



## Public Talking Points

As a representative of Dogs for Better Lives, there will be times when you are out in public and asked about DBL. Whether it is a friend, the general public, local media, or a place of business, you may be asked about DBL. We have created some talking points below, to assist you in these future conversations.

### ELEVATOR PITCH

Dogs for Better Lives (DBL, formerly known as Dogs for the Deaf) is a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit with campuses in Central Point, Oregon and Falmouth, Massachusetts. DBL rescues or breeds, trains, and places Assistance Dogs free of charge with deaf or hard-of-hearing adults, children diagnosed with autism, and licensed professionals working with vulnerable communities so people with disabilities can lead safer and more independent lives.

We believe that everyone who can benefit from an Assistance Dog should have one, by offering dogs at zero cost to eliminate financial burden on our clients. To remove barriers for those who can't travel to our campuses, we place our dogs in the client's home - offering a more personalized placement and training experience. Since 1977, we have placed more than 1,700 dogs with people across the United States. Each dog has made a profound impact on the life of the person they were placed with.

Dogs for Better Lives is one of the few national Assistance Dog organizations that trains shelter dogs to become Assistance Dogs - in addition to utilizing purpose-bred dogs. We support every dog who comes into our care with a lifetime commitment to them and their client. Every decision is rooted in the dog's wellbeing as we make sure they are fulfilled and doing work they're suited to do.

### WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE WORK

- Dogs for Better Lives is a national award-winning 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1977, with campuses in Central Point, OR and Falmouth, MA.
- Since 1977, we have placed more than 1,700 dogs with people across the United States. Each dog has made a profound impact on the life of the person they were placed with.
- Dogs for Better Lives acquires or breeds, trains, and places Assistance Dogs free of charge with deaf or hard-of-hearing adults, children diagnosed with autism, and professionals working with vulnerable populations so people can lead safer and more independent lives.
- As a national nonprofit, Dogs for Better Lives is comprised of regional campuses and satellite offices across the United States. Satellite offices are currently located in California, Washington, Ohio, Georgia, Virginia, and Texas.
- Dogs for Better Lives has been recognized as a 4-star nonprofit with Charity Navigator for 11 consecutive years, and has earned GuideStar's Platinum seal for transparency.
- **To learn more about our dogs or to apply to become a client, volunteer or puppy raiser, visit [www.dogsforbetterlives.org](http://www.dogsforbetterlives.org).**



## WHY DOGS FOR BETTER LIVES

- **We change lives** by providing clients with more safety, independence, and connection to the world around them that they may have lost through hearing loss, an autism diagnosis, or other trauma or disability. We also do this with genuine care for our clients through our staff.
- **We locate the best dogs for the job** through partnerships with breeders, co-ops, shelters and rescues and provide them with expert training that helps the people we serve. Dogs for Better Lives is one of the few national Assistance Dog organizations that trains shelter dogs to become Assistance Dogs - in addition to utilizing purpose-bred dogs.
- **We support our dogs** with a lifetime commitment to them, and every decision is rooted in their wellbeing. We make sure our dogs are fulfilled, doing work they're suited to do.
- **We offer dogs at zero cost**, allowing us to help people without creating a financial burden for them.
- **We break down physical barriers for clients** by traveling to the client and training shelter dogs – and are one of the few national Assistance Dogs organizations who operate this way. Through these policies, we eliminate the need for the client to travel, and can offer smaller dogs to clients when medically necessary.
- **We partner** with donors, volunteers, community members, and other dog organizations to provide life-changing dogs at zero cost.
- **We innovate** to help more people by changing the industry through new processes and efficiencies that don't diminish our focus on quality.
- **We're transparent** by being careful stewards of donor dollars and engaging our clients, donors, and volunteers in the work we do.

## HOW SUPPORT HELPS DBL

- Dogs for Better Lives believes that everyone who can benefit from an Assistance Dog should have one, without the excess financial burden of acquiring one. That vision is made possible through the support of individuals, foundations, and corporate donors.
  - **Zero cost to clients.** There are no application fees or good faith deposits. Thanks to our outstanding donors, we can offer these amazing dogs at no cost to our clients.
  - Average value of an Assistance Dog coming from DBL is \$54,000, based on transport, veterinarian care, training, and placement, plus the ongoing lifetime training and support of the client/dog team.
  - **100% of donor dollars supports programmatic services.** Administrative and fundraising expenses are fully funded by the interest earned from our long-standing endowment.

## OUR PROGRAMS

DBL operates three different Assistance Dog programs that encourage greater independence and success at school, home, and in the community:



**Hearing Assistance Dogs** serve adults who are hard of hearing or deaf. Dogs are trained to physically alert clients to sounds that are necessary for everyday safety and independence, such as smoke/fire alarms, doorbells, oven timers, and the cries of a baby.

