

Dog Tags: Service Dogs for Those Who Serve Us Pre-application

Being paired with a service dog is a life-changing experience—and can be freeing and empowering. But it comes with myriad responsibilities and challenges. It involves ongoing hard work and commitment, and can involve considerable frustration. Before you apply for a Dog Tags service dog, we ask you to reflect carefully on the ways a dog will impact your life as you read through the following considerations:

Privacy

How public are you about your disability? While some disabilities are apparent, others are not visible to the general public. The presence of a service dog will immediately signal the fact that you have a disability. Some strangers will ask you about it, and others will look or stare. How will you react?

Americans, by and large, love dogs. This is a great thing, and will mean that you and your service dog will be welcomed by many—even treated as a celebrity by some. But on the downside, you can count on being stopped in the street, in the office, in the lobby of apartment buildings—everywhere—with comments and questions about your dog. If you are comfortable with a lot of social interaction this may be a plus. But if not, you should consider seriously how you would respond to this level of attention.

Be Realistic

What specifically do you imagine a service dog doing for you? How can the dog really help in terms of the way your disability affects your life? Think carefully about how realistic these goals are.

Home Visits

PBB staff will come to your home six weeks after you graduate with your dog and every year thereafter, in order to recertify you and your dog. How do you feel about having someone come to your home and watch you interact with your dog?

Bimonthly Reports

PBB requires a written report on your dog every other month. We supply the form, it is not long, and we encourage you to email it back to us, but it is an ongoing responsibility on your end. If we do not get it, we will call you and call you until we get the form. For the first two years, PBB retains ownership of the dog. After two years of seeing you work and live together, we will transfer ownership to you. How do you feel about the fact that the dog will not be yours for a full two year period?

Time Commitment

First of all, you'll start with an intensive two-week training period as you learn to work effectively with the dog. This period can be nerve-racking and is certainly fatiguing. You'll attend lectures and one-on-one drills, take written exams, and you'll need to practice for hours a day as you learn.

Working Dog/Working Human

Our service dogs have received thousands of hours of training from dedicated professionals and puppy raisers. The dogs are very capable and have a wide range of skills—but these skills must be maintained with diligent practice. Are you willing to work every day with your dog?

Then, once you and your dog are home, you must continue to work—every day for the rest of the dog’s life. You’ll spend 24 hours a day with the dog, and devote much of that time to fine tuning and building the working relationship. Do you have the time? Do you have the patience? You may want to consider putting off the decision to pursue a service dog if you plan to start a new job, get married or start college soon, or if you’ve recently taken on any overriding commitments.

Home Environment/Community

A service dog will not only enter your life, but also the lives of your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Think about those you live with, or come in contact with on a daily basis. Are they “dog people?” Will they welcome your greater independence, or be threatened by it? Would it affect your relationship with them? Will they help the process of adapting to and living with an assistance animal, or will they be a hindrance? After you’ve thought about this, talk to those in your home, family, and workplace to get their feedback. Then talk with them some more.

Now look at logistics. What kind of space do you live in? How and where will you provide exercise for a dog that will likely weigh between 60 and 75 pounds? What public places do you visit frequently? Do you ride public transportation? A service dog can help you in these environments, and you have a legal right to have a service animal with you at all times, but you can expect to be challenged about that right from time to time. How will you react? Are you willing to defend and demand that right?

Shedding, Drooling, Licking, Chewing

“Dog germs!” was Lucy’s alarmed reaction to a lick from Snoopy. While dogs are not a significant disease vector to humans, they are indeed prone to drool, shed copiously, and to occasionally vomit or “have an accident” in the house. Service dogs are well-trained and mannered, and with proper grooming, diet and exercise these problems can be kept to a minimum. But these are basic facts of dog companionship. The best-groomed dog will still leave traces of their hair on a favorite dress or suit. A valuable shoe or household object could be torn up or eaten. Use of “poop bags” on city streets will need to become second nature. If you are particularly fastidious and uncomfortable with a mess, a dog may not be the best partner for you.

