



## **Released Dog Adoption** *Frequently Asked Questions*

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### **Adopting a Released Dog FAQ**

We hope that you'll find the answers to a lot of your questions here, but please feel free to contact Jennifer McLain at [jmclain@guidingeyes.org](mailto:jmclain@guidingeyes.org) if you need any more specific information, and we'll try to get back to you as quickly as possible.

### **My application is in. How long will it take before I receive my dog?**

Guiding Eyes dogs are known throughout the world for their superior health and temperament. Dogs choosing to become pets are in high demand, and the current waiting period for a young adult is approximately four years. Once your application is processed and approved, you'll receive an email indicating that you've been added to the waiting list. We cannot tell you exactly when a dog will become available and we always appreciate your patience.

Flexibility with breed, color and gender can often shorten the wait. The Guiding Eyes colony consists of 95% Labrador Retrievers and 5% German Shepherd Dogs. We are not currently breeding Golden retrievers. We place more black Labs than yellows, and chocolates are almost non-existent. German Shepherd Dogs are less common but are in lower demand so the wait may be less than for labs.

Older dogs and medically released dogs are sometimes available within a shorter timeframe. Medical releases are often for skin allergies, repeated ear infections and orthopedic problems.

Keep in mind that not every dog is the "right" dog for your lifestyle. Strong, high energy dogs would not be a good match for a home where everyone is gone all day or for an elderly person with physical challenges.

### **Will Guiding Eyes ship my dog by air to me?**

We are no longer shipping released dogs by air to adoption homes. Applications are restricted to people living within driving distance of our facility, which is approximately one hour north of New York City. Other guide dog organizations have similar programs; visit [www.igdf.org.uk](http://www.igdf.org.uk) for a complete list of schools.

### **What kind of training have these dogs had?**

Most adult dogs placed are between 14 and 24 months of age. They have all spent a year or more in a volunteer puppy raiser home, but most have NOT had formal guide dog training. These dogs are generally well-socialized, good around children and people, and ride well in cars. Energy levels vary, with the majority having higher energy levels. They are housebroken, although it's always possible for dogs to have an accident or two when placed in new homes.

All of our young adult dogs have basic obedience training: sit, down, stay, come and "get busy." We highly recommend training classes – particularly for new dog handlers. Guiding Eyes dogs are NOT taught to heel. Instead of walking by your side, they will pull slightly ahead of you. This can easily be altered with positive, consistent training. Also, most of our dogs have NOT had off-leash training. We do not permit our

released dogs to be placed in homes where they will be left unattended in an unfenced area, tied outdoors when no one is home or kept outside at all times.

## **Why are dogs released from guide dog training?**

Not every dog is destined for a career as a guide. Guide dogs are wholly responsible for a blind or visually impaired person's safety. They must have great confidence and be able to make decisions rather than to just follow commands. They must not be distracted by noise, crowds or other dogs. If a dog appears to lack the fortitude for guide work and shows signs of worry in certain situations, we will release him or her from our program. Fortunately, these dogs tend to feel safe and secure in their home environment, and make the best of pets.

Some dogs are released for medical issues that are usually minor and pose no threat to living long lives. However, it is Guiding Eyes' policy not to graduate guide dogs that have health problems.

We will always let you know the exact reasons for a dog's release from our program, and we will provide recommendations for the best care to keep the dog happy and healthy.

## **Released puppies and older dogs:**

Our 8-9 week old released puppies have been tested and indicate that they do not have the potential to become guide dogs. Their personality trait profiles reflect that they may be pups that seek human support when under the pressure of work. Like our older dogs, these pups will make excellent pets. They are healthy, well-bred, affectionate dogs that have been handled and socialized from birth by our staff members and volunteers.

The wait for a puppy is usually 1 to 1 ½ years for our black and yellow labs. Black and tan labs and German Shepherds are sometimes available, but the wait is considerably longer. These puppies are not housebroken, and must be spayed or neutered by the adopter within 6 months of adoption.

Most of our retired guide dogs are over 10 years of age and some may have medical problems. The average life span of our dogs is around 12-13 years of age. We occasionally have "middle aged" dogs between 4-8 years old that have been returned to us for various reasons and need new homes. There is no charge for these dogs and the wait may be less than for young adults. Retired dogs over age 10 do best in homes where someone is home most of the time since they are used to the constant companionship of their working partner. Also, many of the old timers are arthritic and do not do well in homes where there are many flights of stairs to navigate.

## **Are females easier to handle than males?**

Not necessarily! Personality derives from genetics and handling much more than gender. Our males can make great "lap dogs" and some females can be very strong and high energy. Since all of our adult dogs are neutered, we recommend concentrating more on temperament and personality traits. If you restrict your application to a female only, your wait will be considerably longer.

## **Will the dog adjust? Can he or she bond with a new person or family?**

Dogs are social creatures that thrive on human contact and affection. With a few weeks of attentive care and time together, a special love and bond will develop.

## **Can I change the name of my adopted dog?**

Yes, you may change your dog's name. With repetition and positive reinforcement, your dog will learn a new name over time – just like he or she would learn a new command.

## **Can I adopt more than one dog?**

We can only adopt one dog out at a time, and you may only be on one age-group waiting list at a time. Some families will go back on the list to adopt a second dog in the future. To be fair to those waiting, we do require you to go to the end of the list when applying for another dog. This usually works out well to allow a few years spacing between dogs.