



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

## Career Change and Retired Guides

All dogs bred by Guide Dogs for the Blind go on to do wonderful things, whether by becoming a guide dog, a breeder, a K9 Buddy, a service dog for another organization, or a beloved pet. They are wonderful ambassadors for the program, and make friends throughout the world for themselves and for GDB. Their gifts of love, companionship and service are invaluable in any situation.

### CAREER CHANGE GUIDELINES

The following criteria will be used in career changing dogs:

- No puppy will be career changed without an evaluation by a GDB staff member
- Prior to being career changed, the CFR may develop a planned program of improvement
- Transfer to a different puppy raising home may be considered as an alternative to career change
- Developmental stage, sex, raiser ability, socialization opportunities, and health will be considered prior to a career change
- All puppies will be given every opportunity to succeed
- All career changes will be approved by a Canine Resources Manager, the Puppy Raising Manager or the Vice President of Community Operations

Upon being career changed, some dogs will be identified as candidates for another strategic placement by GDB as described below.

### GDB STRATEGIC PLACEMENTS

Guide Dogs for the Blind places GDB career change dogs with a select number of nonprofit organizations that have been evaluated and screened by GDB (for more information, see Dog Placements with Nonprofit Organizations). These organizations will primarily consist of service dog organizations but may also include other nonprofit organizations such as agencies for people who are blind, canine search and rescue organizations, and other organizations that GDB believes enhance people's lives.

GDB will offer suitable career change dogs to these designated organizations prior to the puppy raisers being offered the option to adopt the dog. Though they vary in mission and size, these organizations all have training methods, veterinary care, and other practices that are consistent with GDB's expectations. A GDB Strategic Placement is defined as a placement which enables our retired or career change dog to work in a service capacity such as, but not limited to, with another service organization, with an Orientation & Mobility professional or other allied professional, or in a professional working role within another organization. GDB Agency Placements include dogs placed to provide emotional support, and community bridge building, within an agency whose constituents would benefit from stress relief through positive interaction with a dog. Examples include, but are not limited to, Police and Fire Departments, schools, and community support agencies. In the details regarding placements below, all of these possibilities are listed as "GDB Strategic Placement".

### PLACEMENT OF RETIRED GUIDES AND BREEDERS

In an effort to respect the love and commitment of all dog custodians, there are policies that guide the placement of retired guides and breeder dogs.

#### Retired Guides

Working guide dogs retired with *less than* one year of service:

1. K9 Buddy

2. GDB Strategic Placement
3. Puppy Raiser (most recent first): personal adoption
4. Client adoption or placement with a close friend or family member
5. Puppy raiser (most recent first): placement with a close friend or family member

Working guide dogs retired with *one year of service or more*:

1. Client adoption or placement with a close friend or family member
2. K9 Buddy
3. GDB Strategic Placement
4. Puppy Raiser adoption or placement with a close friend or family member

### **Health Check & Transportation Costs for Retiring Guides Returning to their Puppy Raisers**

One of the greatest gifts a puppy raiser can give is to provide a loving home to the guide dog they raised as a puppy when it is retired. In order to facilitate these placements, GDB will provide a complete veterinary exam of the dog and, as possible, assist with the logistics of the transport of the dog to its “retirement home.”

In the case of a graduate and puppy raiser who are in contact at the time of the guide dog’s retirement and arranging the adoption themselves (and assuming the dog will not be coming to either campus), GDB will pay for a comprehensive veterinary exam at a vet clinic local to the graduate, so that the puppy raiser has up-to-date information on the dog’s health. Transportation will then be arranged by the puppy raiser and the graduate, at their own expense. If additional logistical help is necessary, GDB will assist with these arrangements to the greatest extent possible.

If the puppy raiser and the graduate are not in contact and the dog is returned to a GDB campus for placement, the dog will receive a thorough veterinary examination by one of the GDB veterinarians. Upon notification of retirement, if the puppy raiser wishes to adopt the dog, staff will assist in making transportation arrangements for the dog. While staff will make every effort to find the most cost- and time-efficient way home (e.g. puppy truck), it will be the puppy raiser’s responsibility to pay for the cost of transportation, if necessary.

