



# Procedure

## Assistance animals and support animals at school

**Version effective:** 25/10/2019  
**Version:** 6.0

### Audience

All state schools

### Purpose

This procedure outlines the measures schools must take to provide reasonable adjustments and manage risks for students who are using animals as part of their support at school.

This procedure does not apply to classroom pets or animals that are used for other purposes addressed in the [Animals in Queensland state schools](#) procedure.

### Overview

An assistance animal is a dog or other animal that is trained to assist a person with disability to alleviate the effects of the disability. They must meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place. Assistance animals and their owners have public access rights that are protected by law. A student with disability may be entitled to have their assistance animal accompany them at school and school-related events held off school premises.

In some circumstances, animals that are not an assistance animal (support animals such as companion animals or reading dogs) may provide supports to students. A support animal is a fully trained animal that is used to support student independence, learning or wellbeing. The principal will make a decision on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the relevant parties involved, whether this support will occur at school. People accompanied by support animals do not have public access rights. This means a support animal may not be able to attend public places as part of school events (for example, an awards night held at a community hall) or accompany students on public transport without permission from the appropriate person or organisation.

## Responsibilities

### Principals

- ensure the overall duty of care is met with respect to students and animals on school sites
- consider requests to permit an animal to accompany a student with disability at school
- ensure reasonable adjustments are made so that assistance animals remain under the control of the student who is of sufficient age and maturity or an adult on behalf of the student, at all times that it is on the school grounds or engaged in school activities.

### School staff

- refer all matters related to the use of animals to support students with disability to the principal or their delegate for approval
- support the student's use of the animal as negotiated.

### Owners of animals

- provide adequate care for the animal with respect to food and water, health, living conditions, handling and appropriate training as negotiated with the principal
- ensure an assistance animal remains under the control of:
  - the person with disability; or
  - another person on behalf of the person with disability.

## Process

### Process A: When a student or their parent/carer requests support using an animal at school

Refer to the flowchart [Considering a request from a parent/carer to use an animal to support their child at school](#) for a summary of this process.

1. The parent/carer (or student when appropriate) will make a request to the principal or their delegate to have an animal accompany the student on school grounds.
2. To determine if the animal has public access rights, the principal or their delegate will ask the student and/or their parent/carer to provide evidence of the animal's:
  - training and skills
  - status as an assistance animal
  - health and vaccinations.

**Assistance animals** are defined by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwlth). For the purpose of this procedure, assistance animals must be:

- accredited under the *Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009* (Qld); or
- trained to assist the student to alleviate the effect of their disability; and behave safely and hygienically in the school.

**Support animals** will have:

- training and skills appropriate to the student's needs and the health, welfare and safety of other people on school premises.

3. The principal or staff delegated by the principal will meet with the student and their parent/carer to discuss:
  - the request
  - the adjustments that may be required to support the student at school
  - how the animal, including risks associated with using the animal, could be managed at school.
4. The principal will consider the individual circumstances and the information provided and make a decision to approve or refuse the request.
  - a. The principal will approve the request if the animal is an assistance animal.
  - b. The principal will approve the request if the animal is a support animal and using the animal is a reasonable adjustment.
  - c. The principal will refuse the request if:
    - the animal is a support animal and using the animal is not a reasonable adjustment
    - evidence of the animal's training and skills is not provided
    - the animal is reasonably suspected of having an infectious disease
    - refusal of the animal is reasonably necessary to protect public health or the health of other animals
    - permitting the animal would cause unjustifiable hardship on the school.
  - d. If the animal is an assistance animal or a support animal that is potentially part of a reasonable adjustment, and the principal is considering refusing the request, the principal may contact Legal and Administrative Law Branch to discuss the matter before making a decision.
5. The principal or their delegate will consider any conditions in addition to the animal having good health and up to date vaccinations that are required for the animal to accompany the student at school.
6. The principal or their delegate will:
  - notify the student and their parent/carer of the decision, the factors considered and the reasons for the decision
  - if use of the animal is approved:
    - ensure that staff do not supervise students at the same time as providing additional training for an animal
    - plan for and manage the animal's care and wellbeing at school
    - monitor the use of the animal to ensure conditions of behaviour, health and work are maintained



- implement processes to adjust or cancel the animal's access if issues arise or conditions are not maintained
  - work with school staff to identify and address matters relevant to the use of the animal at school
  - work with the owner to educate students, staff and members of the school community about interacting appropriately with the animal
  - inform the student and their parent/carer that:
    - the animal must remain under the control of:
      - the student with disability; or
      - another person on behalf of the student with disability; and
    - the student/parent is responsible for supplying any food, bedding or other equipment needed by the animal at school
    - the student/parent is entirely responsible for providing and paying for any veterinary treatment required by the animal
    - the animal's owner will be liable for damage to property caused by the animal.
7. If the parent/carer, or the student when appropriate, disagrees with the principal's decision, they will discuss this with the principal.
- The principal will work with the parent/carer or student to determine what steps are appropriate in the situation. For example, if more or different evidence could be provided for consideration.

