

ACCESS AND ETIQUETTE

Public Goodwill

Guide Dogs for the Blind is extremely proud of its puppy raising volunteers, not just for the work they do and the contributions they make to developing GDB's puppies into guide dog candidates, but for how well they represent the GDB program to the public. Leaders, raisers, and other volunteers are the best advocates that the program could hope for. It would be impossible for GDB to establish a presence in so many communities without its amazing volunteers.

Puppy raising volunteers represent not only the club but also GDB's programs, dogs, students, and graduates. It is important that they represent Guide Dogs for the Blind in a positive way.

Etiquette

Please remember that volunteers are GDB representatives; whether at a formal presentation, on the street, at a mall, or wherever they go. Puppy raisers should:

- Be prepared to answer questions about their puppy and about GDB
- Remember to relieve puppies in appropriate areas, not on other people's property
- If a puppy does have an accident, raisers will clean it up promptly. A clean-up kit should always be on hand.
- Only puppies that are ready for the experience should be socialized in public
- Emphasize positive training methods in public
- Keep puppies carefully groomed and in clean puppy coats (see additional *Puppy Coat and Equipment Guidelines* at the end of this section)
- Present themselves in a positive manner to the public by being conscious of their own appearance, actions and speech.

Access

Guide Dogs for the Blind benefits greatly from public access into businesses, schools, workplaces, restaurants, and other sites as this provides a wide range of experiences for program puppies. Public access for working guide teams and other service dog teams however, can be damaged by a volunteer who demands access to a site where a puppy is not welcome.

State laws vary regarding granting public access to guide dog puppies. GDB policy states that regardless of permission granted by state laws, GDB puppies may only have access to public or private places where they are granted willing admittance or inclusion by the proprietor, manager, or staff of the business, facility, or service. GDB will not lobby or otherwise attempt to achieve access for puppies in any setting where the puppies are not welcome. Raisers and leaders may not demand, coerce, lobby, argue, litigate, or otherwise attempt to force issues of access for GDB puppies.

If a puppy raiser is denied access, they may briefly explain their role and what they believe

the state or local ordinance regarding access to be and then politely leave if still asked to do so. There are many places where puppies are welcome. It is best to enjoy those sites rather than possibly having a conflict in public. A puppy's development has never been harmed by a few instances of denied access. Creative raisers and leaders can always find socialization opportunities. If a raiser is repeatedly denied access in the community, they should contact their Community Field Representative.

It is a good idea to contact the management of a place of business prior to visiting. This creates a positive impression and may very well allow access where an unannounced visit may have raised questions. Whether they agree to permit entry or not, thank them for their time.

Reminder: puppies are never to be left unattended in a public place even if it is only for a moment to run inside and ask for permission to enter. Unfortunately puppies left alone may be stolen, mistreated, or get into mischief.

Career change dogs may never wear a GDB harness or puppy coat to gain access to a means of transportation, event, facility, or business which by law or courtesy provides access to program-active dogs.

Finding Meeting Sites

Finding locations for meeting sites can be challenging. Some site managers are reluctant to make their facilities available to dogs. This reluctance may be due to previous negative experiences with dogs at the facility or from public perceptions about dogs. Leaders and raisers may best change this perception by complying with the facility rules, courteously managing their puppies' behaviors, and cleaning up after them, both from relieving and shedding.

Suggested Meeting Sites

- Club members' homes
- Schools
- Churches
- Government maintained buildings
- Government maintained parks
- Local businesses that maintain public access meeting rooms
- Local service organization (Lions, Elks, etc.) facilities

Suggested Outing Sites

In addition to a regular meeting site, a club should also utilize a variety of outing sites that would be both fun for raisers and productive for socializing puppies.

- Grocery stores
- Malls
- Parks
- Public transportation
- Restaurants

- Theaters
- Concerts
- Guide Dogs for the Blind campuses
- Public squares
- Tourist attractions
- Fairs

Please also refer to puppy socialization guidelines provided by GDB when selecting venues for club outings.

Facility Policies

Organizations and government agencies have different regulations regarding adult supervision of youth. For example, a school's adult volunteer screening process for people using its facilities may be more stringent than GDB policy. If this is the case, leaders and other adults working with raisers at the school site need to be screened using the school's standards. Leaders have the responsibility of learning the policies of the facility that they are using and following those policies in addition to GDB's.

- Make sure that the facility manager knows how many dogs will be at the site.
- Respect facility rules such as "no smoking."
- Always clean up messes made by both people and dogs and return the facility to the same condition or better than when the club arrived.
- If required to do so, please remember to lock doors and turn out lights when leaving.

Some sites require proof of insurance before they will allow a club to use their facilities. Guide Dogs for the Blind provides such insurance for its raisers and leaders. A copy of the policy may be obtained by request from the CFR.

Providing for Safety

Puppies under 17 weeks of age cannot be in a high dog-traffic area, which would include parks and pet supply stores. Puppies' needs for training and socialization opportunities must be balanced with protecting them from the possibilities of infectious disease.

Meeting and outing sites should be safe for both puppies and raisers. The ideal meeting place is one that is well-located, comfortable and welcomes people and dogs.

When taking youth on an outing, special considerations must be made. Leaders should ensure that they have adequate supervision for the number of children participating. Keeping track of young raisers and their puppies in a crowd can be challenging. GDB discourages taking children to events where alcohol is consumed. If a leader supervises youth raisers, they need to refer to the guidelines regarding protecting youth, providing transportation, and other relevant safeguards in the *Providing for a Safe and Ethical Puppy Raising Environment* section of this manual.

Thank You's

It is always a good idea to periodically thank those who provide the use of their facilities for puppy club meetings and outings. A thoughtful card or certificate of gratitude is a great

way to create a positive association with GDB and the business owner or manager.

Puppy Coat and Equipment Guidelines

Guide Dogs for the Blind provides the leader of each group with green puppy coats in a variety of sizes. Puppy raisers will receive a puppy coat when their puppies are ready to be socialized in public and with each successive size as the puppy grows. Puppies should wear this coat whenever they are in public, especially in a place where dogs are not normally allowed. The coat provides a visual explanation to the public as to why the puppy is in an area where dogs may not normally be allowed. These guidelines are not meant to discourage raisers from having fun with their puppies at special club meetings/parties and at GDB Fun Days. It is not appropriate for GDB puppies to wear costumes in public, but at special events, such as a puppy club Halloween party, dressing up a pup is allowed.

- The coat is also a symbol of the work of Guide Dogs for the Blind. Only GDB puppies may wear a puppy coat. It is never to be used on a career change dog or any other family pet.
- Puppy coats should be kept clean and in good condition with no obvious wear and tear
- Puppies should wear only the puppy coats, collars, headcollars, and other approved items provided by GDB; no additional items should be worn or added (i.e. bandannas, other patches, etc) without the approval of the CFR
- Headcollars may only be tan, green, or black
- No additional items should be added to the puppy coat, including pins, buttons, or other adornments
- Puppy coats are the property of GDB and must be returned to the leader when the puppy leaves the group.