

# Minimum Standards for Service Dogs

A Product of the Service Dog Education System

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#### For information contact:

Delta Society® 580 Naches Avenue SW, Suite 101 Renton, WA 98055-2297 (425) 226-7357 (voice)

Email: info@deltasociety.org
Web site: http://www.deltasociety.org

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Jennifer Arnold Bruner & Kent Bruner, DVM Canine Assistants Alpharetta, GA

Shari Burke Discovery Dogs San Rafael, CA

Major Perry Chumley, DVM AIM HI Service Dog Training Center Ft. Knox, KY

Debi Davis Tucson, AZ

Mark Engen, DVM American College of Veterinary Surgeons Kirkland, WA

Nancy Fierer Susquehanna Service Dogs Harrisburg, PA

Sue Ford, RN Euless, TX

Jeanne Hampl, RN Gig Harbor, WA

Suzanne Hetts, Ph.D. Animal Behavior Associates, Inc. Littleton, CO

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Lynn & Scott Quade Retrievers ASAP Janesville, WI

Pamela J. Reid, Ph.D. ASPCA New York, NY

Elizabeth Rudy, DVM Seattle, WA

Helen Rudy Campbell, OH

George Salpietro Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation Bloomfield, CT

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# Introduction

# **Purpose**

The *Minimum Standards for Service Dogs* (*Minimum Standards*) documents the recommended characteristics and minimum set of skills required of all service dogs<sup>1</sup>. The *Minimum Standards* also address the health and safety of the public, handler, and dog.

# Background

# Development

The *Minimum Standards* were developed by a team of service dog trainers, animal behaviorists, people with disabilities, and veterinarians.

# Service Dog Behaviors vs. Tasks

As the Team began analyzing the work to be performed by service dogs (e.g., turn on a light switch, alert to the doorbell, guide the handler down the sidewalk), the Team determined that the specific service dog tasks (may be better thought of as "applications") were actually chains (or sequential combinations) of component behaviors such as "sit," "moving with handler," and "focus on handler." In other words, a task is a set or combination of behaviors joined or chained together into a sequence.

Service dog tasks, which are primarily activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living<sup>2</sup>, are so numerous and individualized that it is impractical to list all of them. The Team decided that the first step was to identify all the component behaviors that a dog needs to know before learning how to combine (or chain) them together into tasks. The Team identified an extensive list of component behaviors by breaking down several sample tasks. In addition to defining the component behaviors, the team recognized the need to identify the various contexts in which the behaviors and tasks need to be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The term "service animal," as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), is any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. This can include guiding a person with impaired vision, alerting a person with impaired hearing to the presence of people or sounds, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, etc. Delta Society uses the term "service dog" to be consistent with the ADA definition of "service animal".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Activities of daily living include bathing, dressing, eating, walking, and other personal functioning activities. Instrumental activities of daily living include preparing meals, shopping, using the phone, doing laundry, and other measures of living independently.

performed, the range of conditions affecting the behaviors and tasks, and the set of stimuli that will control the behaviors and tasks.

Once the component behaviors were listed, the Team identified those behaviors and other characteristics that all service dogs should be able to perform, no matter what the individual needs of the handler will be. Most of these behaviors and characteristics are related to basic obedience and public health and safety.

Opening a door is an example of a service dog task. The component behaviors for this task would be:

- ♦ Going Away (from handler to door)
- ◆ Targeting/Touching (specific door)
- Picking up an Object (towel attached to door handle so it can be opened)
- ◆ Tugging with Mouth (pulling on towel to open door)
- Dropping the Object (release the towel once door open)

# Scope

These *Minimum Standards* include only those recommended characteristics and minimum component behaviors (hereafter referred to as "behaviors") required of all service dogs. The characteristics and specialized behaviors required of individual dogs should vary, based on the individual requirements of the person for whom the dog is trained.

Included for each behavior is a description of the behavior, the conditions under which the behavior is performed, suggested uses or applications for the behavior, and popular cues used to elicit the behavior.

A glossary is provided in the Appendix.

# Service Dog Characteristics

# **General Characteristics**

Candidate dogs for service dog training must have passed entry screening for aptitude and health with consideration for age, physical soundness, soundness of temperament, breed/breed-type characteristics, size, expected longevity, stewardship issues, behavioral issues, and behavior history.

