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Canine Court Companion Program Information Booklet



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Thank you for your interest in the Canine Court Companion Program (CCCP).

The following Information Booklet contains information about the program which we hope you will find useful.

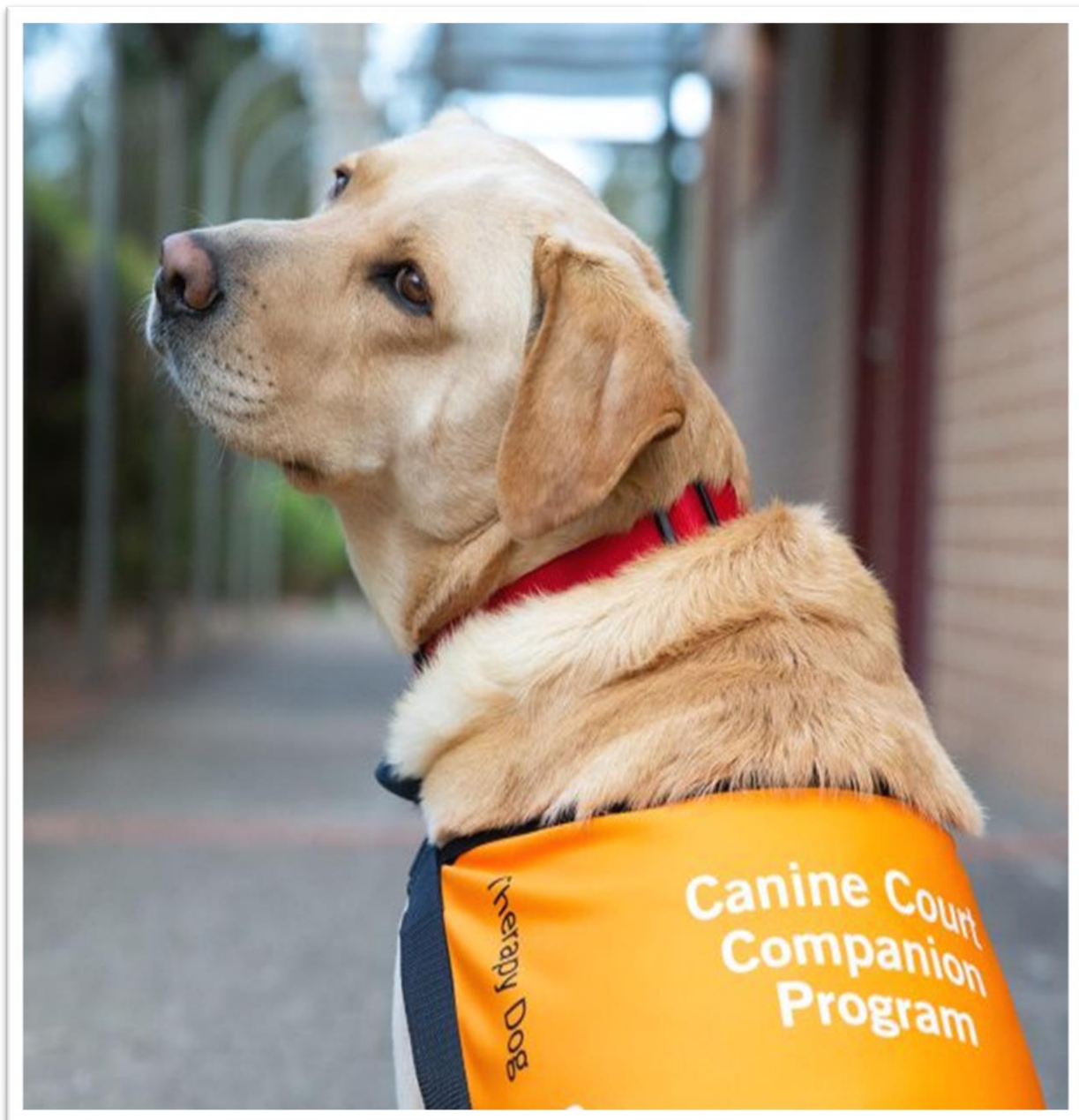
The CCCP is a collaborative initiative between Department of Justice and Communities – Victim Services and Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

Since its induction in 2018 the CCCP has been made possible because of generous Volunteers who strive to make our communities better by donating their time and expertise to giving back.

