

Service Dog Foster FAQs

Pawsibilities Unleashed has been providing service dogs and service dog training to people with disabilities since 2007. Every service dog starts as a dog that needs a loving home in which to grow, learn and flourish. You can help us by volunteering to foster a dog and change someone's life. Volunteer dog fostering is a great way to help children and adults with disabilities live more independent and productive lives.

 **How long do fosters keep a dog?** A. Fosters usually keep the dogs for up to 8 months. The length of time may vary, however, depending on the individual dog's development or our need for dogs.

 **What are the responsibilities of a dog foster?** A. Dog fosters are responsible for teaching dogs good behavior at home and in public and what to expect from this busy world. Fosters rear the dogs to become close companions and to trust people. The foster's goal is to develop the dogs into mature, dependable dogs that have the following characteristics:

1. **Well mannered:** Dogs need to have good manners in all situations. They are quiet and calm, eat their own food, are not destructive, do not jump up on people or bolt out the door when open. They are house trained and are comfortable being crated.
2. **Socialized:** Dogs need to be exposed to a variety of people, things and places and accept new situations in a calm manner.
3. **Well traveled:** Dogs are relaxed and comfortable riding in a car and any other modes of transportation available to the foster to expose them to.
4. **People friendly:** Dogs must be friendly with all people, adults and children. So they need to be exposed to a numerous amount of people. They should enjoy receiving praise and be eager to please.
5. **Animal friendly:** Dogs should be calm and appropriate around all different animals including other dogs, cats, birds, livestock, etc.
6. **Responsive:** Dogs must be able to obey basic obedience commands and be cooperative during various training exercises. They should have their skills generalized to a variety of locations.

The actual training where the dogs learn the specific skills and commands to be Service Dogs are done through a comprehensive approach involving their new handler and their family once the dogs are returned to us.

- 🍌 **What if 8 months is too long of a commitment?** We also need short term fosters who will keep a dog for as long as possible then turn it over to us to find a new foster who will continue the process until ready to go to its new home.
- 🍌 **Do I need to feed the dog a specific food?** Yes, we recommend feeding Purina One dog food.
- 🍌 **What breeds of dogs do you use?** We use different breeds of dogs in our program.
- 🍌 **Where do you get your dogs?** We do not breed the dogs ourselves, but we do work with breeders that donate puppies and dogs to our program. We evaluate them to determine the best suited to service dog careers. We also occasionally receive owner turn-ins that may be well suited for service dogs.
- 🍌 **I am 15 years old, can I foster a dog?** You must be 18 years old to be a volunteer foster. Those under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian living in the same household as a co-applicant on the foster application.
- 🍌 **Do I need a fenced yard?** We strongly prefer that our foster homes have a fenced yard. Fosters must agree to follow our supervision and leash requirements. Dogs must not be off leash at any time unless in an enclosed area.
- 🍌 **What type of training will I do with the dog?** A foster must set aside time for daily training and attend obedience classes for the duration of the foster at our facility in Frankfort, KY. The classes are free to our fosters.
- 🍌 **How much exercise do the dogs require?** Dogs need physical activity in the form of play or walking. You should expect to spend 25-40 minutes of exercise per day. Pawsibilities Unleashed fosters are **NOT** allowed to visit public dog parks.
- 🍌 **I work outside the home, can I still be a foster?** Absolutely! Most fosters gain approval to take the dog to work. We recommend speaking with your employer prior to applying. The dog will need regular toileting breaks (especially a puppy) throughout the day.

- 🐾 **Can the dog stay at home while I am at work?** It is imperative to the dog that supervision and socialization are provided throughout the day. You must either have prior written approval to bring the dog to the workplace or provide an alternative for the socialization and care of the dog during the day. When left unsupervised, dogs should always be in an appropriate size crate, not more than 4 hours at one time.

- 🐾 **Who takes care of the dog if I go out of town?** In most cases, the dog can accompany the foster on vacation, or can be placed with a sitter that meets our criteria. If you cannot find someone to keep the dog while you are out of town, we can take the dog during your vacation and you can pick it up when you get home.

- 🐾 **Are there any policies regarding children and pets?** Other pets are limited to a household of two dogs, not including the foster dog. All pets in the home must be well behaved, current on vaccines and over one year of age. There is no policy regarding age or number of children in the home; however, we strongly encourage families with young children to attend a class and / or evaluate carefully the commitment of fostering on an individual basis.

- 🐾 **How do I get prepared for my role as a foster?** Each foster goes through an orientation and is given training support through the weekly training class. We also give ongoing support via text, email, phone or in-person follow up.

- 🐾 **Where can I take the dog in public?** Dogs need to be exposed or "socialized" to activities of daily life. This can include accompanying the foster to work, shopping center or other public places. When in public, the dogs wear a vest or cape identifying the fact that they are being socialized for special purposes. However, we rely upon the goodwill of merchants and business owners rather than the legal system for gaining public access. So you may want to ask ahead of time if you can bring the dog with you to public places.

- 🐾 **What type of training philosophy do you endorse?** We believe in the use of positive reinforcement training. You will be applying the training you learn in your classes each week.

- 🐾 **What happens if my living situation changes and I can no longer care for the dog?** We maintain ownership of each dog in foster and our staff will find a new home for any dog in need.

- 🍄 **How can I possibly give him up when the time comes?** You and the dog you foster will take a long journey together! It's only natural that you will become attached to the dog. The ability to give up a dog comes from knowing that you're raising the dog for a purpose - that the dog will go on to help someone with a disability lead a more social and independent life.

- 🍄 **Will I get to meet the individual who receives the dog I raised?** We will make every effort to unite a foster with the service dog recipient. If an in-person meeting is not possible, we will pass along your contact information.

- 🍄 **What kind of financial commitment is required?** Fosters agree to provide food, supplies, vet care, transportation and related expenses while the dog is in their care. These expenses are usually tax deductible as a donation to us. If there is an emergency situation with the dog's care, we are often able to help with veterinary expenses.

- 🍄 **What if the dog is not placed as a Service Dog?** In the event the dog is released from our program but found suitable for another working role, such as a therapy dog, we will place the dog in that role. Should the dog be unsuitable for placement in any working role, the foster may adopt the dog as their pet or we will place the dog up for adoption to the public. There may be an adoption fee that applies.