The dogs will vary in age, breed, training experience, activity level, and temperament. The source of the dogs will also vary. They may come from animal shelters, breed rescue groups, breeding programs, or the handlers' household. They may have been raised specifically to be service dogs. A variety of training methods may have been used with the dogs. The dogs may have been highly affected by previous training methods. In some cases, little or nothing may be known about the background of the dogs.

# Health, Aptitude, and Physical Requirements

To perform successfully as a service dog, a dog must meet minimum health, aptitude, and physical requirements. When screening dogs for these requirements, those performing the screenings must consider the tasks the dogs may be expected to perform for their prospective handlers and the environments in which the dogs will be routinely expected to work. For example, a dog that assists a person with mobility tasks may need different physical characteristics from one that provides sound alerting assistance. The dog's characteristics must be matched with a handler's requirements, whether the dog is selected for a specific handler or matched with a handler after it has started training.

The following are requirements that the dog must meet by the time it has completed service dog training:

- Basic physical exam performed by a veterinarian and other appropriate animal health care professionals Each dog shall pass a basic physical exam that includes, at a minimum, the following:
  - Eyes Eyes shall be clear, free from disease, and fully functional. A veterinary ophthalmologist who will look for breed-related defects and indicators of other congenital or hereditary eye problems should check the dog.

- Hearing Ears shall be clean, free from disease, congenital problems and functional such that the dog can perform required tasks.
- Skeletal/Muscles The dog shall have the normal skeletal/muscle structure and function within normal limits for its breed or predominant breed. There shall be no structural faults or deficiencies that would prevent it from performing the expected tasks. All dogs that weigh 40 lbs. or more shall be evaluated for dysplasia of the hips and elbows (OFA or PennHip). Dogs shall also be radiographed for OCD of the hips and elbows. It is highly recommended that the dogs also be checked for OCD of the shoulders, hocks and knees.
- ♦ Blood panel The dog shall be screened for heartworms and for normal blood results.
- ♦ All immunizations The dog shall have had all immunizations appropriate for the area of origin and for eventual placement.
- ◆ Stool The dog's stool shall be examined and be free from ova, parasites and blood.
- ♦ Skin The dog's skin shall be free of fleas, ticks, dermatitis/allergic reactions, mange, and other common ailments.
- ◆ Respiration The dog shall have normal lung sounds, respiratory rate and rhythm.
- ♦ Heart Based on a heart screening, the dog shall have normal heart sounds and there shall be no heart conditions detectable on exam that would prevent it from performing the expected tasks.
- ♦ Abdominal organs The dog shall have normal results from the palpation of abdominal organs.
- ◆ Teeth/Gums The dog shall have clean and healthy teeth and gums free of infections or other dental problems.
- Pedigree Every attempt should be made to review the pedigree of the dog to ensure it is free from hereditary diseases. When this cannot be done, the dog should be examined for hereditary diseases in possible mixes, such as collie eye in collie dogs and hearing loss for breeds in which it is historically found.
- Owner identification Ownership must have been properly transferred to the person/organization supplying the dog. This includes checking the dog for the presence of all microchip systems and tattoos and other accepted methods of determining ownership
- Temperament The dog should be screened for temperaments appropriate for the tasks it will be performing and under the conditions

it will perform them. At a minimum, the dog should behave in a friendly manner to both people and other animals, should not display inappropriately fearful reactions to normal experiences, and should not behave in an excessively submissive or assertive manner. The dog should display confidence and a willingness to interact with people in a novel environment.

- Spay/neuter All service dogs must be spayed or neutered prior to placement with the handler.
- Physically suited to tasks required The dog must possess the physical size, strength, conditioning, physical structure, etc. to be able to perform the expected tasks. The dog shall not be overweight or underweight, as determined by the examining veterinarian.
- Able to handle the conditions of working/living in the area in which it
  will eventually be placed For example, a dog placed in Montana
  would have to be able to perform its tasks in conditions such as
  temperature extremes, snow, ice, and rain.
- Age The dog's age should be identified as best as possible. This may be difficult with dogs coming from shelters or rescue organizations, but a reasonable estimate should be possible. A thoughtful review of the dog's age in relation to expectations must be made. The dog must be at least 12 months old and physically mature enough to perform required tasks at the time of placement with the handler. The dog should have an expected working life of at least 6 years.
- Local animal control laws vary and should be considered when selecting and placing a service dog.

