



**ABOUT SERVICE DOGS FOR AMERICA**

Service Dogs for America (SDA) trained its first service dog in 1989 and placed it with SDA’s first client in 1990. In 1992, SDA was officially designated as a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. SDA is an accredited service dog school member of Assistance Dogs International.

The mission of SDA is to: *“train and certify service dogs for individuals with disabilities”*

**The following describes the different types of dogs trained and placed by SDA**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mobility Assistance Dog</b></p> <p>Assists with (but not limited to) the following types of diseases or injuries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amputation</li> <li>• Arthritis</li> <li>• Cerebral Palsy</li> <li>• Multiple Sclerosis</li> <li>• Muscular Dystrophy</li> <li>• Paraplegia</li> <li>• Parkinson’s Disease</li> <li>• Spina Bifida</li> <li>• Stroke</li> <li>• Tetraplegia</li> <li>• Traumatic brain or spinal cord injury</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mobility Assistance Dog - Task Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retrieve dropped object.</li> <li>• Open interior/exterior doors.</li> <li>• Retrieve a beverage, medication, or other item from a refrigerator.</li> <li>• Bring medication and/or a beverage to a person on command or when alerted to do so by a timer/alarm.</li> <li>• Help a person stand and brace.</li> <li>• Stabilize during walking.</li> <li>• Assist in pulling a <i>manual</i> wheelchair.</li> <li>• Turn lights on or off.</li> <li>• Pull/push/open door, drawer, or cupboard.</li> <li>• Operate handicap door switch.</li> <li>• Retrieve a phone or other specified object to person’s hand or lap.</li> <li>• Get help by alerting another person in the environment.</li> <li>• Activate an electronic alert system.</li> <li>• Assist a person in removing/putting on clothing.</li> <li>• Carry medication, wallet, etc.</li> <li>• Dog can perform skills while client is using adaptive equipment such as a wheelchair, scooter, walker or specialized leash or harness.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Diabetic Alert Emergency Medical Response Dog (EMRD)</b></p> <p>Assists with (but not limited to) the following diagnoses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type I/Brittle Diabetes</li> <li>• Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels)</li> </ul> <p><i>We only train for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels), not hyperglycemia (high blood sugar levels).</i></p> <p><i>We do not train dogs to assist an individual with Type II Diabetes.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Diabetic Alert (EMRD) - Task Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert individual and/or caregiver to significant changes in low blood sugar.</li> <li>• Remind to test blood sugar at the sound of an alarm.</li> <li>• Get help by alerting another person in the environment.</li> <li>• Activate an emergency button, electronic alert system, or pull cord.</li> <li>• Retrieve a beverage, medication, or other item from a refrigerator.</li> <li>• Lie close to the client, nudging, licking, lying on the client during an event.</li> <li>• Carry medication, wallet, etc.</li> </ul>