### **Retired Breeding Stock**

When a breeder is retired from that role, there are different paths they may take depending on their health, temperament and length of time in the breeder custodian home.

Breeders who are retired *after one year or more*:

1. Breeder Custodian: personal adoption
2. K9 Buddy
3. GDB Strategic Placement
4. Puppy Raiser adoption or placement with a close friend or family member

GDB has the discretion to make exceptions to all dog placement guidelines.

Exceptions may include but are not limited to the following:

- The dog's temperament
- The dog's health
- The dog's compatibility with people and pets in the custodial or adopter home
- The dog's possible effect on a GDB puppy in the home
- Instances of abuse or neglect in a home
- Incidents of dogs running loose at the home
- Questions regarding the raiser or breeder custodian’s ability to effectively care and manage the dog
- Inadequate fencing or other housing needs
- Previous agreements between transfer homes, leaders, and CFR’s
- Other determinations by GDB in consideration for the well-being of the dog and/or the household

Breeder dogs that have been in a breeder custodian home for less than a year may be considered for guide dog training or placed as guides or K9 Buddies. For dogs released in these stages of the program, the order of consideration for a volunteer to adopt the dog will be the same as indicated above.

### **WHO RECEIVES CAREER CHANGE DOGS?**

For dogs that are considered to be healthy manageable companions, GDB assesses the dog to determine if the dog is a possible GDB Strategic Placement. If the decision is that the dog will be offered in one of these capacities, the puppy raiser is notified.

If the dog is available for adoption, the most recent puppy raiser has the first option to adopt the dog as a pet. If the most recent raiser does not wish to keep the dog personally, the previous raiser has the next choice to adopt the dog personally.

If the dog has had more than two raisers and neither of the previous two wish to keep the dog personally, other previous raisers are offered the dog in the reverse order that they raised. Example of a dog that's had four raisers: 4th raiser = 1st choice, 3rd raiser = 2nd choice, 2nd raiser = 3rd choice, 1st raiser = 4th choice. If no raiser wishes to keep the dog personally, raisers have the option of placing a career change dog only with a close family member or a close friend and in the order described above (see further guidelines for placing with a close friend or family member – below), going in the same order as described above. As discussed above, GDB has the discretion to make exceptions to the above placement guidelines.

### **PUPPY RAISER ADOPTION OF A CAREER CHANGE DOG**

#### **How does a puppy raiser decide to keep a dog they raised?**

Raisers have a great deal of attachment to the puppies that they loved, cared for, and trained, often watching them grow from cute, cuddly puppies into mature dogs. As a result of these heartfelt emotions, a raiser may feel drawn to taking a career change dog back even if adopting the dog does not really suit their personal situation. GDB staff understands a raiser's feelings of love and responsibility to the dog yet place no responsibility on raisers to keep a dog that they have raised. Unless a raiser is sure that they can provide a lifetime quality home for a dog, GDB prefers to place the dog through its Dog Placement program (see GDB's Dog Placement Program below).

#### **Things to Consider Prior to Adopting a Career Change Dog**

- Is there a sense of obligation to adopt the dog?
- The dog may be a larger size or have different behaviors than when it entered training.
- Is this the best possible home for this dog?
- Will the dog get enough stimulation (playtime, exercise)?
- Does the entire family agree on adoption?
- For youth raisers: do the parents want the dog as well? Is the youth going to college soon or moving out on their own? What are the plans for the dog if this is the case?
- Will the dog get along well with all family members: adults, small children and pets?
- If there are other dogs - a GDB puppy, other career change dogs, or pets – will each animal get sufficient individual love and care?
- Can the puppy raiser afford the food and veterinary care of a large-breed dog?
- Is the yard or dog run securely fenced and at least 5 feet in height?
- If the home has a pool, is it safely fenced?
- Will the dog have adequate shelter from both the rain and sun?
- Will the dog be inside the house (at least at night)?
- How much time will the dog be alone?
- If renting, does the landlord approve?