# Component Behaviors

Unless otherwise specified for a behavior, the following conditions and standards apply to all behaviors and are not included in the specific discussions for each behavior.

# **Common Conditions**

Dogs must be physiologically capable of performing all behaviors they are expected to perform. This includes physical conditioning, size, weight, physical structure, etc.

#### Surfaces

The surface on which the behaviors are performed must vary in texture, traction, angle (both horizontal and vertical planes), stability, temperature, and material (see examples below). Behaviors for which the surface is particularly important (e.g., move with handler) must be performed on a variety of surfaces. Behaviors for which surface is less important (e.g., focus on handler) do not need to be performed on as wide a variety of surfaces.

 Examples – carpet, slick floors, ice, snow, dirt, sidewalk, road, temperature of flooring/footing, grass, gravel, changes of surface (dark/light color, shiny/dull and dark/bright lighting), flat, incline, decline, cambered (arched), and moving surfaces

# Equipment

The assistive/required equipment the dog must wear or use will depend on the individual needs of the handler. (See examples below)

- Assistive/required equipment worn by the dog e.g., pulling, bracing, or guide harness; backpack; foot protection; leash; collar
- Assistive/required equipment used e.g., door pulls, drawer pulls, light switch levers, specialized switches, specialized pulls

#### **Environments**

The environments in which the behaviors are performed must vary in the distractions presented, familiarity to the dog and/or handler, and physical

characteristics (see examples below). At a minimum, there must be a food distraction; crowds; unexpected, loud, and sharp noises; an unfamiliar dog and cat; and an unexpected approach and interaction with a stranger, in which the stranger pets the dog. Behaviors will be performed in public, in the home, and, if the handler works outside the home, in the handler's workplace. If there are other pets in the household, they may be present during the performance of some of the behaviors in the home. If the handler lives with family members, an assistant, roommate, or other person(s), those persons may be present during some of the behaviors.

 Examples – variety of temperature, food, crowds, noises, other animals, toys, individual people, odors, light and dark, in familiar/unfamiliar environments, while being petted, in public, at home, and varying amounts of room available for performing the behaviors.

# Command/Cues by Handler

The dog must respond to the types of commands, cues, and corrections that the handler is capable of providing (see examples below).

• Examples – voice command, hand signal, laser light, sound cue, and behavioral cues. For some behaviors (e.g., basic and social behaviors), the dog must respond to the commands/cues of people other than the handler if the handler has given permission and/or if the handler is not present or able to control the dog (e.g., the handler is incapacitated).

# **Common Standards**

# Standards for the Dog

- The dog maintains controlled position, in appropriate proximity and position to handler, on cue by handler and/or as appropriate to the behavior.
- The dog performs the behavior without injury, discomfort, or interference to handler.
- Frequency of correct responses is high enough to ensure handler's safety and not be an impediment to handler's ability (with dog's assistance) to perform daily tasks and respond to the environment in a timely fashion.
- The dog responds to commands and/or cues. The handler may give the cues or the dog may be cued by events in the environment. The dog

responds without prolonged delay, and does so without pain or physical discomfort to either dog or handler.

- The dog performs the behavior within a reasonable amount of time.
- The dog may exhibit submissive behaviors, but its behavior cannot interfere with the handler's safety or control or the dog's work functions. The dog should recover from its submissive behavior quickly.
- The dog performs the behavior required by the handler.
- It is acceptable, and even desirable, for the service dog to display avoidance or appeasement behaviors to encourage less threatening and aggressive behavior from an approaching dog, assuming the approaching dog is directing its behavior toward the service dog rather than the handler.
- The dog does not pull toward animals or initiate interaction with animals. Ignoring or greeting other animals appropriately is essential because when in public, the service dog and handler will encounter other animals, on and off leash.

When encountering another dog, the service dog may look at the other dog and wag its tail, provided this does not interfere with its work. However, if the other dog approaches the service dog, the service dog either ignores the dog or sniffs briefly before continuing with its work. The dog should display: a relaxed facial expression and a relaxed body, its tail may wag gently, its ears may be alert and forward, or relaxed, or slightly back, its mouth may be open but the lips relaxed, its head may be slightly lowered.