### Process B: When the school is considering using an animal to provide support for students

1. A staff member or school team will use school data to identify a need that using a support animal may contribute to addressing.
2. The relevant school staff member will provide the principal with the reasons for using the animal, including:
  - information relevant to the goal/s of the activity
  - the needs of the students
  - information about how the animal will enable the needs of students to be met and/or contribute to improved student outcomes
  - evidence of the animal's registration (when appropriate), temperament, training and skills
  - evidence of the animal's good health and vaccinations
  - evidence of any animal handler and/or program provider's suitability to be on school grounds
  - a completed risk assessment and management plan.
3. When using an animal handler and/or program provider is proposed, the staff member will work with the handler/provider to provide the principal with:
  - a. details of the services to be provided at the school
  - b. evidence that handlers/providers attending the school have a current Working with Children Check (Blue Card) and have completed mandatory training



- c. certified copies of certificates of currency for the following insurances:
    - i. workers compensation insurance (or personal injury insurance in the case of sole traders undertaking the work themselves)
    - ii. professional indemnity insurance for not less than \$2 million per claim
    - iii. public liability insurance for not less than \$20 million per claim.
  - d. evidence of the animal's skills, good health and up to date vaccinations.
4. Before making a decision, the principal will:
- a. consult with members of the school community, including parents/carers, students and staff
  - b. seek additional information from the school staff member as required
  - c. consult with animal handlers and/or program providers as required to form an agreement
  - d. consider the information and evidence provided
  - e. acknowledge and address any concerns.
5. The principal will make a decision to approve or refuse the activity and communicate this to the staff member.
- a. If approved, the school staff member will:
    - o communicate with the school community about the animal as required (for example, what the animal does to support students at the school)
    - o plan for and manage the animal's care and wellbeing at school
    - o discuss and negotiate as required the animal's management with the animal's owner
    - o educate members of the school community about interacting appropriately with the animal
    - o complete any documentation associated with the activity as required (for example, Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment)
    - o collect and review evidence about use of the animal, and provide this to the principal to inform ongoing decision making as negotiated
    - o ensure the support animal does not access public places that animals are generally not permitted in during school events without prior approval from the appropriate person/organisation.
  - b. The principal or delegated staff member will manage complaints and concerns and complete ongoing monitoring to ensure:
    - o the activity achieves the intended outcomes
    - o risks are managed
    - o the animal's wellbeing is maintained.

## Definitions

<p><b>Assistance animal</b></p>	<p>An assistance animal is a dog or other animal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) accredited under a Queensland law that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or</li> <li>b) accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or</li> <li>c) trained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and</li> <li>ii. to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Assistance animals will include guide dogs, hearing dogs and assistance dogs for the purposes of the <i>Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009</i> (Qld).</p>
<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>The <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cwlth) definition of disability, in relation to a person, means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or</li> <li>b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or</li> <li>c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or</li> <li>d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or</li> <li>e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or</li> <li>f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or</li> <li>g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;</li> </ul> <p>and includes a disability that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h) presently exists; or</li> <li>i) previously existed but no longer exists; or</li> <li>j) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or</li> <li>k) is imputed to a person.</li> </ul>

	To avoid doubt, a <i>disability</i> that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.
<b>Reasonable adjustment</b>	An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students. An adjustment is reasonable if it achieves this purpose while taking into account the student's learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with disability, the education provider, staff and other students (definition from Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cwlth)).
<b>Support animal</b>	For the purpose of this procedure, support animal is a collective term for a fully trained animal that is used to support student independence, learning or wellbeing. Support animals include reading dogs, therapy and companion animals.  Support animals do not include wildlife, class pets, livestock or animals used for scientific purposes.
<b>Unjustifiable hardship</b>	An education provider does not have to carry out an obligation under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cwlth) as outlined in section 10.2 if that obligation would cause unjustifiable hardship.  For the purposes of this procedure, unjustifiable hardship might include interference with the good order and management of the school. For example, too many students requesting assistance animals could unreasonably hinder school operations as a consequence or where there are students with a genuine fear of dogs and it is not possible to keep the dogs separated from the student in fear.

## Legislation

- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cwlth\)](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cwlth\)](#)
- [Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 \(Qld\)](#)

## Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

## Related policies

- [Inclusive education](#)

## Related procedures

- [Animals in Queensland state schools](#)

## Guidelines

- [Considering a request from a parent/carer to use an animal to support their child at school](#)
- [Guidelines for using assistance animals and support animals at school](#)

## Supporting information/websites

- [Risk management plan: Assistance animals and support animals](#)
- [Duty of care for animals](#)
- [Parent information sheet: Applying for an assistance animal or support animal to attend school with your child](#)

## Contact

For further information, please contact your [regional office](#).

## Review date

25/10/2022

## Superseded versions

*Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.*

- 3.0 Assistance Animals in Schools
- 4.0 Assistance Animals in Schools
- 5.0 Assistance Animals in Schools

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