

Brayden is an energetic and kind elementary school student with severe diabetes. Though Brayden has a CGM (continuous glucose monitor) that helps monitor his blood sugars and an insulin pump that provides him with insulin, at times his blood sugar spikes or drops so quickly that the machine cannot register it before it becomes dangerous for him. To provide Brayden with added protection he has a diabetic alert dog named Luke who is specially trained to sense symptoms of a diabetic episode. Like many dogs, Luke is Brayden's best friend, but he is also a working dog and quite literally a lifesaver.

At first Brayden's school didn't understand Luke's value to their young student and didn't understand their legal obligations to provide Luke access to the school under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Brayden's parents really wanted him to go to school and benefit from in person learning, peer engagement, and integration in a school community. Without Luke his parents feared that Brayden wouldn't be safe at school. After pleading with the school repeatedly to allow Luke to accompany Brayden to school to no avail, so Brayden's parents contacted DRT.

"Before DRT's support, we didn't know how to protect the right of our son to have his service dog at school," states Tasha Davis, Brayden's mom.

DRT worked closely with Brayden's family and the school district to advocate on behalf of Brayden's rights and educate the school on what Luke can do, why he is important, and what the law says about Brayden's ability to bring him to school. Now, as a result of DRT's efforts, the school district has recently enacted a new policy regarding service animals that fully complies with federal law. Brayden now brings Luke to school every day.

"Ever since DRT helped get Luke into the school system, Brayden and Luke have become an even better team," comments Davis. "They are inseparable and conquering the world of diabetes together."

Regrettably, experiences like Brayden's with schools misunderstanding the ADA are not uncommon. Over the past year DRT has been involved in several other cases involving schools and access for service animals. As a result, our advocacy and legal staff have been hard at work making sure school districts craft service animal policies that are compliant with federal law. For example, DRT worked in collaboration with the Tennessee Association of Guide Dog Users (TAGDU) to ensure Blount County Schools adopted an ADA compliant policy.

You can read more about what DRT has learned about this reoccurring problem in our piece "Service Dogs in Schools: Achieving Systemic Change One County at a Time." You can also learn more about students with disabilities rights and responsibilities by reviewing resources on the DRT website. If your child uses a service animal at school



DRT Client Story:  
Brayden and Luke

and you are experiencing problems, please contact our Intake Team at [gethelp@disabilityrightstn.org](mailto:gethelp@disabilityrightstn.org) or 1-800-342-1660.