

July 29, 2008

Dear Potential Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in The Prison Pet Partnership Program and considering obtaining a service dog from us. We provide highly skilled trained service dogs to qualifying individuals with physical disabilities and seizure disorders. A trained service dog can greatly enhance an individual's independence and can be a very rewarding. Our dogs are trained to assist in a variety of the daily tasks of living, including bracing a partner in the event they fall, getting help for an immobilized partner, retrieving objects or opening or closing doors.

Overview of Application Process

- Request An Application Packet - If after reviewing this information, you decide that you would like to proceed with applying for a service dog from us, contact us at the office to request an application packet.
- Complete and Return Application – Once all components of the application have been completed, they should be returned to the Prison Pet Partnership Program. All components of the application must be completed before the application will be considered for review. If any components are missing, the office will notify you and allow you to submit the missing sections to complete the application.
- Notification of Review Status Sent / Pre-interview Packet Sent – Once we've received the completed application, we will review your application and notify you of the status of your application. If, upon review of the initial application, we believe one of our service dogs might be appropriate for you, we will also send a pre-interview packet that needs to be completed and returned to us prior to scheduling the first interview.
- Phone Interview – To help best match a dog to your needs, we will conduct a series of interviews to help us to get to know you better and to allow you an opportunity to ask any questions about the process or experience of having a service dog. The pre-interview packet allows us to get a little better acquainted and better prepared for a phone interview.
- In-Person Interview – If after the phone interview, we still believe one of our service dogs could be an asset to you, we will schedule a time for you to come to the facility to meet with us and meet some of our dogs in training.
- Notification of Status Sent / Added to Waiting List – Once the review and interview process is complete, you will be notified of the status of your application. If approved, your completed application will be placed on the waiting list for a service dog.

Wait Time

We strive to match clients with the dog that best meets their specific needs as well as best matches them in terms of personality. For this reason, dogs are not placed solely on a “first come, first serve” basis. For this reason, it is impossible to predict how long of a wait it will be before we have a dog available for an individual client. The average waiting time for one of our service dogs is between four and six years. This wait time is about average for most service dog organizations. Our primary goal is to get clients matched with a service dog as quickly as possible therefore we encourage our applicants to apply to as many service dog programs as possible. You can find other organizations online at www.adionline.org.

THINGS TO CONSIDER: IS A SERVICE DOG RIGHT FOR YOU?

What type of dog is best for me?

Service Dog – A service dog is a highly trained working partner for individuals with disabilities. These dogs are solid, calm and dependable companions that can assist their partner with mobility, turning on or off lights, retrieving items or pulling a wheelchair among many other tasks. Service dogs have full access rights and are offered protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the Fair Housing Agreement.

Seizure Response – These highly trained dogs work with individuals who have a seizure disorder. They are trained to perform skills and tasks to assist an individual in recovering from a seizure. Once the client has recovered sufficiently to offer the dog instructions, the dog can be directed to push an alert button or go find and get help from someone. These dogs are *not* intended to be seizure alert dogs. While it is possible that some dogs may be sensitive enough to learn to recognize the signs of a pending seizure, the wide variety of types of seizures means this is not something that can be pre-trained. There can be no guarantee that our dogs will alert the owners before the onset of a seizure. They also have full access rights and are offered protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the Fair Housing Agreement.

Home Helpmate – A home helpmate is a dog that is, quite often, as highly trained as a full service dog. These dogs are often capable of many of the same skills as a service dog but for one reason or another can not be given full access rights in public. These dogs may be a bit too shy or may have some medical reason that makes life as a full-fledged service dog not possible. They'd much prefer to be home bodies and help around the house in whatever way their recipient may need assistance. These dogs are placed with the understanding that they *do not* have access rights. They are only intended to accompany their client to places a pet dog might be allowed.

Social / Therapy Dog – These social, trained dogs can offer support and companionship to individuals in a variety of circumstances. They can accompany their handlers on social visits to hospitals, nursing homes or schools. They can also provide in home support and companionship to families who have family members with special needs. These dogs, typically, do not have access rights.

