Guiding Eyes for the Blind
Home Foster Manual

**DOG DROP-OFF**: Mon-Fri 6:30-8:30 am
**DOG PICK-UP**: Mon-Fri 4:30-6:30 pm

*If you will be late or are unable to come at the specified time, please call:*

**914-243-2228**
*(Remember to save this number in your cell phone)*

homefosters@guidingeyes.org

Emergency number 24/7: 914-245-4024, then follow prompts.

**LOCATION:**
Guiding Eyes for the Blind
611 Granite Springs Road
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
Guiding Eyes administers monthly heartworm, flea and tick preventatives to our dogs on the 1st of every month. Preventatives are an essential part of maintaining a healthy guide dog. You will be getting a three-month supply of heartworm, flea, and tick protection. They are oral preventatives, pills that are chewable and can be put directly into your dog’s food. An email will be sent before the 1st of every month as a friendly reminder to give your dog their preventatives.

Sentinel and Credelio are the preventatives that Guiding Eyes currently uses for our dogs in training. **Sentinel** is a monthly oral preventive that protects against heartworms, adult roundworms, adult hookworms, whipworms and prevents the development of flea eggs. **Credelio** is a monthly oral flea and tick product that kills adult fleas, treats flea infestations and treats and controls tick infestations for one month.

**How to Manage, Handle, and Care for Your Guiding Eyes Dog**

We greatly appreciate that you have chosen to care for a Guiding Eyes for the Blind dog in your home. By providing our dogs with a temporary home, you are helping to ensure that our dogs stay well-adjusted and that they continue to follow behavior guidelines established. This is a condensed document on the basic care and handling of a Guiding Eyes dog. By providing these guidelines, we hope that it will help make the process of having a new dog in your home more comfortable. When you first pick up your new dog, you will be asked to participate in a short training session with a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI). They will review basic commands and how to handle the dog, as well as general guidelines, and answer any questions before you head home.

**Feeding, Watering, and Relieving:**

This is an essential part of caring for your dog regularly. By following the guidelines below, the process should go smoothly and quickly. All dogs in training must establish a consistent routine with regards to feeding, watering, and relieving. By creating a routine, you will help to develop positive habits in the dog. It will also help you predict your dog’s patterns more reliably.

When you pick up your dog, we will explain how many cups of food that your dog is eating each day. Ideally, the amount of food should be split equally into two meals and fed at breakfast and dinner times. *We will provide the food for your dog.*

When you are ready to feed, ask the dog to SIT and STAY. The food bowl should be placed on the floor in front of the dog while reminding the dog to STAY. After two seconds, the dog is released with the word BREAK. It signals to the dog that they can go to the next activity, which is eating. When the dog is done eating (which takes as little as 30 seconds with a Labrador), the bowl is picked up, washed, and put away until the next feeding time. If your dog should leave before the verbal break, then step in between the dog and the bowl and ask the dog for a sit again. Step away, and when the dog is holding the sit, rerelease the dog with the word break.
The dog should be allowed to relieve itself after each feeding. The dog should have 4-5 actual "park" times a day ("park" means going outside to relieve them). The park time should be kept under 10 minutes each time, as this helps to facilitate quicker relieving. Most dogs defecate 2-3 times a day and will generally urinate at each park time.

All dogs are required to be on a leash when taken out to relieve. The leash relieving of the dog should take place in a small designated area, preferably on asphalt or gravel. Please remain stationary, allow the dog the full length of the leash to sniff and do their business. This is an essential part of their guide dog training. Once the dog has relieved itself, you can allow it freedom in a fenced-in yard, playtime on a long line, or head out on your walk. Never leave your dog unsupervised, even in an enclosed area. It could lead to numerous undesirable behaviors such as scavenging, digging holes, and barking, as well as risk the safety of the dog. If you have a multi-dog household, you will have to carefully monitor your dog's social interaction to be sure that it is appropriate.

Water should be accessible at all times, but if you find that your dog is consuming a whole bowl at once, place less water in the bowl (about 2 cups at a time) and refill it every few hours. Keep the bowl in a room that has tile or linoleum as Labradors tend to dribble water from the sides of their mouths after drinking. You can also place a rug or towel under the bowl that can be laundered as needed.

If your dog has just returned from vigorous exercises, such as ball throwing or a long walk, wait five minutes for the dog to cool down before allowing it to drink. Also, allow the dog 30 to 40 minutes after eating before exercising.

