

5. Family Commitment Letter:

It is important for prospective families to understand that although highly trained and extremely beneficial, service dogs are dogs and require maintenance. In order to educate our families, we ask that you read and initial next to each item.

Before Delivery:

___ At the time the trainers make a dog selection for the family, we, the family understand that it is required to visit the facility in Harmony, NC to meet the dog. The dog and the child meet prior to the service dog portion of the training.

___ We the family understand that we may not purchase or otherwise acquire another (or additional pet) from the time the application is submitted to up to a year after the delivery.

After Delivery:

___ **Your Dog Will Need Exercise Every Day** – Exercise is an important component to keeping your dog healthy physically as well as mentally. Dogs that are not exercised on a regular basis can become destructive within the home due to boredom. Be prepared to exercise your dog in some form every day. You can play fetch, tug of war, run or walk with your dog, etc. Just make sure that your sessions are a reasonable amount of time to ensure that the dog is getting the physical exercise and mental stimulation they need.

___ **Educate Yourself About Your Dog's Health Needs** – You will need to be knowledgeable about basic grooming, cleaning ears, clipping nails, brushing teeth, heart worm medicine, and flea and tick preventative. Also, you will need to have a relationship with your local vet and make sure to take your dog to check-ups on a regular basis and have your dog always up to date on vaccinations.

___ **Your Dog Will Need to be on a Schedule** – You will need to have your dog on a bathroom schedule and be vigilant about making sure that you provide your dog with plenty of opportunities to use the restroom. Your dog will also need to be on a feeding schedule as well. You don't want to just leave a bowl of dog food lying out every day.

___ **You Will Need to Work Your Dog's Obedience Every Day** – This is an important part of making sure that your dog maintains their training and learns to listen and respect you. Set time aside (especially in the beginning) to work on all your dog's commands. This is an important part of making sure that your service dog is able to provide you with the best help they can.

___ **Consistency is Important** – Everyone in the family and anyone who will handle the dog needs to be on the same page. Everyone must have the same boundaries for the dog. For example, we like to have our dogs sit before they get fed. Anyone who feeds the dog must follow that rule. Another example is jumping. A dog does not understand that they can jump on one person but not on another. Jumping is either allowed or in a service dog's case it is not allowed.

___ **Organization is Key** – If a dog lives in an environment with a lot of clutter that dog may develop some negative behaviors. Until your dog knows what is acceptable to play with you want to make sure that there are no toys lying around that the dog could confuse as theirs.

___ **There are Certain Foods That You Should Keep Your Dog Away From** – You will want to familiarize yourself with these foods. Here are a few: grapes, raisins, chocolate, milk, avocado, garlic, onion, candy, sugary foods, and fried foods.

___ **Even Service Dogs Need Play Time** – Be aware that your dog will still need time to play and relax. Dogs cannot work all day long. They need down time to rejuvenate.

___ **Have a Safe Environment for Your Dog** – If you have a fenced in back yard, make sure that it is safe and appropriate for your dog. You want to make sure that it is fixed and there are no places a dog could use as an exit. Electric fences should be set up before the dog arrives if you are using one instead of a regular fence. Be aware that if you do not have a fenced space you will need to leash walk the dog at all times.

___ **Your Dogs Need to be Vaccinated** – If you have personal pet dogs make sure that they are fully vaccinated before your service dog arrives. Also, you will want to have your dogs on flea and tick and heartworm preventative.

___ **Ultimately it is the responsibility of the adult to handle and manage the service dog up until such time as the child is able to handle the dog independently.** This can depend on the child’s age and abilities and varies greatly on a case by case basis.

We understand there is a high level commitment involved in owning and keeping up the training of a service dog for our child. _____ (Please initial)

_____(Signature of parent/guardian) _____(Signature of
parent/guardian)

_____(Printed name) _____(Printed name)

_____ (Date)