

Welcoming a New Guide Dog Team to Your Community

All new guide dog teams from Guiding Eyes for the Blind have completed an extensive guide dog training course. Even though the basic training has been completed, there remains a considerable amount of work to be done once the team heads home. In these first few months, the team will adjust to new surroundings, new routines, new routes, and a new community, ideally forging a long-lasting, successful relationship.

Below are useful guidelines to help welcome the new team home and ensure they can safely continue their work together.

Don't distract a working dog.

When a guide dog is in harness, they need to remain focused on working, devoting their attention to guiding their handler. Never pet a working dog, as this can distract them from their very important work.

Always ask.

Even when the dog is out of harness and not actually guiding, the handler is responsible for their behavior to ensure they are well-mannered. Always ask for permission before interacting with the dog, so that the handler can maintain control.

Help spot service dog fraud.

It's important to know the difference between a working dog and a pet. Guide dog teams have trained long and hard to maintain behavior that is appropriate for public access. The ability to travel freely in public space is a privilege that is earned and protected by law. If you encounter a service dog team that you believe to be fraudulent, simply state: "That dog is not appropriate for public access." Alerting the handler, management or law enforcement can make a big difference.

No people food.

Don't give the dog any "special" treatment that the dog's owner would not want to continue. A scrap from the table "just this once" will come to be expected by the dog and can interfere with the owner's efforts to maintain good behavior patterns.

Keep your pet on his leash.

Guide dogs get to relax and play when they are at home. When you see a guide dog working with a blind handler, make sure to keep your pets at a distance, allowing the guide dog to focus.