



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLYING FOR THE WHISKEY'S WISH INC. SERVICE DOG PROGRAM

Please note that this form is not an application form but is a requirement before proceeding to apply for the Whiskey's Wish Inc. Service Dog Program. This information form is to provide you with information on our service and program and to assess if you would be a suitable candidate to proceed with a full application. It also enables you to consider the necessary factors before proceeding with an expression of interest.

Please send the completed expression of interest form and Disability Declaration completed by your treating Psychiatrist pages 1, 2 and 3 by email to info@whiskeyswish.org.au or by post to:

Whiskey's Wish Inc. PO Box 733 Samford QLD 4520

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Suburb/Town/City: _____ State: _____

Postcode: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

DISABILITY DECLARATION

To be completed by your treating Psychiatrist.

Treating Psychiatrist (Medical Practitioner):

Full Name: _____

Name of Medical Practice: _____

Qualification: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Suburb/Town/City: _____ State: _____

Postcode: _____

I have seen the intending applicant in a professional capacity for:

Years: _____ Months: _____

Please outline the nature of the applicant's disability/disabilities:

Have you read the Expression of Interest and Considerations Document for the Whiskey's Wish Inc. Service Dog Program in its entirety?

Yes No

Have you discussed the document with your client/patient?

Yes No

Based on your professional relationship with the applicant do you recommend the applicant to proceed with applying for the Whiskey's Wish Inc. Service Dog Program?

Yes No

Is the applicant mentally competent and stable to have a service dog and participate in the commitment to the training of a service dog and control it in a public place?

Yes No

Signature: _____

Date: _____/_____/_____

We do not intend for the following information to discourage you from expressing interest and wishing to apply for a Whiskey's Wish Inc. puppy to be trained as a service dog or for your own dog to be assessed as a suitable candidate for training to be a service dog. We do strongly encourage you to read and discuss the following information with your family and your treating psychiatrist and consider all the issues and what effect a service dog in training and accredited service dog will have for you.

Criteria:

- Full support from other family members and those living in the same household.
- Consideration of other family members and those living in the same household in relation to any allergies to dogs.
- Must be able to provide care and meet all requirements of an active dog such as exercise and financial considerations as discussed in this document.
- Must be under the care of a Psychiatrist and have recommendation for provision of or training of own dog into the program.
- The applicant's PTSD and/or service related injury must be caused from military exposure or by working in Emergency Response Services such as Police, Firefighters, Ambulance/Paramedics, State Emergency Service persons.
- Must be prepared to meet training requirements of a service dog. Whiskey's Wish Inc. Service dog program requires between 18 to 24 months' commitment from the recipient to meet full accreditation of their service dog in training.

Other than assisting you with daily tasks and companionship what other affect will a Service dog have on your life?

Do your family/spouse/partner/other household members approve of this decision?

The people with whom you live will understandably have opinions about adding a dog to the household. A flat mate for example may not want a dog around, so it may mean getting a new flat mate or change accommodation, but a spouse or partner is a different matter. Do not under-estimate any resistance to having a dog **in** the home, as a service dog lives with you 24 hours a day. To do so may leave you and your dog open to very difficult situations.

How will the dog fit into the daily schedule?

Have you considered your friends?

You may lose friends over a decision to get a Service dog. Not everyone feels comfortable around dogs. Friends may not understand why you are choosing to use a Service dog instead of other assistive devices. Your friends may not want you to have the dog in their homes or even around them.

Talk to your friends before you decide to get a Service dog and see the affect it may have on your social life. You may decide that the benefits of using a Service dog are greater than keeping the friends who don't agree with your decision, but it is good to be aware of the potential implications.

Are you ready for the greatly increased public attention? You will draw attention to yourself (and your disability) with a Service dog.

A Service dog attracts attention, both to the dog and to the handler. This can really change how people perceive you, especially if your disability is invisible. A Service dog openly labels the handler as one with a disability. People who had not known you as disabled or did not consciously consider you to be disabled will suddenly have it drawn to their attention, and you may find that their perception of you changes when you get a Service dog.

Members of the general public may want to stop and talk to you about your dog and sometimes also about your disability. This can be constant and annoying. Small children will chase your dog and try to pat it or even hug it. If your dog is large, small children may try to climb on it and ride it. A Service dog is probably not a good option for someone that cannot tolerate a lot of public attention. However, if you like meeting new people your dog can be a bonus and give many “introductions”.

