



Frequently Asked Questions about Puppy Raising

1. It must be tough to give up a puppy. How do you do it?

We love the puppies and miss them when they're gone, but we're proud that we helped them become what they were meant to be. The joy of helping someone who needs a service dog helps compensate for the sorrow of giving up a puppy. How many times will you have the opportunity to help another person find the independence they so greatly deserve?

2. How old is a puppy when it is placed with a volunteer puppy raiser?

A puppy is typically around eight weeks old, however some puppies may be older.

3. What breeds of dogs do you use?

The most commonly used breeds for service dogs are Labrador and Golden Retrievers, however Domesti-PUPS service dog potentials are chosen for their temperament, not by breed. Ninety percent of all dogs temperament tested do not make it into our program.

4. Where do the dogs come from?

The puppies are typically donated by breeders. They are bred for health, confidence and temperament.

5. What does a puppy raiser do?

A raiser has two major jobs that lay the foundation for actual service dog training:

1. Socialize the puppy to everyday experiences such as riding in the car, meeting people and other animals, walking around traffic, lying quietly at a meeting.
2. Teach the puppy manners so it is a pleasant companion in the house and in public. The Puppy Raisers perform an essential service; without Puppy Raisers, there would be no service dogs.

6. Do Puppy Raisers train the puppies to be service dogs?

No, Puppy Raisers do not train service dogs. Puppy Raisers lay the foundation for future service dog training by raising the puppy until it has matured, usually between 12 to 14 months of age. Then the puppy is sent to Domesti-PUPS where it is evaluated. If the puppy has the traits needed for service dog work (excellent health and a confident, serene, and friendly temperament), it begins formal training with a professional service dog trainer. After this formal training the service dog is matched with a person with disabilities and the team undergoes a 13-day training process.

7. How long does a puppy stay with the puppy raiser?

A puppy usually remains in the puppy raiser home until it is between 12 to 14 months old. This can vary depending on the puppy's development or our training school's need for dogs.

8. Do you need any previous dog training experience to be a volunteer puppy raiser?

No, but it is helpful if you have a dog, or have had one in the past.

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9. Does a Domesti-PUPS puppy require any special food?

Domesti-PUPS recommends good quality foods that have been found to provide the best health and longevity for the service dogs.

10. Where does a puppy go if the Puppy Raiser is out of town?

Volunteer “puppy sitters” watch pups while their Puppy Raisers are away. In some cases with the Area Coordinator’s approval, the puppy can accompany the raiser on the trip to enhance the puppy’s socialization.

11. Who pays for the puppy’s expenses?

Domesti-PUPS provides the puppy its first training collar, lead and crate. The puppy raiser is responsible for the puppy’s food, toys and incidental equipment such as food bowls, grooming and tools. The raiser is also responsible for veterinary care and purchasing any flea or tick medication. Some veterinarians may choose to donate their services.

12. Do all the puppies make it as service dogs?

Not all dogs have the ability to perform service dog work. Some are more suitable as a pet than a helper.

13. What happens to puppies that don’t make it as service dogs?

Some dogs are placed in other careers such as facility, therapy or classroom dogs. Or, a dog released from our program may be a loved pet going back to the Puppy Raiser or another adopter.

14. Do disabled persons pay for the dogs?

There is no charge to the client for his or her dog. Donations cover the \$12,000-16,000 it costs to graduate a service dog team. Clients are encouraged to help with fundraising any way they can.

15. How long do service dogs work?

The average retirement age for a service dog is 8-10 years depending on the dog’s health.

16. What happens when a service dog gets too old to work?

Most Domesti-PUPS graduates keep their retired dogs as a member of the family or place them with close friends. In the few situations when a retired service dog is available for placement, Domesti-PUPS contacts the dog’s Puppy Raiser. If the Puppy Raiser can’t be located, we have a waiting list of people who have applied to adopt a retired service dog.

17. Are there other ways to help raise a puppy if I can’t make a commitment for eighteen months?

Yes. There is always a need for puppy sitters, and sometimes for starter homes that will raise a puppy until it can be placed with a permanent puppy raiser. Or you can help by walking dogs in our service dog program.

**Interesting in becoming a Puppy Raiser?
Call us toll-free at 1-866-515-PUPS for an application.**