

CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc.



Participant Handbook

CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc.

Effective Date: May 2026

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1. Welcome Letter

Welcome to CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc. I am committed to developing safe, ethical, capable, and reliable service dog teams through structured education, humane training practices, and individualized support.

My programs are designed to support participants through the development of real-world skills that improve quality of life, independence, and handler confidence. I prioritize welfare, public safety, neutrality, and functional task training while maintaining high standards for both dogs and handlers.

Participation in the program requires teamwork, consistency, communication, and dedication. I look forward to supporting you throughout your training journey.

2. Organization Information

Organization: CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc.

Location: Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

Training Director: Niomi Smith

Phone: 403-837-5510

Email: CanineSidekicks@hotmail.com

Website: <https://caninesidekicks.Thinkific.com>

Social Media: Facebook.com/SidekickServiceDogs

Participants are encouraged to maintain updated contact information and communicate promptly regarding scheduling, behavioural concerns, emergencies, or program-related questions.

3. Program Overview

The participant program handbook is provided to individuals accepted into or considering participation in CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc. programming.

Programs may include:

- Trauma Support & Alert Program
- Reality Support & Response Program
- Mobility Assistance & Retrieval Program
- Autism Support & Regulation Program

- Hearing Alert & Response Program

Program progression is performance-based rather than time-based. Advancement depends upon demonstrated skill proficiency, stability, handler consistency, and welfare considerations.

4. Definitions and Terminology

- **Career Change:** Removal from service work consideration due to behavioural, medical, welfare, suitability, or safety concerns.
- **Evaluation:** A structured assessment used to review behaviour, training progress, handling skills, or public access readiness.
- **Handler:** The individual responsible for working with, caring for, and maintaining the training of the dog.
- **Humane Training Methods:** Training methods focused on safety, welfare, clear communication, and minimizing fear, distress, or unnecessary discomfort.
- **Neutrality:** The ability to remain calm, focused, and non-reactive around distractions, people, animals, environments, and activity.
- **Placement Dog:** A dog owned or placed through the organization for participation in the program.
- **Public Access:** The ability of a service dog to safely, appropriately, and neutrally accompany a handler in public environments.
- **Public Access Training:** Structured training conducted in public environments to develop safe, appropriate, and neutral behaviour.
- **Service Dog:** A dog individually trained to perform specific tasks that mitigate a handler's disability.
- **Service Dog in Training (SDiT):** A dog actively participating in structured training toward service dog standards.
- **Task Training:** Specific trained behaviours that mitigate disability-related limitations.
- **Team:** The handler and dog working together as a functional partnership.
- **Welfare:** The physical, emotional, and behavioural wellbeing of the dog.

5. Participant Responsibilities

Participants are expected to actively participate in training and maintain humane, respectful handling of their dog at all times.

Participants are responsible for:

- Attending scheduled training sessions and evaluations
- Practising assigned skills between sessions
- Maintaining their dog's health, safety, and welfare
- Using humane training methods
- Maintaining control of their dog in public
- Following program policies and safety requirements
- Communicating behavioural or medical concerns honestly
- Treating the training director, other trainers, volunteers, and other participants respectfully
- Using service dog equipment and identification appropriately

The following may result in suspension or removal from programming:

- Abusive or unsafe handling
- Repeated policy violations
- Aggressive behaviour toward people or dogs
- Dishonesty regarding behavioural history
- Failure to maintain safety standards
- Harassment or discrimination
- Misrepresentation of service dog status or training level

Humane training methods are required at all times.

6. Dog Eligibility and Welfare Standards

Dogs participating in programming must:

- Be physically healthy and medically cleared for training
- Remain current on veterinary requirements
- Be free from unmanaged contagious illness
- Receive adequate rest, enrichment, hydration, and nutrition
- Be groomed appropriately for public participation
- Be removed from training when showing excessive stress or fatigue

The organization reserves the right to pause participation if welfare concerns arise.

