



PROCEDURE OF APPLICATION FOR A SUCCESSOR DOG

The working life of most service dogs is eight to ten years. It is a sad moment when service dog partners recognize that their beloved canine companions and loyal, working friends are beginning to slow down or show signs of aging. Service Dogs for America (SDA) understands that it can be difficult to imagine life without your canine partner at your side. As your service dog ages, it is important to speak with your veterinarian and seek his/her opinion on how your dog is performing and how much longer your dog will be able to continue to serve in the capacity of a service dog.

People respond in different ways when faced with having to retire a service dog. Some clients choose to wait to obtain a new canine partner until after their current dog passes on; others begin to apply for a Successor Dog while maintaining and gradually retiring their current dog. The process of applying for a Successor Dog involves completing an updated application, which includes updated medical and veterinarian records as well as a new needs assessment in order to evaluate if a new Assistance Dog will be able to meet your current needs and health requirements. While every client is welcome to apply for a Successor Dog when he/she is ready, it is important to be aware that not every application will be accepted.

*It is the policy and practice of Service Dogs for America (SDA) that applicants **approved** for a successor dog, have priority over first time applicants.*

Successor Dog Full Application & Review Procedure

- SDA will request a release to review all veterinarian records, and a letter of recommendation from your veterinarian is required.
- If possible, an SDA team member will conduct a site visit to observe the handler and current dog working together. If a site visit is not possible, a video of the working team may be substituted.
- The **completed** full application and financial worksheet, including all necessary signatures, is then returned to SDA, along with a non-refundable \$50.00 application fee.
- SDA will share the full application with the review team, which includes the following professionals:
 - Medical Doctor
 - Licensed Psychologist
 - Registered Nurse
 - Licensed Veterinarian
 - Special Needs Educator
 - SDA Trainer
 - SDA Board Member
 - SDA Executive Director

Interview & Wait List Procedure

- Following the review team's receipt of and review of the full application, the applicant will be notified by mail that the documentation is complete and that she/he should contact SDA's Client Coordinator and make an appointment for a personal interview.
- SDA's Client Coordinator will conduct interviews either at the SDA Training Center or in the candidate's home. If deemed appropriate for a successor placement, the individual will be placed on the top of SDA's waiting list. The client will remain on the waiting list until a suitable dog has been chosen for him/her. SDA's Client Coordinator will then contact the client about attending an upcoming Team Training Class.

Pre-Placement Procedure

- Prior to arrival at the SDA Campus, the following documents must be signed and returned:
 - SDA Candidate Bill of Rights
 - SDA Confidentiality Policy
 - SDA Voluntary Photo and Audio Release Form
 - SDA Voluntary Release to be interviewed by Assistance Dogs International Accrediting Team
 - Waiver of Liability Form
 - EMT – Medical Release Form
 - SDA Service Dog Agreement
 - SDA Financial Agreement

Candidate Travel, Lodging, Team Training Fees & Procedure

- Two fully-furnished apartments are available for candidates on campus for Team Training and the cost of lodging is included in the \$20,000 cost of the dog.
- Service Dog Team Training Course: The course, equipment fee and team manual are \$500 for the Team Training course and due upon arrival to campus.
- If candidates prefer not to stay on campus, special arrangements for off-campus accommodations will need to be approved by the trainer prior to arrival.* (*Does not include ND veterans)
- All candidates traveling to the Jud, ND area, will be responsible for arranging their own transportation and attendant care.
- Candidates must make arrangements to obtain their own groceries while on campus.
- Each candidate must be prepared to meet his/her own financial needs during training, including outings and unique equipment need or modifications. We recommend no less than \$100 be set aside for this purpose.
- Individual needs, such as personal care attendants and other individuals in the supportive role are the responsibility of the candidate.

Team Training Procedure

- Course Fee Deposit: (payable 30 days prior to arrival)
Service Dog Team Training Course: The course, equipment fee and team manual deposit is \$350 and is non-refundable for the two-week Team Training course.
- All successor dog teams will be required to **successfully complete** either a one or two-week Team Training Course, as specified by SDA.
- Clients are required to attend all classes, lectures and field trips. Absences beyond one day may result in transfer of a candidate to another class, or required make-up training time.
- Family members, friends, and personal care attendants are encouraged accompany the client and may be invited from time to time to participate and observe some of the training sessions.

Placement Interruption Procedure

- SDA reserves the right to deny an applicant or terminate a placement at any time before, during the Team Training or after graduation, and grounds for termination include:
 - Applicant's unrealistic expectations of an Assistance dog's capabilities.
 - Approved successor dog clients have priority over first time applicants.
 - Current numbers of applicants already on waiting list.
 - Current resources available to SDA to manage waiting list in a timely fashion.
 - Current number and types of dogs available for training and placement.
 - A candidate fails to handle an assistance dog according to SDA requirements.
 - A candidate fails the command/task demonstration and public access test.
 - A candidate handles his or her dog in an abusive or negligent manner.
 - SDA has grounds to believe the dog will not be able to meet the candidate's needs.
 - The placement would jeopardize the dogs' health, safety or well being.
- Completing the Team Training course does not guarantee you will leave SDA's campus with a service dog.

Public Access Test & Certification Procedure

- Candidate must comfortably handle and demonstrate all of the tasks his/her new canine partner was trained to perform for the candidate.
- A passing score on the public access test is required in order for the candidate/dog team to be certified and for the candidate to take possession of the dog.
- 80% accuracy is required on the public access test. Absences and scores below 80% will require a make-up test.

Post Placement Procedure

- After graduation, graduates will be expected to provide on-going information regarding the dogs' work habits, public behavior and veterinary records. Graduates will be expected to make themselves available for aftercare calls, and are required to meet SDA's criteria for team certification renewal.

All applicants will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, creed, sexual orientation and ethnic origin.