Final Assessment

Weigh carefully the advantages provided by a service dog against the challenges, time commitment and potential problems a dog might bring to your life. Keep in mind that there are financial responsibilities connected with the dog as well—from food to veterinary care. The benefits from a service dog partnership can be spectacular—but only if you’re the right person to maximize them.

I have carefully read and considered this document:

Signature

Date



HOW TO APPLY FOR A DOG TAGS® SERVICE DOG AND WHAT TO EXPECT

As a boutique service dog provider specializing in service dogs for OIF/OEF veterans with PTSD and TBI, we only have a maximum of fifteen to donate annually. Please note that your completed application does not guarantee you will receive a service dog. Careful consideration is made of both your ability to benefit from, and care for, one of these specially trained four-legged companions.

Qualifications:

To qualify for a Dog Tags® companion:

- You must be an OIF/OEF veteran no longer on active duty or about to be discharged.
- You must be able to provide a stable, safe environment for our dog which includes love, exercise, medical care and food.
- You must be willing to become more independent and to work with a highly-trained four-legged companion.
- You must be willing to tell the public, by way of having a working service dog with you, that you have a disability.

Application Process:

1. Please read the pre-application carefully; sign and remit the signature page.
2. Please fill out and submit the application that follows this page.
3. Please have your health care provider (psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor or therapist) and two personal references fill out and submit the reference forms included at the end of the application. At least one of the personal references should be from a friend or someone not related to you. These references are required to complete your application but you do not need to include them immediately with the application questionnaire if you need more time to get them together.
4. We will notify you when your application is received and we will begin reviewing it.
5. We will contact your health care provider to obtain their professional medical opinion of how you would benefit from having a service dog. This discussion is completely confidential.
6. We will also conduct an interview with you over the phone, so that we can clarify any information on your application that we may need, so we can answer any questions you may have, and so we can get a better sense of who you are.
7. After verifying your medical and personal references, we will tell you if we think a Dog Tags® service dog is the right fit or not.

Declined Applicants

Each year, we decline applicants whose lifestyle we feel is not suitable for one our service dogs. This does not mean that another service dog agency does not have a dog for you; it just means that we do not. If we decline your application, we will refer you to several other schools.

Accepted Applicants

You can expect there to be a waiting period between the time we inform you that your application has been approved and your training and placement with the service dog specially chosen for you.

Training Schedule / Travel Arrangements

We will contact you to let you know the dates of the next available two week training class; during this class you will be paired and trained with a service dog specifically chosen for you. If the dates we offer you do not work for you, we will give you first priority for the next training class. If you cannot make two classes in a row, we will work with you to see if we can accommodate you in a future class. You must demonstrate a desire to fit the training schedule into your life, though we understand there may be long-standing commitments, such as a medical board review, around which you must schedule your training.

Once we establish the training dates for you and the service dog we have picked for you, we will contact you regarding travel logistics. PBB will make all the flight, hotel and car arrangements for you and a family member, if desired, to travel for the training. PBB pays for flights, rental car, gas and hotel accommodations, as well as a \$15 per person per diem for food. Please see "Dog Tags Agreement" at the end of the application for more details on PBB's reimbursement policy. A copy of this agreement signed by both you and PBB will be sent to you for your records. We will contact you a week before your scheduled travel to check in and make sure you have all the information you need. You should plan to bring your military attire for the graduation ceremony that culminates the two weeks of training.

Recertification Requirement

You must agree to a home visit with a PBB instructor approximately 6 weeks after you train with your dog, in addition to yearly recertification thereafter.

Ongoing Feedback

PBB also requires that you write a written report on your dog every other month. We supply the form, it is not long, and we encourage you to email it back to us, but it is an ongoing responsibility on your end. If you do not want this kind of ongoing relationship, then PBB is not the right agency for you. There are many other excellent service dog agencies that have different ongoing levels of commitment.