The dog should not display: a stiff, larger than normal body posture; a stiff rigid or a stiff wagging tail positioned high or tucked underneath the body; retracted or pulled forward lips; bared teeth or gums (unless panting); piloerected hair; direct stare in combination with stiff body, bared teeth, or growl; upside-down posture exposing the groin area. The dog should not vocalize (bark, howl, whine, growl, snarl, etc.) or urinate.

#### Standards for the Handler

- Commands and/or cues are given in a manner that is understood and consistently responded to by the dog, and in a manner appropriate for a public setting.
- The handler does not interfere with dog's attempt to perform the behavior unless it is necessary due to changing situation (e.g., someone unexpectedly blocks the door to be entered).

- The handler uses encouragement and reinforcement to assist the dog as needed.
- The handler uses partial or intermittent reinforcement, not continuous reinforcement.
- The handler follows humane dog training as defined in the *Professional Standards for Dog Trainers* (available from Delta Society).

# Summary List of Minimum Behaviors

The behaviors have been grouped into categories that relate to the most significant aspects of service dog behaviors. Note that these are the names of the behaviors and do not necessarily correspond to the popular cues given for behaviors. The categories and behaviors are listed below.

#### **Basic Behaviors**

Static Positions, Postures, or Behaviors

Sitting

Lying Down

Standing

Staying

**Basic Movements** 

Halting/Stopping

Movements Relative to Handler

Focus on Handler

Moving with Handler

Going to Specified Position

Moving Backward

Coming to the Handler

#### General Positioning

Behind

In

On

Off

To

Manipulation Movements

Dropping the Object

#### **Social Behaviors**

Interrupt Current Behavior Eliminate on Command Accept Greeting by People Allow Body Examination

# Information Included for Each Behavior

Included for each behavior is the name of the behavior, a description of the behavior, the conditions under which the behavior is performed, suggested uses or applications of the behavior, and popular cues used to elicit the behavior.

We have included popular cues for each behavior for the reader to recognize familiar behaviors. Some behaviors have multiple popular cues. The cues are for the convenience of the reader only. Trainers and handlers will use the best cues for their individual situations. Cues are *all* arbitrary; the key is that the person can remember and communicate the cue/command consistently to the dog and the dog has been acclimated to the handler's delivery of cues.

The handler is usually the person with a disability. There may be times where someone else temporarily becomes the handler of the service dog to assist the person with a disability.

#### **Basic Behaviors**

#### Static Positions, Postures, or Behaviors

Behavior Name: Sitting

#### **Description**

Dog is stationary with its buttocks and rear pasterns tucked under body (hind legs bent at stifle and hock) and in contact with the floor or ground. The forearms are straight down from the shoulder. The dog's hindquarters may be tilted such that all or part of one hip or upper thigh is in contact with the ground or floor.

The pads of both front paws should be in contact with the ground or floor, but the forearms may be raised singly from time to time.

#### **Other Conditions**

This behavior should occur in response to appropriate contexts (i.e., the dog may assume a sitting position without a specific signal to do so or within a chain of behaviors in which it has regularly been required to sit in the past)

#### **Suggested Uses**

The sit can be chained with other tasks service dogs perform, such as heeling, providing physical support, retrieving, possibly having equipment put on, interacting with people, etc.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Sit"

Behavior Name: Lying Down

#### **Description**

Dog is stationary, lying on its abdomen, side, or back (i.e., ventral, lateral or dorsal recumbency). The head may or may not be in contact with the ground or floor underneath the dog. In ventral recumbency, the dog may also rotate its hindquarters so that all or part of the upper thigh and/or hip is in contact with the ground or floor.

#### **Other Conditions**

This behavior should occur in response to appropriate contexts. The dog may assume a down position without a specific signal to do so, in a situation in which it has regularly been required to lie down in the past or within a chain of behaviors in which it has regularly been required to lie down in the past.

