

Welcome!

Thank you so much for your interest in volunteering with Service Dogs, Inc. This volunteer handbook will introduce you to volunteering at SDI, what to expect and how to stay safe.

If you decide to pursue volunteering, a copy of this handbook will be in the back of the log book where you sign in and out each time you volunteer.

You will be asked to sign the following before you may volunteer for SDI:

1. Confirmation you have read and understand this Handbook.
2. A copy of the Volunteer Job Description
3. A Release of Liability, Authorization for Medical Treatment and Consent to Photography form

These agreements are required to work as a volunteer at SDI.

Please begin by reading this handbook, then sign and return this sheet to:

Volunteer Coordinator
 Service Dogs Inc.
 4925 Bell Springs Rd.
 Dripping Springs TX 78620

We'll take it from there!

We look forward to working with you and deeply appreciate any time you can commit to us. At SDI you will get to know the staff and our dogs in training, plus you'll be invited to graduation. There you can meet the clients as they begin life with their new partners.

See you there!

I have read and received a copy of the volunteer handbook and understand my responsibilities.

Volunteer Name	Volunteer Signature	Date
SDI Representative	Representative Signature	Date

SERVICE DOGS, INC.

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

OUR MISSION

- To bring greater independence to people living with disabilities through partnership with a working dog.
- To provide abandoned and unwanted dogs renewed lives of love and service
- To provide the dogs and training free of charge to recipients

SDI was established as non-profit organization in 1988. We adopt dogs from animal shelters or rescue groups and train them to be hearing dogs and service dogs. Hearing dogs alert their deaf or hearing impaired partners to sounds such as the phone, doorbell and smoke alarm. Service dogs help physically disabled partners with tasks such as picking up dropped items, opening and closing doors, moving paralyzed limbs and providing assistance in emergencies.

VOLUNTEERS

What do we expect of volunteers?

Committed volunteers improve our presence in the community and expand the knowledge of service dogs throughout their community. Not many people know what a service dog is or what they do. There are different types of service dogs and we want to inform the public by attending events and getting ourselves out in the community.

If you sign up for an activity we are counting on you to be there. If you must cancel please do so as soon as possible, preferably 2 days before the activity to allow us time to find someone else. If you "no show" more than 2 times without notice, we will not schedule you again.

We try to keep an upbeat atmosphere and expect people to have fun as long as we are being productive in the process.

Volunteer hours

We need volunteers for events such as the Mighty Texas Dog Walk and booths at shows. These can involve setup before and take-down after the event, time slots during the event, or event preparations such as making signs, stuffing gift bags, helping with registration, etc. Some show and booth events are in cities around Texas, so out-of-town volunteers are always needed.

How do I sign up?

Each month the volunteer coordinator will put out a schedule of upcoming events. You will need to contact her if you are interested.

Age requirements

Adult volunteers of all ages are welcome. Younger volunteers must be 14 or older to work on their own and children 7-14 may volunteer with a parent present at all times. All volunteers must comply with the volunteer guidelines and all safety procedures.

What should I wear?

Something comfortable and easy to clean

We do not allow flip flops, sandals or open toed shoes for safety reasons.

Do I need any special equipment?

Any special equipment will be provided

How do I keep track my volunteer hours?

We have a notebook for you to sign in and out so your hours can be logged. In addition, you will earn recognition for every 25 hours of volunteering. We recognize the time you spend with us is valuable and there are a number of volunteer recognitions as you work with SDI.

ABOUT WORKING WITH THE DOGS**Will I be working with dogs?**

The training for assistance dogs is highly specialized and only volunteers who work as fosters work directly with the dogs. When we have volunteer days at the center you will be around the dogs during training but will only be able to interact with them if a trainer asks you to. Training Center Volunteering is a reward for volunteer who show go above and beyond when volunteering, it is by invitation only.

Training Philosophy

We use positive reinforcement training with our dogs. This means we reinforce behaviors that we want (like sitting, laying down, being calm and quiet) and we ignore behaviors we don't want. Pretty soon the dog is doing more of the behaviors we want and less of the behaviors we don't want. We use many types of reinforcement (something a particular dog likes) and it can vary by dog. We use treats, touch, petting, toys, coming out of their kennel, access to yards and other things. Most dogs find some or all of these things reinforcing.

We do not use punishment like leash corrections, scolding or yelling with our dogs. If a dog does something we do not want we ignore him or redirect him to do a behavior we do want.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

All staff, volunteers, applicants, Assistance Dog recipients, contractors, and community members must be aware of and take precautions to prevent injuries due to the environment or natural disaster.

Central Texas is home to: poisonous snakes, scorpions, spiders, and other wildlife that may cause injury. Should injury occur, seek professional medical attention immediately.

Other safety considerations include severe weather, fire, and hazards specific to working with dogs. **All people on the grounds are responsible for assuring their own safety and for reporting unsafe situations.**

Inappropriate or Unsafe Conduct of Volunteers/Clients:

Any staff or volunteer aware of or suspecting inappropriate behavior, including abusive behavior and/or failure to follow established procedures, by client, volunteers or visitors, must immediately notify the Training manager on-site. You can also report unsafe conduct to the officers or board members listed on the www.servicedogs.org website.

Severe Weather

Please do not come to events if severe weather such as tornado, ice or major storms are forecast. If you are already onsite, please return to your home as soon as possible.

If you cannot leave, follow the instructions of SDI staff at all times.