



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Volunteer

Application Process

Getting Started

Once a person interested in becoming a puppy raising volunteer has begun attending meetings with a local puppy raising group, they will be learning about the puppy raising process, including the basics of guide dog puppy handling, submitting an application to become an official volunteer, and reviewing the basic requirements of the program. In addition, the person may receive a club activity description that gives basic information about the club and its functions.

Program Participation Requirements

A Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) puppy raising volunteer must be at least nine years of age. For those under the age of 16, the following requirements must also be met:

- Those under 16 years of age will participate in volunteering and raise a puppy under the mentorship of a parent or other designated adult. This designated adult may be a leader or other screened adult member of the puppy club.
- Parent(s) or adult mentor(s) of youth under 16 will commit to ensuring that all program requirements for puppy raising are met.
- A parent or guardian must complete and sign the Parental/Guardian Consent & Release form in the Puppy Raising Volunteer Application.
- At least one parent/designated adult mentor will attend all events, meetings, and activities with the youth under 16.

All additional family or household members that will handle the puppy at home or on outings must attend at least one club meeting within each 3-month period. In this way, all members of the household receive the same instruction and support while raising the puppy.

Co-Raising a Puppy

Some volunteers are not able to raise a puppy full time due to a work schedule, family responsibilities, or other reasons. In such cases, the volunteer can work with the club leader to find another volunteer in the club with whom to co-raise a puppy. This kind of arrangement allows more individuals and families to raise a puppy in a way that suits their lifestyles. In addition, co-raising can help a puppy be more comfortable with transitions in its schedule and to become accustomed to different handlers, both of which are helpful for the development of a working guide dog. At the same time though, co-raising a puppy requires a great deal of cooperation and communication. For example, it is important to think about which raiser is going to make required vet care appointments and other such responsibilities. The [Co-Raising Agreement](#) located in the Puppy Raising Manual was designed to help both co-raisers make decisions and feel confident that the puppy they share will have its needs met in a consistent equitable way.

Guidelines for Puppy Raisers with Multiple Dogs

- The total number of dogs allowed in any GDB puppy raiser home will vary with each individual's home situation. The leader must give approval for multiple dog households with final approval by the GDB Community Field Representative (CFR).
- GDB puppies may not reside in a home containing another animal that GDB staff determines to present a hazard to the puppy's safety or development.
- The maximum number of GDB puppies allowed in any one raiser or puppy-sitting home is two.
- A GDB puppy and any other puppy being raised by the same household must be at least 6 months apart in age, or less at the CFRs discretion.
- Except in cases of a brief overlap, a single individual may raise only one GDB puppy at a time.

Submitting an Application

When a person interested in becoming a puppy raising volunteer has attended a minimum of three consecutive meetings, they may request an application from their club leader. The leader, upon approval, will provide the Puppy Raising Volunteer Application for completion. The applicant may be approved to raise a puppy after having met the following requirements:

- A successful home visit from club leaders (e.g., no further modifications to house or yard required).
- Demonstration of a minimum level of puppy handling skills, including appropriate use of cues, proper training techniques, appropriate use of head collars, etc.
- Completed a minimum of five days of puppy sitting of program puppies.

Compliance with GDB Guidelines, Policies and Procedures

All GDB guidelines, policies, and procedures are to be adhered to by all associated with the puppy raising program, including GDB employees, club assistants, raisers, leaders, raiser parents, and others participating in the program. GDB policies, guidelines, and procedures have been designed to ensure that all activities related to the organization are productive, safe, ethical, and legal. Failure to comply with any aspect of these policies and guidelines can lead to the suspension or termination of one's volunteer relationship with GDB.

Volunteer Term of Service

GDB is greatly appreciative of the time that all volunteers generously devote to its organization and mission. Personal commitments and goals may at times limit one's involvement. Volunteers are engaged for no definite period of time. Volunteers may terminate their relationship with GDB at any time, with or without reason or notice, and GDB may do the same.

Equal Opportunity

GDB believes that all people are entitled to equal opportunity under the law. GDB, its staff, and its volunteers may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, medical condition, disability, veteran status, marital status, or any other consideration that has been made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.

Parental Support and Participation

Raising a puppy involves a great degree of responsibility and patience. Puppies can be challenging by exhibiting behaviors including jumping and mouthing. For this reason, parental support is critical for youth puppy raisers.

Parents need to realize the responsibility that their child is assuming when agreeing to raise a GDB puppy. While GDB puppies are bred to be more manageable and agreeable to handling and instruction, the level of good behavior that they must achieve surpasses that of most household pets. Traits and behaviors that are tolerable in the family dog may not be acceptable in a guide dog candidate and may lead to a dog being career changed or transferred.

