



Foster Manual

Our mission

BluePath provides autism service dogs, offering safety, companionship and opportunities for independence. We have an unwavering commitment to deliver personalized service beyond expectation, and our vision is to be the definitive leader in autism service dog provision – transforming the lives of individuals, families and communities. We rely heavily on the generosity of donors and volunteers to fulfill our mission.

Why dogs for children with autism?

Scientific studies confirm the transformative nature of the human – canine bond, and as a result, animal assisted therapies have grown dramatically. For children with autism, the comfort and companionship of a well-trained dog can serve as the catalyst for remarkable changes in sleeping, eating, and social behavior.

How does an autism service dog work?

Many children with autism exhibit decreased safety awareness; they can bolt away from a safe environment or the security of a caregiver with no warning. These elopement issues can make trips outside the home a frightening proposition. An autism service dog works alongside parents or caregivers to keep a child safe. The dog is connected to the child via a specially designed tether system, and the dog is trained to “anchor” in response to a child bolting. This immediate, emotionless reaction keeps the child safe – and often helps to reduce or eliminate the bolting behavior.

From a graduate:

“Many times we were forced to take turns staying home or just not go out with our son because the stress of going out in public was so great. He got away from us more than once and the agony of getting to him before something tragic happened to him was more than we could bear. Receiving our autism service dog changed our lives; we have been able to participate in many activities that in the past would not have been possible.”



Chapter 1: Welcome Fosterers

It takes a huge heart to become a BluePath foster. You have selflessly agreed to take a dog into your home for six months or more – to provide additional training, socialization and love. We are incredibly grateful for your dedication and generosity.

You will have several responsibilities as a BluePath foster. The most important job is providing a loving, warm, and safe environment when the dog is home with you. You will also be responsible for continuing the good work of the puppy raiser by enforcing good social and house manners.

Fostering a dog is an exciting and rewarding experience. Nevertheless, we understand that you may feel some trepidation and may have many questions before and during such an undertaking. This manual is a guide to making your fostering experience easier, but never hesitate to call or email if you can't find the answer here. Thank you for joining our team and being an integral part of changing the life of a child and family affected by autism.

What BluePath provides:

- Foster Kit: This includes a collar, a leash, a Nylabone chew toy, a zoom groom, two stainless steel bowls, a mat and a small supply of dog food. Once this supply runs out, we ask that you supply the dog food for the duration of the dog's time with you, unless this causes a hardship.
- A 42" size dog crate
- Instruction on teaching the commands and skills, and ongoing support.
- Invitation to your foster dog's graduation luncheon

What we ask of our fosters:

- Provide a safe and loving home.
- Always keep the dog on a leash when outdoors, unless in a fenced-in area.
- Your dog should initially never be left alone and unsupervised, unless he is safe in a crate. Once he has been in your home for several days and you are confident he has appropriate house manners, you can start leaving him loose in your home for short periods of time. Leave him loose when you take the garbage to the road or waiting for the school bus. Once you can successfully leave him for 5-10 minutes, increase the minutes you leave him alone, in 10-15 minute increments.
- Be sure you feed only the amount of food set by BluePath as it is important that the dog stay at a healthy weight. If you use treats throughout the day, portion these off from the dog's regular meals. BluePath staff will be monitoring the dog's weight and will alert you to any changes to the dog's daily food intake.
- Brush your dog daily to ensure a healthy coat and cut down on shedding.

- Ensure your dog has ample opportunities for exercise – whether it’s appropriate play in the house or yard or for long walks and/or hikes.
- Continue working on appropriate house manners. The dog is not allowed on furniture. He is not allowed to put his feet up on the counter or table or to chase other pets in the house. He should not take items that are not his, such as slippers, socks, stuffed animals.
- Use BluePath’s commands and training techniques in your home and when out on socialization outings and walks.
- Fosters are responsible for providing quality food, appropriate toys and a dog bed.

Before You

Your foster dog has spent the first 14-16 months of his life living with a volunteer puppy raiser. These dedicated individuals take puppies at approximately eight weeks old; they teach them house manners and basic obedience and they socialize them to everything the world has to offer. Puppy raisers provide the foundation for service dogs to be successful, and without them we would simply be unable to fulfill our mission.

