

# RESCUE TO SERVICE

*People Saving Dogs. Dogs Saving People.*

## Foster Home Job Description

### Overview:

The Rescue to Service Program (RTS) is a program of Handi-Dogs, Inc. in collaboration with several non-profit organizations in Southern Arizona. The goal of the program is to identify dogs needing forever homes who could be potential candidates for service dog training through Handi-Dogs.

Foster homes (fosters) are a critical element to this program. Fosters will care for a service dog training candidate (program dog) in their home until such time the dog is adopted to its forever home. It is anticipated the minimum time in foster care will be 2 months and may be as much as 6 months. While in foster care, the foster will also be responsible for training core skills and socialization per the program parameters. Fosters will be a volunteer with a participating shelter / rescue organization.

### Eligibility to be a Foster:

- Attend an in-person Information Session which reviews the Rescue to Service Program in detail and reviews the responsibilities of foster homes.
- Complete an application with a participating shelter / rescue organization.
- Have a relatively calm household.
- Homes may have other animals living in them. There should be no aggressive history / tendencies of the other animals. All dogs living in the house must be spayed/neutered and vaccinated.
  - The program dogs will be spayed/neutered prior to placement and will be current on vaccinations.
- Agree to a home check prior to having a program dog placed with you, and agree to random home checks once you have a dog.
- Complete any additional orientation sessions or documents as required to be a volunteer with a participating shelter / rescue organization.
- For this program, fosters will NOT be the person for whom the program dog will be trained to be a service dog.

### Responsibilities:

- Complete RTS orientation sessions which will include education on dog body language, an overview on the training methods to be used, and review expectations of what is to be achieved through training your foster dog.
- Provide a safe environment, with expectation of the program dog living in your home 2 – 8 months.
  - Dog to reside in the house (not left outdoors overnight or extended period of times)
  - Supervise throughout the day
  - Feed the dog a diet recommended by the program
  - Do not encourage letting the dog be on furniture
  - Keep the dog on an approved collar/harness and leash at all times unless in secured fenced area or inside the home.
  - Crate train (as their safe place, that can be moved with them to their forever home)
    - The RTS Program will supply a crate, leash, collar or harness, and settle mat for each dog. This equipment will go with the dog when it is adopted.

- Teach the dog core skills (loose leash walking, watch me, 4 on the floor, sit, down, etc.)
  - Only use approved positive reinforcement techniques, as taught through this program.
  - With the program dog, attend weekly training classes at Handi-Dogs - Days/Times TBD.
    - You will start training classes about 2 weeks after the dog has been in your home. This enables the dog to acclimate to his/her new surroundings first.
  - Do daily training homework (at least 10 – 15 minutes per day).
  - Training sessions will be funded by this program. The foster will not need to pay for these.
- Socialize dog per Handi-Dogs recommendations for each program dog.
  - A key to service dog training is to NOT take the dog too many places, before it is ready – if that happens, it could be detrimental to the dog ultimately becoming a service dog.
  - Go to places where pets are allowed (Bookmans, pet stores, parks, La Encantada, etc.)
  - Do NOT take out as a ‘Service Dog In-Training’ to places where pets are not allowed, unless prior written approval by Handi-Dogs is given. Do NOT let dogs wear ‘service dog in-training’ vests, unless prior approval by Handi-Dogs is given.
- Transport dog as needed to training sessions, socializations, vet appts, etc.
  - Crate or put in an approved seat belt when in car at all times.
- Complete weekly RTS training reports. Submit as requested by Handi-Dogs.
- Keep the dog well-groomed (brushed, bathed, clean ears and teeth, keep nails clipped, etc.)
- Financially support the care of the dog by paying for its food, treats, and grooming. Self-fund transportation needs for taking the dog to training sessions, vet appointments, meet & greets, etc.
  - If financial assistance is needed, please consult with the shelter / rescue which you will be a volunteer, in advance of being assigned a program dog.
- Work with the program to arrange ‘meet and greets’ with prospective adopters.
- Agree to return the program dog to the shelter / rescue upon request.
- If a program dog is not available, we encourage volunteers to register to be ‘relief’ and ‘emergency’ foster homes for dogs in this program.

Throughout the fostering, the program dogs will be evaluated for potential of becoming a service dog candidate. At any time should it be determined the dog may not be a good service dog candidate, the dog will be removed from this program. In these cases you will work with the shelter / rescue organization in determining the best care for the dog (remain with you until an adoptive family can be found, be moved to another foster, etc.) Dogs that don’t make it in this program may be deemed good candidates to become an emotional-support or a therapy ‘volunteer with your dog’ dog.