



## Guide Dog Development Program – Puppy Raising Volunteer

Guide Dogs SA/NT is a premium service provider in the disability sector. We use our expertise with dogs and in sensory service provision to enhance the quality of life of individuals living with disability and their families.

The Guide Dog Services department provides Guide Dogs to people who are blind or vision impaired, Autism Assistance Dogs to families of children with autism, and Pets as Therapy Dogs as companions to individuals living with disability or a disorder.

To achieve this, we rely heavily on the generous support and commitment of volunteers to care for, nurture and assist in the development of our pups and dogs. Our volunteers are one of the most important parts of our organisation. It takes a lot of dedication and patience to raise or provide care for a puppy. But for our volunteers, it is very rewarding to see the final outcome and the joy, independence and safety they can give a person with disability.

Volunteers can assist Dog Services as a Puppy Raiser, Home Boarder, Short Term Boarder or in the Puppy Development Centre (PDC). Refer to separate information sheet for Boarding and PDC roles.

Volunteer Puppy Raisers care for a puppy from around 8-10 weeks of age, for a minimum of 12 months, in their homes. This is a 24/7 role requiring attendance at regular training sessions (approx. 1 per week). Applicants may work part time or less (preferred). However if applicants work or study full time and have flexible or other arrangements that could accommodate Puppy Raising, the Guide Dogs team are happy to discuss these arrangements and consider placement. Puppies are not to be left unattended for more than 4 hours per day.

### Puppy Raising

Puppies spend a minimum of 12 months with volunteer families.

Puppy Raisers care for the puppies and teach them appropriate social behaviour to help produce healthy, socialised young dogs with good temperaments to be assessed for inclusion in our Guide Dog program, Autism Assistance Dog program, or Pets as Therapy program.

### Where Do the Pups Come From?

Pups are sourced from our own breeding program as well as other Guide Dog schools.

### **What is Involved?**

We place puppies with volunteer families when the puppies are 8-10 weeks of age. Between 12-16 months of age, they return to Guide Dogs SA/NT to be assessed for training.

Each Puppy Raiser receives on-going support and instruction from Guide Dogs SA/NT. A staff member visits regularly and is available for telephone support. The scheduling of visits will depend on the progress of the puppy and volunteer family.

There are also group obedience, free run and travel sessions that you will be required to attend. On average, you can expect to have contact with a Guide Dogs SA/NT staff member on a weekly basis. This may require you travelling into the city.

### **Socialisation**

Pups are gradually exposed to all of the sights, sounds and smells that they are likely to encounter as working dogs.

If they are introduced to new things in a supported and positive way, they are likely to develop the confident, relaxed attitude essential for a working dog. Since Guide Dogs and Autism Assistance Dogs can go almost everywhere that people go, the puppies need to learn to feel comfortable in the presence of traffic, pedestrians, children and other dogs.

Puppies are conditioned to walk on steps and other unusual surfaces, and to be confident in noisy and busy areas. To develop a relaxed and confident attitude, the puppies must be walked daily on lead by a responsible adult. In the early days, the puppy will walk only short distances on quiet residential streets.

As the puppy grows and develops confidence, it can then be taken to various new environments and allowed to experience busier conditions – all under the supervision and recommendation of Guide Dogs SA/NT staff. Puppies are individual and will progress at different rates – the puppy is not exposed to more than it can comfortably cope with.

As the puppy's confidence grows, it will be introduced to more complex and challenging environments and situations like busy urban shopping centres, and travelling on public transport

### **Does Puppy Raising Cost Anything?**

Guide Dogs SA/NT provides for all the puppy's needs, including lead, collar, crate, bed, blankets, brush, food bowls, toys, food, veterinary costs and worming and flea control products. Costs to Puppy Raisers are therefore minimal. Sometimes Puppy Raisers provide extra toys if needed and you will need petrol to transport the puppy to and from training sessions that are held in a variety of areas, both close to your home and away from your local area.

### **What do Guide Dog Puppies Eat?**

The puppies are fed a diet of Pedigree Advance (dry food). A supply of food can be given to you on your visits or it can be collected from our office. It is important that puppies have only their own food at mealtimes and no snacks or treats.

