

# CLUB STRUCTURE

## Leadership Structure

All club leaders must be approved by the Community Field Representative (CFR) and complete the GDB leader training under their supervision. For clubs with more than one leader, a primary leader will be chosen with the approval of the CFR. GDB provides a leader with a basic list of responsibilities and support materials for their role as a puppy club leader.

An important puppy club leader responsibility is to be a liaison between GDB and the raisers in the club. Being a positive representative of GDB's puppy raising program is key to having a club that works in harmony with the mission. Strong leadership and clear communication are essential qualities in a club leader.

Likewise, open communication with CFRs is essential. Leaders must keep CFRs aware of all conflicts and problem issues with club volunteers and the puppies or with the public.

Communications regarding all issues should begin as soon as they surface. If GDB staff is aware of problematic situations as they arise, their support will be more timely and effective.

## Multi-Leader Groups

Larger clubs with multiple leaders will determine how to assign responsibilities between them. Co-leaders are encouraged to assume roles based on their interests and talents, using the list of responsibilities provided by GDB. Leaders will provide raisers with a written list of each leader's responsibilities, as well as contact information.

The following guidelines are provided to maintain consistent communication amongst leaders:

- Monthly club leadership meetings are required.
- Agenda items for these meetings can be proposed or presented by all leaders.
- All communication about club matters will include all club leaders so all are kept up to date.
- When communicating by phone or informally in person, make sure to relay information to other leaders via email or follow-up telephone calls.

Community Field Representatives and Guide Dogs for the Blind will schedule periodic leader trainings to ensure all are kept current of changes in the organization, training techniques, and other topics. Leaders are required to attend 80% of these trainings per year. To facilitate attendance, CFRs and other GDB staff will schedule these trainings as early in advance as possible.

## Club Division

Occasionally a single club will re-form into two separate groups. There are two situations in which this might occur:

1. Membership in the club has grown to a point that meetings and outings have become unwieldy, or members live throughout a large area and travel to meetings has become too time consuming.
2. Differences in style or goals within the leadership and club make it difficult to move forward with regular club activities.

Splitting an existing club or creating a new club in an area in which a club already exists, is allowed only with the consultation and approval of the CFR and Puppy Raising Manager.

A number of factors need to be considered in this type of situation: are there enough raisers to maintain two clubs? If the instigating issue is an interpersonal one, is splitting the club the best way to resolve it?

### **Finances and Equipment**

In the situation of a second club forming by splitting from an existing club, the question of whether club monies and equipment will be shared must be addressed. It is important to note that the new club is not automatically entitled to any funds or equipment. The original or pre-existing club is under no obligation to provide funds or equipment to the new group, but may choose to do so if the original club's leadership considers it appropriate. Club equipment in use by a raiser moving to the new club, remains the property of the original club and will be returned to that club when the current puppy returns for training or otherwise leaves the raiser's home.

## **Requirements of a GDB Club**

### **Requirements For the Formation of a New Club**

- All new clubs must submit an *Application to Establish a GDB Puppy Raising Club* (this form should be requested from the CFR) prior to approval.
- All new GDB clubs are approved or declined by the CFR in consultation with the Puppy Raising Manager.
- All clubs must be supervised by a leader who meets the application, screening, training, and performance standards of GDB.
- All clubs must have at least three potential puppy raising homes, which may include the leader.
- Each prospective member must reside close enough to their leader and club meeting site to facilitate meeting attendance, monitoring, instruction and constructive intervention by the leader when needed.
- To best facilitate CFR supervision and instruction, clubs may be required to meet with other clubs at central sites of the CFR's choosing.
- A club does not have an exclusive territory. Other clubs that meet GDB requirements may form in the same geographical area.

## Requirements For Maintaining a Club

- Leaders, raisers, and club assistants will meet all guidelines of GDB; including: attending group meetings, trainings, evaluation, or other sessions as requested by their CFR or the organization.
- Clubs that have fewer than three puppies placed with approved raisers will be individually evaluated to determine if the opportunity for growth warrants their continuation as a club.
- Clubs that are concurrently enrolled in other organizations (4H, FFA) must also meet the requirements of that organization.

## Club Profile Document

All clubs are strongly encouraged to develop a document for distribution to all club members which gives basic information about the club and its functions. This information may also be made available to volunteers through a club website, Facebook page, or other electronic means. Information contained in this document includes:

- Calendar of Club Activities: regular meeting days, times and locations; detail of any other regular club outings and activities
- Attendance requirements
- Leader names and contact information
- Club and GDB website information
- Financial expectations and obligations: dog food, crate, toys, fees for outings, dues for incidental club expenses (postage, copies, etc.)
- Fundraising information: brief description of club fundraising activities and expected raiser participation

The club description document is to be updated annually. The CFR will be provided with a copy of each club's paper.

## Meeting Attendance

Puppy raisers are required to attend 80% of required meetings and outings during each six month period of participation in the program. Raisers with puppies that are temporarily unable to attend club events due to a veterinary issue will still attend training meetings. Mandatory meetings include training meetings and socialization outings. Fundraising meetings and events, and planning meetings for other events should generally be considered as optional. Individual clubs may, at their discretion, require attendance at a limited number of fundraising events or activities (80% attendance at this type of meeting would not apply).

