

Guidelines for Assistance Dog Eligibility

Positive Response Assistance Dogs

Contents

Positive Response Assistance Dogs	1
Introduction	2
What Breed of dog can I use?	2
Acceptable Collars & Leads	2
De-sexing	2
Your own dog	3
Buying a Puppy	3
What type of dog will suit your needs	3
Finances	3
Patience	3
Physical Capability	3
Risks	3
Training	4
Buying an Adult Dog	4
What type of dog will suit your needs	4
How to choose your dog	4
Finances	5
Patience	5
Physical Capability	5
Risks	5
What are definable tasks?	5
Eligibility	6
Puppy	6
Adult Dog	6
Documentation	6
Dog	6
Documentation required – Primary Handler	6
Conditions	8



Introduction

Positive Response Assistance Dogs work with people with Mental Health requirements and Physical Disabilities.

You may have already had a conversation with your health care provider about an assistance dog or how one may help you with your current situation.

Below is the process that will be required to reach the end goal – a fully certified assistance dog that will assist you to move about the community and assist with everyday activities.

Please note the route to training up an assistance dog takes around 18 months and there is never any guarantee that the dog you have, will meet all the criterion at any point throughout the training. That is why we train alongside you, manage and assess on a regular basis to ensure we can capture any issues and deal with them promptly.

What Breed of dog can I use?

An assistance dog can come in many breeds and there is no specific breed requirement. Psychiatric dogs trained so far have included a variety of breeds from tiny fox terriers to German shepherd crosses. The breed will often depend upon your exact requirements, so this is something we can assist with if you are needing to make a decision on a suitable breed.

Acceptable Collars & Leads

- Front attached harnesses **ONLY**. If you are looking to buy a harness, we sell and strongly recommend the Harmony Harness (front loaded harness). These can be purchased [online](#).
- Collars and leads are **NOT** acceptable for beginners
- Retractable leads, chain leads, bungee leads ARE **NOT** acceptable at all.
- Check chains, electric shock collars, citronella or prong collars ARE **NOT** acceptable at all.

De-sexing

Hormones can cause major behavioural issues in entire male dogs and bitches. Entire un-desexed dogs are not eligible to perform duties as an assistance dog.

If you are rearing a young puppy, it **MUST** be de-sexed before reaching sexual maturity which will vary from breed to breed so be sure to discuss this with your vet or trainer if you are unsure.



Your own dog

Many of you will have your own dog that may make a great assistance dog. You will have an established bond and perhaps your dog is already performing tasks for you such as deep pressure or waking you from night terrors. To see if your dog would make a suitable assistance dog please read below in **“What is our process”**.

Buying a Puppy

This is never an easy choice and there is much to consider. In making the decision to buy a puppy please think about the following.

What type of dog will suit your needs – i.e. hypoallergenic, coat maintenance and size. Size is critical as you must consider your lifestyle, size of yard and very importantly your daily movements. Getting on a bus, plane or train is more difficult with a large breed dog than a small one.

Finances – can you afford this? Insurance, veterinary requirements, food, training. Take a look at this [Puppy Finance Table](#) to get an idea of the costs of raising a puppy in its first year of life.

Patience - to put up with rearing a baby. Similar to a human baby you can expect a few sleepless nights and a lot of settling in time. Thankfully this usually will only last a few weeks with the right support in place.

Physical Capability – are you able to keep up with a young growing puppy and handle and manage it. Young puppies are fully on energy and constantly on the go so you will need to keep up with their sometimes exuberant behaviour.

Risks – Just because you rear this pup does not mean it will make an assistance dog. To achieve success there are some aspects that should be taken into strong consideration.

- Your puppy must come from a reputable breeder that knows what to look for and may well have bred these pups before. They are chosen for their ability to be:
- Bomb-proof – able to cope with a variety of noises and situations from 8 weeks of age
- No anxiety at all
- Calm and confident natures
- Happy to be picked up and handled
- Is not the shy one in the corner nor the over stimulated jump all over you type
- Have been on a desensitisation and habituation program by a registered breeder who knows what they are doing. An example of a breeder that uses these programs is <http://www.gagalabradoodles.com/>



Training

- Puppy classes through a reputable trainer that ONLY uses reward-based training should be taken from 8 weeks of age or as quickly as you can join puppy classes. If you are outside of our Brisbane based training centers, please click [here](https://www.ppgaustralia.net.au/PetGuildMembers) for other national qualified trainers.
- Ongoing training is critical and if you can't find a trainer that runs further training after puppy school, you can join Positive Response via distance education and follow the skills E-book with video tutorials that will be sent out to you.
- Socialization is critical and we will be able to assist you to set your new puppy up for success. We have physical play groups for young puppies but will also give you tips on getting your new pup out and about safely to slowly desensitize it to the outside world.

Please view our video [here](#) - for a rundown.

Buying an Adult Dog

When looking to buy an adult dog most people will buy from a shelter. Giving a dog a second chance can be life changing for both you and your new-found friend as long as it is done correctly with the following in mind:

What type of dog will suit your needs – i.e. hypoallergenic, coat maintenance and size. Size is critical as you must consider your lifestyle, size of yard and very importantly your daily movements. Getting on a bus, plane or train is more difficult with a large breed dog than a small one.