One way around this is to advise the public that you are the ‘trainer’ and are training the dog. This may redress the focus away from you and back towards the dog and because this *is* a self-paced training program, where we help to train *you* to train *your dog* this is a perfectly acceptable explanation.

You may be criticized by people both in and out of the Service dog community for choosing to train your own dog. The Service dog community is resistant to owner-trainers. They cite reasons which include the stability or temperament of the dog, the quality of training the dog receives, and the validity of the partnership of the dog and handler that has not been evaluated by a trainer. As an owner-trainer, you must be willing to defend your right to self-train.

For this to be well received, your dog needs to be trained at least to the level of a dog from an organisation that trains Service dogs such as Whiskey’s Wish Inc. Any dog that causes a scene, or acts aggressively or unacceptably increases problems for those with well trained dogs. It is *your* responsibility to make sure your dog does not reflect poorly on the industry or make things difficult for other Service dog users. If you cannot accept the responsibility and properly train your dog, you should not have a dog in public. If you are not willing to stand up for your rights as an owner-trainer, you should not attempt to train your own dog.

Can you handle confrontation?

Even if you get to the level where your dog is a fully accredited Service dog, some people will deny you access to places you have every right to enter. You will also have people tell you that dogs should not be in public places, or you may even be accosted by an animal liberationist for enslaving an animal. These confrontations can be emotionally exhausting and hurtful. They can also be time consuming.

Are you able to stand up for your rights to business owners and insist on access? Will you feel totally intimidated by people of a different political persuasion? This is a very real and unfortunate part of having a Service dog. If you are not able to deal with this, you probably should not get a Service dog.

Be aware that Whiskey's Wish Inc. will always assist you and train to prepare you for these situations. However, if you ignore advice and assistance then you may potentially be removed from the program.

Financial responsibility comes with dog ownership – Average cost of keeping a Service Dog.

Please consider your ability to cover the costs of having a dog, especially one that is in training. Any dog is expensive. Medical emergencies may arise and these can be very expensive and stressful.

The cost of maintaining a Service dog must be factored into your budget. Whiskey's Wish Inc. estimates that it costs approximately between \$150 to \$200 per month or yearly cost of approximately \$2000 (*these are estimates only*) to maintain the feeding, annual health check and injections, worming, heartworm, tick and flea control, grooming and care equipment, toys and treats and pet insurance.

Whiskey's Wish Inc. provide all recipient start-up costs associated with training a service dog to complete accreditation – all required training equipment, jacket and ID is provided at no cost, however, should they not be maintained or lost they must be replaced at the cost of the recipient.

Check your local council regulations regarding the housing and keeping of dogs. This does need to be explored, particularly if you already own other dogs. Some council's restrictions are severe others are more accommodating. All will require some form of registration.

Are you ready for the long-term commitment that comes with dog ownership?

Dog ownership is a commitment.

If lucky, the dog will be of service for approximately 8-10 years. On retirement you must decide if you will keep the dog or find a new and suitable retirement home for the dog. What will you do if the dog develops behavior problems or health issues and must be retired early? Will you be able to emotionally endure the eventual death of your dog? These are all things you should consider before you get a Service dog (or any dog for that matter).

Have you considered your current living arrangements as being suitable?

Is your current housing suitable and safe for a dog and consider if the dog will have enough room to exercise and toilet safely. Even if you reside in an apartment complex, consider factors such as size of dog and close proximity to parks and area in which the dog is able to toilet.

What are the responsibilities of Service dog ownership?

Do you have the time and patience to work with a Service dog both initially in the partnership and commit to ongoing training during the dog's life?

It can take up to six months to become comfortable training and getting used to a Service dog, and many feel that it can take up to two years before you and your Service dog are working smoothly as a team. Getting a Service dog, regardless of whether it comes fully trained Service dog from another organisation, or for you to train under supervision, is a huge transition. Initially you will spend much time working with the dog, earning its trust and learning to work comfortably with a constant canine companion; learning to understand and “read” your dog and learning to work with your dog in public.

The amount of time spent on dedicated training may decrease, but a certain amount of ongoing training is necessary during the working life of the dog. If the training is not maintained, your dog's skills will deteriorate. A change in working patterns can even cause some dogs to develop behavioral problems.

