

Is a Service/Facility Dog Right for You?

When considering whether a service or facility dog is right for you, it's important to have realistic expectations. It's not just a matter of acquiring a dog and suddenly having all your problems solved. The journey to success with a service/facility dog requires time, effort, and money. It's also important to remember that a service/facility dog is a working animal and should be treated with respect and professionalism.

By honestly answering the questions below, you can make an informed decision about whether a service/facility dog is the right choice for you.

- Can you demonstrate that you would benefit from the tasks Service Dogs of Virginia service or facility dogs are trained to perform? (i.e. What challenges do your experience in daily life that limit your from living a full life? What do you commonly need help with?
 - Is it physical something the dog can do?
 - Could it injure or scare the dog?
 - Is it easier for a person or technology to assist?

- Can you financially, physically, mentally and emotionally care for the service dog?
 - Are you able to consistently provide the dog with high quality food?
 - Are your able to provide exercise (play, walks, games, enrichments, dog-dog play) for the dog?
 - Do you have access to a fenced yard (not a dog park)?
 - How will you exercise the dog during inclement weather or when you are not feeling well?
 - When the dog is working less will you be able to provide mental stimulation through training sessions or enrichment?
 - Will you be able to provide a dog with a designated area for rest and sufficient time to rest?
 - Will you be able to support the dog if it is stressed?

 - Can you afford routine vet care and monthly health insurance?

- Are those who live with you willing to support your relationship with a service or facility dog and comply with basic guidelines established by Service Dogs of Virginia?
 - Do you have a good support system?
 - Will your family members understand and respect your need for them to distance themselves from the dog initially?
 - Are your children old enough to understand that the dog is a working dog and not a pet?
 - If you have other animals, will they be comfortable with another dog in the house?
 - Will the other animals interfere with the service dog's job?
 - Are you willing to rehome your other animals if asked?

- Bringing a service or facility dog into your life is a major lifestyle change and commitment.
 - Is your lifestyle appropriate for utilizing a dog?
 - Is your life stable enough to add a service dog?
 - Are you planning on moving or switching careers?
 - A service dog will draw attention to you when out in public. Are you comfortable with extra attention or will this cause more anxiety?
 - Are you able to maintain the dog's training and commit to being consistent with training?
 - Do your bad days outnumber your good days? If so, how will your care for a dog during a bad day?
 - How often do you go out in public? To maintain the dog's training public outings are crucial.
 - Is your work/school environment a safe place for the dog?
 - Can you physically handle a dog at work/school?
 - How often would you need to leave the dog alone?

- Not only are you committing to a relationship with the dog, but you are also committed to a relationship with SDV for working life of the dog. Once receiving the dog, are you willing to stay engaged with Service Dogs of Virginia, provide veterinary updates yearly and meet with SDV staff in person at least once every year and more if required.