

CanineSidekicks Therapy Dog Development Program

Board & Train Program Overview

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Therapy Dog Development Board & Train Program is designed for individuals, organizations, schools, healthcare facilities, community programs, and volunteer teams seeking to develop a reliable, well-trained therapy dog capable of working safely and professionally in public and facility-based environments.

Dogs accepted into the program participate in a structured professional training program focused on obedience, advanced public access skills, environmental stability, social engagement, handler responsiveness, facility preparation, and therapy-specific interaction skills.

Training plans are individualized based on the dog's temperament, aptitude, existing training foundation, and intended therapy work environment.

PROGRAM PATHWAYS

Fast-Track Certification Program (6 Weeks)

The Fast-Track Certification Program is designed for dogs that already possess a strong foundation of obedience, environmental stability, public manners, and social confidence.

Dogs accepted into this pathway focus primarily on advanced public access development, therapy-specific interaction skills, facility preparation, and certification readiness.

Foundation Development Program (12 Weeks)

The Foundation Development Program is designed for dogs requiring complete development from foundational obedience through therapy dog certification standards.

Dogs accepted into this pathway receive comprehensive training in obedience, public access skills, environmental exposure, social engagement, facility preparation, and therapy-specific interaction skills.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Dogs accepted into the program undergo structured development including suitability assessment, obedience training, socialization, environmental exposure, confidence building,

public access preparation, therapy-specific social interaction training, facility preparation, real-world application, and handler transfer training.

PUBLIC ACCESS SKILLS

Training includes loose leash walking, public settling, neutrality around people and animals, controlled greetings, stores and shopping environments, restaurants and food service environments, medical facilities, libraries, schools and educational settings, elevators and automatic doors, vehicle travel, crowded environments, extended public outings, group activities, and community events.

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, cooperative care procedures, and grooming and handling tolerance.

ADVANCED THERAPY DOG SKILLS

Training includes development of appropriate therapy dog behaviours and interactions including calm engagement with unfamiliar people, appropriate social interaction, accepting physical affection from a variety of individuals, maintaining composure around emotional displays, working around individuals experiencing stress, grief, or emotional distress, controlled interactions with children and seniors, working around mobility aids and medical equipment, maintaining focus despite frequent social interaction, appropriate settling during visits, and professional behaviour in facility settings.

FACILITY PREPARATION

Dogs are prepared for potential therapy work within schools and educational programs, libraries and reading programs, healthcare facilities, long-term care facilities, assisted living facilities, community wellness programs, support programs, public events, and other approved therapy environments.

HANDLER DEVELOPMENT & TRANSITION SUPPORT

- Individualized follow-up training sessions
- Written guidance and reintegration support lessons
- 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 Development training resources

TRAINING HOURS & DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

Fast-Track Certification Program

Dogs complete a minimum of six (6) weeks of advanced public access development, therapy-specific skills training, facility preparation, and certification readiness.

- Minimum Professional Training Hours: 126 hours
- Maximum Professional Training Hours: 147 hours

Foundation Development Program

Dogs complete a minimum of twelve (12) weeks of foundational obedience, public access preparation, environmental exposure, therapy dog development, facility preparation, and real-world application.

- Minimum Professional Training Hours: 252 hours
- Maximum Professional Training Hours: 294 hours

Training hours do not include routine care, feeding, exercise, transportation, veterinary appointments, 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 reliable, highly trained therapy dogs capable of providing safe, positive, and meaningful interactions within schools, healthcare facilities, community programs, and other approved environments.

Graduates are expected to demonstrate excellent public manners, emotional stability, environmental confidence, and the ability to interact appropriately with diverse populations while representing the highest standards of therapy dog professionalism and animal welfare.