TYPES OF SERVICE DOGS

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Seizure Response Emergency Medical Response Dog (EMRD)</b></p> <p>Assists with (but not limited to) the following types of seizure(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence</li> <li>• Gelastic</li> <li>• Dacrystic</li> <li>• Atonic</li> <li>• Myoclonic</li> <li>• Tonic-clonic</li> <li>• Partial Complex</li> <li>• Partial Simple</li> <li>• Status Epilepticus</li> </ul> <p>We do not train service dogs for individuals with psychological origin seizures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pseudo</li> <li>• Psychogenic</li> <li>• Cryptogenic</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Seizure Response (EMRD) - Task Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie close to the client, nudging, licking, lying on the client during an event.</li> <li>• Get help by alerting another person in the environment.</li> <li>• Retrieve an object, such as a phone or medication.</li> <li>• Activate an emergency button, electronic alert system, or pull cord.</li> <li>• Carry medication, wallet, etc.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Psychiatric Service Dog – PTSD ONLY</b></p> <p>Assists with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)</li> </ul> <p><i>A trained PTSD service dog is a tool and is not intended to substitute or replace a current therapeutic or medication treatment plan. The dog is trained to mitigate and distract from possible stressors related to an individual's PTSD and contribute to their physical, emotional and social well-being.</i></p> <p><b><i>We do not train service dogs for individuals with multiple complex mental health issues including personality disorders, somatoform disorders, etc.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>We do not train service dogs for individuals who have a coexisting diagnosis of autism. Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PTSD Service Dog - Task Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interrupt anxiety or distress and provide psycho-emotional grounding by nudging, pawing, and leaning.</li> <li>• Assist a person in waking from night terrors and nightmares.</li> <li>• Distract a person from an event or specific maladaptive behavior by nudging, pawing, and licking.</li> <li>• Bring medication to a person on command or when alerted to do so by a timer/alarm.</li> <li>• Stand in front of or circle an individual in crowded areas in order to create personal space in a passive, non-aggressive manner.</li> <li>• Lead an individual safely to a building exit when experiencing an anxiety or panic attack.</li> <li>• Get help by alerting another person or activate an emergency button or alert system.</li> </ul> <p><b>They are not trained to be guard dogs or act aggressive</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Types of Cross-Trained Assistance Dogs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility Assist/PTSD Assist</li> <li>• Mobility Assist/Diabetic Alert</li> <li>• Mobility Assist/Seizure Response</li> <li>• Mobility Assist/Seizure Response/PTSD Assist</li> <li>• Mobility Assist/Diabetic Alert/Seizure Response</li> <li>• Mobility Assist/Diabetic Alert/Seizure Response/PTSD Assist</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Facility Dog</b></p> <p>Facility dogs are usually found in a nursing home or similar type of facility. They 'visit' with residents and families that come to the facility. <i>Please note, this type dog is not certified for public access.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Courthouse Facility Dog</b></p> <p><i>"Courthouse facility dogs are professionally trained dogs working throughout the country in prosecutor's offices, child advocacy centers, and family courts. They primarily provide a calming influence during stressful legal proceedings. As legally neutral companions for witnesses during the investigation and prosecution of crimes, these dogs help the most vulnerable witnesses feel willing and able to describe what happened."</i> (source: <a href="https://courthousedogs.org/">https://courthousedogs.org/</a>)</p>

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**\* SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION DOES NOT GUARANTEE YOU WILL RECEIVE A SERVICE DOG \***

### Preliminary Application Procedure

- The first step in applying for a service dog from Service Dogs for America (SDA) is to fill out and submit the preliminary application attached to these instructions. If you are unable to download the application, please contact SDA and a paper copy can be sent to you. Before submitting a preliminary application, please review the following eligibility requirements:
  - Applicant must be 12 years of age or older and possess the physical and developmental capacity to handle a service dog independently.
  - Applicant must reside within the United States and be able to travel to the SDA campus in Jud, North Dakota, for training.
  - If applying for a PTSD service dog, applicant must meet both of the following criteria:
    - have an official PTSD diagnosis from a qualified and licensed mental health professional ;
    - be actively engaged in therapy for a minimum of one (1) year for the PTSD diagnosis.
  - Applicant must present a verifiable medical need for a service dog and understand SDA may not be able to train a dog specific to their needs.
  - Applicant must be available and willing to communicate with SDA staff throughout the application and placement process.
  - Applicant must demonstrate proficiency in handling a service dog at home and in a variety of public environments, while managing the dog's safety, behavior and working skills.
  - Applicant will be required to supply proof of financial resources sufficient for the care of a service dog, including veterinarian care.
- Preliminary Applications are reviewed monthly. If the applicant meets SDA's selection criteria, an approval letter will be sent out along with a full application packet.