Puppies, like children, develop best in an atmosphere of trust, encouragement, and praise. Parents are asked to provide strong emotional support for their children in the raising of GDB puppies. GDB asks that parents emphasize effective and consistent techniques and socialization as well as fair and humane treatment of the puppy that their child is raising.

GDB asks for assistance in providing a safe environment in which children can attend GDB functions. GDB strongly believes in promoting a safe environment for children and in providing carefully screened adults to work with children. To help us ensure success, parental support of all guidelines is needed, along with parental involvement in club functions and open conversation between parents and youth about what is and is not appropriate interaction by adults.

Parent and Other Custodian Responsibilities:

- Co-signing on their youth's volunteer application.
- Participating in a home interview with their child prior to a puppy being assigned to the home.
- If involved in a direct supervisory, teaching, or advisory role with youth, being screened for child welfare issues.
- Completing and signing any relevant documents as required by GDB.
- Being knowledgeable and supportive of GDB guidelines as they pertain to GDB prescribed interaction with youth.
- Following the written and verbal instructions of GDB regarding puppy raising, club management, ethical behavior, interactions with staff, volunteers, and the public.
- Positively representing GDB, both formally and informally, in their puppy raising clubs and communities.
- Reporting to GDB any deviation from prescribed guidelines for interaction with youth.
- Ensuring that their child attends the required club and GDB functions as designated by the leader or GDB staff.
- Transporting their child to and from required GDB events. Volunteer transportation to and from GDB events is not a GDB responsibility. GDB has no liability - legal, financial or otherwise - for such activities.
- Being participants and supporters in the raising process of their child's GDB puppy and attending their child's puppy club meetings and events.
- Ensuring that their child follows the written or verbal guidelines outlined by GDB concerning the raising and care of a GDB puppy.

Puppy Raising Leader Responsibilities:

- Completion of a leader application package.
- A successful background screening, and completion of orientation on child welfare issues.
- Minimum age of 18 years.
- Compliance with all GDB program requirements and guidelines.
- No actions that would negatively affect the wellbeing, physical or otherwise, of youth or animals.
- Initiating, receiving, and processing raiser applications.
- Conducting a thorough home interview with each applicant and family to determine suitability of the raiser and the home environment.
- Ensuring each raiser has access to all GDB puppy development and policy and procedures materials; thoroughly reviewing the contents of these materials with each raiser when the puppy first arrives home and on a regular basis thereafter.
- Teaching raisers the techniques and guidelines as established by GDB regarding puppy handling and socialization.
- Assist with the recruitment of new club members.
- Representing a positive image of GDB to the public.

- Working with their designated CFR to determine the best possible environment for the puppies.
- Notifying the CFR of any situation that may be potentially unsafe, contentious, litigious, harmful to the reputation of GDB, or otherwise harmful.
- Following all GDB protocols and policies for working with and protecting youth.
- Mediate conflicts between club members.

Length of Term

- All volunteers serve as needed at the discretion of the organization.
- Leadership is not transferable from club-to-club without GDB approval.

GDB Puppy Raiser Requirements:

- Minimum age of 9 years; no upper age limit.
- Completion of Puppy Raising Volunteer Application
- Successful home visit by a GDB approved leader (this includes all homes in which the puppy will reside).
- Using GDB approved training and management techniques when working with or caring for GDB puppies.
- Compliance with all GDB guidelines.
- Submission of monthly reports on puppy's progress and other reports, per program requirements.
- Communicating effectively with other volunteers, GDB staff, and the public.
- Direct one-to-one adult contact with youth requires a successful background screening, signing of a contract, and completion of orientation on child welfare issues.
- No actions that would negatively affect the wellbeing; physical or otherwise, of the volunteer, other raisers, or an animal.

Length of Term

- All volunteers serve as needed at the discretion of the organization.
- Raising a GDB puppy is not necessarily transferable between puppy clubs (e.g. when moving) and must be approved by the CFR.

Puppy Raising Volunteer Application Procedures and Guidelines

The following procedures outline the application process for both adults and youth volunteering to assist GDB in its puppy raising program.

All persons wishing to become puppy raising volunteers must request approval through the club leader. Once approved, the leader will provide the Puppy Raising Volunteer Application and the applicant must complete and sign all appropriate sections for submission.

Every person has a right to request an application, even if a leader has concerns regarding them as a viable applicant. With the CFR's approval, leaders approve or deny all volunteer applications for their club. The supervising CFR must be notified prior to a leader's approval or denial of any application (see the Recruiting Puppy Raising Volunteers section below).

Leaders will use the online Puppy Raising Community to submit information for new applicants and request the completion of Puppy Raising Volunteer Application(s). These members of the club will remain in the "Applicant" status until 1) the person becomes an official puppy sitter or puppy club volunteer in the puppy club; or 2) the person withdraws from the club and is no longer interested or involved in the program.