#### **Suggested Uses**

Lying down can be chained with other tasks service dogs perform, such as providing physical support, completing certain household tasks, possibly having equipment put on, interacting with people, relaxing while on duty, etc. Down can be a very comfortable and relaxed posture for the dog and may be used for longer duration than other postures.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Down," "Rest," "Lie," "Lay," "Platz," "Lay Down," "Lie Down"

Behavior Name: Standing

#### **Description**

Dog is stationary with all four feet under the body in contact with the floor or ground. The forearms are directly below the shoulders. The rear hock and rear pasterns are straight down from the upper thigh and are extended naturally. Feet are in contact with the floor or ground. The head and/or tail may move. The dog should not move its feet.

#### **Other Conditions**

This behavior should occur in response to appropriate contexts. The dog may assume a standing position without a specific signal to do so, in a situation in which it has regularly been required to stand in the past or within a chain of behaviors in which it has regularly been required to stand in the past.

#### **Suggested Uses**

Standing can be chained with other tasks service dogs perform, such as providing physical support, mobility functions, completing certain household tasks, having equipment put on, interacting with people, etc.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Stand"

#### Behavior Name: Staying

#### **Description**

The dog remains in a specified posture without moving in any direction (changing location) or significantly changing posture. Slight shifting of position, movement of head and tail, and lifting and replacing feet in same location are permitted.

#### **Other Conditions**

This response may be taught as an additional component of the sit, down, stand and other behaviors (i.e., the dog may learn to assume a sit position with a "sit" signal and to maintain that position for a length of time with a "stay" signal. The dog may also be taught that, when told to "sit" for example, it assumes a sit position and maintains it with the "sit" signal alone until released from that position.

This behavior should occur in response to appropriate contexts. The dog may stay without a specific signal to do so, in a situation in which it has regularly been required to stay in the past or within a chain of behaviors in which it has regularly been required to stay.

#### **Suggested Uses**

Staying can be chained with other tasks service dogs perform, such as providing physical support, completing certain household tasks, having equipment put on, interacting with people, relaxing while on duty, etc. It is also a component of waiting, which allows the dog more freedom in where it positions itself.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Stay," "Wait"

#### **Basic Movements**

#### Behavior Name: Halting/Stopping

#### **Description**

Dog ceases forward or other directional movement and becomes stationary. May assume a sit, down or stand position.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

Halting/stopping is built into numerous chains, especially during heeling and other mobility functions. For example, it is used to stop the dog at a curb or to stop the dog from pulling a wheelchair.

Halting/stopping is also used in emergency and safety situations.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Stop," "Halt," "Whoa"

#### Movements Relative to Handler

Behavior Name: Focus on Handler

#### **Description**

Dog orients itself (head or full body) toward the handler. The dog may look at/make eye contact with the handler, rest with paw on handler's leg or lean into handler's body.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

Focus on the handler behavior can be chained with other behaviors service dogs perform, such as retrieving, completing household tasks, alerting the handler to sources of sounds, etc. It may be used to get the dog's attention, to get the animal ready for the next command or to get its attention away from a distraction. It can also be used for social support.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Watch Me," "Look at Me," "Watch," "Pay Attention"

Behavior Name: Moving with Handler

#### **Description**

Dog moves with handler in any direction and matches the handler's gait. A variety of gaits may be required. The dog maintains a defined, consistent position relative to the handler. The dog's position should not interfere with handler's movement in any direction. The dog should be close to the handler and should adjust his/her pace to the handler's rather than vice versa. A common position for the dog to maintain when moving with the handler is the "heel" position to the handler's side (left or right, as appropriate), with the dog in close proximity to the handler. The specific location for the dog will vary, based on the handler's needs and equipment. Other positions ahead, behind or to the side of the defined heel position would have similar criteria, but be signaled by a different command word (e.g. side, behind, front, etc.)

#### **Other Conditions**

The positions assumed relative to the handler depend on many factors. For example, dogs are typically worked on the side opposite power wheelchair controls (i.e., dog on the right if the controls are on the left). Positions should be chosen to permit handler greatest degree of movement ease and safety.

#### **Suggested Uses**

Moving in a constant position relative to the handler is actually a chain of behaviors made up of forward movement, turns, and halts. The dog may or may not be taught to perform each of these behaviors separately. It may be taught to maintain a position relative to the handler, which would require that the dog perform these behaviors as the dog moves along with the handler. The goal is to

give the dog one preliminary signal for movement with the handler and no further signals for component behaviors that occur as part of the movement sequence.