### Full Application Procedure – **APPLICANTS ARE ONLY ELIGIBLE FOR THIS NEXT STEP IF THEIR PRELIMINARY APPLICATION IS APPROVED.**

- The second step in applying for a service dog is to return a full application to SDA – including all necessary signatures and a **non-refundable \$50.00 application fee**. Applications returned without the \$50 fee will not be processed.
- Once all supporting documentation for the full application has been received, an independent Medical Review Board (MRB) reviews the application and determines final eligibility. The MRB bases their decision regarding service dog placement per the following criteria:
  - is a service dog necessary for the applicant so as to mitigate the applicant's disability
  - can a service dog perform enough specific tasks so as benefit the applicant
  - can the applicant properly care for and handle a service dog

### Notification, Travel and Training Procedures

- Following the MRB's review of the full application, the applicant will be notified by mail as to whether their request for a service dog has been approved or denied or if the MRB needs additional information before making their decision. **Approval of the application by the MRB does not guarantee the applicant will receive a service dog. SDA reserves the right to terminate the application and placement process at any time.**



## PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

GREAT PLAINS ASSISTANCE DOGS FOUNDATION DBA  
SERVICE DOGS FOR AMERICA  
PO BOX 513  
JUD, ND 58454

- If approved for a service dog, SDA's Executive Director will schedule the applicant for their Team Training at SDA's Jud, North Dakota, campus. SDA's Client Services Coordinator will also send out a welcome packet detailing all aspects of Team Training and the placement process. *NOTE: "Team" denotes the pairing of an applicant with a service dog.*
- Team Training is a minimum, mandatory three (3) weeks, and applicants must **successfully complete** their Team Training Course before leaving campus with their service dog. It is highly recommended to purchase travel insurance in conjunction with any airline or train tickets, in the event Team Training needs to be extended or cancelled.

***Arrival to campus and participation in Team Training does not guarantee an applicant will leave campus with a service dog. SDA reserves the right to stop placement at any time.***

- All applicants traveling to the SDA campus are responsible for making their own travel arrangements, including ground transportation and attendant care (if necessary). There are two (2) fully-furnished guest cabins on campus that are available to applicants for Team Training. This lodging is included in the cost of the service dog, however while on campus applicants are responsible for their own groceries, toiletries, etc. If applicants prefer not to stay on campus, off-campus accommodations will need to be approved by SDA prior to arrival and will be the sole financial responsibility of the applicant.
- Prior to the applicant's arrival on campus, SDA will conduct either an in-home visit or a video tour of the applicant's home.
- Each applicant must be prepared to meet his/her own financial needs during Team Training, including outings and any equipment needs or modifications. Applicants with electric wheelchairs must plan on bringing or arranging for a manual wheelchair in the event of an electric wheelchair malfunction.
- Any individuals or family members accompanying the applicant in a supportive role are the responsibility of the applicant and are welcome to stay on campus with the applicant; their attendance during Team Training is at the discretion of the SDA training department.

### Team Sponsor

- Each Team is required to have a sponsor; this is not a financial sponsor but rather a mentor or advocate who will look after the best interest of the dog and report back to SDA.
- The sponsor has to be one or more individuals outside the applicant's immediate family who will agree to periodically check on the status of the Team and who will also agree to look after the dog should something happen to the applicant.
- The sponsor is not asked to intervene or take action unless an emergency exists or concerns arise that may include:
  - the dog is not being cared for properly, including veterinary care and vaccinations
  - the dog is not being used as per the contract, including established safekeeping practices
  - the applicant is not following training protocols
  - the applicant is experiencing additional medical/mental issues that place the dog at risk
  - the applicant talks of surrendering or abandoning the dog



## Placement Interruption Procedure

- SDA is involved with the Team for the life of the dog, therefore SDA reserves the right to deny an applicant or terminate a placement at any time before, during or after Team Training and graduation. Grounds for termination include, but are not limited to:
  - applicant fails to handle the service dog according to SDA requirements
  - applicant fails the Public Access Test required for the Team's graduation
  - applicant handles his or her service dog in an abusive or negligent manner
  - applicant becomes unable to care for the service dog
  - applicant is not using the service dog as intended
  - placement will jeopardize the dog's health, safety, or well-being
  - SDA has grounds to believe the dog will not be able to meet the applicant's needs