I have carefully read and considered this document.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Puppies Behind Bars, Inc.

Title

Date



APPLICATION FOR A SERVICE DOG FROM PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

Dog Tags® is a Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) initiative which honors wounded OIF/OEF veterans. Our dogs, raised in prison, are trained to perform over 90 service dog commands. Since we specialize in dogs for veterans with PTSD and TBI, we also teach our dogs special commands for wounded veterans with these conditions.

All the costs associated with getting the right dog and being trained to care for and work with that dog will be paid for by PBB. These include the costs of lodging and transportation and a \$15 food per diem for the vet or soldier and one family member, if desired, to attend a two week training session in Colorado or New York. As a boutique service dog school, PBB can only accept fifty applications per year and donate a maximum of fifteen of these special dogs per year. Applicants must be out of the hospital for at least six months in order to understand what it is like to live outside of the hospital and whether or not a dog can be incorporated in their life.

This application will help us understand more about you, your needs, your lifestyle, and, therefore, which type of dog and which of our dogs in particular might be the best fit. If there is anything we've left out, please feel free to add it at the end. Please mail completed application, attention Kate Lorenz, to: 10 E. 40 St. Suite 1900, NY NY 10016.

Date:

Name:

Address:

City / State / Zip Code:

Home / Cell Phone Number:

Email Address:

Date of birth:

Occupation:

Are you: married single divorced separated widowed

War in which you fought: Operation Iraqi Freedom Operation Enduring Freedom

Branch of Armed Services: Current Status of Service: Active/Reserve/Retired Rank

1. How did you hear about Puppies Behind Bars?
2. What were your year or years of service overseas?
3. Did you spend time in a hospital?
4. If so, when were you discharged?
5. Have you ever been tested for seizures or traumatic brain injury? If so, what were the results?
6. Do you use any assistive devices such as a cane, wheelchair, hearing aids, or prosthetic limbs? If so, please describe below.
7. Do you take prescription or non-prescription drugs on a daily basis? If so, please indicate each medication you are taking and what each is for.
8. Do you consume alcohol on a daily basis? If so, what kinds and how much do you drink?
9. Do you live alone? (If not, please skip to #10.)
If so, is there a relative that lives nearby?
10. If you do not live alone, with whom do you live? Do you have children in your home? If so, what ages? We will speak with your spouse, partner, or other adult with whom you live, to talk about how a dog would be incorporated into your household. Please provide their name and contact information.
11. Do you have any animals in your home? If so, what kinds and how old are they? If dogs, please indicate if they are neutered or spayed.

18. We specialize in training dogs for veterans with PTSD and TBI. As such, our dogs are taught special commands in addition to the regular 82 service dog commands. For example, they are taught to “watch your back” and “pop a corner.” What, ideally, would you like a dog to do for you? If you also have physical impairments, do you need a dog to open doors for you, pick up dropped objects, turn on and off lights, help you buy items in the supermarket? If no physical impairments, what do you want the dog to help you with?
19. If your application is accepted, you will attend a two-week training class during which you will be paired and trained with a service dog specially chosen for you. New York training classes visit a local state park for several hours each afternoon; this enables class members to enjoy daily recreation together and the service dogs in training get a chance to run off lead and exercise. If you are chosen to train in New York, will this activity present any problems for you?

Please be as thorough and complete as possible when answering the following questions. PBB is here to help veterans from the current wars, not to pass judgment.

20. How do you feel your past experiences with dogs have shaped your opinion of animals?
21. Thinking back throughout your lifetime, what is the best experience that you can remember with a dog? What was the worst?
22. How has your combat experience changed those opinions?
23. A prerequisite for getting a dog is a desire, on your part, to become more independent. How would you get across to us that you do, indeed, want to become more independent?

