



Guide Dog Development Program – Brood Guardian Volunteer

Guide Dogs SA/NT is a premium service provider in the disability sector. We use our expertise with dogs and in sensory service provision to enhance the quality of life of individuals living with disability and their families.

The Guide Dog Services department provides Guide Dogs to people who are blind or vision impaired, Autism Assistance Dogs to families of children with autism, and Pets as Therapy Dogs as companions to individuals living with disability or disorder.

To achieve this, we rely heavily on the generous support and commitment of volunteers to care for, nurture and assist in the development of the pups and dogs. Volunteering is one of the most important parts of our organisation. It takes a lot of dedication and patience to raise a brood bitch but for volunteers, it is very rewarding to see the final outcome and the joy, independence and safety they can give a person with disability.

Volunteers can assist Dog Services as a Puppy Raiser, Home Boarder, Short Term Boarder or in the Puppy Development Centre (PDC). Refer to separate information sheets for Puppy Raising, Boarding and PDC roles.

The Role of Brood Guardian

Volunteer Brood Guardians care for a brood bitch in their home until the end of her reproductive life. This is usually a long term placement as the brood is placed into the home between 14 to 18 months of age, however occasionally the brood will be re-assessed and transferred back to training on the Guide Dog or Autism Assistance Dog program. This is a 24/7 role requiring attendance at regular training sessions (approximately 1 per month). Applicants must not work full time or have any on-going commitments that may require them to leave the dog unattended for more than 4 hours per day. They will also be required to regularly attend the Guide Dog office for veterinary consultations.

Whilst the brood lives with the Brood Guardian, she will be required to return to stay in the Puppy Development Centre or other alternate locations when breeding is required and then again for whelping for approximately 10 weeks.

Becoming a Volunteer

Our volunteers know and understand that they are helping to give our clients the freedom of mobility and that they carry a large responsibility to prepare the dog for its intended role.

To ensure that we find the right volunteers for our dogs there is an application process involving an interview with staff and other specific requirements depending on the role.

Once you have filled out your paperwork to express your interest in becoming a Volunteer one of our staff members will contact you by phone to arrange an interview. The interview gives our staff an opportunity to explain the role of the volunteer to ensure that you meet the relevant criteria and that you understand the commitment involved in this role. It also provides you the opportunity to ask questions.

House Inspection/Practical Session

You will be contacted to arrange a time to visit you at your home to ensure there is a suitable home/living environment and appropriately fenced area. This allows our staff to view your current skill level relevant to the volunteering role, and to identify areas in which you will require further training and assistance. It provides applicants with an opportunity to understand what to expect from your volunteering role.

Application Approved/Further Paperwork

Once your application is approved and all paperwork completed, you will go onto our contact list and will be contacted once we have a dog available. Often we are unable to provide you with an exact time frame of when you can expect a dog. In the meantime, there may be training sessions and workshops that we ask you to attend, to upskill you and support you in your role.

Does being a Brood Guardian Cost Anything?

Guide Dogs SA/NT provides for all the brood's needs, including lead, collar, bed, blankets, brush, food bowls, toys, food, veterinary costs and worming and flea control products.

Costs for Brood Guardians are therefore minimal. Sometimes Brood Guardians provide extra toys if needed and you will need petrol to transport the dog to and from training sessions that are held in a variety of areas and the Guide Dog office, both close to your home and away from your local area.

Do I Need to Register the Brood with My Local Council?

The brood should be registered with your local council who will issue you with an ID tag. As a Guide Dog brood, there will be no registration charge.

What about Holidays?

Guide Dogs SA/NT has a short-term boarding program where families look after dogs of any age while their Brood Guardian is on holidays or sick. Our boarding families are trained to look after our dogs at any age. Staff will visit a boarding dog to check on its progress and continue its training.

Where Can I Take the Brood?

Our dogs are provided with a Guide Dogs medallion and jacket, which allows them access to public places, just like working Guide Dogs or Autism Assistance Dogs. Dogs are not allowed in animal sanctuaries (including the zoo), and certain hospital environments (such as the burns and intensive care units).

Our dogs are identified by a yellow coat and the Brood Guardian is given an identity card to carry with them when accompanied by the dog. This card demonstrates that the dog is recognised under relevant laws which enable access to different environments.

Brood Guardians are guided by staff in choosing suitable locations for socialisation at the various stages of the brood's reproductive life.

Can Children and Teenagers be Brood Guardians?

It is beneficial for broods to be exposed to children and teenagers. They can assist with the dog at home by grooming, toileting and feeding. However, the primary caregiver of the dog must be an adult, aged 18 years or over.

Children and teenagers should not walk the dog. They cannot be expected to react appropriately in all situations they are likely to encounter with a dog, nor should they be given such a significant responsibility. Young children should always be supervised when with the dog.

Who can apply to be a Brood Guardian?

Brood Guardian volunteers need to meet the following criteria for acceptance into the programme.

Location:

Brood Guardians must live in metropolitan Adelaide, to enable easy transport to training sessions, veterinary consultations and regular visits by Guide Dogs SA/NT staff. These visits occur on a weekly basis initially and will progress to fortnightly.

Some applications are also accepted from Gawler, Mt Barker, and Victor Harbor, provided people are prepared to do some travelling. Brood Guardians are required to attend regular group sessions, regardless of where they live.

Physical Fitness:

Brood Guardians need to be physically fit and strong enough to control a large dog. Labradors grow quickly. They can weigh up to 20kg at 6 months of age and some will mature to 35kg by 12 months. At times, they will be boisterous and may pull strongly on the lead. Some activities will involve regular lifting of dogs into vehicles etc.

Transport:

Brood Guardians need to have access to a car and hold a current drivers licence, for transportation to the vet and to training sessions, including at the Adelaide office when required.

Fenced Yard:

Brood Guardians must have a securely fenced yard for the dog to play, toilet and be safely left from time to time. Swimming pools, spas and ponds must be securely fenced. Fences must be at least 1.5 metres high.

Indoors:

Guide Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs, and Pets as Therapy dogs are “inside dogs”. Broods must sleep inside the house and spend time inside during the day. You will be provided with bedding and instructions regarding any relevant training requirements.

Applying to Become a Volunteer

Please contact us on 8203 8372 for further information and to obtain the relevant paperwork for the volunteer role.

Please complete all of the documentation and return it by post to

GDS Administration
Guide Dogs SA/NT
251 Morphett St
Adelaide SA 5000

Or by email to hr.volunteer@guidedogs.org.au

We will then contact you by phone to arrange the next step in the application process.

Suitability will be determined in accordance with the listed criteria.