Having a dog by your side whilst doing this is the cherry on the top!

Therapy Dog Team

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1. CCCP Overview

Objectives

The primary objectives of the Canine Court Companion Program are;

- To reduce the negative impact of court attendance and support victims of crime through the medium of a specially selected and trained Therapy dog.
- Provide nominated courthouses with Therapy dog teams who are confident, empathetic, and committed to their roles.
- Create opportunities where members of the public can be involved in their community in a meaningful way through a well-structured and supported program.

What are the benefits of a Therapy Dog?

Interacting with Therapy dogs has been scientifically proven to lower heart rate, increase speech and memory function and heighten mental clarity. Therapy dogs can also reduce anxiety, offer a pleasant distraction, and provide non-judgemental support to those in need. In a courthouse environment emotions and stress are often at a high and victims of crime are at risk of being re-traumatised and left feeling vulnerable. Interacting with a Therapy dog can reduce these feelings and improve the wellbeing of the individual.

Previous trials of dogs used in a therapy capacity in courthouses around the world have proven to be highly successful with positive effects felt by not only the victims of crime, but their support networks and staff who work in the legal system.

What does the program look like?

Therapy dog teams attend nominated courthouses on assigned days at an agreed time to offer support and interact with court users and court staff with a specially trained and selected Therapy dog.

Therapy dog teams primarily offer support in the public areas of the courthouse, including the main foyer, waiting rooms, interview rooms (when invited) and safe

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rooms. Teams may be asked to assist police or court professionals with individuals who are anxious and may benefit from spending time with a Therapy dog.

Selected courts

Metro courts

Manly, Gosford, Sutherland, Burwood, and Campbelltown.

Regional courts

Lismore, Goulburn, Nowra, Orange, Wagga Wagga and Taree.

When

Therapy dog teams are required to attend court for a 1.5 hour visit between 9am – 12pm (as per arranged with the court registrar). Most visits occur between 9am – 10.30am.

Training

Volunteers will be required to attend an online training session with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT staff. Volunteers will also receive dog handling training at time of Therapy dog placement.

Court days of operation

Visits days vary between each court and are currently:

Manly: Tuesday (AVO – double visit), Wednesday and Thursday

Gosford: Monday, Tuesday (AVO), Wednesday and Friday

Burwood: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (AVO – double visit)

Sutherland: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

Campbelltown: Tuesday (AVO – double visit), Wednesday and Thursday

Orange: Tuesday (AVO) and Thursday

Goulburn: Monday and Tuesday (AVO)

Nowra: Tuesday, Wednesday (AVO), Thursday, and Friday

Lismore: Monday, Tuesday (AVO), and Wednesday

Wagga Wagga: Tuesday and Thursday (AVO)

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Taree: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday (AVO)

Some variations exist between courts dependent on whether that court also holds Children Court and District Court sittings. Days may change as required by courts but is actioned with notice. Please note, Victim Services prefer female handlers for days where domestic violence and AVO cases are heard.