## **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

The command "Heel" can be used for the primary position from which the dog will move with the handler. Although traditionally this has specified a position on the handler's left side, this convention is not mandatory for service dog work. Different commands must define forward movement from other positions so as not to confuse the dog (e.g., if "heel" means left side, "my side" could be used for forward movement with the dog to the handler's right).

"Forward," "Let's Go," and "Hup-up" (used by many guide dog schools)

Behavior Name: Going to Specified Position

#### **Description**

Dog moves from current position to the position specified and remains there. The dog will stop and assume a sit, down, or stand position (as deemed by handler's needs) when it reaches the required location. Possible positions relative to handler could be:

- Front (in front of the handler)
- Left (left side of the handler)
- Right (to the right side of the handler)
- Behind (behind the handler)

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

The "go to a specified position" is built into chains such as walking and other mobility functions, or putting on equipment.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

```
"Front," "Back," "Around," "Let's Go," "By Me," "Place," "Walk Close," "With Me."
```

(If the command "Heel" is used to initiate movement with the handler from a specified position, then another command should be used for the "go to position" behavior.)

Behavior Name: Moving Backward

#### **Description**

Without changing the direction it is facing and from a standing position, the dog initiates and maintains motion in the direction of its rear quarters (until cued otherwise.)

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

Moving backward is necessary or useful in many contexts and in many situations. It is built into numerous chains, especially heeling and other mobility functions, having equipment put on, etc.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Back," "Back Up," "Reverse," "Step Back," "Go Back".

Behavior Name: Coming to the Handler

#### **Description**

Dog moves from its current location to a specified position related to the handler's needs. This behavior is often described as a recall: a return to a specified position by the handler.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

Coming to the handler is built into chains that make up numerous tasks service dogs perform, such as alerting a person to the source of a sound, retrieving, having equipment put on, completing household duties, social interactions, for the dog's safety, etc.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Come," "Here," "Come Here," "Front"

# General Positioning

Behavior Name: Behind

#### **Description**

The dog places its body in back of an indicated object and remains there in indicated position (sitting, lying down, standing) until given the cue to move.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

This behavior can be part of a number of chains. The dog may be directed to get behind the handler in preparation for following or behind a curb, fence, or other barrier.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Get Back," "Behind"

#### Behavior Name: In

#### **Description**

Dog moves to location (e.g., crate, under a table) of contained area and goes inside or under indicated object. Typically, another positioning cue, such as Down, would be given.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

The in behavior can be useful when the dog must go into its crate, a kennel, car or other vehicle. Moving under or behind something is very convenient to position the dog in an unobtrusive place, such as under a piece of furniture. Sometimes when taking public transportation, it may be necessary for the safety of the dog and other people.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Get into," "Get in," "Kennel," "Go in," "In," "Under," "Get in there," "Go Under"

#### Behavior Name: On

#### **Description**

The dog moves its body onto a specified object or place (e.g., table, chair, loading ramp) and remains there in the position indicated by handler (sitting, lying down, or standing on the object).

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

Moving onto something is convenient when positioning the dog in an unobtrusive place, such as on a piece of furniture. It is useful if the dog can be signaled to jump onto a table in order to receive grooming, examinations, etc. This behavior may also be incorporated into chains of behaviors involved in completing activities of daily living, both at home and in public.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Up," "Get Up," "Jump," "On"

#### Behavior Name: Off

#### **Description**

The dog moves all or part of its body from the object or surface where it is located to the floor/ground.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

This is used to get the dog off an object once it has been commanded to get on. This includes getting paws off.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Off," "Paws off," "Get off"

Behavior Name: To

#### **Description**

The dog moves to an indicated location. The "going to" behavior is often part of a chain of behavior (see Suggested Uses), but may also be followed by a position command.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

To is built into chains that make up tasks service dogs perform, such as going to the handler, going to another person, or sending the dog to a specific location (e.g., go to crate, bed, etc.).