Riding in the Car:

Riding in vehicles is a big part of a guide dog's life, and it is essential that the dog is under control and behaves appropriately. We need to make sure the dog does not become a distraction to keep both driver and dog safe. We realize that there are a variety of vehicles, and every car is slightly different with regards to space. There are no absolute rules here, but some basic guidelines are in order.

The ideal location for a dog is on the floor in the middle seat. However, the rear of the car is also suitable, or some dogs may be comfortable in the footwell of the passenger seat. Avoid having your dog sit on the front seat as this puts them very close to the airbags. Many vehicles do not have enough room for the dog to go on the floor. Cars such as Honda Civics, Ford Escorts, and Volkswagens only have enough room on the seat. In these types of vehicles, it is acceptable for the dog to ride on the back seat. We suggest covering the seat with an old sheet or blanket to catch shedding fur.

In any of the above situations, we want the dog to be sitting or lying down. The dog should not be bouncing about from window to window or standing on all fours unless
exiting the vehicle. It will keep you and your dog safer when driving and riding together. If a second person is riding with you, they can help to control the dog. If you are alone and need assistance, a long leash can be connected to the dog and laced back through the seat to you. In this manner, you will be able to reinforce the dog’s correct behavior safely.

Have your dog SIT and STAY before opening any door. Particularly when exiting or entering the car, the dog must wait patiently until they are invited to hop into or out of the car. It allows time for the door to open fully and for you to get the leash on, minimizing the risk of the dog escaping.

Please check for the dog's tail before closing the door. 
*Do not leave the dog unattended in the car for any reason. Both hot and cold weather can present a life-threatening situation for your dog.*

**Walking with Your Dog on a Leash:**

You will be provided with a half check collar that is made up of both nylon and a slip chain. This collar is one of the safest collars for the dog to wear as they cannot slip out of it, nor can it tighten to the point of causing injury. The collar and leash provide a safety net for the dog and a means by which the handler can communicate to the dog. *When leading your dog on a leash, the dog will be kept on the handler’s left side (unless you have been instructed otherwise).* Keep the collar loose and only allow minimal tension on the leash. The dog should not lag or forge ahead beyond the handler. Ideally, the dog’s head should be next to or just past the handler's left leg. *Use LET’S GO as the walking command.* Inform the dog that you will start walking by using LET’S GO every time you are about to move from a standstill. It signals to the dog to follow you. If you are changing directions, you can alert your dog with a "THIS WAY" command. If your dog does try to get ahead or start to pull on the leash, stop immediately, and use HEEL to call the dog back to your left side.

If you are walking in an area that has many pet dogs, maintain a buffer zone between the pet dogs and yourself. It will provide you with better control and prevent the situation from getting out of hand. If you are experiencing difficult distraction issues, please let your dog’s instructor know what is happening. They will help you formulate a plan to resolve the issue. In some cases, we may need to try a different dog with you while we address the issue with additional training.

*Do not allow the dog to randomly mark, urinate on the walk or stop to sniff every tree. Park the dog before and after the walk and keep the dog moving at your pace.* It helps to establish and maintain a positive forward mindset when out on the leash. If you stop to chat with a neighbor or friend, ask the dog to SIT or DOWN until the conversation is over. Avoid letting the dog explore everything at the end of his leash. Carry pick up bags with you at all times in case the dog does relieve unexpectedly. Dispose of the bag once you locate an appropriate receptacle, please do not leave the
bag on the side of the road. It helps to create a positive image of dogs to the general public.

You will not be tasked with teaching the dog any actual guide work skills, but there are a couple of ways that you can help to maintain the training they already have. You can maintain the dog’s work pattern by stopping at any change in elevation. This includes any step up or down, any curb when crossing streets or any staircase. Please do not diagonally cross any street as the dogs are taught to work in a straight line. Another important pattern to maintain is moving the dog to your right side when passing through any left-hinged doors. A staff member will teach you specific techniques for doing this.

Never use a Flexi Lead/Retractable dog leash. This will only allow the dog to develop bad habits. You may only walk your dog with the leash provided by Guiding Eyes.

*Never allow children under the age of 14 to handle the dog on a leash. The dog can easily pull away from the child and get loose. These dogs are very valuable and should always be handled by an adult when out in public.*

**Exercising the Dog on a Long Line or Fenced-in Yard:**

*You must never let your dog off-leash in an open space that has no physical boundaries.* The dog can be exercised on a long line or in a fenced-in yard. Both provide safety to the dog and peace of mind to the caretaker. Retrieving games can also be played in this manner using TAKE IT and OUT. Always park your dog on a leash in the designated area before allowing any off-leash or long line play.

The long line may not be used for walking your dog; it is for exercise purposes only.