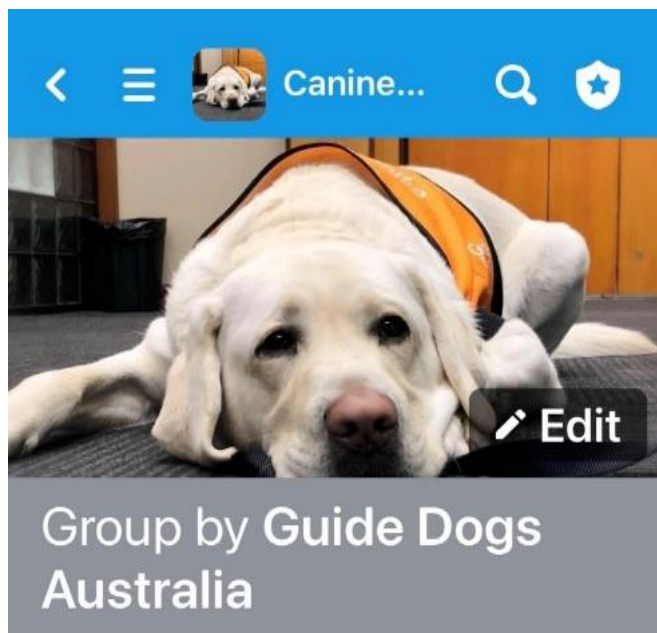
Teams per court

Teams vary between courts and are dependent on the number of visits required each week. There are generally four dedicated Therapy dog and Handler teams per Metro court and two dedicated Therapy dog and Handler teams per Regional court. Teams share the load and create a support network so that court visits can be maintained should a volunteer be unable to attend on their assigned day. Teams may also wish to meet up for training sessions and doggy play dates.

Communication

Communication is largely received via the Canine Court Companion Program Facebook group (a closed group specifically for CCCP Volunteers), dedicated court team Messenger groups, and email. It is preferred if you have access to or the capacity to use Facebook and Messenger.

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Canine Court Companion Program >

Private group · 118 members



 **Manage**

 **Invite**

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Volunteer Options

I would like to Host a dog and become a Therapy Dog Handler

Fantastic! If you can commit to at least 1 day per week at a nominated courthouse and you have the capacity to care for a Therapy dog in your home, we would love to have you on board!

I currently own a dog from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and am interested in becoming a Therapy Dog Handler

If you Puppy Raised a dog for Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and it was deemed unsuitable to be placed with a client in one of our programs due to a minor health or temperament/behavioural concern and you would like to volunteer, please contact us further to discuss.

I would like to volunteer with my own Labrador or Golden Retriever

Although many of the dogs used in the CCCP are from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, should you wish to have your dog assessed for the program we would be happy to discuss this further with you.

2. What does hosting a Therapy dog entail?

Ideally Hosts will live close to a nominated courthouse to reduce travelling time and encourage compliance with visits.

Hosts are expected to allow the dog in their home, sleep inside their home and provide adequate exercise and mental stimulation. The Host will not leave the dog in most cases for more than 4 -5 hours a day by itself. The Host will also have adequate outdoor shelter and a dog-safe yard, gates and home to ensure the welfare of the dog. The Host will be responsible for the dog's physical health i.e., maintain a healthy weight, ensure a clean coat, and keep nails clipped, etc. The Host will be expected to make the dog part of their family.

The Host is responsible for maintaining basic training skills and home manners. It is also important that Therapy dogs have 'off duty' time where they are encouraged to have down time to relax and play.

Hosts can apply if they have existing pets providing, they are dog social.

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Hosts will be supported and trained in dog care, dog handling and welfare by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

What will Guide Dogs provide for the dog?

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will supply the Host with a Therapy Dog Kit (see Section 6).

For the duration of the dog's working life the Host will also be provided with dog food, *Veterinary care (see Primary Carer Agreement), and preventive medications (see Section 7). These will need to be collected by the Host from a Puppy Development Advisor (PDA) or their local pet store, depending on region. To receive supplies, the Host must commit to one or more visits per week. Should the Host reduce visit commitments to less than once per week on a permanent basis, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will cease supplying food. The Host will then be expected to provide the dog with a premium food. A CCCP dog vest and name tag will also be supplied as per CCCP uniform.

What will Guide Dogs supply for the Host?