## Post-Placement Procedure

- After graduation, applicants will be expected to provide on-going information regarding the dog's work habits and public behavior. Applicants will be expected to make themselves available for aftercare calls and are required to meet SDA's criteria for Team certification renewal.
- Applicants will be expected to sign a release for their health provider(s), giving SDA access to contact them quarterly for the purpose of follow-up and to document any improvements in physical, emotional, and social interactions as a result of a service dog.
- Teams are required to return to campus at regular intervals post-graduation for public access recertification and additional training (if necessary). The guest cabins are available to the Team at no charge, however all travel expenses are the responsibility of the applicant. The recertification schedule is as follows:
  - within 12 months following graduation
  - every 24 months after the first year

***Failure to be compliant with required follow-up could result in repossession of the service dog or being declined for a successor dog placement.***

## Disclaimers

- All applicants will be considered regardless of race, gender, religion, creed, sexual orientation, and ethnic origin.
- Approved successor dog applicants have priority over first-time applicants.
- Wait time for training and placement will vary depending on specific needs of applicant and dog availability.
- **SDA reserves the right to stop the application process, training and placement process at any time.**



## What Every Caregiver Needs To Know About Service Dogs

by Joan Froling (reprinted with permission)

IAADP has been frequently contacted over the years by parents and spouses seeking a service dog to assist them in watching over a disabled loved one with Alzheimer Disease, Downs Syndrome, Autism, TBI (traumatic brain injury), or some other serious cognitive impairment. They fear for the safety of the mentally disabled person. They want a dog trained to alert them if the cognitively impaired family member attempts to leave the house or the yard.

I view such requests with sympathy. It is exhausting to be constantly vigilant. I commend the person for leaving no stone unturned in the effort to keep a loved one safe. Then I level with them. As wonderful as service dogs can be, they are not the right kind of assistive technology for every disability and every situation.

While in theory it is possible to teach a service dog to perform a hearing dog type alert, responding to a bell jingling on a door or back yard gate when it is opened, it is wrong to put a dog in charge of a disabled person's safety. A dog is not capable of handling that kind of responsibility. The dog won't have the faintest idea that his failure to perform as desired could result in an injury to the disabled person or even a fatality. As trainers, we have no way to communicate to the dog the dangers posed by traffic, bullies or inclement weather to a mentally impaired patient. The best we can do is teach a dog that if he performs a certain behavior like barking or seeking out the caregiver in response to a certain stimulus like a bell, he can earn a treat and praise from a caregiver.

Unfortunately, earning a milkbone is not always the highest thing on a dog's priority list. If he is taking a nap or eliminating or watching a squirrel or chewing on a rawhide bone, he may be too preoccupied to respond as the family hopes for. Ill health, thunderstorms, anxiety over changes in the household routine or lack of practice are additional reasons why reliance on a service dog in this situation is akin to playing Russian Roulette.

I've been looking for alternative solutions for families in this predicament. I don't discount the therapeutic value of an assistance dog. I can appreciate the benefits of a facilitated partnership. But on a pragmatic basis, with regard to this particular safety issue, the caregiver needs to find something more dependable out there than a dog's desire to earn a treat.

I recently came across an innovative high tech device which seems quite promising. It is called an "Open Door Security Monitor." It is a wireless alarm system. Powered by batteries, the remote transmitters can be attached to doors, windows or gates without any tools being needed. One monitor can keep track of three transmitters. If anyone opens a door, window or gate to which a transmitter is attached, the small portable monitor emits an alarm and a light on the monitor changes from green to red to indicate which one of the exits have been breached. A caregiver can keep the monitor in the kitchen while she is cooking or on the night stand when she goes to bed. The photo advertising it shows a partially open front door with a baby crawling out of the house, graphically illustrating the kind of situation in which this Open Door Security Monitor could be worth its weight in gold.

*To obtain more information or place an order:* see the Hammacher Schlemmer Catalog [www.hammacher.com](http://www.hammacher.com) (800)543-3366 (1) #64698H \$49.95 Monitor and One Transmitter. *Note:*...the monitor unit can display up to three transmitters on three different exits if you buy additional transmitters. (2) #65004H Additional Door Monitoring Transmitter \$29.95.