Approximately one month into your foster dog’s time with you, we’ll provide you with your puppy raiser’s contact information and we’ll share your contact info with them. We ask that you connect with your dog’s raiser several times throughout the fostering period, sharing photos and notes about the fun times you share together. It’s possible that the puppy raiser may want to visit the dog; this type of event would be coordinated through BluePath staff.



Chapter 2: Preparing for the Dog's Arrival

Everyone your dog encounters will have an impact on his development and behavior. This is especially important with family members, as they will be interacting with the dog all the time. Make sure they read this manual prior to the dog's arrival. Talk about the rules as a family so everyone fully understands each rule and its importance on the dog's behavior.

Safety first: dog proofing your home and yard:

Dogs are very inquisitive in a new home, so your home needs to be prepared for the dog in the same way you safeguard your home for a toddler.

Labrador retrievers and Golden retrievers investigate their surroundings with their mouths, picking up objects to see how they feel and taste. However, there are many objects that are dangerous or poisonous, and these items must be removed from the environment.

It is necessary to follow these safety steps to keep your dog safe and healthy:

- **Human medications are the number one cause of poisonings in dogs and should be put away in cabinets - never leave them out on countertops or bathroom vanities.** Dogs can easily reach pill vials that are up over their heads and chew them up, ingesting their contents. Tylenol, Advil (Ibuprofen) and Aleve (Naproxen) should never be given to dogs.
- Mouse and rat poisons are one of the most common poisons found in households and are extremely deadly for dogs. **Mouse and rat poisons are prohibited in BluePath's foster raising homes.** This applies to all areas of the house, including the garage, regardless of whether your dog has access to the room.
- All plants should be kept out of reach of your dog. While most plants cause only mild toxicities (vomiting, diarrhea), others can cause kidney, liver or heart problems. Before adding plants to your household or yard, check the ASPCA website (<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>) to see if they are safe.
- All chocolates should be kept in cabinets or pantries and never left out on the kitchen counter or in bowls on coffee tables or kitchen tables. Milk chocolate is toxic in larger amounts, but dark chocolate and cocoa powder for baking is toxic in smaller quantities.
- Grapes and raisins can be toxic and even deadly to some dogs, even with the ingestion of only one.
- Ingestion of gums, candies and food products containing the sugar substitute Xylitol can cause life-threatening liver damage and dangerously low blood sugar. Note that some peanut butters contain Xylitol.

- Other food items like garlic, onions, and macadamia nuts cause varying degrees of toxicity.
- Peach pits and corn cobs easily cause intestinal obstructions requiring surgery.
- Clothing items left on the floor or in accessible laundry baskets can be chewed into pieces or swallowed whole. Please keep socks and underwear in drawers or sealable laundry bins.
- Cocoa mulch used in some landscaping is dangerous and should not be used.
- Garbage bins need to be kept in latching cabinets or in locking containers.
- Dogs should not have access to garages, as anti-freeze is extremely deadly, even in small amounts. **ANY leakage of anti-freeze** under your car should be thoroughly hosed away with copious amounts of water. Dogs are attracted to the sweet taste of anti-freeze.
- Pools, rapidly flowing creeks and rivers, and deep-water ponds can be drowning hazards to all dogs. Be sure to thoughtfully manage your dog around any body of water.

Always know where your dog is and what he or she is doing in your home, yard or in public. Here are important websites and phone numbers to refer to in an emergency:

Animal Poison Control **888-426-4435**
<https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>

Poisonous Plants: <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>

(Please note that this center charges a fee per call, which will not be reimbursed by BluePath.)

Equipment list:

You will need to provide the following items for your dog:

- Food
- Crate mat
- Grooming tools - We will supply you with a Kong Zoom Groom. You may also choose to buy a Furminator.
- Plastic poop bags - It is important to always pick up after your dog defecates.
- Collar - Your dog will be wearing a training collar, but you may purchase a nylon buckle collar if you wish.
- Toys - There are hundreds of types of toys you can purchase; however, some are much better quality than others. We recommend toys from the following companies: Kong, Nylabone, Kyjen, Busy Buddy, Chuckit, Jolly Pet, JW Pet, Outward Hound, Petstages, Planet Dog, Tuffy's, and West Paw. These toys can be purchased at toy stores or online. We have had much success using Chewy.com. Soft toys, tennis balls, rope toys, fleece toys and squeaker toys should only be available when you are either actively playing with the dog or the

dog is being well supervised. Never leave these types of toys in the crate with them. **Rawhide, cow hooves, pig ears, raw or cooked animal bones, edible Nylabones or greenies, antlers, or bully sticks are not permitted at any time.**

Quick overview chart:

The chart below provides a general overview of our training methodologies and best practices. Many of these are addressed in greater detail later in this document.

