and, as appropriate, during the school year (e.g., when a student has been diagnosed with a prevalent medical condition).

If KCS approves a request for a service animal, the appropriate parties (e.g., the Head of School, parent/guardian, KCS staff) will develop strategies for sharing information with members of the broader KCS community who may be impacted by the decision (e.g., other students, parent/guardian, Special Education Advisory Committees, and organizations that use KCS facilities (e.g., licensed child-care providers operating in KCS)), while identifying how the student's privacy will be considered.

If KCS denies a request for a service animal, KCS will provide a written response to the family that made the request in a timely manner.

## **F. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **(a) Parents/Guardians of Children who Use Service Animals**

As primary caregivers of their child, parents/guardians are expected to be active participants in supporting the management of their child's use of a service animal while the child is in school. At a minimum, parents/guardians should:

- inform KCS of their child's disability and use of a service animal;
- actively participate in development of the Service Animal Plan to govern and manage the use of the service animal, with the Head of School or designate;
- educate their child about their use of a service animal, with support from a professional, as needed;
- guide and encourage their child to reach their full potential for self-management and self-advocacy;
- communicate changes to the Service Animal Plan, such as changes to the status of their child's disability or changes to their child's use of a service animal, to the Head of School or designate;
- confirm annually to the Head of School or designate if their child's use of a service animal is unchanged;
- initiate and participate in annual meetings to review their child's Service Animal Plan;
- supply their child and/or KCS with sufficient equipment and supplies for management of the service animal, including food, food containers and waste management equipment;

- seek advice from a professional, where appropriate.

**(b) Students**

Depending on their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical stage of development, and their capacity for self-management, students are expected to actively support the development and implementation of their Service Animal Plan. Students should:

- take responsibility for advocating for their personal safety and well-being that is consistent with their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical stage of development and their capacity for self-management;
- participate in the development of their Service Animal Plan, as appropriate;
- participate in meetings to review their Service Animal Plan, as appropriate;
- carry out daily or routine management of their service animal to their full potential, as described in their Service Animal Plan;
- set goals on an ongoing basis for self-management of their service animal, in conjunction with their parents/guardians and health care professionals;
- communicate with their parents/guardians and KCS staff if they are facing challenges related to their use of a service animal at school.

**(c) School staff**

KCS staff should follow KCS's policies related to supporting service animals in schools. KCS staff should, for example:

- review the contents of the Service Animal Plan for any student with whom they have direct contact;
- participate in training, during the instructional day, on service animals, as required by KCS;
- share information on a student's use of a service animal with other students, if the parents/guardians give consent to do so and as outlined in the Service Animal Plan and authorized by the Head of School in writing;
- support a student's daily or routine management of a service animal;
- support inclusion by allowing students with service animals to perform daily or routine management activities of their service animal, as outlined in their Service Animal Plan, while being aware of confidentiality and the dignity of the student;
- enable students with service animals to participate in school to their full potential, as outlined in their Service Animal Plan.

**(d) Head of School**

In addition to the responsibilities outlined above under "School staff", the Head of School or designate should:

- clearly communicate to parents/guardians and appropriate staff the process for parents/guardians to notify KCS of their child's use of a service animal, as well as the

expectation for parents/guardians to co-create, review, and update a Service Animal Plan with the Head of School or designate. This process should be communicated to parents/guardians, at a minimum:

- during the time of registration;
- each year during the first thirty days of school.
- co-create, review, or update the Service Animal Plan for a student with a service animal with the parents/guardians, in consultation with KCS staff (as appropriate) and with the student (as appropriate);
- maintain a file with the Service Animal Plan and supporting documentation for each student with a service animal;
- provide relevant information from the student's Service Animal Plan to KCS staff and others who are identified in the Service Animal Plan (e.g. transportation providers, volunteers, occasional staff who will be in direct contact with the student), including any revisions that are made to the plan;
- encourage the identification of staff who can support the daily or routine management needs of students in KCS with service animals.

#### **(e) School**

KCS will communicate, on an annual basis, its policies on supporting students with service animals to parents/guardians, KCS staff, and others in the KCS community who are in direct contact with students (e.g. transportation providers, volunteers).

KCS will also:

- allow a student to be accompanied by a service animal in school when doing so would be an appropriate accommodation to support the student's learning needs and would meet KCS's duty to accommodate students with disabilities under the *Code*;
- make determinations on whether to approve requests for a service animal on a case-by-case basis, based on the individual needs of each student;
- put in place consistent and transparent processes that allow for meaningful consideration of requests for service animals to accompany students in school.

#### **G. COMMUNICATION PLAN**

KCS will communicate, on an annual basis, its policies on supporting students with service animals to parents/guardians, KCS staff, and others in the KCS community who are in direct contact with students (e.g. transportation providers, volunteers).

#### **H. HEALTH, SAFETY AND OTHER CONCERNS**

Students and staff who may come in contact with a service animal, and parents/guardians of other students, may bring their concerns regarding a service animal to the Head of School or designate. These

concerns may include health and safety concerns such as allergies and fear or anxiety associated with the animal. Wherever possible, KCS will take steps to minimize conflict through cooperative problem-solving, and/or other supports which may include training for staff and students.

#### **I. TRAINING**

KCS will provide reasonable training related to service animals as often as is necessary to KCS staff who have direct contact with students with service animals, including occasional staff. Training will generally take place within the student's first thirty days of school, where possible, to ensure the safety and well-being of the student, and will be reviewed as appropriate.

The scope of training will include the following:

- strategies for supporting inclusion and participation in school;
- strategies for managing safety;
- strategies for managing student, parent/guardian and staff concerns;
- strategies for managing animal food, waste, and equipment;
- information on KCS staff supports, in accordance with KCS policy; and
- data collection procedures.

#### **J. DATA COLLECTION**

KCS will develop a process for data collection and collect data regularly, including, but not limited to:

- total number of requests for students to be accompanied by service animals;
- whether requests are for elementary or secondary school students;
- the number of requests approved and denied;
- if denied, the rationale for the decision, including a description of other supports and/or services provided to the student to support their access to education;
- species of service animals requested and approved; and
- types of needs being supported (e.g., medical, physical, emotional).

#### **K. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

KCS will only collect, use and disclose information in accordance with its Privacy Policy. It will comply with applicable privacy legislation and obtain parental/guardian consent, as necessary, prior to sharing student health information with KCS staff or other students.

Members of the KCS community should consult KCS's Privacy Policy for further details.

#### **L. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

This Policy and related procedures will be made publicly available on KCS's website. This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.