Training is ongoing.

Training your dog to be a Service dog is not something that can be done in a weekend or even in a month. It will be an ongoing process continuing for the whole life of the dog. However, the most intense training will be in the early months/years. There will be days when you will feel you are not progressing and in fact you may think the whole process is going backwards. These days are normal as long as they only happen occasionally. Training requires consistent, daily effort even when starting with a dog that has already had significant obedience and socialisation schooling. If you do not have the time to do this, or you are not willing to spend time working and practicing with your dog *daily*, you may not be a candidate for a Service dog. You may decide a companion dog a more appropriate choice.

You need to understand the basics of dog training before starting to train your Service dog.

It is important to use humane, positive training techniques when training any dog. It is also important to prepare for each training lesson, so as to know what to teach and how to impart the learning to the dog. Improper training techniques will at best decrease the dog's performance reliability and at the very worst can turn your dog into a dangerous, unpredictable animal. A Service dog must be able to demonstrate very high standards in both public behavior and task performance.

A Service dog is still a dog.

Even the best trained dog in the world will not be a perfect dog. If you cannot handle imperfection from your dog, you definitely should not train a dog, and probably should not work with a Service dog at all. While Service dogs are highly trained, they are nonetheless animals, and will make mistakes, have good days and bad days and may even have “off days”. Someone who struggles with the ups and downs of dog training will not be an effective trainer and may compound the situation. If a handler cannot tolerate occasional errors, that all dogs make, then they should not work with a Service dog at all.

If at any point you realize that you are not succeeding with your dog, you must be willing to discuss this openly with Whiskey's Wish Inc. Service trainers. This help could come in a variety of forms and it could be as simple as a telephone call to talk over the problem. If you are not the sort of person who is able to ask for help, even when needed, then you may not be ready to train your own Service dog.

Service Dog training is not circus dog training. Your dog will not be trained to perform agility training skills or tricks to amuse you – though if you enjoy the experience of training your dog for such skills, then we certainly encourage you to do so as long as it does not interfere with the dog's service/working job at hand for you out in public.

Service dog training is a commitment and is ongoing. Results and outcomes will vary and may be affected by the breed, the age of the dog, the drives of the dog; by training and delivery of that training, the consistency in application and many other factors. Like humans, dogs are individuals and may or may not rise to the occasion. All we can do is help them get there.

Be realistic about expectations.

A SERVICE DOG IS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY

PLEASE NOTE:

You will be legally responsible for the behavior of your dog at all times. If your dog develops a behavioral problem, it will be your responsibility to make contact with Whiskey's Wish Inc. for further assistance. You are also responsible for maintaining your dog's training at an acceptable level. You will be required by Whiskey's Wish Inc. to provide training diaries (visual and written), attend training depending on location and complete an annual training review.

Having decided that you are ready for a Service dog, here are some further questions to consider.

What breed of dog should I get?

There is no one breed of dog that is a better Service dog than other breeds. However, with this in mind, it is best to choose dogs from breeds that have a working heritage and/or from families that have good work ethics. Service dogs are frequently Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers and German Shepherds. Collies and Standard Poodles are also being increasingly used.

Even though many mixed breeds can make excellent Service dogs we do not recommend mixes or crossbreeds, due to the uncertainty of their genetic makeup, which often presents with unpredictable health, training, and even size issues. A “designer dog” is not considered a mixed breed as it is a direct result of mating two purebred breeds.

You may already have a dog who you think would be a good Service dog candidate; If this is the case we are happy to assess and check the aptitude and suitability of your dog. We require all dogs entering our Service dog program to successfully pass a socialisation and temperament test.

Should your dog not meet the minimum standards or is not a breed with a high social acceptance, you may opt to withdraw your application, and obtain an additional dog to be trained as your Service dog.

From where should I get my dog and what sort of dog?

We primarily seek dogs that are healthy, with the right temperament and suitable for the tasks you want the dog to do, plus it is a socially acceptable breed, so there are quite some opportunities.

Pounds at times have great dogs that are available for adoption for unfortunate non- behavior related reasons. E.g., people downscale, death, families expand etc. This may mean that a temperamentally great dog may become available. However, there are also many dogs in the pound because they are no longer wanted, have issues, either in health and/or behavior.

