LIONS FOUNDATION OF CANADA
DOGGUIDES

Facility Support Dog Program Discovery Package

ABOUT LIONS FOUNDATION OF CANADA DOG GUIDES

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides (LFCDG) empowers Canadians living with disabilities to navigate their world with confidence and independence, by providing a Dog Guide at no cost and supporting them in their journey together. Located in Oakville, Ontario with a breeding and training facility in Breslau (between Kitchener and Guelph), we are the only school to train Dog Guides in seven distinct programs.

From breeding to rearing and training with a lifetime of follow-up services, each Dog Guide requires an investment of $35,000 to train and place. The Foundation relies on donations to provide these special matches and does not receive any government funding. Each client who is accepted into a program is matched with a Dog Guide at no cost.

LFCDG has been operating under the highest standards for 40 years. We are a founding member of the Canadian Association of Guide & Assistance Dog Schools and a fully accredited member of International Guide Dog Federation, Assistance Dogs International, and Imagine Canada.

We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and diverse environment that values and respects the unique perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences of all our stakeholders. We are committed to providing equal opportunities, promoting fairness, and eliminating discrimination in all aspects of our interactions.

We have matched over 3,000 clients to Dog Guides across the country.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Facility Support dogs are for professional agencies that assist individuals in traumatic situations. These dogs are trained to provide on-scene support when requested to those most vulnerable in the community.

The Facility Support Dog Guides provide:

- Comfort to victims or witnesses of a crime or sudden tragedy
- On-scene support to those most vulnerable in our community (i.e., justice process, medical exam, forensic interview, death notification, outreach, therapy)
- Support to persons providing difficult disclosure to police for crimes such as child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, etc.

Note that public access for Facility Support Dog Guides is only granted with permission from the institution or under the provisions of provincial/federal laws (i.e., allowance for a testimonial aid).

The special skills our facility support dogs are trained for include:

- Rest: This skill allows the client to receive light pressure to help with support and self-regulation.
- Hugs: This skill allows the client to receive deep pressure to help with support and self-regulation.
- Go visit: This skill allows the client to receive light pressure against the side of their leg to help with support and self-regulation.
- Switch: This skill allows the dog to walk on either the left- or right-hand side of the client when entering an interview or courtroom.
- Mat: This skill allows the client to place the dog on a specific mat, where they will stay until they are given another cue.
- Under: This skill allows the client to place the dog under the witness stand or chair to provide support.

- Fetch: This skill allows the client to have the dog fetch items they have dropped.
- Wave, spin and bow: These skills can be used as ice breakers when meeting a new client and can also provide comical relief for a child dealing with trauma.

ABOUT OUR DOGS

At Dog Guides, we have established our own breeding program which consists of the following breeds:

- Labrador Retriever
- Golden Retriever
- Labrador Retriever X Golden Retriever
- Standard Poodle – these are reserved for clients with allergies to dog fur

Prior to dogs being matched with clients, the following health procedures are completed to ensure each dog is fit for life as a Dog Guide:

- Hips and elbows x-rayed
- Eyes are screened by an ophthalmologist
- Males are neutered
- Females are spayed
- Wellness exam

All of our puppies are raised by volunteer foster families until they are approximately 10-14 months of age, at which time they return to our training center in Oakville. Once we have determined which program a dog is best suited for, it will enter advanced training for 4-6 months. Training will focus on special skills intended to increase the confidence and daily independence of the client the dog will be matched with. Skills are unique in each program. Dogs are

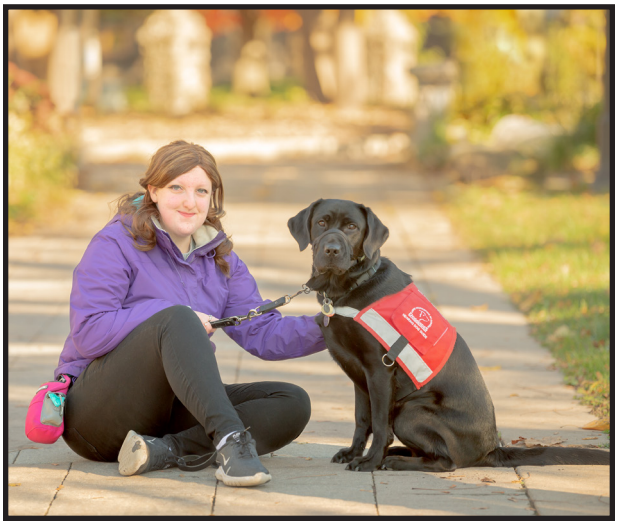
evaluated throughout training to ensure each dog has reached a certain standard before it can be matched with a client. The dogs are approximately 2 years of age when matched with an accepted applicant and placed into team training.

All of our Dog Guides are ambassadors for the organization, so their physical, emotional and mental well-being must be maintained for them to remain working. If it is deemed that the Dog Guide is not being cared for or utilized for its intended purpose, staff will intervene and determine the best course of action for both the Dog Guide and the client.

QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

- Professional organizations operating in Canada that support vulnerable people who have experienced trauma which could be a result of criminal behavior (I.E: victim service agencies, child advocacy centres, and courtrooms)
- There must be physical, social or emotional improvement to the organization's clients with the addition of a specially trained dog-handler team
- Facilities must demonstrate that the future workload and responsibilities of the Facility Support Dog require a trained Assistance Dogs International (ADI) Facility Dog (i.e., they cannot utilize a therapy or pet dog at their facility to fulfill their purpose in applying).
- The Facility Support Dog must enhance existing services already being provided
- The Facility Support Dog must be utilized a minimum of 20 hours per week
- The Facility Support Dog must be utilized a maximum of 30 hours per week
- The organization must be able to meet the emotional, physical and financial needs of the Assistance Dog
- Must have support from senior management to obtain a Facility Support Dog
- Dog must reside and work in a smoke-free environment that is deemed safe
- Handlers have not been convicted of cruelty, abuse, or neglect of animals or humans, crimes against humanity, or violence against animals or humans.

COMMITMENT, RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS



- The client (or in the case of a minor, a parent or guardian) must be willing to attend on-site training and be physically and cognitively capable of participating in the on-site training process, up to 19 consecutive days.
- There are no fees related to applying and training with your Dog Guide. If you are accepted, however, once you have graduated, you become responsible for all costs related to the care of your Dog Guide.
- Clients are responsible for maintaining contact with LFCDG staff and submitting all vet reports for the working life of their Dog Guide. Weight reports are required every six months, and vet reports are required once annually.
- Clients are responsible for keeping all their contact information (address, phone number and email) up to date with Dog Guides at all times.
- Dog Guides will contact each client monthly for the first six months after returning home to provide support, and once annually after the first year for the duration of the Dog Guide's career. Communication can take place via email, phone, video, or in person visits.
- The client is responsible for maintaining the skills of their Dog Guide and is expected to continually work on the dog's obedience and skills.
- If this commitment is not maintained, Dog Guides will contact the client to discuss how the issue can be resolved.
- Applicants have the right to leave the process at any time for any reason after having informed Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides.
- Applicants are not required to undertake any public relations or fundraising activities.

JOURNEY

Step 1: Discovery

You are here! Learn as much about the program as possible to ensure you meet the qualification criteria, and are able to fulfill the commitment, responsibilities and expectations of being matched with a Dog Guide. Applying is an intensive and emotional journey you will be required to participate in if you wish to move forward. It is important to understand all you can before making this important decision.

Step 2: Expression of interest

At certain points in time, we will have room on our waitlists and will begin inviting individuals to initiate the application process. At this early stage, you will tell us a bit about yourself by completing our expression of interest questionnaire. If you meet the basic program requirements, we will arrange a phone interview to discuss your expression of interest, continue the discovery process and help us understand if we are able to move forward in the process. If we receive more expressions of interest than available spots on our waitlist, we will select a limited number randomly and process those expressions of interest only. Those who are not selected will need to wait for the next time Expression of Interests reopen to reapply.

Step 3: Application

If we determine you meet our program qualification criteria and feel you are able to fulfill the commitment, responsibilities and expectations of being matched with a Dog Guide, you will be required to complete a detailed application form. At this time, we will require supporting information from your healthcare providers. We will also schedule an in-home visit to meet with you in person, so that we can learn more about your daily life and see where the Dog Guide would reside. Once we have gathered all this information, it will be brought forward to our Acceptance Committee to determine if we are able to match you with a dog that will improve the quality of your life based on the training a Dog Guide receives. We will consider the benefits the Dog Guide will bring to your life, your means to care for a Dog Guide emotionally and physically, and your understanding of the commitment a Dog Guide requires.

Step 4: Dog and client matching

If you are accepted into a program, we will identify a great canine match based on your specific needs. Once this has happened, we will notify you and begin making arrangements for you to attend team training.

Step 5: On-site training

You will be our guest as we train you to work with the Dog Guide you have been matched with. You will stay with us at our Oakville, Ontario facility for up to 3 weeks of classes. You will attend class with other people who have also been matched with a Dog Guide. During this time, we will provide you with all meals, and will cover the costs of travel for you to come to Oakville. Training is intensive – your days will be filled with classroom learning, hands-on dog handling, excursions and lots of discussions.

Step 6: Ongoing support

We will stay in touch with you for the working life of the dog to ensure you have all the support you need, and that the dog maintains its skills and good health. You will always have access to skilled trainers should you require any help or advice regarding your Dog Guide.

Overall, the journey from discovery to receiving a Dog Guide could take up to two years. Not everyone who begins this journey will receive a Dog Guide. It is our responsibility to place Dog Guides with individuals who will receive the greatest benefit and can commit to maintaining the Dog Guide's skills and good health for its entire career.

Last updated May 2026 Subject to change at the discretion of Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides.

Lions Foundation Of Canada Dog Guides

Canine Vision • Hearing • Service • Seizure Response
Autism Assistance • Diabetes Alert • Facility Support