If any of the preceding questions cause doubts, it might be best to let GDB place the dog.

#### **Raisers Who Decide to Adopt a Career Change Dog as a Pet**

- GDB legally transfers the dog to the raiser after the Agreement Confirming Gift of Dog contract has been completed
- Any transportation costs are paid by the raiser

- With the exception of a small number of pre-approved cases, veterinary and all other expenses are the responsibility of the raiser
- If at any time the adopter cannot keep the dog, the adopter should notify and return the dog to GDB
- If at any time in the dog's life it transfers to a new home, please complete and return to GDB a Supplemental Dog Transfer Form (included with the adoption packet)
- Raisers are not allowed to sell career change dogs
- If concerns about a dog's behavior or health arise, please contact GDB Dog Placement program staff

### **Raiser Placement of a Career Change Dog**

If a raiser decides to not personally keep the dog, they also have the option to place the dog. In these cases, the puppy raiser may only place the dog with a close friend or close family member. GDB has found that the placements of dogs by raisers with people whom they do not know extremely well are often not successful. If a raiser cannot keep a career change dog as their own or place the dog with a very trusted person, GDB will happily place the dog.

GDB takes great care, reinforced by years of experience, in the placement of career change dogs. GDB has two Dog Placement offices, one in California and one in Oregon, that are staffed by professionally trained people whose sole jobs are to screen, select, and educate prospective homes. GDB offers not only these preliminary services but also follow-up services to ensure that the dog is happy in the new home.

### **Things for the Puppy Raiser to Consider Prior to a Close Friend or Close Family Member Placement**

- Does the dog have temperament, management, or behavior concerns that make it a challenging candidate for placement?
- If the dog has problems in the adopters' home, can the puppy raiser offer resources to help work through the problem?
- If the dog does not work out in its new home, is the puppy raiser willing to take it back or return to GDB?
- Would this dog be better placed by GDB's experienced Dog Placement staff?

### **Things for the Puppy Raiser to Consider about the Prospective Home**

- Are the prospective adopters receptive to and understand how to manage any potential negative behaviors and/or health problems?
- Does everyone in the home want the dog?
- Is the potential adopter making a decision on impulse or as a surprise gift for someone else? This is not a good way to make such an important decision.
- Will the dog get along well with all family members (adults, small children, pets/livestock)?
- Is anyone in the home allergic to dogs?
- What is the prospective adopter's motivation in wanting this dog as a pet?
- Are they interested in this dog because they really know and like it?
- Have they spent any substantial amount of time with the dog?
- Do they only want the dog because he is a "good deal?"
- Do they only want the dog as a favor?
- Do they only want the dog because it has come from Guide Dogs for the Blind?
- Do they understand that all dogs have dog behaviors, good and bad, even dogs from GDB?
- Do they understand all the responsibilities involved in providing a lifetime, loving home?
- Are all their current pets well cared for, including grooming, housing, and vaccinations?
- Have they had dogs in the past? What became of these dogs?

These factors can often best predict a dog's happiness in a new home.

Once a raiser can confidently recommend a prospective close friend or family member, the puppy raiser should refer to the earlier section Things to Consider Prior to Adopting a Career Change Dog. In addition to these considerations, is the close friend or close family member able and willing to obtain and use a crate? Are they willing to take the dog through obedience classes or private training to better understand and manage the dog? Are they familiar with the grooming needs of this breed? Are they willing to provide flea control and heartworm preventative? And lastly, are they planning to move in the near future? If there are any concerns about the success of the proposed placement, please let GDB select a home instead.

### **Once Satisfied with a Particular Close Friend or Close Family Member Placement**

- Introduce the dog to the adopters at their home
- Make sure that no family members are intimidated by the dog
- Make sure that all family members are gentle and kind, yet consistent
- Make sure that there are no possible conflicts with other pets, inside and outside the home
- Double check the yard for safety and security

### **If all goes well...**

- Any transportation costs to transport the dog to the new home are the responsibility of the puppy raiser or the adopters.
- With the exception of a small number of pre-approved cases, veterinary and all other expenses are the responsibility of the adopters.
- If questions arise in the new home, please ask the adopters to contact the GDB Dog Placement program for a consultation.
- If it doesn't work out with the adopters, have them contact the puppy raiser or GDB directly to return the dog.