- A uniform consisting of a polo shirt and jacket, and a training pouch.
- Dog care, dog handling and dog welfare training.
- Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and Victim Services will provide training on courthouse etiquette, what to expect, procedures and debriefing.



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Stewardship of the Therapy Dog

Therapy dogs who are placed with volunteer Hosts will remain under the ownership of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT for the duration of court program. Should the Host commit 12 months of service (one or more weekly visits) to the program they will be offered permanent ownership of the dog upon cessation of their volunteer period. Should the Host decide to withdraw from the program under 12 months and not have a purpose for the dog, the dog may be returned and redeployed (at Guide Dogs NSW/ACT discretion)

About Therapy Dogs

Our dogs are the result of careful and selective breeding through Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Breeding Program. Pups are reared in loving home environments with a trained Home Whelping volunteer until they are around 6 weeks of age. At this point, mum and pups are brought into the Guide Dog Centre in Glossodia NSW, where they receive age-appropriate handling and exposure as well as lots of love and support with trained staff.

At 8 weeks of age the pups are placed with volunteer Puppy Raisers. Puppy Raisers provide safe nurturing homes for our pups, and with ongoing assistance from our Puppy Development Advisors (PDA's) and our Successive Training and Enrichment Program (STEP) help to raise healthy and happy dogs.

At 14 months of age our dogs are returned to the Guide Dog Centre for assessment and training. Dogs undergo an intensive 3-week assessment and are selected to

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roles best suited to their individual strengths. Reconsideration of roles may occur however at any time during assessment and training.

Because we want the best dogs possible in our programs, the Breeding Program is given initial consideration. After this, consideration is given to our Guide Dog program. Guide dog work is unique, and a specific skill set, and temperament is required from a Guide Dog. Because of this, not all dogs coming through our Puppy Raising program will suit this program but will shine in other roles including Therapy Dog Program, Canine Court Companion, or Ambassador Dog Programs.

What do we look for in a Therapy Dog?

Dogs selected for the CCCP have been identified as having a calm and predictable temperament with an engaging demeanour and the capacity to work happily in a stressful environment with high human traffic without causing disruption to court proceedings.

What Training do CCCP Therapy Dogs Receive?

All dogs raised in Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Puppy Raising program have undergone supervised training from 8 weeks of age. During the first year of the dog's life the dog will learn basic obedience including sit, drop, stay, stand, wait (for meals), 'on your bed', and 'quick quicks' (for toileting). They are trained to walk on the left side of the handler and be manageable and responsive on lead. During this time pups are also exposed to new and interesting environments to ensure they are confident and adaptable.

Once at the Guide Dog Centre the Therapy Dog Team, in addition to solidifying basic skills, familiarise the dogs to mobility equipment, noises, traffic, car travel, cafés, children, other dogs, residential areas, rural areas, parks and water ways to name a few. Additional behaviours may also be taught to Therapy dogs to encourage engagement with court attendees such as 'shake', 'bow' or 'visit'.

All training throughout our dogs' lives is undertaken using positive reinforcement via food, physical and verbal rewards. It is expected that the Host will continue with this style or training and reinforcement and refrain from punishment or aversive methods.

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Dogs deemed unsuitable for our programs due to health or temperament are offered back to their Puppy Raiser in the first instance as a pet dog. If the Puppy Raiser is unable to take the dog as a pet, the dog is placed on our Pet List and is matched and offered to the most suitable Pet List applicant.

3. The application process

Applicants first need to read this Information Booklet in its entirety. If the applicant is satisfied that they meet the criteria for one of the volunteer options, they should proceed with completing the Application.

Application:

1. Upon receipt of Application to the Guide Dog Centre an Acknowledgement Letter is emailed or posted.
2. The applicant is then contacted by a member of the Therapy Dog Team to discuss the application. If deemed suitable to proceed a trail court walk through is organized with an existing Volunteer to provide a live experience of the role before proceeding.
3. If after the court walk through, the applicant would like to proceed, a home assessment date and time is scheduled.
4. The assessment is conducted in the applicant's home and generally takes up to 1 hour to complete. If the applicant moves residence after the assessment but before receiving a dog the new residence will need to be assessed.
5. Successful applicants will be placed on the Therapy dog waiting list until a suitable dog match becomes available.
6. Once a match has been determined the Therapy Dog Team will contact the applicant and make the offer.