Dog Tags Agreement

Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) pays all costs associated with training the dog and matching the dog with a veteran. Puppies Behind Bars will pay for travel and lodging expenses for the veteran and a family member to travel to the two-week training where the veteran and dog are trained to work together. Please save and remit all receipts for rental car, gas and food. Upon 30 days of receiving the receipts, PBB will reimburse rental car fees, gas expenses and up to \$15 per day per person for food expenses. This does **not** include incidentals such as checked baggage fees, food or beverages consumed on board flights, or cultural or entertainment expenses incurred during the two weeks of training with the dog.

If, at any time and for any reason, I find that it is impossible to keep the dog I have received from PBB, I will contact PBB and will return the dog to the organization. I will neither sell nor give the dog to anyone, including a family member. PBB will make all arrangements to pick up the dog and no questions will be asked. PBB *feels* that the dog's happiness and health is of prime importance and will take back any dog whose quality of life is not of the highest standards, which includes that the dog maintains a healthy weight, receives proper veterinary care including monthly doses of Heartguard and Frontline, gets daily exercise, and lives in the house and not in a kennel. Accordingly, I agree to send PBB written updates on my dog, on a bimonthly (every other month) basis. **PBB will retain ownership of the dog for the first five years to ensure that you are working well with the dog and the above standards are met.**

PBB will make site visits when I am home with my dog after approximately six weeks and will test me and my dog once a year thereafter. I will comply with all these visits.

Media Release

I agree that all photographs or video footage taken of me any time during training are the property of PBB and may be used by PBB for training, record keeping, fundraising and educational purposes.

Confidentiality

Puppies Behind Bars follows all HIPPA regulations as required by the State of New York and the Federal Government.

I have read, understand, and will comply with all the above. PBB will send me a copy of this agreement for my records.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Puppies Behind Bars, Inc.

Title

Date



Health Care Provider Reference Form for Dog Tags® Application

Applicant: _____

Date _____

Name of Health Care Provider (please print): _____

Title/ Relationship to Applicant: _____

Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

How long have you known the applicant?

Our organization specializes in training service dogs for OIF/OEF veterans with PTSD and TBI. The applicant above has applied to receive one of these special dogs. Please discuss the applicant's disability or disabilities.

How would a service dog benefit the applicant? To your knowledge is the applicant able to care and provide for a service dog?

Do you feel the applicant would be able to handle a service dog in times of stress and in public situations where dogs are not permitted and the presence of the service dog is challenged?

Does the applicant take any medication or have any conditions which may impair his/her judgment or ability to care for a service dog?

Has the applicant had a suicide screening? If so, when, and what were the results?

Please feel free to add anything else about the applicant that substantiates his/her ability to care for, and benefit from, a service dog.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please send to:

**Kate Lorenz
Puppies Behind Bars
10 E. 40 St. Suite 1900
New York, NY 10016
kate@puppiesbehindbars.com**



Personal Reference Form for Dog Tags® Application

Applicant: _____

Our organization specializes in training service dogs for OIF/OEF veterans with PTSD and TBI. The above-named applicant has applied for a service dog to help cope with his/her disability.

Your Name : _____

Phone Number:

Email Address:

What is your relationship to the applicant?

How long have you known the applicant?

How does the applicant's disability impair his ability to function in daily life?

To your knowledge, what family and/or community support systems are available to the applicant?

In what ways would the applicant benefit from having a service dog?

Have you ever observed the applicant interacting with other animals?

How do you think the applicant would handle a service dog in times of stress?

By law, service dogs are required entry to all public areas, but not everyone knows that psychiatric service dogs bring a lot of attention to the veteran. How do you think the applicant would handle the increased attention and social interaction that comes with having a service dog? How would he or she handle situations in which his/her right to be accompanied by a service dog is challenged?

To your knowledge is the applicant able to care and provide for a service dog?

Please fee free to add anything else you feel we should know about the applicant.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please send to:

**Kate Lorenz
Puppies Behind Bars
10 E. 40 St. Suite 1900
New York, NY 10016**

kate@puppiesbehindbars.com