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Go," "Go To (...) Place"

### Manipulation Movements

Behavior Name: Dropping the Object

#### **Description**

The dog opens its jaws and releases its hold on the object in its mouth so that the object can either be removed from the dog's mouth or it falls to a designated location

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

This behavior is generally the endpoint of a sequence of behaviors by which the dog brings objects to the handler or other person, or moves objects from one location to another. This behavior can also be used for the dog's safety to drop an object the dog has picked up that you do not want it to have.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

"Drop it," "Release," "Out," "Give," "Let go," "Thank You"

# Social Behaviors

Behavior Name: Interrupt Current Behavior

#### **Description**

The dog should stop whatever activity s/he is engaging in and be stationary until another command is given.

#### **Other Conditions**

#### **Suggested Uses**

When a dog is engaging in a socially inappropriate behavior and needs to be cued to cease doing so.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

```
"No," "Ehh," "Oi," "Hey," "Quit," "Stop," "Leave It," "Uh, uh"
```

Behavior Name: Eliminate on Command

#### **Description**

Dog begins sniffing, circling, etc., or engaging in any other behaviors that precede urination or defecation and then does either or both in the area and at the time indicated by the handler.

#### **Other Conditions**

It is also acceptable for the dog to eliminate when not specifically commanded to do so, if instead, the handler has indicated by some other signal or command (e.g. "free") that the context or situation is appropriate. While on duty, the dog performs this behavior only when signaled. The dog must be accustomed to eliminating whether on or off leash, indoors or outdoors, and on different ground, such as pavement, grass, etc.

#### **Suggested Uses**

A service dog cannot eliminate inappropriately in public places such as shopping malls or interrupt its work to relieve itself unless commanded to do so. It may also be necessary for the dog to eliminate at a specific time, because the opportunity may not be available again for a while (e.g. prior to boarding an airplane).

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

```
"Do Your Chores," "Go Potty," "Potty," "Go Ahead," "Better Go Now," "Empty," "Hurry Up"
```

Behavior Name: Accept Greeting by People

#### **Description**

The dog permits people to approach itself and the handler in a passive or friendly manner. The dog should display a relaxed facial expression and a relaxed body; its tail may wag gently, its ears may be alert and forward, or relaxed, or slightly back; its mouth may be open but the lips relaxed; its head may be slightly lowered.

The dog should not display any of the following: body posture that is stiff or rigid; a stiff tail positioned high or tucked underneath the body; retracted or pulled forward lips; bared teeth or gums; piloerected hair on withers; direct stare in combination with stiff body, bared teeth or growl; upside-down posture exposing the groin; or urination. The dog should not attempt to avoid the approaching person nor should it jump up or have contact with the person unless commanded to do so. The dog should, at most, sniff the person on the hand, leg or other

appropriate spot and should not vocalize (bark, howl, whine, growl, snarl, etc.) or urinate. Accepting greetings by people should not interfere with a task the dog is performing. The dog should accept touching, stroking, and hugging in the same manner.

If the dog has not been given a signal to greet the person approaching it, the dog should ignore the person.

#### **Other Conditions**

This is qualified by the assumption that the approaching person is behaving in a friendly manner toward the handler. Although it is not recommended that the service dog be specifically trained to protect its handler, when presented with a menacing person, the dog will bark only on command, change its position to be between the person and handler, and/or assume an 'alert' stance.

If the approaching person is not friendly to the dog, the dog should not behave in an unfriendly manner in return (unless the person physically abuses the dog). There are cases when a menacing person approaches the handler-dog team, pointing at the dog and demanding to know why the dog is in the person's place of business. It would not be appropriate for the dog to respond to this type of situation with anything but passivity.

#### **Suggested Uses**

Greeting people appropriately is essential because the service dog is often required to be in public and, inevitably, people are curious and want to greet the dog.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

Most of these behaviors are performed without specific signals provided by the handler, although signals may sometimes be helpful. If the handler chooses, the dog may be instructed to greet people by shaking hands, sitting, or other desirable behavior.

Behavior Name: Allow Body Examination

#### **Description**

The dog permits itself to be touched and restrained in a variety of ways, including cleaning ears, brushing teeth, placing drops in eyes, clipping nails, etc. The dog allows touching, probing, and manipulation of its body while sitting, lying down, standing, or lying on its back and while restrained.

It allows its ears and mouth to be held open and probed and its eyes to be held open with objects in close proximity (e.g., dropper, veterinary instruments, etc.). The dog may display an interest in the person's behavior but does not interfere.

