

**Operational
Policy**Section
Independent LivingSubject
Guide and Service Dogs

Policy

Ownership of an animal is generally not necessary, appropriate, or sufficient health care for most work-related injuries or illnesses due to the lack of strong and consistent evidence of therapeutic efficacy. However, in the limited circumstances that a worker has a work-related serious injury or illness that is a designated condition, as defined, a guide dog or service dog may be considered necessary, appropriate, and sufficient health care.

The WSIB will pay for the purchase, training, care and maintenance of a guide dog or service dog where it is considered necessary, appropriate, and sufficient health care for a work-related serious injury or illness that is a designated condition.

Where health care treatment that includes animal-assisted intervention is recommended, aside from ownership, entitlement should be considered under 17-01-02, Entitlement to Health Care.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the designated conditions for which entitlement to a guide dog or service dog will be considered, and the criteria for entitlement to the purchase, training, care and maintenance of guide dogs and service dogs.

Guidelines

This policy must be read in conjunction with 17-06-01, Independent living and quality of life measures - Overview and definitions.

Definitions

Designated condition means one of the following serious injuries or illnesses for which there is strong and consistent evidence of the effectiveness of animal-assisted intervention involving ownership:

- significant/severe vision loss
- severe to profound bilateral hearing loss
- spinal cord injuries resulting in significant immobility necessitating the use of a wheelchair, or
- partial or full amputations resulting in significant immobility necessitating the use of a wheelchair, where a prosthetic device is not sufficient to facilitate independent living.

Independent living describes the ability to function at home and in the community with reduced reliance on assistance from family, other people, or institutions.

A **serious injury** means a work-related injury that results in significant/severe functional limitations that impact a worker's ability to live independently such that they require assistance or other appropriate measures:

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- for six months or more, or
- permanently.

A **serious illness** generally means a work-related illness that results in significant/severe functional limitations that impact a worker's ability to live independently such that they require assistance or other appropriate measures, that:

- the worker is unlikely to recover from, and/or
- is a progressive life-limiting illness.

See 17-06-01, Independent living and quality of life measures - Overview and definitions for other definitions.

Entitlement criteria

To be entitled to a guide dog or service dog, all of the following criteria must be met:

- The worker has a work-related designated condition that impacts their ability to live independently.
- The worker's health professional treating the designated condition recommends owning a guide dog or service dog to lessen the impact of the designated condition on the worker's ability to live independently.
- An appropriate clinical assessment of the worker has been conducted.
- There are no contraindications to owning the recommended animal. Contraindications may include, but are not limited to, a history of violent or abusive behaviour toward humans or animals, worsening of symptoms, substance use or inability to control emotions.
- The worker is able to care for the guide or service dog on a daily basis, including feeding, bathing, toileting, exercising, maintaining consistent training, providing a clean and safe environment and monitoring overall health to determine when veterinary care may be required.
- Working with the guide or service dog will not impede the worker's recovery or return-to-work (RTW) activities, where applicable.
- A guide or service dog is necessary to facilitate the worker's independent living, which may include helping in the worker's RTW activities.
- The impact of the designated condition on the worker's ability to live independently has not been addressed by other means (e.g., assistive devices, prostheses, independent living devices, vehicle modifications, home modifications).

Guide dogs

Guide dogs for workers with significant/severe vision loss must be recommended either by the worker's treating health professional or by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). The guide dog must successfully complete a training program at an accredited training facility.

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Service dogs for workers with severe to profound bilateral hearing loss or who have significant immobility must be trained at an accredited training facility. The WSIB only considers entitlement to service animals that are dogs.

Payment**Initial costs**

The WSIB pays for the purchase and training of a guide dog or service dog from an accredited training facility, and for the related training for the worker. The purchase and training of the dog should take place in Ontario unless otherwise approved by the WSIB. The WSIB will not reimburse the worker for the cost of purchasing or training a dog that was not pre-approved by the WSIB or that was owned by the worker before a guide or service dog was recommended by the health professional treating the designated condition.

Routine veterinary care and maintenance

The WSIB provides an allowance to cover routine veterinary care and maintenance costs (e.g., nutritional needs, annual examinations, and inoculations). The allowance is paid annually as a lump sum. No receipts are required. The WSIB will not cover routine veterinary care or maintenance costs for a dog that was not pre-approved by the WSIB or that was owned by the worker before a guide or service dog was recommended for their serious injury or illness. For the current allowance for guide dogs and service dogs, see 18-01-05, Table of Rates.

The daily routine care of the guide or service dog will not be provided for under any other policies such as 17-06-02, Independent Living Allowances, 17-06-03, Independent Living Devices, or 17-06-05, Personal Care Attendants and Allowance.

Extraordinary veterinary care

The WSIB also pays for extraordinary veterinary care and treatment. This includes unforeseen health problems, accidents, illnesses, and euthanasia. The actual cost of such care and treatment is payable upon submission of appropriate receipts or accounts.

Material change

Upon notice of a material change in circumstances, the WSIB will determine if a review is required to assess ongoing entitlement to a guide dog or service dog (see 22-01-02, Material Change in Circumstances - Worker). Reviews may also be conducted if requested by the worker, the worker's health care professional, employer, or at the discretion of the WSIB (e.g. WSIB receives information indicating the worker's condition has deteriorated or improved significantly). Material changes include, but are not limited to, a change in the worker's health care status that impacts their ability to work with or care for the guide or service dog, or a change in the dog's health care status such that the dog can no longer assist the worker to live independently.

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A worker may be entitled to a replacement guide dog or service dog in certain circumstances (e.g. the dog has retired or died). The WSIB will approve a replacement guide or service dog and the associated costs where appropriate documentation is provided and all of the other entitlement criteria continue to be met.

Application date

This policy applies to all decisions made on or after TBD, for all accidents.

Document history

This document replaces 17-06-04 dated April 9, 2021.

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17-06-04 dated February 15, 2013
17-06-04 dated January 3, 2007
17-06-04 dated October 12, 2004
17-06-04 dated April 6, 2001
17-06-04 dated June 15, 1999
06-05-06 dated March 28, 1991.

References**Legislative authority**

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, as amended
Sections 32, 33

Workers' Compensation Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended
Sections 50, 52

Minute

Administrative