**Swimming:**

*Swimming is allowed if it is a safe location where there are no fast-moving currents, and dogs are allowed access to the water. Your dog must be on a long line at all times while swimming.* The dog will be able to have sufficient freedom, and you will have the peace of mind that the dog will stay safe from harm.

**Grooming and Ear Care:**

Your dog will receive daily grooming from Guiding Eyes staff during the week, but it doesn’t hurt to brush them at home as well. If you do not already have a brush and comb, we can provide you with one. Move slowly and avoid the tender areas of the dog (ears, face, feet, and under-belly). Brush the coat in the same direction that the hair is growing.
and do not push down hard. Remove fur from the brush by running the comb through it or by hand. You will not be asked to routinely clean the ears unless your dog develops an ear infection. If that is the case, you will receive specific instruction from Guiding Eyes staff.

**Household Pets:**

If you have a multi-dog household, you will need to monitor all the dogs and be sure that all interactions are appropriate. Dogs should be separated at feeding times to maintain a calm and comfortable environment for all.

Many households will have a variety of other pets or companion animals. They all need to be handled slightly differently to ensure the safety of all your pets. The most crucial element is that these animals are respected.

Cats will deal with the dog on their terms, so do not force the issue. Cats raised with dogs understand them; cats that have not will need a large buffer zone. **Do not allow the dog to chase after the cats.**

Birds—these are prey or chase animals. Keep birdcages up high, and do not let the dogs and birds interact. Small birds could die of fright if repeatedly startled.

Ferrets may bite the dog, or the dog may bite them. Play and interact with them separately.

Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Gerbils, and Mice—-are all prey animals, so always keep them separate.

**Handling Stairs:**

At some point or another, the dog will have to ascend or descend a flight of stairs with you. It should always be done on a loose leash. The dog should be allowed to approach the stairs at their own pace. When off-leash in your home, the dog should not be allowed to rush past you on the stairs. If you are having an issue with the stairs, please communicate with your dog’s instructor.

**Crate:**

You will be provided with a crate for your dog. The crate provides a variety of functions and is something that the dog knows well. Your dog has been crate trained as a puppy and understands that the crate is something positive and provides safety and comfort. The crate is a way for the dog to have downtime, sleep, rest, or chew an approved toy. It
is also a way to establish a consistent park schedule and prevent relieving accidents in the home. Guide dogs need to be comfortable with confinement on some level as it will be a regular part of their life.

**Here are some guidelines on when to use the crate:**
- **Anytime you must leave the dog alone (shopping, errands, movies, dinners out, etc.)**
- **Overnight - keep in a room where the dog can see people**
- **When the dog needs a break from an active household**

It will be important that you use the crate regularly as this helps maintain good crate behavior. Place a piece of kibble in the crate ahead of the dog while saying KENNEL, then drop the kibble and close the door gently as the dog enters to retrieve the kibble. **Avoid talking to or interacting with the dog while it is in the crate.** We refer to this as passive crate training. We want the dog to lie quietly and be relaxed while in the crate. Panting, barking, or continual standing is not desirable. If you experience poor crate behavior, please let us know. Ideal times to have the dog go into the crate are after periods of exercise. A tired dog is a relaxed dog, and more than likely, they will sleep. So, for example, if you have an errand to run, exercise the dog first, allow it to relieve itself, and then put him into the crate. You will find that this is the best method to establish positive behavior.

**Basic House Behavior:**

It will be crucial that your dog is monitored closely when free in the home. It's best to keep the dog with you on a leash for the first couple of days. Allow them to explore the home in a controlled manner and set a pattern of good habits from the start. Begin giving him freedom in the home after successful park times outdoors. By monitoring your dog's behavior closely, you are allowing him or her to experience freedom yet prevent undesirable behaviors. You may notice that your dog follows you from room to room until you stop at a location. It is normal behavior for most dogs. Ideally, you want the dog in the same room as you or at least on the same floor. A dog that is out of sight is also out of mind. If this is the only dog in the household, monitoring the dog will be quite straightforward. In multi-dog households, you will have to observe them more closely. Listed below are some more guidelines for in-home behavior.

**Mealtimes:** The dog should not be permitted to beg at the edge of the table. The dog can be placed in the crate during mealtimes if necessary. People food should never be offered to the dog.

**Watching TV or working on the computer:** The dog should ideally be in the same room as you. It can lie down and chew on an approved toy while you are preoccupied.