Any personal information collected by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will be treated as confidential. Access to this information will be limited to management and team members involved with service provision.

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4. Declined applications

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is committed to providing quality and meaningful services to assist those in need. However, not everyone will be suited to our programs and whilst every effort is made to ensure applicants are treated fairly and their applications considered holistically, some applications may still be declined.

Should your application be declined, you will be notified by the Therapy Dog Team. The letter will state the reasons why the application has been declined. Recommendations encouraging applicants to develop skills or improve environmental conditions may also be provided so that should re-application occur the applicant might be successful in the second instance.

Applicants who have been declined will have the right to appeal.

5. Canine Court Companion Program agreement

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has an ongoing responsibility to ensure the Host/ Handler and Therapy dog have the best possible experience through suitable training and ongoing monitoring. The welfare of the dog is an important responsibility of both Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and the Host/Handler, with the dog reliant on its Host/Handler to ensure its wellbeing. As such an Agreement has been developed to outline these responsibilities. You will be asked to sign this Agreement upon receipt of a Therapy dog.

Please find a copy of the Canine Court Companion Program Agreement on the following page.

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6. CANINE COURT COMPANION PROGRAM AGREEMENT

The breeding and training of a Canine Court Companion Therapy Dog is a significant investment in time and expense by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and the benefactors who support these costs. The success of the program is reliant upon volunteer compliance and commitment. As such, recipients of Therapy dogs specifically for the CCCP are asked to sign this Agreement to demonstrate acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibilities as outlined below.

I _____ of
Therapy Dog Handler's Name

Address

received _____ Dog Code: _____
Therapy Dog Name

on _____ and agree that I will:
Date

7. Fulfil visitation commitments at the agreed location, time and on agreed days.
8. Advise GDN immediately if the commitment is no longer able to be fulfilled.
9. Advise GDN immediately if you are unable to attend a visit.
10. Advise GDN immediately if your circumstances change and you need to withdraw.
11. Ensure exceptional health, presentation, and care of the dog at all times by:
 - a) Maintaining the weight of the dog as advised by GDNSWACT Veterinarians.
 - b) Having the dog examined by a veterinarian every twelve (12) months.
 - c) Following health and care guidelines as provided by GDN.
 - d) Engaging in positive training and behavioural reinforcement.

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- e) Undertaking regular grooming, bathing, and nail clipping.
 - f) Maintaining the emotional and mental health of the dog by providing adequate and appropriate exercise, socialisation, down time, and affection.
 - g) Ensuring the dog is safe from abuse and discomfort.
12. Comply with all legislation and local by-laws relative to the keeping of dogs.
 13. Maintain personal neat and clean appearance when attending courthouse visitations.
 14. Maintain cleanliness and neatness of the dog coat and equipment provided.
 15. Wear the uniform provided by GDN to all visitations and public events when acting on behalf of GDN.
 16. Ensure the dog is wearing the coat unobscured by equipment at all visitations.
 17. Comply with any requirements and standards as outlined by the courthouse.
 18. Maintain current Working with Children Check and National Police Check.
 19. Complete any logs or paperwork as required by GDN and Department of Justice and Communities /Victim Services.
 20. Veterinary Services:
 - a) GDN shall provide veterinary services to eligible dogs at the Guide Dog Centre when available or at Approved Vets. Services will be without charge to the Volunteer during the term of this Agreement. The treatment of the dog will be at the direction and discretion of GDN Veterinarians.
 - b) It is the Volunteers responsibility to secure all necessary veterinary care, including emergency care, for the dog as needed.
 - c) Veterinary care obtained for a dog at a non-GDN veterinary clinic may or may not be eligible for reimbursement through GDN.
 - d) Veterinary care may not be eligible for reimbursement for consults sought for injury, ingestion, or inhalation. Such issues can be prevented with attentive dog management.