It does pay to remember though that other family members or friends usually take exceptional dogs into their families and these “good dogs” don’t end up in pounds. However, you can still find a temperamentally great dog, but there are also many dogs that are in the pound because they are no longer wanted, have issues, either in health and/or behavior. Sometimes too what you see of the dog’s behavior while it is in the lost dog’s home is not the behavior it will exhibit two months later in your home.

A good Service dog is BOMB proof, and restores to its ‘natural behavioral settings’ in a very short time. This is very important as the dog needs to be able to cope (or learn to cope) with any type of situation, noise or visual stimuli, crowds or confined spaces etc.

A rescue dog brings risks as usually there is a very limited history of family backgrounds and of care and treatment that has been given.

Within breed groups there are also specialist re-homing services, normally operated by and for a breeders group to protect the breed and ensure that rehoming is done to the best possible homes. Often this may include more mature dogs, e.g. puppies and dogs of about 12-18 months of age. There can be terrific candidates available, and being a breed related group, health and temperament information is more readily accessible. But once again, be careful to do your homework, because anybody can call themselves a breeder. Ask if the dog is registered through a State body; ask for references from the breeder’s Vet and other people who have bought dogs or puppies from them. They will be delighted to give you these details if they have the breed’s interests at heart. You may also be asked for references about your ability to care for a dog.

Similar risks apply to puppies – their parents may be great, however puppies are an unknown, and therefore potentially a high risk gamble. Puppies need to progress through the puppy and juvenile periods, they have a tendency to push boundaries and may not make the mark.

Another source to consider is recruiting from ‘Show Ring’ dogs that did not make it in that world, but are genetically and behaviorally very balanced –that is - unless they are being discarded from the show ring and breeding plans because of behavioral issues. The dogs are being discarded because they do not meet the breed standard e.g. too tall, too short, etc. are better bets and often have reasonable social skills and are normally sound of health.

Whiskey’s Wish Inc. can also provide a service dog for you. The dog remains the property of Whiskey’s Wish Inc. We will source a suitable puppy and the puppy will be fostered and trained until 6 months of age by our Whiskey’s Wish Inc. fosters. This is at no cost to the recipient. You will be required to come to our training location for a 5 day handover of the puppy.

Do you need a dog to perform retrieval based tasks?

Most dogs, with enough training, can be taught to retrieve - not just breeds with "retriever" in their name! However, some dogs love to retrieve and do it naturally or can be easily trained to do it. If you need a dog that can do a lot of retrieving, it would be in your best interest to make sure you discuss this with Whiskey’s Wish Inc.

How active do you expect to be with your Service dog?

Your activity level and expected daily routine is an important consideration. Do you work or study where your dog will be sleeping under your desk for hours at a time for example? Do you have an active job where you are up and about for most of the day?

Dogs are as individual in their activity levels as people. If you have a dog that needs frequent stimulation and activity and you sit behind a desk all day, the dog will not be happy. However, if you have a dog that enjoys his naps but is still ready to go when the day is over, then you have the perfect work or study companion. In the same way, if you are very active and your dog is not, you will find yourself dragging your dog along everywhere you go, and no one will be happy with that. Keep in mind that all dogs need some level of physical activity to stay healthy and happy, and if that cannot be provided by either yourself or by arranging for your dog to get exercise you may want to reconsider getting a Service dog.

What kind of personality do you like in a dog?

Dogs are individuals; your partnership success depends on the compatibility of you and your dog.

Some dogs are sensitive and responsive. These are usually easily corrected and want your approval and praise. They work because they want to make you happy, and they are satisfied when you are satisfied. This is often (but certainly not always) a good type of dog for a first time dog owner, or a sensitive, quiet person who does not want to try and "talk" an independent dog into working. At the other end of the scale is a hard dog. They are stubborn, independent and self-motivated. They can be frustrating to train. They work because they want to, and because they like their jobs. They like praise, but don't necessarily need it. They are happy when they feel they have done a good job. Hard dogs are often the best dog for an experienced owner/trainer, or a handler that is more outgoing, loud and assertive or someone that wants a self-motivated independent thinker in a dog.

Realistically, most dogs fall somewhere between these two extremes. Look critically at your preferences, personality and training experience as you do the selection process.