For more information and details about the Puppy Raising Application and Puppy Placement Questionnaire (PPQ) process, visit the Forms and Resources section of the Puppy Raising Community.

Outside Organization Application and Screening

Any volunteer who wishes to be concurrently enrolled in another organization (examples: 4-H, FFA) must meet all application and screening guidelines of that organization. These volunteers must contact the other entity as needed.

Applying for Leadership

CFRs and/or the Puppy Raising Manager have the responsibility of interviewing, evaluating, and selecting leader candidates. Leaders may not appoint additional leaders or successive leaders. Leaders who have recommendations for leader applicants should inform their CFR.

The training provided for new leaders takes place over a period of up to one year and is comprised of the following steps:

1. Submit completed Puppy Raising Leader Application to appropriate CFR.
2. Pass background screening.
3. Complete leader policies and procedures training presented by CFR.
4. Complete puppy handling training presented by CFR or designated leader.
5. Observe four puppy field evaluations with CFR.
6. Understand information needed in, and importance of, monthly puppy reports and the Final Report.
7. Observe an experienced leader on four home visits for Puppy Raising Volunteer Application approval and review the application. See the Home Interview Guide in the Forms and Resources section.
8. Attend three GDB training events approved by CFR.
9. Mentor with an experienced leader, designated by CFR.
10. Attend four meetings or outings of other puppy raising clubs.

If a leader will supervise a puppy raising club under the umbrella of 4-H, FFA, or other such program, he or she will be required to attend that organization's training sessions as well.

Confidentiality and Security

All records relating to a leader's application and screening process will be maintained as confidential. Only the following GDB staff will have access:

- GDB President and CEO
- GDB Vice President of Community Operations
- GDB Puppy Raising Manager
- GDB Puppy Raising Administration Manager
- GDB CCP Operations & Project Manager
- GDB Vice President of Human Resources

GDB at its sole discretion may contact legal counsel to review the appropriateness of a volunteer to work with youth or otherwise volunteer for GDB.

As part of required security:

- All applicable records will be stored in a secured part of the GDB database with restricted access.
- All applicable records will be accessible only to persons referenced above.
- All other reasonable attempts at confidentiality will be maintained.
- All applicable records will be maintained throughout a volunteer's service.
- As required by law, a volunteer can have access to their files.

Recruiting Puppy Raising Volunteers

GDB and individual clubs need puppy raising volunteers to continue providing guide dogs to people who are blind or visually impaired. The continued health of the organization and its mission depend on each club's recruitment efforts.

In addition to providing a number of raisers consistent with the number of puppies, continual recruitment has other benefits as well:

- An opportunity to select only the most promising candidates.
- A waiting list for puppies provides leaders more opportunity to:
 - thoroughly screen applicants
 - require an applicant to attend several meetings before assigning a puppy
 - train volunteers prior to puppy placement
 - assign volunteers to supportive roles other than puppy raising.

Volunteers, either while raising a puppy or not, may volunteer as other types of club volunteers. Leaders can assign a role to each person as appropriate (e.g. club event coordinator, Treasurer).

Factors that help qualify an applicant include, but are not limited to:

- Commitment to GDB's Mission and Values and Behaviors guidelines.
- Ability to learn and apply dog handling skills.
- Good communication skills.
- Willingness to follow instructions.
- Willingness to work cooperatively with club leaders, other club members, and GDB staff.
- Willingness to positively promote puppy raising and GDB to the public.
- Consistent attendance at meetings.

Factors that would disqualify an applicant or returning raiser include, but are not limited to:

- A history of actions that GDB deems inappropriate to be in a setting with youth.
- Inability to meet basic program guidelines outlined in the Puppy Raising Volunteer Application process and requirements.
- A person in the home who may be endangered by the behaviors of a GDB puppy.
- Other pets that may negatively impact the proper development of a GDB puppy.
- Too many other dogs or other pets in the home.
- Prior failure to meet GDB program requirements or lack of compliance with GDB values, behaviors, and standards of conduct.
- Use of non-GDB approved training techniques.
- Demonstrated consistent lack of ability to handle a dog in accordance with GDB standards.

Valid reasons for declining an application are performance-based and factual. Evaluation of an applicant may not include either speculation or personal feelings. Leaders should consult with their CFR whenever they have a question about an applicant's suitability for the program.

GDB does not discriminate against any applicant for volunteer service in any program based on race, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, physical disability, marital status, veteran status, gender, or any other factor prohibited under local, state, or federal law. GDB leaders are expected to abide by this policy in all interactions with volunteers and staff.

Protected Information

- Date of birth

- Marital status
- Name of spouse
- Spouse's occupation, place of employment, or time on the job
- Number of children and ages
- Whether child care can be arranged for children
- Ancestry
- National origin or race
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Union or political affiliations

The above information may be obtained only after retention of the volunteer's service and must not have any bearing on decisions regarding qualifications.