**K9 Buddy Observation Guidelines**

Thank you for welcoming a potential K9 Buddy dog into your home! The full process for evaluating a K9 Buddy dog includes the following steps: gathering information from staff members who have worked closely with the dog, review of puppy/training history, on/off campus evaluation by a staff member, and a 1-2 week observation in the home of a puppy raiser, puppy sitter, or Foster Care Provider (typically with a child under the age of 12). We so appreciate your assistance with this step and the valuable observations you can share with us!

The goal of this observation period is to gain more information about a dog’s tendencies in the home. If helpful for the 2 week observation, staff will pass along any pertinent training information/history relating to the Buddy eval dog.

K9 Buddy Observation Home Process: Send short videos of different interactions and complete a K9 Buddy Dog Observation Questionnaire (DOQ). The following list can be used as a guide for what we would like to see in the videos:

* The dog ‘hanging out’ while children are playing (not interacting with dog)
* The dog settled next to the children while they do something quiet, like watching TV/reading
* The child petting and gently hugging the dog around the shoulder area
* The children playing with the dog more actively (tug or low-key retrieve games)
* The dog following basic cues given by a child (foundation positions, stay, etc.) off-leash and being given food rewards
* The dog being groomed and fed a meal by the child
* The dog in the yard with children. Start with dog on leash to observe tendencies in this environment. Progress to using long/drag line and practice recall command, using food reward for successful return. If dog demonstrates good recall, progress to off leash time in a fenced yard.
* A short clip of a neighborhood walk in a Gentle Leader with a child handling, double leashed with adult for safety\*. Child can independently walk dog in the home or yard, if appropriate and comfortable. \*If the child is over 9 years old and trained as a puppy raiser or sitter, double leashing is optional.

It is important to find a child participant who is comfortable around dogs and receptive to guidance. The parent needs to be willing to coach appropriate interactions with the K9 Buddy candidates. We serve K9 Buddy clients from 5 years old to adult, so interactions provide the most helpful information if they are with a child of at least 5 years old. Younger children are welcome to interact with the dog, but their role should not be primary in the home observation. Please supervise interactions between dog and child to ensure both parties are comfortable. Safety should always be the primary focus. If at any time the child or dog appears uncomfortable, please discontinue the interaction and call GDB for support.

While many partnered K9 Buddy dogs are very gentle and manageable, these dogs have not yet been selected for the program and are still in the evaluation process. Dogs, like people, have boundaries and can be overwhelmed or startled by excessive or unexpected touch. While we ask for your observations about the dog’s enjoyment of physical touch, we want to be mindful that dogs should also be allowed personal space. If a dog attempts to retreat from an interaction, do not allow the child to follow and continue to engage. Here are some tips to ensure the observation period is enjoyable for all involved.

*Things to Avoid:*

* Crowding the dog with multiple children at time; please have children take turns in petting or interacting with the dog
* “Manhandling” the dog or rough physical interaction (pulling the dog’s limbs, etc.)
* Repeating commands excessively, raised voices, or yelling at the dog
* Unexpectedly grabbing or hugging the dog
* A child pulling a toy or bone out of dog’s mouth

*Things to Focus On:*

* What the dogs seems to enjoy (play, cuddles, preferred energy level of environment)
* How the dog is responding in any interaction
* If the dog’s behavior or responses change with a younger or less skilled handler
* Who the dog appears to be gravitating to in the home (adult, child, etc)
* Having FUN! J

Our goal is not for the dog to be “set up” or “tested” in the observation home, but to receive feedback on common interactions that happen within a home. If a dog demonstrates a behavior that is not desirable, that does not mean the observational period was not a success! Having these pieces of information help us in our overall evaluation process.

Completion of K9 Buddy Observation Home Process:

* Please send the completed DOQ back to [K9BuddyTeam@guidedogs.com](mailto:K9BuddyTeam@guidedogs.com)
* Upload videos to [K9B Upload Link](https://gdftb.app.box.com/f/18d51858f0d3403a9d31432e604bf52b) (include dog’s name in the description of each video)
* Please submit DOQ and videos within 2 weeks of the beginning of the observation period. This helps us move the evaluation process along efficiently, so we can make partnerships and serve clients waiting for dogs.
* Once a determination is made about the dog’s next steps, we are happy to share that information with you. If a dog is successfully partnered, we will share this happy news, as well! Please keep in mind we may be limited in the details that can be shared due to client privacy.

Please reach out with any questions. Thank you for supporting the K9 Buddy Program!

K9 Buddy Team: [K9BuddyTeam@guidedogs.com](mailto:K9BuddyTeam@guidedogs.com)

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