7. Equipment Policies

Approved equipment may include:

- • Flat collars
- • Harnesses
- • Long lines
- • Standard 4–6 foot leashes
- • Approved training vests and identification equipment

Equipment considered unsafe, abusive, or inappropriate may be prohibited. Participants must receive approval before introducing new training tools into programming before introducing new training tools into programming.

8. Public Access Standards

Dogs participating in public access training are expected to:

- Remain under handler control
- Demonstrate appropriate public behaviour
- Maintain cleanliness and hygiene
- Ignore distractions unless cued otherwise

- Settle quietly when stationary
- Exit environments when overwhelmed or unsafe

Participation in training does not automatically grant public access certification or legal status.

9. Training Stage Progression Overview

Training progression typically includes:

- Foundation engagement and handling
- Environmental neutrality
- Public manners and impulse control
- Task development
- Public access proofing
- Advanced distraction work
- Graduation evaluation

Progression timelines vary significantly between teams.

10. Attendance, Scheduling, and Cancellation Policies

Participants are expected to arrive on time and communicate scheduling conflicts promptly.

Missed sessions may not be refundable. Repeated absences or late arrivals may affect program participation. Weather-related cancellations or emergency rescheduling procedures will be communicated directly to participants.

11. Media Release and Photography Policy

CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc. may use photographs, video recordings, testimonials, and training footage for educational, promotional, social media, and program development purposes.

As part of the educational and demonstration-based nature of the program, participants may be recorded during training sessions, evaluations, workshops, public access outings, or related program activities.

Participants will be asked to complete a separate media consent form acknowledging the organization's use of photographs, video recordings, testimonials, and social media content.

Due to the instructional and educational structure of the program, participation requires consent to reasonable media recording and educational use related to program activities.

12. Liability and Assumption of Risk

Dog training and public access training involve inherent risk. Participants acknowledge that dogs may react unpredictably and that public environments may contain uncontrolled variables.

Participants remain responsible for safely handling their dog and complying with all safety procedures. Veterinary expenses and damages resulting from participant negligence remain the responsibility of the participant unless otherwise agreed in writing.

13. Service Dog Law and Representation Disclaimer

Service dog laws vary by province and jurisdiction. Participation in programming does not guarantee legal certification, public access approval, or graduation.

Handlers are responsible for understanding and complying with applicable laws regarding representation, identification, and public access standards.

14. Complaint Resolution Process

Participants are encouraged to communicate concerns respectfully and promptly.

Complaints should be submitted directly to the Training Director. Concerns will be reviewed professionally and confidentially. The Training Director reserves the right to establish behavioural expectations during dispute resolution processes.

15. Emergency Procedures

In the event of a veterinary emergency, participants should seek immediate veterinary care.

Training sessions may be paused or cancelled due to:

- Unsafe weather

- Emergencies
- Facility issues
- Dog welfare concerns
- Safety incidents Participants should maintain updated emergency contact information at all times.

16. Record Keeping and Privacy

Participant records, evaluations, and training documentation are maintained confidentially. Information may include:

- Intake forms
- Training progress records
- Veterinary disclosures
- Incident documentation
- Attendance records

Information will only be shared when legally required or authorized by the participant.

17. Graduation and Program Exit Policies

Graduation is based on demonstrated skill proficiency, safety, stability, neutrality, and task reliability.

Not all dogs are suited for public access service work. Some dogs may transition into alternative roles including companion support or sport work.

The organization reserves the right to recommend career changes or withdrawal from programming when necessary for safety or welfare.

18. Participant Resources and Reference Materials

- Service Dog Program Application Form
- Training Stage Progression Framework
- Public Access Behaviour Checklist

- Service Dog Vesting Eligibility Checklist
- Service Dog Team Certification and Graduation Checklist
- Animal Welfare Policy Acknowledgement
- Emergency and Safety Response Guidelines

Participant Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the CanineSidekicks Service Dogs Inc. Participant Program Handbook and understand that participation in programming requires adherence to organizational policies, welfare standards, and safety procedures.

Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____