*At this time, we do not place service dogs specifically trained to work with individuals with autism. There are a couple programs that do provide dogs specifically trained to work with individuals with autism and, on request, we can give you the contact information. At this time, we can only provide social therapy dogs that can live in the home and offer ongoing support and companionship for such families.

Recipient Criteria

At this time we do not place dogs with children *under* 12 years of age. Service dogs require a great deal of time and responsibility and it is important to ensure a certain level of maturity in our service dog partners. All applicants are expected to have the maturity to train with and handle a dog correctly. If we receive an application for a child who is under 12 years of age, the application will be placed in inactive status, and will

not be considered until the child turns 12 years old. We recommend waiting until the child is 12 years or older before submitting an application.

Our dogs are trained to assist people who have mobility impairments (CP, MS, MD, spinal cord injuries, balance disorders, arthritis, etc.) and seizure disorders. We do not train dogs to assist people with visual or hearing impairment or emotional disorders. While we will place a dog with someone who has one of the above, the applicant's primary disability must be in the form of a mobility impairment or seizure disorder. In addition, the applicant should be able to see well enough to adequately observe the dog and must be independent in their orientation and mobility skills as it pertains to sight. We will not place dogs intended to perform guide work to any degree. The dogs we place are active, involved workers. While we aim to match the dog and client's personality types, applicants should be active enough to utilize a dog and keep it sufficiently stimulated.

The dogs we train and place are rescued and homeless dogs that come to us by way of local humane societies and rescue groups. While it is possible we may come across a poodle or poodle cross or another dog considered to be low-allergen, this is a rare occurrence. Individuals with significant enough allergies to affect their ability to work with or handle the dog should bare in mind that we may not be able to find and place a dog that is both suitably trained and with a low-allergen type coat. In addition, we do not train applicants own, personal dog.

Time and Financial Commitments

Our dogs are highly trained animals, trained to perform a variety of physical tasks. Because of the high level of training and expectation we put in the dogs, there are significant financial and time obligations for the upkeep, health and well-being of the Service Dog.

Training & Follow-up

Service dogs are versatile, reliable assistants for people with physical disabilities, yet they are still dogs. Service dogs are not machines, and even more so than a pet dog, rely on a fair and consistent leader. This takes a great deal of patience and training.

Potential partners *must* be able to attend a sixty hour Service Dog Team Training at our facility within the Washington Corrections Center for Women. Partners are responsible for making their own arrangements for lodging and daily transportation for the duration of Team Training.

The personal dedication required for having a service dog is significant. A service dog partner must be willing to work on their own with their service dog on a daily basis, as well as participate in on-going training, (i.e. periodic training classes requiring you and your dog to come back to the prison to work with the trainers for brush-up and problem solving), home visits and initial monthly written reports.

Feeding & Veterinary Care

The average Service Dog weighs approximately 60-90 lbs. and eats 2-4+ cups of dog food per day, which equals almost 20 pounds of food per week. In addition, all dogs require yearly vaccinations against canine diseases, as well as regular check-ups and preventive health care.

Grooming

Grooming is also necessary on a regular basis. Service dogs *must* have their nails kept short and be clean and parasite free at all times since they spend time in public. The Prison Pet Partnership Program will groom service dogs from our program free of charge.

The Decision

Having a service dog can help many people overcome many of the limitations of their disabilities and the barriers in their environments, yet service dogs are *not* a universal cure for every negative aspect of a disability. A Service Dog can be a great choice for independent living, however, before applying to our program please make sure it's the right choice for you.

If, after reviewing the previous information, you are interested in continuing in the application process for a service dog from our program, please call us at (253) 858-4240 or email us at prisonpetpartnership@yahoo.com and we will promptly mail you the necessary application materials. If you have any questions regarding the application process, screening, selection or training, don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you, sincerely, for your interest.

Grace Van Dyke
Training Coordinator

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