**Children and dogs are much of the same mindset; they love to play:** Small children and toddlers should be carefully monitored around dogs. The dog may knock the child
over, and the child may not know how to touch the dog appropriately. **A child should never chase the dog, and a child should never attempt to pull an object out of the dog’s mouth or take its food bowl away. Children should be shown how to gently stroke the dog.** Older children and teens will be able to do more with the dog. They may have endless fun playing retrieving games. They will need to be mindful to limit tug-of-war games as we want the dogs to release items willingly. **If you need to get the dog to release an object in its mouth, squeeze the top of the muzzle gently while saying OUT. If you experience problems with inappropriate play, please let us know.**

**Counter and tabletops:** We want the dogs to avoid looking on counter and table surfaces. **At no time should the dog place its front feet on the edge of a counter or table.** If you observe the dog doing this behavior, immediately signal to the dog with a firm OFF, then redirect the dog by asking it to SIT or DOWN. Avoid leaving any items on the countertop that may be overly tempting to your dog (meat is the most appealing). Wrap or cover foods immediately and store out of reach of your dog when finished. It also applies to garbage pails as well. Keep small pails empty, in a cabinet, or out of the dogs reach and use a pail with a lid for kitchen trash. **If you observe the dog investigating around a pail, signal to the dog to LEAVE IT.** This command is used anytime we want the dog to leave an item alone and not attempt to put it in their mouth. Praise the dog when it backs away.

**Toys:** Provide only acceptable toys for your dog. **Labradors are large dogs and have powerful jaws and teeth.** Nylabone, Benebones, and sterilized bones (unstuffed) are acceptable bones for your dog. Kongs are an excellent play-retrieving choice as they are durable. **Soft toys or any toy with a squeaker in it should not be offered.** Although dogs adore them, rawhides of any kind are not allowed. Rawhides can cause severe stomach to upset and frequent urination, as well as posing a high risk of choking and blockages. Many of them are treated with a lot of salt, which causes the dog to drink more than they usually would.

**What to Expect:**

You may host many different dogs as part of this program. Typically, you will host the same dog for a period of weeks or months, depending on the needs of the program, and how well the dog fits into your household. You will be given an Information Sheet whenever you pick up a new dog that you have not had before. You will also meet with the dog’s trainer or another staff member to review handling techniques and discuss any specific needs the dog may have.

Your feedback on each of these dogs is invaluable to us. We ask that you fill out a weekly short questionnaire regarding the dog’s overall behavior and manners at home. Each report goes directly to the dog’s trainer and often provides them with information that helps shape the dog’s training (i.e., small animal distraction, pulls on the leash, barks at
birds, noises in the distance, or signs of being uneasy, reactive to impending storms or thunder, etc.). These reports also serve as a record of the dog's time in your home.

**Pick-up and drop-off must be completed during the designated time frame (7-9 am & 4:30-6:30 pm) every day. Any representative of your family can do it. If you are going to be late, even by 5 or 10 minutes, please call to let the staff know (914) 243-2228). These times are firm and are designed to make this program run smoothly. If you have a vacation or absence planned, please speak to the staff in advance so we can arrange care for your dog.**

**DO's and DON'Ts:**

Although we want you to have fun and enjoy your time with the dog, remember that these are working dogs with an important job to do. There are some guidelines to follow in order to keep you and the dog safe:

**Do** supervise your dog while he or she explores your house.

**Do** utilize the crate both when you are home and away. Even if you find your dog to be reliable out of the crate, they need to remain accustomed to crate time as a normal part of the routine.

**Do** take your dog on outdoor excursions with your family.

**Do** take your dogs to visit friends and relatives with their permission!

**Do** keep your dog on a leash and under control around horses or other livestock.

**Do** ask questions anytime you are unsure if you should include the dog in an activity.

**Don't** leave your dog unattended when there is food around.

**Don't** let your dog off-leash except in a securely fenced area.

**Don't** take your dog into malls, supermarkets, or other businesses that would not allow a pet dog.

**Don't** take your dogs on escalators, moving sidewalks, subways, or trains.
Don't allow children to walk or lead the dog.

Don't take the dogs to public dog parks; this is to ensure the safety and health of our dogs in training.

In conclusion, and most importantly, have fun with your dog and enjoy having him or her as part of your family. You are providing exceptional service and a loving, caring environment for our dog. There are very few absolutes when it comes to handling dogs. Each dog, like each person, is an individual and should be treated with respect. In general, terms, discourage undesirable behaviors and support or reinforce positive ones. Remember that dogs are highly social animals that will follow our lead, and they are looking for direction from us all the time. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. Our goal is to help make the experience a positive one for you, your family, and your dog. Guiding Eyes instructors and staff are always happy to answer questions and work with you to resolve any issues.