

Is a Service Dog the Right Solution for You and Your Child?

Your service dog is not a robot. You need to understand that dogs are highly social animals and need close human relationships just as much as they need food, shelter and proper exercise. Each dog is unique with its very own personality, feelings and needs. They are not like people who can understand why something happens or doesn't happen; therefore, it is essential that their owners assume responsibility for their care and their needs. In return, dogs will be eager to please and serve their owners.

The relationship between you and a service dog will be one of mutual caring and support. It will take some time to building a close working relationship will. When the dog is teamed with you, it will have changed homes two or three times from its birth. It will have gone through several different training environments. It will need a period of three months to adjust as it shifts its allegiance from its previous trainer to you. It will need to learn to trust and respect you as the new handler. This period will be a period of confusion for the dog and you will need to be patient and supportive while it makes the transition. The dog trainer will work with you as needed (daily or weekly) during these initial three months. It is your responsibility to attend the video sessions scheduled with the trainer. Most of the problems we see about the dog not adjusting is because the new owner is not doing things correctly.

If the dog is going to be assisting a child with a disability that impairs cognition, such as Syngap, spectrum disorders, an adult must be present at all times to monitor the interaction between child and dog.

You, the new dog owner, will have some major adjustments to make in your life as well. Some routines must be changed and priorities rearranged. A dog has natural canine needs that must be met at appropriate times whether it is convenient for you or not. If you are unable to meet its needs yourself, you will still be responsible for making sure that **SOMEONE** takes care of the dog.

Even though the dog will be highly trained by the time it is transferred to you, incidents such as unwanted elimination, chewing, barking or vomiting may occur as a result of stress, illness or extreme changes in routine. Unpleasant though such incidents are, immediate clean-up is necessary. Housecleaning chores also will increase to cope with the dog hair, tracked-in dirt, etc.

Once the dog is in your possession, **YOU** will be responsible for continuing the training exercises and reinforcing the dog appropriately for doing its tasks well. Meridus team will be available for follow-up training during the first year of the transition. After that period, regular training fees will apply. It is very important that you consider carefully whether you have the time, money and energy and are willing to make the commitment necessary to have a service or emotional support dog.

Questionnaire

- Have you done an allergy test for dog saliva and dog dandruff? Yes___ No___ If yes, you will need to submit via postal service the results when you are ready to begin the process to have a service dog for your child. If no, you will need to do such a test to proof that your child has no allergies to dog saliva and dandruff.
- Are there any dogs currently living in your home? Yes___ No___ If yes, will that dog be able to be separated from the service dog and the child at all times? Yes___ No___
- Since you became an adult, have you owned a dog? Yes___ No___
- Do you live in a home with a yard? Yes___ No___ If no, do you have the means to walk the service dog for 30 to 40 minutes twice a day? Explain: _____

- Will you need financial assistance? Yes___ No___ If yes, DO NOT SET a campaign on your own. SRF will organize the fundraising campaign for your dog.

Last Name

First Name

Signature

Date