

CanineSidekicks Therapy Dog Development Program

Placement Dog Program Overview

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Therapy Dog Placement Program is a comprehensive therapy dog development program designed for individuals, organizations, schools, libraries, healthcare facilities, community programs, and other settings where trained therapy dogs provide comfort, engagement, emotional support, and meaningful human-animal interaction.

Dogs in this program are carefully selected from purpose-bred litters, temperament tested, and professionally developed through advanced training. Many dogs accepted into this program were originally evaluated as service dog prospects and demonstrated exceptional sociability, engagement with people, and suitability for therapy work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Dogs accepted into the program undergo structured development including temperament evaluation, socialization, environmental stability, obedience training, confidence building, community exposure, therapy dog skills development, real-world application, and grooming, handling, veterinary examination, and cooperative care procedures.

COMMUNITY ACCESS SKILLS

Training includes loose leash walking, public settling, calm greetings, appropriate social engagement, neutrality around distractions, schools, libraries, healthcare environments, community programs, elevators, automatic doors, vehicle travel, crowded environments, and extended public outings.

CARE, OBEDIENCE & CONTROL

Training includes marker-based communication, sit, down, place, recall, loose leash walking, greeting manners, impulse control, crate training, household manners, vehicle manners, social skills, and cooperative care procedures.

THERAPY DOG SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Training focuses on the development of behaviours required for safe, effective, and professional therapy dog work, including:

- Calm and controlled interaction with unfamiliar people

- Appropriate responses to physical contact and affection
- Emotional neutrality in stimulating environments
- Controlled greetings and engagement
- Settle and relaxation behaviours
- Handler focus and responsiveness
- Adaptability to diverse environments and populations
- Confidence around mobility aids, medical equipment, and environmental distractions
- Professional presentation and working manners

Not all dogs will be suitable for every therapy setting. Placement recommendations are based on each dog's individual temperament, strengths, and suitability.

HANDLER DEVELOPMENT & TRANSITION SUPPORT

- Twelve (12) individualized follow-up training sessions
- Twelve (12) weeks of written guidance and transition support
- Written command list and handling reference guide
- Homework plans and skill maintenance exercises
- Video demonstrations
- Access to Puppy FUNDamentals 2.0
- Access to Life Skills Level 1
- Access to Therapy Dog Foundations coursework

TRAINING HOURS & DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

- 12-Month Placement Dog Program: Minimum 450 professional training hours
- 18-Month Placement Dog Program: Minimum 550 professional training hours

Training hours do not include routine care, feeding, exercise, transportation, veterinary appointments, grooming maintenance, or other management activities.

CERTIFICATION & RECERTIFICATION

Therapy dog certification is valid for three (3) years. To maintain Active Certification status, teams must successfully complete annual recertification requirements and remain in compliance with all program standards, policies, and ethical requirements. Teams that fail to complete annual recertification may have their website verification status updated to Expired Certification until recertification requirements have been completed.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The goal of this program is to develop highly trained therapy dogs that can safely and effectively participate in community-based programs while promoting comfort, connection, emotional well-being, social engagement, and meaningful human-animal interaction. Therapy dogs developed through this program are trained to work as part of a handler-and-dog team and are not represented as service dogs or granted service dog public access rights.