



Welcome to DBL's Puppy Program

Welcome

Welcome to the Dogs for Better Lives Puppy Program and congratulations thank you for becoming a puppy raiser! Our puppy raisers are such an integral part of what we do, which is changing lives! Our goal is to help as many people as we possibly can and that starts with our program puppies and amazing volunteers like you. Together we can help provide the program puppy with a strong foundation they will need to eventually become successful Assistance Dogs. What does that look like and mean for our puppy raisers? Here is a quick glance at the journey from program puppy to Assistance Dog.

Birth

It all starts with our breeder dogs and their breeder caretakers. Breeder caretakers oversee the care and well-being of our breeder dogs. There are a few different types of breeder caretakers:

- Those who care for our stud (male) dogs long-term.
- Those who care for our breeder dogs long-term and whelp litters in their homes.
- Those who care for our breeder dogs long-term but do not whelp litters in their homes.
- Those who host breeder dogs short-term during their pregnancy, for the whelping, and until the puppies are 8 weeks of age.

Our breeder dogs go through extensive health and behavioral examinations before becoming selected as a breeder dog. Once chosen, they are then placed with their breeder caretaker. They will then be bred to carefully selected studs in hopes of setting up the litter for as much success as possible. When the puppies are born, the breeder caretakers will care for both the breeder dog and the puppies until the puppies are seven to eight weeks of age. During their time caring for the puppies, they help to expose the puppies to different sights, sounds, textures, people, and environments.

Puppyhood

Once the program puppies reach 8 weeks of age, they are then placed with their puppy raisers. Puppy raisers will foster the program puppy until they reach 14-16 months of age. During their time with the program puppy, puppy raisers will ensure that the program puppy:

- Is safe and well cared for.
- Remains healthy, ensuring the program puppy receives routine medical care, stays up to date on all vaccinations, and is current on all heartworm, flea and tick preventatives.
- Attends training classes either with Dogs for Better Lives, or an outside training facility that utilizes positive reinforcement training techniques.
- When the program puppy reaches the appropriate age, puppy raisers will take them on age-appropriate public outings two to three times a week.
- Ensures the program puppy will receive age-appropriate enrichment and play time.

- Puppy raisers will also fill out monthly reports updating their DBL staff representative on the program puppy's progress and identifying any issues they may have.

By providing all these things to the program puppy, puppy raisers will ensure that they are setting a strong foundation for their program puppy to help them be successful when they return for formal training at one of our DBL campuses.

Formal Training

Once the program puppy graduates from the Puppy Program, they will enter what is called formal training. This means they will return to one of our DBL campuses, undergo a behavioral examination, then be matched with one of our professional trainers. After a few weeks of working with the program puppy, the trainer will determine which Assistance Dog program they would be best suited for. On average, our trainers will spend about four to six months working with the program puppy teaching them all the tasks they will need to become an Assistance Dog. However, the amount of time spent in formal training can vary depending on the needs of the program puppy and the number of tasks they are learning. Once the trainer feels the program puppy can consistently and accurately perform all their tasks, they will then complete an Assistance Dog certification test with the program puppy. Should the program puppy pass their test, their trainer will then match and offer them to a client.

If the program puppy is particularly spectacular, DBL would look at them as a potential breeder dog. The program puppy would then go through additional health examinations. Should they pass all their health and behavioral evaluations, they would then be placed with a breeder caretaker.

Placement

Once a client has officially accepted the program puppy, the puppy raiser will be notified. While being notified, the DBL staff representative will also ask if the puppy raiser would like to pass along their contact information to the Assistance Dog's new client. They will also be offered the chance to participate in a video call with the client during placement. Should the client also agree to participate in the video call, the trainer responsible for the placement will set up a day and time for the client and puppy raiser to participate in the video call. After the team (client and Assistance Dog) successfully complete the placement, the puppy raiser's contact information is then shared with the client. The client then has the option of whether they would like to establish a connection with the puppy raiser.

Thank you!

Dogs for Better Lives is able to change so many lives all thanks to our amazing volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time helping the program puppy through their journey – from our breeder caretaker volunteers who care for the program puppies from birth to 8 weeks, to the puppy raisers who care for them for over a year, to our kennel volunteers who walk our dogs living on campus, to our short-term foster volunteers who help spend time with the dogs when they aren't training on campus – we couldn't do this without all of you. From the entire Dogs for Better Lives team, thank you for taking part in our Puppy Program and helping us to further our mission of changing as many lives as we can. Together we can make a difference!