### **Where do I Take the Puppy to the Vet?**

Guide Dogs SA/NT has its own Breeding & Veterinary Care Manager on site who will undertake general procedures, vaccinations and health checks etc.

Puppy Raisers should contact their relevant Puppy Raising Advisor initially for advice on health problems, except for a life-threatening emergency when the puppy should be taken to the 24 hour Adelaide Emergency Vet situated at 119 Anzac Highway, Kurralta Park Phone: (08) 8371 0333.

### **Do I Need to Register the Puppy With My Local Council?**

The puppy should be registered with your local council who will issue you with an ID tag. As a Guide Dog puppy, there will be no registration charge. The Puppy Raising Advisor will give you a letter for the Council identifying the puppy as part of Guide Dogs SA.

### **What About Holidays?**

Guide Dogs SA/NT has a short-term boarding program where families look after puppies of any age while their Puppy Raiser is on holidays or sick. Our boarding families are trained in the same manner as Puppy Raisers. Staff will visit a boarding dog to check on its progress and continue its training.

### **Where Can I Take the Puppy?**

The puppies and trainee dogs have legal access to public places, just like working Guide Dogs or Autism Assistance Dogs. Puppies are not allowed in animal sanctuaries (including the zoo), and certain hospital environments (such as the burns and intensive care units).

Puppies are identified by a Guide Dogs SA/NT yellow coat and the Puppy Raiser is given an identity card to carry with them when accompanied by the puppy. This card demonstrates that the puppy is recognised under relevant laws which enable access to different environments.

Puppy Raisers are guided by staff in choosing suitable locations for socialisation at the various stages of development of the puppy.

### **What Happens after the Puppy is Returned to Guide Dogs SA/NT?**

Guide Dogs SA/NT confirms a handover date with Puppy Raisers about two weeks before the puppy enters training. The puppy will be assessed over a 2 week period by training staff and those who are successful will begin a 6 month training program. A dog may be reclassified or withdrawn at any stage throughout the program.

### **What Happens to Dogs that are not accepted for Guide Dog or Autism Assistance Dog Training?**

The qualities required in a Guide Dog or Autism Assistance Dog are so specific that only about half of our specially bred and raised dogs will be accepted for training on these programs.

Those dogs not accepted for training on these programs may be re-classified as a Pets as Therapy dog for a child or adult with Autism or another disorder or disability. Dogs not suitable for placement as Pets as Therapy dogs may be offered for sale to the public.

### **What if I Have Other Pets?**

Any other pets in the home need to be compatible with a puppy. Generally, households that have more than one dog will not be deemed suitable to volunteer.

If there is already one dog in the house, a staff member will visit and assess whether your dog will be compatible with one of our puppies.

Pet dogs that are approximately 12-18 months of age or older, de-sexed and immunised, and of a quiet, gentle, placid nature can be a good influence on the puppy.

The puppy will need to be socialised and walked separately from your own dog, so that the puppy learns to be self-confident and does not rely on the older dog for security and support.

### **Children and Teenagers in Puppy Raising Households?**

It is beneficial for puppies to be exposed to children. However, due to the level of commitment required for the care and training of a puppy, Guide Dogs do not recommend families with children under school age volunteer for this responsibility. Older children and teenagers can assist with the puppy at home by grooming, toileting and feeding providing the primary caregiver of the puppy is an adult, aged 18 years or over.

Children and teenagers should not walk the puppy. They cannot be expected to react appropriately in all situations they are likely to encounter with a puppy, nor should they be given such a significant responsibility. Young children should always be supervised when with the puppy.

### **Who Can Apply To Be A Puppy Raiser?**

Puppy Raising volunteers need to meet the following criteria for acceptance into the program.

#### **Location:**

Puppy Raisers must live in metropolitan Adelaide, to enable easy transport to training sessions and regular visits by Guide Dogs SA/NT staff. These visits occur on a weekly basis initially and will progress to fortnightly as the dog develops confidence and matures.

Some applications are also accepted from Gawler, Mt Barker, and Victor Harbor, provided people are prepared to do some travelling. ALL Puppy Raisers are required to attend regular group sessions, regardless of where they live.