For puppies over 5 months, the *minimum* number of required meetings/activities is two per month. For pups under 5 months, the *minimum* number of required meetings/activities is 4 per month. More activities can be offered as optional. It is important that puppies be present at 80% of meetings at a minimum. On the occasion that a raiser cannot attend a meeting, they are required to contact the leader and make other arrangements for the puppy to be at the meeting, if possible.

## **Club Activity Requirements for Club Volunteers Not Currently Raising a Puppy**

- Puppy sitters and all other club volunteers that handle puppies as part of their club involvement, will attend a minimum of 80% of training meetings in each six month period. Participation in socialization outings may be required if the club leadership feels this is necessary to increase dog handling abilities.
- Those club volunteers that do not routinely handle dogs must attend all club meetings or activities as appropriate to handle their job function (example - a treasurer would need to attend all business meetings, but not socialization outings).

## **Puppy Exchanges**

Puppy exchanges, or trades, are an integral part of the puppy raising program and participation by all raisers and their puppies is required. The following guidelines outline the minimum requirements for these exchanges within puppy raising clubs:

- Minimum frequency of six exchanges per year (more at discretion of the club leadership and CFR)
- Exchanges are to be coordinated and monitored by a leader or designated club member
- Raisers may not opt out of allowing the puppy they raise to be exchanged

## **Puppy Sitting**

Puppy sitting is coordinated by a leader or designated club member. Raisers will not make arrangements for puppy sitting directly with the sitter.

## **Puppy Numbers**

GDB may set a maximum number of puppies for individual clubs at its discretion.

## **Club Governance**

Guide Dogs for the Blind strives to maintain consistency in the manner in which puppy raising clubs operate. Understanding that clubs and their members will vary in their needs and interests, a certain amount of flexibility in application of guidelines is appropriate.

## **Club Decisions**

- Primary club leader will not have veto power over decisions made by the total club leadership.
- In the event that a majority vote cannot be reached, the issue in question will be taken to the CFR for resolution.
- When conflict occurs in a group that cannot be resolved by the leadership group, the CFR will help facilitate a resolution.
- Voting on club matters will take place through a simple majority vote of club members.
- Decisions regarding outings (ideas, locations, special dates and times) should be based on the leadership's decision and the consensus of club members.
- If a group chooses to fundraise, have dues or any kind of monies collected:
  - A treasurer will be designated.

- There will be strict accountability of funds. Treasurer will make quarterly reports on expenditures and income to full club membership.
  - Receipts must be given and a set of books maintained to track every transaction. These documents remain with the club, even if there is a change of treasurer.
  - All GDB policies and practices for club fundraising and handling of funds must be followed; see the *Club Fundraising* section of this manual.
- Decisions regarding expenditures for general club benefit (equipment, outing and meeting expenses, operational expenses) can be made by club leadership without a general club vote, providing for the dollar amounts discussed in the next bulleted item. Expenditures for items that benefit individuals must be voted on by general club membership.
  - The primary leader may make or authorize expenditures up to a maximum total of \$100 per month without club leadership or club approval. Expenditures between \$100 and \$250 must be authorized by club leadership (by vote or consensus). Expenditures over \$250 must be approved by a vote of general club membership.
  - Club dues and fees for use of club-owned equipment may be charged as long as the club membership approves and fees are assessed in a consistent manner.

### **Decision Making Format**

- There is no specific format for all club decisions. A simple majority vote is recommended whenever feasible.
- A meeting agenda is strongly recommended for all club meetings. Agenda items may be proposed to a club leader by any club member. The leadership has the responsibility to approve, or not, all submitted agenda items. Agendas and meeting minutes help maintain clear records of discussions and decisions.

### **Club Websites, Newsletters & Social Media**

- All information on the website, Facebook page or other club sponsored media site will be approved by the club leadership prior to posting.
- No personal phone numbers, email addresses, or home addresses are provided under any circumstances. The use of last names on club websites is discouraged. When necessary, refer to a person by job title or first name only.
- No personal information or photo will be posted on the website without approval of individual referenced.

For information on GDB's guidelines on social media, logo use and branding, please refer to the *Marketing and Social Media* section of this manual.

### **Other Types of Service Programs**

GDB puppy raising clubs are to operate solely under the guidelines and expectations of Guide Dogs for the Blind, unless they are affiliated with another organization (i.e. 4H, FFA). In such situations, puppy raising management can identify the methods to best operate these types of clubs and activities, consulting with the other organization as appropriate. Joint service dog clubs are not allowed within the GDB puppy raising structure.

If a leader or member of a GDB puppy raising club decides to raise a dog for another guide dog or service dog school, they are to maintain their work with that dog separate from the GDB club and puppies. Different programs have very different training methods and cues. To avoid confusion, it is necessary to keep the GDB puppy club activities for the training and socialization of its own program puppies.