### **GDB'S DOG PLACEMENT PROGRAM**

The GDB Dog Placement staff individually screen and select a home for each dog. GDB receives countless inquiries each year from people interested in receiving a career change dog.

- Potential homes are screened to determine their suitability to adopt a career change dog, including a home visit/fence check.
- Potential adopters must come to GDB to meet the available dogs.
- Individual dogs are matched to individual homes.
- Dog Placement staff personally interview and introduce dogs to their potential adopters.
- GDB charges an adoption fee of \$2,000.
- GDB provides follow-up information: booklets and training references.
- GDB welcomes back any dog that is not compatible with the new home.

It is difficult for raisers when they, or a close friend or family member, are not able to provide a home for a career change dog. When this happens, the dog's placement becomes the responsibility of GDB's Dog Placement program. GDB spends a great amount of time, effort, and love with each adoption.

Members of the public express interest in adopting a GDB career change dog by filling out and submitting a Career Change Application. Adoption is generally only open to those living in the same states in which GDB has the puppy raising program. After careful review, only those individuals who qualify are kept on file. Acceptable applications are entered into GDB's computer database.

GDB Dog Placement (DP) has a lot of information on each dog: the puppy history (monthly reports, the Final Report, Fun Things About my Puppy, CFR reports, etc.); training and health information; and release reason. If relevant, those involved in the formal training of the dog at GDB are also consulted for their first-hand knowledge of the dog. All of this information gives GDB a basic profile of the type of home and handler (retired couple, family with young children, a home with or without other pets, an experienced dog person, etc.) that would match best with a particular dog.

By searching the available applications in the database, GDB develops a list of potential matches. Then, considering the dog's strengths and weaknesses, DP staff spends hours reviewing the applications and talking on the phone with several potential adopters to find a home that seems best suited for a particular dog. Once GDB feels there is a possible match, the potential adopter is notified of an available dog. The dog is described in detail, both the positives and negatives. It is very important that GDB is straightforward about the dog. GDB's success depends on giving full disclosure on a dog to avoid surprises in the adoptive home.

If the potential adopter is interested, the individual and/or family are required to meet the dog on campus. During this 1-2 hour visit and showing of the dog, DP staff discusses dog behavior, demonstrates training techniques/tools, and discusses the need to set limits as well as praise the dog. GDB encourages the whole family to participate, especially if there are young children or other pet dogs in the household.

Not all meetings end in an adoption. Sometimes the adopter is just not a match for the dog, and the process begins again.

It takes time to find the right match. It is never the case of just assigning a dog to the next applicant on the list. As dogs wait for new homes, most adjust well to life in the kennels, continue to mature and learn from their assigned Canine Welfare Training Technician who continues to groom, train, and exercise them.

When it appears that there might be a likely match between adopter and dog, a mandatory fence check is done prior to placement. This check provides GDB with an opportunity to observe the home environment. Fence checks are done by GDB staff, leaders or volunteers.

GDB's primary goal in placing a dog is with a family or person who will provide a lifetime of love, care, and companionship. Since these dogs were raised to enjoy active involvement with their people, GDB encourages applications from those who want dogs for agility, obedience, tracking, pet facilitated therapy, or other disciplines and hobbies.

### **RETURNING A CAREER CHANGE DOG TO GDB**

Guide Dogs for the Blind will gladly take back any dog that it has whelped or raised. As would any reputable breeder, GDB feels responsible for the welfare of all of its dogs. GDB will provide transportation for the dog's return to us. This is the case for dogs adopted by puppy raisers and clients, outside adopters or other organizations.

If a volunteer ever has doubts about keeping a career change dog of their own, or hears of any GDB dog adopter that is no longer able to care for their dog, for whatever reason, they are encouraged to notify GDB Dog Placement staff immediately.