

Autistic George West student denied use of dog

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GEORGE WEST, Texas (AP) — A South Texas girl diagnosed as autistic allegedly has been denied use of her service dog at school.

The mother of 17-year-old Colleen Molohon says a George West Independent School District review committee on Monday ruled against the dog named Chili.

The Corpus Christi Caller-Times reports Superintendent Ty Sparks declined comment on the closed-door meeting.

Donna Osborn says her daughter's physician diagnosed the girl as autistic. Osborn says the Australian cattle dog helps the girl, who's had spinal surgery, with physical tasks and alerts her on communication issues. Chili wears a service dog badge.

District officials and the Texas Education Agency say the girl has emotional issues, not autism.

The Justice Department last year decided so-called comfort animals are not service animals. The district does not allow comfort animals.