DO	DON'T
Use a long line to play with the dog outdoors if you do not have a fenced in yard.	Never allow the dog to run unleashed in an area that is not fenced in. Invisible fences are not appropriate containment methods.
Use a 4ft, 6ft or a long line (15ft - 25ft) leash.	Never use a retractable leash.
If you need a negative consequence for a behavior, use a verbal “no” or “uh uh” and then show him the behavior you want.	Never hit, swat, spank the dog, yell, or tap him or her on the nose as a correction.
Take the dog outside regularly to urinate and defecate. Always do this as soon as they wake up, after drinking water, eating, or playing.	Never punish the dog for urinating or defecating indoors.
Take the dog to a friend’s house to play if it is in a fenced in area, and you know that the other dog(s) are healthy, friendly, and fully vaccinated.	Never take the dog to a dog park.
The dog should walk nicely on all different types of stairs.	Never take the dog on an escalator or moving walkway.
Allow your dog to check out bodies of water like streams and ponds, while on leash or long line. Allow them to go into the water and swim if they want to.	Never allow your dog to play around the swimming pool.
Allow people to pet your dog.	Don’t allow the dog to mouth people. Don’t allow the dog to jump on people.

Chapter 3: A BluePath Dog Moves in: What Happens Next?

Initially, BluePath staff will spend time with you and the dog together, helping you get him used to his new environment. Staff will also work with you and the dog together until you feel comfortable and confident. There will be an adjustment period that will take a few days or even a week when the dog first moves in, but things will quickly settle down once a routine and rules are put in place.

Establishing a daily routine is paramount to having a positive fostering experience. The dog will learn the routine quickly, making him more confident at what to expect throughout the day. You must establish that extra time every day in your own schedule so the needs of the dog are met.

Whether you're a new foster or a veteran, mistakes will be made by both of you. Together you will learn from them and you will both move on. Dogs need time, repetition, and patience to learn everything they need to learn, so relax and take a deep breath, and above all, enjoy the journey.



The dog's arrival:

As soon as BluePath staff arrives with the dog, we will take him directly to his designated toileting area and give him a chance to relieve. Your home is a brand-new experience for him, so we want to give him time to explore both the outside and inside of your home on leash as well as meet all family members in a calm and relaxed manner.

Introducing your personal dogs and cats:

Allow the dog to meet your other pets one at a time, slowly and carefully. If you have a pet dog in the home, this introduction will have been done prior to placement in your home. However, before we enter your home this time, we will again make the introduction outside on the driveway or sidewalk. We will put both dogs on leash and slowly allow them to greet each other. We will give them time to get reacquainted, praising both dogs for calm and appropriate behavior.

Introducing your dog to the family cat should be delayed, if possible, to allow the cat to get used to the smell of the dog before they meet. Keep the litter box and cat food in an area that your dog does not have access as ingestion of these items can cause intestinal upset. When you do introduce your dog to the cat, the dog should be on a

leash. This will keep the dog from chasing your cat and gives you the ability to move the dog away from the cat when needed. This initial greeting should not be forced. It may be helpful to have a room where the cat can go to escape the dog. Using a baby gate to block off a room allows your cat the ability to choose the amount of interaction that he feels comfortable with.

Basic house behavior:

During the first few weeks, the dog should not have free run of your home. When you can't supervise him, place him in his crate with a Nylabone or another good chew toy. Supervision and the use of the crate are the best ways to teach the dog good house manners.



It will be very important that your dog is monitored closely when free in the house, especially for the first couple of weeks. By monitoring your dog's behavior, you are allowing him to experience freedom, yet preventing him from establishing poor behaviors. You may notice that your dog follows you from room to room until you stop in a certain area; this is common and ideal. A dog that is out of sight is out of mind. If this is the only dog in the household, this will be easy to monitor but in multi-dog households, you will have to observe more closely. As time goes on, you will be able to provide more freedom in the home as he proves himself reliable.