Another situation that keeps coming up is one in which a worried parent cannot be in the same room round the clock, seven days a week, watching over a family member with multiple disabilities or a disease with life threatening aspects. A number of mothers have called or written to IAADP seeking a service dog who can watch over a disabled child for a few hours in the afternoon while they do housework or at night while they sleep. The dog is expected to run and find her if the child has a seizure or respiratory crisis or some other serious medical emergency.



Expecting a dog to "go get help" without a command is commonplace after decades of exposure to fictional canine heroes like Lassie and Rin Tin Tin. I grew up in the 1950's watching Lassie and Rin Tin Tin save somebody in almost every television episode. It never occurred to me as a child that Hollywood scriptwriters might be distorting the way real dogs think and act. Today as dog trainer watching the re-runs, it is readily apparent Hollywood often endowed their canine protagonists with unusual reasoning powers and a fictional "rush to the rescue," instinct in the plots they cooked up. They probably regarded such embellishments as "harmless entertainment." Regrettably, the cumulative effect on the public is confusion about what can realistically be expected from a dog, especially one trained to be a service dog.

Misinterpretations of canine behavior compound the problem.

The first time a child has a seizure, a dog may run to "mom" for comfort because he is nervous about the strange behavior. The family assumes the dog came to alert them to the seizure as he is deeply concerned about the child's welfare. The dog's egocentric scaredy cat behavior could serve a useful purpose if it kept reoccurring. Typically, though, most dogs adapt rather quickly to new situations. Pretty soon, a seizure or some other kind of medical problem will become a "ho hum" event, just a normal part of everyday life in that household. The day will come when the dog no longer bothers to get up to nervously seek out reassurance from another family member.

While efforts to train a dog to respond to certain cues (symptoms) may be the game plan, you can't force a dog to medically monitor a patient and take action if certain symptoms occur. He may prefer to hang out with the caregiver or another family member rather than lying for hours next to somebody's bed, keeping vigil. Even dogs who bond closely with a bedridden child or adult can't be trusted to perform as we might wish they would. There will be days when that dog won't feel like interrupting his nap to go earn a cookie. He is not being "bad," or "stupid," he is just being a normal dog. He can't imagine the potentially tragic consequences of his failure to carry out the desired task.

For the sake of the disabled person's safety, I try to educate families that there are limits to what a service dog can reasonably be expected to do. No dog should ever be expected to function as a babysitter or respite caregiver.

Most families appreciate the honesty, for it spares them from going on a wild goose chase and it encourages them to explore alternative ways to improve the safety of a disabled loved one.

For a worried parent or spouse who can't spend all their time at a family member's bedside, catalogs like Sharper Image offer a wall mounted camera and a portable television monitor. The camera can transmit images of the sleeping child or adult to another room. This enhances the chances of detecting a seizure or some other medical emergency "in time." It allows a busy mom to cook dinner for the rest of the family without being tormented with anxiety about leaving the disabled person alone in a bedroom. The equipment which would allow her to keep a weather eye on a loved one costs about \$150. Whether viewed as an alternative to a service dog or as a sensible "back up plan," I'm delighted to discover this kind of security surveillance equipment has now become an affordable option for families in need of it.

I think it also could offer service dog trainers a marvelous training aid, enabling them to monitor the dog's behavior in another room during a real or simulated crisis. It might even enhance the team training in some cases, allowing a trainer to analyze and pinpoint why the dog is not performing as desired when alone with his new partner. [with the student's consent, of course] Additional coaching, specific to the disabled person's abilities and dog's temperament and the nature of the problem could be given to help the student overcome a service dog's resistance or confusion about a certain task.

IAADP's Information and Advocacy Center would like to compile a list of alternative or "back up" ideas for members of the public who seek to address serious safety issues with a service dog. If you someday come across an innovative idea, device or an actual service dog task which might help caregivers who are worried about the safety of disabled loved ones, please consider sharing it with IAADP.