#### **Other Conditions**

The dog allows body examination by the handler and by other people, such as family members, the veterinarian, and groomer. These procedures should not be painful; however, if they are, it is acceptable for the dog to display mild

discomfort and struggling, but the dog should calm easily once the procedure is completed.

#### **Suggested Uses**

Examining the service dog's body without difficulty is extremely important because the handler may not be able to physically restrain the dog. The handler and professionals, such as veterinarians and groomers, will need to handle the dog as part of health care delivery.

#### **Popular Cues for This Behavior**

A variety of commands may be used to assist the dog in assuming and maintaining desired positions during the examination such as "Sit," "Down," "Stand," "Stay," "Lifting a Paw," "Roll Over"

# Appendix Glossary

Term Definition

Analysis Report Service Dogs Analysis Report

avoidance/appeasement

behaviors

Defensive reaction to a threat, real or imaginary, flight or pacify.

Examples include moving in an arc, sniffing the ground, lip

licking, and blinking or averting the eyes.

chaining The linking together of two or more behaviors to create a more

complicated task

command/cue/signal A stimulus that elicits behavior.

dorsal Pertaining to the back area or a position more toward the spine

than some other point on the dog

forearm The part of the front leg that is between the wrist and elbow (see

Figure A-1)

gait Any of the ways, such as a run, trot, or walk, by which a dog can

move by lifting the feet in different order or rhythm.

handler The person with a disability (as defined by the Americans with

Disabilities Act [ADA]) who is being benefited/assisted by the

service dog

hock The joint above the rear pastern (see Figure A-1)

ingest To take in mouth and swallow

lateral Of, at, or toward the side; the outside surface

OCD Osteochondritis dessicans. A condition caused by the cartilage of

the growth plate of the bone not getting enough nutrition, such that the joint no longer has a continuous covering of smooth

protective cartilage.

pastern The part of the rear leg that is between the hock and paw (see

Figure A-1)

Term Definition

piloerected Hair standing on end; hackles up

propel To drive or push forward; to give an onward movement to

recumbency Lying down, reclining

reinforcement An event, a circumstance, or a condition that increases the

likelihood that a given response will recur.

service dog Delta Society uses the term "service" dog to be consistent with

the terminology in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA defines a service animal as any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. This can include guiding a person with impaired

vision, alerting a person with impaired hearing, pulling a

wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, etc.

staccato In a short, sharp, disconnected manner; not running on smoothly

stewardship Management of the dog's health and well-being throughout the

life of the dog

stifle The knee of the rear leg (see Figure A-1)

submissive behaviors Behaviors by a dog showing compliance, willing to submit.

Examples include tail down, groveling movements, body

lowered, eyes looking away and licks at mouth of dominant dog.

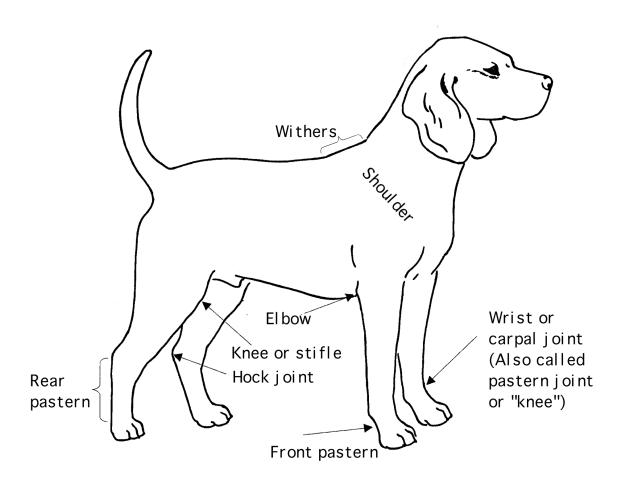
temperament A specific dog's manner of thinking, behaving or reacting to its

environment; disposition

ventral Pertaining to the underside or a position more toward the

abdomen than some other point on the dog

wither The ridge between the dog's shoulder blades (see Figure A-1)



• Figure A-1: Anatomy of a Dog<sup>3</sup>

 $<sup>^3</sup>$  Elliott, Rachel Page. Dogsteps: Illustrated Gait At A Glance. Howell Book House: New York, NY. 1977. p. 16.