Like the difference between hard and soft, some dogs have independent characters while others are more social creatures. Most dogs have times when they need both their own space and close companionship. Some prefer to be by your side at all times. These are the dogs that always want to be in the same room as you and share the bed with you at night. They are cuddly and close and crave attention.

Some people like this, others find this really annoying. An independent type will wander off the second they are off duty and find a quiet corner to sleep. These dogs definitely need time alone to be dogs, and will not be happy if showered with constant attention. They will not beg for attention and are usually pretty happy on the floor or even in another room or area at night. Some people really like having a more independent dog while others feel neglected or even insulted if the dog prefers solitude to their company. When evaluating preference for independent or social dog, take into account the preferences of other family members or house mates. If you like an extremely social dog, but others do not, it might be best to compromise.

Breed range to consider:

Whatever the breed, it is imperative that the dog comes from sound breeding, one who cares about the dogs they deliver and not just the money. Dogs from pet stores and/or puppy farms, the internet and papers like the Trading Post are to be avoided at all costs!

This IAADP list is of ‘universally acceptable’ breeds *provided* the dog has the right aptitude and personality:

Labrador Retriever	German Shepherd*	Australian Shepherd*	Samoyed*
Golden Retriever	Lab x GRT	Flat or Curly Coated Retriever	Groodle
Smooth Coat Collie	Labradoodle	Standard Poodle	German Pointer
Rough Coat Collie	Springer Spaniel		
* Ensure from a reputable breeder			

When considering a dog, think about the size, where it will live - in an apartment with a small yard, will it be required for mobility assistance (support when getting up or walking). Think about the longevity of the breed as some giant breeds have a very short lifespan. Medium sized dogs have a lifespan into their teens, larger dogs maybe 10-12 years. Consider the coat care, the amount of grooming needed, how much clipping is required for the dog to cope well in the climate you reside in?

Whiskey's Wish Inc. are more than happy to discuss suitable breeds and provide further information into what may be a suitable breed for your needs.

Gender – Females are traditionally smaller, and when spayed are equal to a male dog in terms of competency as far as work and learning is concerned.

Age – ideally we start with dogs that are around 6 to 9 months old – as the bonding between handler and dog is the crucial base to a good service dog. However, dogs of 18 months to 3 years old are good, as they become more stable. Look at the useful life of the dog – most service dogs are retired between eight and ten years old.

Whiskey's Wish Inc. will not consider dogs that are aged over 3 years and weigh less than 10kg. We will not consider any dogs that are a restricted breed as per Australian legislation:

A 'restricted breed dog' is defined as a breed whose importation into Australia is prohibited under the Commonwealth Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956.

The following dogs are restricted breed dogs:

- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier)
- Dogo Argentino (Argentinian fighting dog)
- Fila Brasileiro (Brazilian fighting dog)
- Japanese Tosa, and
- Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario).

Of these, the Pit Bull Terrier and the Perro de Presa Canario are the only breeds currently known to exist in Australia. Importantly, a restricted breed dog can include any dog of a mixed breed that visibly contains any of the above prohibited breeds.

Is this the right time for you to consider having a service dog to train?

The first year requires a great deal of effort and time and will require consistency in order to get the best results for having a service dog in training. It is crucial that this consistency is maintained in order for the dog's skills, bond and communication to be in sync with you as their trainer and handler.

Are you able to commit to consistent training in this first year? Do you have plans to travel overseas or have other commitments that will involve you not being able to take your dog with you for long periods of time? If you do, then you are not ready to take on the full time commitment of training a service dog.

The benefits of having a service dog in training to then full accreditation can be life-enriching experience but it does not happen overnight.

Be prepared for some challenges and frustrations in training a service dog, but also be prepared to reap the rewards. Be prepared to ask for help, Whiskey's Wish Inc. cannot be of assistance if you do not reach out and ask for it. Our commitment is to encourage you and assist in all the training requirements and communication is on a weekly basis.

A Service Dog is not the answer for everyone. It is a requirement that this document be read and discussed with your treating psychiatrist before applying for the program.

Whiskey's Wish Inc. are a charitable organisation registered by the ACNC and Incorporated by the Office of Fair Trading QLD. We are run by volunteers and are a self-funded charity. It is important for the considerations to be taken into account in order for the Service Dog Program to be able to assist as many of our veterans and first responders as needed.