Name: _____ Date _____

Signature: _____

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Privacy Policy

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is committed to protecting the personal information of our clients, members, donors, supporters, customers, and other individuals we deal with. We recognise that individuals have a right to control how their personal information is handled. Providing personal information is an act of trust that we take seriously.

Personal information is information about you, like your name, contact details and records of your dealings with us. Personal information may in some cases include sensitive information, like your health information or membership of a professional or trade association.

Our full privacy policy can be viewed at nsw.guidedogs.com.au/privacy-policy/.

7. Therapy Dog Placement

Once a dog has been matched, offered, and accepted, a time and date for placement will be agreed upon. On the day of placement, a Therapy Dog Team member will deliver the Therapy dog to the home of the Host/Handler whereupon training and living with the dog begins.

Receiving a dog from any of our programs requires a commitment of both time and energy. For the best possible outcome Hosts/Handlers should clear their schedules during the placement and training period so that they can fully focus on receiving information and assist with settling the dog into its new home. It is recommended that non-essential visitors be asked to keep visits to a minimum if at all during the first few days of the initial bonding period so that the dog has adequate time to settle into its new routine and the host has time to develop the skills and confidence required to manage their new dog.

Placements are tailored to suit the Host/Handlers needs and skillset and are monitored carefully to ensure a positive outcome. The amount of time spent on a placement varies in accordance with both the Host and the dog's needs. Most placements however take 2 hours.

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What Happens at a Therapy Dog Placement?

A Therapy Dog Team member will first deliver the kit and dog food to the home. Staff will then give the Host a dog treat and ask them to sit in a comfortable spot whilst retrieving the dog from the car (during hot whether the dog will accompany staff to the door in the first instance). Staff will then introduce the dog to the Host at which time they can feed the dog the treat to initiate a positive connection. After this time staff will ask the Host to show where the dog will be toileted, and the dog will be asked to eliminate to initiate a toileting routine.

After this time, the dog will be shown its water bucket and allowed to investigate its new surroundings on lead, then off lead under supervision, dependant on the environment and dog. Staff then discusses the Pre-Allocation Health Summary and Handbooks. After staff have discussed the general care and management of the dog, grooming, obedience, and feeding will be demonstrated and the dog will be introduced to its sleeping area. This will be followed by a walk with the dog to introduce the dog to its new area as well as acquaint the Host with managing the dog on lead. Once staff and the Host are confident the Host has acquired adequate knowledge and skills to manage the dog independently, staff leave, and the placement begins.

The next day a follow up call or visit is conducted to check on the progress of the dog. During this time any concerns or questions may be raised and addressed.

Therapy Dog Kit

Therapy Dogs are placed with a kit suited to their individual needs. All Hosts however will receive a kit which includes:

- Lead. Walking and control of the dog
- Martingale collar. Always walk the dog in a martingale (not the flat collar). Remove the Martingale when not walking the dog.
- Flat collar. Flat buckle collar with an ID tag attached. The collar should be fitted, neither too loose, nor too tight. Your dog should not be walked outside the home using this collar.

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- ID tag.
- Nexgard Spectra. Fleas, ticks, heartworm, and intestinal worms (not Hydatid)
- Dry food, 2 x 15kg bag of Advance Dry Food
- Chew toy. Appropriate toy (Kong, Nylabone, etc.)

Other equipment such as a long line lead, walking harness, or short lead for children may be included if required.

Once these items run out or become worn out, it is the Host's responsibility to advise Guide Dogs so that they can be replaced in a timely manner.