How to choose your dog

- Look for a dog that is calm, happy to make body contact with you, not shy or withdrawn, does not snarl or move away from you.
- Will it take some food from your hand?
- Will it lie down for a tummy rub?
- Is the dog allergic to anything or does it have a clean bill of health?
- Take the dog for a walk. Will it go willingly, run with you, play, sniff around
- Is its tail up and is it looking happy and relaxed? If the tail is down and the dog is anxious or nervous, won't take food then chances are its not the right dog
- Ask the shelter if you can take the dog out and see if it will willingly get into your vehicle. A dog that won't go near a car means extra work that may not reduce the behavior and again this is not the right dog.
- If you have another pet dog at home a meet and greet between both is required.



- If you have any other small animals at home, you must consider the dog you are looking at should not have high prey drive. i.e. a cat at home and you are looking at a retired greyhound that might chase.
- Take into consideration other immediate and extended family/people in your life – are they allergic to dogs, do they have very young children a large dog might knock over etc.

Positive response can do a suitability test for your new dog. Please contact us.

Finances – can you afford this? Insurance, veterinary requirements, food, training.

Patience – Adult dogs can have behavioral issues that arise after you bring them home. You need to ensure you have the patience and time to dedicate to training and rectifying these issues.

Physical Capability – are you able to physically train and handle this dog. If you have a bad back, a large breed may be difficult.

Risks – Many unforeseen issues can arise and there is always the risk that the dog you have chosen may not be a suitable assistance dog.

What are definable tasks?

Definable tasks are what sets an assistance dog apart from a pet/companion dog.

Please see a small list of some task examples below:

- Positioning themselves in front/behind their owner, a technique known as “posting” which helps to ease hyperawareness, the feeling of being constantly on edge.
- Entering a room before the owner and turning on the lights so they don’t have to enter a dark space.
- Entering a room or house and sweeping it for people or intruders, alerting its owner by barking.
- Alerting an owner to take medication
- Bringing medication to an owner
- Providing physical contact or waking up an owner that suffers from nightmares.
- Diverting their owner's attention to the dog, a technique known as "anchoring", helping to bring their owner back to the present moment.
- Dogs sense when owners have panic attacks and will push, paw bark to alert and then will often lie on the owner for deep pressure therapy



Eligibility

Puppy

- Home preparation session for bringing home new puppy – **optional**
- Puppy Education (part 1-2-3) or equivalent – **mandatory**
- Appropriate training equipment as outlined in our rules - **mandatory**
- 6 months old – must be spayed/neutered – **mandatory**
- 6 months of age – 30 min assessment – **mandatory to join program**
- Private one on one training ongoing sessions – **mandatory**
- Task Training – **mandatory**
- Upon reaching 12 months of training history - a pre-assessment for a PAT – **mandatory**

Adult Dog

- Initial Behavioural Assessment - **mandatory**
- Adult Education (part 1-2-3) or equivalent - **mandatory**
- Must be spayed/neutered – **mandatory**
- Appropriate training equipment as outlined in our rules - **mandatory**
- Private one on one training ongoing sessions – **mandatory**
- Task Training – **mandatory**
- Upon reaching 12 months of training history - a pre-assessment for a PAT – **mandatory**

Documentation

There are documents that will be required immediately and other information that will be required as you progress through the stages of training. Please find a list below of what will be required.

Dog

- Current vaccination records
- Tick and Flea prevention
- Microchip ID
- Sterilisation Paperwork
- Council registration

Documentation required – Primary Handler

- Disability Certificate – **mandatory**
- Positive Response Assistance Dog work books– **mandatory**



Prior to Public Access Test we require the following documents

- Recent (no older than 6 months) **Passport style photo identification in high resolution** of the handler/s - must clearly show the face, head and top of shoulders, looking directly at the camera
- Recent (no older than 6 months) **Passport style photo identification in a high resolution** of the dog that clearly shows the head of the dog looking directly at the camera
- Certified true copy of ID - Certified copy of **one** of the following identification documents for the handler/s (primary/alternative) certified by a person before whom a statutory declaration may be made under the Statutory Declarations Act 1959 (Cwlth) section 8(b) – e.g. Justice of the Peace, legal practitioner, medical practitioner, physiotherapist, psychologist
 - a birth certificate
 - a current driver's licence
 - a current 18 plus card
 - a current Medicare card
 - a current passport

Once you have passed your public access test, this will be the re-occurring process for the working life of your assistance dog:

- Public Access Test – PASS
- 6-month phone follow up call
- 12-month 30-minute re-assessment (fee applies)
- 18-month phone follow up call
- 24-month 30-minute re-assessment (fee applies)
- 30-month phone follow up call
- Public Access Re-test (fee applies)

Once your dog reaches the age of 10 years we will require an annual veterinary health check/letter from your vet advising that the dog is still fit to continue with their duties as an assistance dog:

- Your dog is required to complete an assessment every 12 months from 10 years of age onwards



Conditions

- It is a condition that all client/dog teams that pass a public access test continue to follow the rules and guidelines that relate to Assistance Dogs under the Guide Hearing and Assistance Dog Act 2009, along with the guidelines, policies and procedures set out by Positive Response Assistance Dogs.
- Any team that's deemed to have breached these conditions will be subject to immediate suspension or termination of their Assistance Dog Status.