**Lifestyle and Experiences:**

Puppy Raisers must consistently provide the puppy with a lifestyle that is conducive to positive social interactions, and exposure to a variety of environments. This is to ensure that as a trained Guide Dog or Autism Assistance Dog, they are able to work effectively in all changing environments. It is also imperative that the puppy is not left alone for more than 4 hours a day.

**Care and Supervision:**

Puppy Raisers must be able to provide appropriate care, attention, supervision and leadership, in accordance with Guide Dogs SA/NT standards. Because of the time that needs to be invested into one of our pups, it is preferred that Puppy Raisers do not work full time or have any on-going commitments that may require them to leave the puppy unattended for more than 4 hours per day. However, if a Puppy Raiser does work or study full time and can be flexible or make suitable arrangements, the Guide Dogs team are happy to discuss further.

**Physical Fitness:** Puppy Raisers need to be physically fit and strong enough to control a large dog particularly in terms of back, upper body and leg strength. Labradors grow quickly. They can weigh up to 20kg at 6 months of age and some will mature to 30kg by 12 months. At times, they will be boisterous and may pull strongly on the lead. Some activities will involve: regularly lifting of the puppies into vehicles, bending down to the ground up to 100 times a day to pick up faeces, toys, bowls, for training purposes and picking up the pup, walking up to an hour at a time over a variety of surfaces.. It is highly recommended that you also thoroughly read the separate information sheet: 'Health demands required of Puppy Raisers'.

**Transport:**

Puppy Raisers need to have access to a car and hold a current drivers licence, so they can transport the puppy to the vet, and to training sessions, including into the Adelaide office when required.

**Fenced Yard:**

Puppy Raisers must have a securely fenced yard in which the puppy can play, toilet and be safely left from time to time. Swimming pools, spas and ponds must be securely fenced. Fences must be at least 1.5 metres high.

**Indoors:**

Guide Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs, and Pets as Therapy dogs are "inside dogs". Puppies must sleep inside the house and spend time inside during the day. They will need to be housetrained. You will be provided with a puppy crate for the pup to sleep in and instructions on how to successfully houstrain the pup.

**Becoming a Volunteer**

Our volunteers know and understand that they are helping to give our clients the freedom of mobility and that they carry a large responsibility to prepare the pup or dog for its intended role.

To ensure that we find the right volunteers for our puppies and dogs there is an application process involving an interview with staff and other specific requirements depending on the role.

Once you have filled out your paperwork to express your interest in becoming a Volunteer one of our staff members will contact you by phone to arrange an interview. The interview gives our staff an opportunity to explain the role of the volunteer to ensure that you meet the relevant criteria and that you understand the commitment involved in this role. It also provides you the opportunity to ask questions. You will also be invited to an information session about Guide Dogs SA and volunteering by our Human Resources Department.

### **House Inspection/Practical Session**

After the interview, you will be contacted to arrange a time for a staff member to visit you at your home and to also undertake a practical session. This allows our staff to ensure there is a suitable home/living environment and that you have an appropriately fenced area. A practical session will also be undertaken to view your current skill level relevant to the volunteering role, and to identify areas in which you will require further training and assistance. It provides applicants with an opportunity to understand what to expect from the volunteering role.

### **Application Approved/Further Paperwork**

Once your application is approved and all paperwork completed you will go onto our volunteer contact list and we will contact you once a puppy becomes available. Often we are unable to provide you with an exact time frame of when you can expect a puppy. In the meantime, there may be training sessions and workshops that we ask you to attend, to upskill you and support you in your role. You may also be expected to do some short-term boarding whilst waiting for a puppy.

### **Application to Volunteer**

Please contact us on 8203 8372 for further information and to obtain the relevant paperwork for the volunteer role.

Please complete all of the documentation and return it by post to:

GDS Administration  
Guide Dogs SA/NT  
251 Morphett Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

Or by email to [hr.volunteer@guidedogs.org.au](mailto:hr.volunteer@guidedogs.org.au)

We will then contact you by phone to arrange the next step in the application process.

Suitability will be determined in accordance with the listed criteria.