**Autism Assistance Dogs** serve children ages 4-12 who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. They are extensively trained to enhance the well-being of children and families living with Autism. Our dogs provide trained tasks both in public and at home to assist with keeping children grounded and focused while presenting a social bridge for relationships and friendships.

**Facility Dogs** are trained to do specific, skilled tasks and placed with working professionals to help support them in their work with vulnerable populations and persons with disabilities (physical, mental, cognitive, sensory, or developmental). The dog accompanies the professional to work and is trained to interact in various ways with patients, clients, and students to provide a needed focus or distraction, motivation, and a calming presence to enhance treatment, learning, and development.

In addition to the Assistance Dog programs, DBL also occasionally places "**Career Change**" dogs. Career Change Dogs are wonderful dogs who are happy and healthy but just not suited to working in our Hearing, Autism or Facility Dog Programs. We have a Career Change Dog waiting list for those who are interested in adopting one of these amazing dogs.

## **OUR PROCESS**

- **Training** - Dogs for Better Lives Assistance Dogs are trained using positive reinforcement. The trainers reward good behavior and ignore or redirect undesirable behavior. Training takes between four and six months and includes obedience, socialization, and specialized training from Certified Trainers at one of our campuses. Our dogs receive hundreds of hours of training before they are certified and placed as a working Assistance Dog.
- **Placement** - Dogs for Better Lives places dogs in-home instead of having the client travel to our campus. A Certified Trainer travels with the dog to the new client's home for one week of hands-on transition and skills-retention training.
- **Screening** – We screen each applicant using a thorough process to carefully determine the person's needs, abilities, personality, lifestyle, and ability to care for the dog. Each client is carefully matched with one of our dogs, ensuring a strong Assistance Dog Team.
- **Lifetime commitment** – Clients receive continued coaching, support and advice throughout the life of the team. Our client services team supports Active Teams through retirement, keeping the dog's wellbeing (physical, emotional, and mental) at the root of all decisions.



## WHERE WE GET OUR DOGS

- **Shelter Partnerships**: Dogs for Better Lives has a unique program to transform shelter dogs into Service Dogs for people with disabilities. This program is currently in partnership with Operation Kindness in Carrollton, Texas and Atlanta Humane Society in Atlanta, Georgia. We choose dogs based on temperament and specific characteristics that we've found lead to success in our programs, like confidence, friendliness, focus, and drive. There truly is no perfect assistance dog breed - all breeds, pure or mixed, are capable of loyalty, love, and intelligence. Dogs selected in this program live in foster homes and train with our trainers during the day, learning their essential skills to become a Service Dog.
- **Breeding**: For some dogs, training begins at birth. Our Breeding Program identifies breeder dogs and places them with a breeder caretaker who provides a safe home and whelping environment. Once puppies are born, they live with volunteer puppy raisers until 14-16 months of age, receiving training and staff support to encourage positive behaviors for future Assistance Dogs. Then the dogs return to one of our campuses to begin their extensive training.

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- **Become a Puppy Raiser**: Our puppy raisers receive a puppy at eight (8) weeks of age and continue to raise the puppy until it is between 14 to 16 months of age. During their time raising, they attend basic obedience classes with their puppies. They also go on public outings to expose the puppies to a multitude of different environments. At 14-17 months of age, the puppies are ready to return to Dogs for Better Lives to begin their next step towards becoming an Assistance Dog. Learn more: [dogsforbetterlives.org/get-involved](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/get-involved)
- **Foster a Shelter Dog**: If you live near our shelter program partners, you can play an important part in this transformative and life changing journey by fostering a shelter dog that has been evaluated and in training for this important work. Volunteers welcome a carefully selected dog from our shelter partner into their home for up to 6 months. Dogs train with DBL professional Service Dog trainers on weekdays at the DBL training location. The dogs spend the evenings and weekends relaxing with their fosters and reinforcing their training at home.
- **Become a temporary foster or transportation volunteer**: Our team of foster and transportation volunteers make a big impact on our Assistance Dog Programs, helping our dogs through various stages of their Assistance Dog training journey. Sometimes our dogs need a short-term foster home before, during, or after training. Other times a dog will need a ride to another location to begin training on campus or to be handed off to another volunteer or staff member. Learn more: [dogsforbetterlives.org/get-involved](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/get-involved)
- **Join a Regional Advisory Board**: DBL's Regional Advisory Boards (RAB) are comprised of like-minded individuals who share a similar passion for dogs and giving back to people with disabilities in their communities. Members are engaged in advocating for and marketing the



mission of DBL, participating in outreach events, as well as planning and fundraising through a variety of initiatives. Learn more: [dogsforbetterlives.org/get-involved](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/get-involved)