Prior to placement the Host will be responsible for sourcing

- Indoor bed. We recommend a soft but supportive bed suited for a large size dog (approx. 1200cm x 800cm). You may need more than one.
- An outdoor bed (optional) - we recommend a trampoline bed
- Bucket for the dog's water (9L buckets are best for outdoors)
- Pooper scooper and bin
- Poo bags to pick up toileting on walks
- Dog nail clippers (unless you plan on outsourcing this task)
- Dog shampoo (natural is best, perfume free e.g., Aloveen)
- You may also wish to purchase toys. Labrador safe toys are best. Soft cheap toys are usually destroyed quickly and will need to be thrown away.

A Word on Toys

Many Labradors enjoy chewing and willingly accept toys. They are however able to destroy soft and stuffed toys, tennis balls and rope toys with little to no effort. As such these types of toys should be avoided as internal injuries from ingesting broken parts may result. Hard wearing toys such as Kong's and Nylabones are recommended.

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8. Supplies

In return for your commitment Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is happy to supply full time volunteers who conduct one or more visits per week the following supplies for the duration of the dog's working life at court:

- Premium dog food: \$115 per bag
- Nexgard Spectra: \$94 per 6 pack
- Yearly vaccination (C2ii and Bordetella): \$150 (approx.)
- 3 yearly vaccinations (Distemper, Adenovirus, and Parvovirus): \$150 (approx.)
- Canine Court Companion Therapy dog Handler uniform (polo and jacket)
- Canine Court Companion Therapy dog vest
- Equipment: Lead, collar, martingale collar, Therapy dog tag and treat pouch.

*Prices based on average 2023 product search.

**Please note for dogs remaining under Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Stewardship, all vet care will be covered EXCEPT for the three 'i's as per CCCP Agreement:

“14.d Veterinary care may not be eligible for reimbursement for consults sought for injury, ingestion, or inhalation. Such issues can be prevented with attentive dog management. “

*** For dogs under Volunteer ownership (i.e. using their own dogs) preventative medications will be covered as will veterinary care should the dog acquire an injury at the court.

9. Therapy dog handler training

How the dogs are managed in the courthouse environment is important to both their welfare and longevity as a Therapy dog. As such Handlers will undergo courthouse training with the Therapy dog, including supervised sessions, to ensure confidence and ease of handling when on the job.

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Handlers will be taught basic cues used with a Therapy dog, how to reward a dog effectively to encourage desired behaviour and how to identify stress in dogs so that the dog remains happy in its environment. Other areas of training will include information on court procedure, ethics and confidentiality, occupational health and safety, human health and communication, healthcare, infection control, court user rights and animal welfare. This training will be conducted in collaboration with Victim Services.

Induction will be conducted at your nominated court, information sessions largely online and dog handling in person, and will be delivered in a flexible and supportive manner.

10. Complaints

Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback including dissatisfaction with services provided by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. There will be no disadvantage in respect to ongoing or future services because of any complaint made.

Complaint Procedure

1. Volunteers will be informed at the commencement of a program that there is a procedure for complaints.
2. Dissatisfaction with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT or its staff or with services should first be raised with the staff member providing the service. If a volunteer feels unable to raise the issue directly with this person, the matter can be raised with the staff member's supervisor or by contacting the Client Feedback Officer on 0466 306 827 or email feedback@guidedogs.com.au.
3. Wherever possible complaints will be resolved by the staff member receiving the complaint. More serious complaints will require investigation. The volunteer will be kept informed during the complaint process.
4. The complaint will be investigated, and the volunteer informed of the outcome of the complaint. If the volunteer is unhappy with the resolution of the complaint it will be reviewed by the Client Services General Manager.

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5. If the volunteer remains dissatisfied, they can take the complaint to the NSW Ombudsman, for residents of New South Wales (NSW), or the ACT Human Rights Commission, for residents of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).
6. Documentation of complaints is confidential and recorded in a secure register. Details of complaints raised are not recorded on volunteer's records.

Contact Details

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Thank you!