Guidelines to ensure good house behavior:

Meal times: The dog should not be permitted to beg at the edge of the table; he should be crated or asked to “place” on a small mat at the perimeter of the room. Initially, crate the dog during meal times until you have practiced “place” with him when you have the time and a meal is not in the works. The dog must never eat people food and he should not be teased with it by children or other family members.

While working on the computer or watching TV: The dog should be in the room with you. He can lie down and chew on an approved toy but be sure to constantly monitor what he is chewing as a toy can suddenly become the chair leg. Stay mindful those first couple of weeks until the dog has settled in and you know what to expect.

Counter surfing: BluePath dogs should never place his nose or feet on a counter or table top. If you observe the dog considering this behavior, immediately use a firm “leave it” so the dog stops looking up and turns his attention to you. Praise him when he moves away from the counter and then engage him for a few minutes with some

obedience commands such as “sit,” “stay,” “come” and then another “sit.” This will distract him from the counter and redirect his attention onto you. Avoid leaving very tempting items (such as meat) out on the counter; it takes less than 15 seconds for a dog to grab your entire dinner, right from under your nose.

Furniture: BluePath dogs are not allowed on the furniture. If the dog jumps up on a piece of furniture, immediately use the word “off.” If the dog does not comply, calmly put a leash on the dog and tell him “off” while giving a light tug on the leash towards the floor. Once he is off the furniture, give him light praise.

Crate:

BluePath supplied you with a crate when you received your dog. The crate is extremely important and will be used daily; it must always be in your home, in a family-centric area - never outdoors or in a garage. As we mentioned above, the dog should initially be put in the crate anytime he’s left alone, as well as overnight. You can also use the crate when the dog is overstimulated and needs a time out.

The dog has been raised with a crate since he was eight weeks old; it is a safe place where he can relax. When the dog is crated, no one in the home should tease him or talk to him as this may rouse him to vocalize. Children should not go near the crate while the dog is in it. If the dog starts vocalizing in his crate, ignore him; it should dissipate within a few minutes.

We use the word “kennel” to let the dog know you want him to enter his crate. Stand next to the open crate door and point toward the open door and use the word “kennel.” Praise the dog calmly when he enters.

Bedtime routine:

When it is time for the dog to go to bed, give him one more chance to relieve himself before placing him in his crate. At first, he may bark or whine. Ignore him and he should settle himself. If he does not, simply say “quiet” in a calm, firm tone. If he begins to whine in the middle of the night, again tell him “quiet” in the same calm, firm tone. If he does not settle and you feel he is uncomfortable, put him on leash and take him to his toileting area. Give him only a minute or two to relieve. If he does not relieve himself, go back inside and put him back in his crate. If he begins to vocalize, tell him “quiet” but do not take him back outside.

Food and water:

Your dog will eat twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, at times convenient for your schedule. You will receive written instructions regarding the amount of food the dog eats at each meal.

Water should be accessible at all times. However, if you find your dog is consuming a whole bowl at once, place less water in the bowl and refill it every few hours.

If your dog has just returned from vigorous exercise such as ball throwing, and he is panting excessively, do not feed for at least a half hour. He may have a couple sips of water but then remove the bowl until the heavy panting has subsided. If your dog has just eaten, give him at least 30 minutes to digest his meal before any strenuous exercise.

Feeding:

The goal at meal times is that the dog should be in a “sit” position when you are preparing the food. He must sit quietly without jumping up on you during the process. To start, put the leash on the dog and tell the dog to “sit” and “stay.” Hold the leash but keep it loose. If you need to use the leash to reinforce the command, calmly correct the dog into the “sit” position. Quietly praise the dog when he complies.

Now tell the dog to “stay” in a calm, firm tone as you place the food bowl on the floor in front of the dog. If the dog begins to get up to eat before you have released him, pick up the food bowl and repeat the “stay.” Initially you may need to repeat these steps. Once your dog has sat calmly for a second or two, release him with a happy “break” command so the dog knows he can get up and eat his food. No children should be near the food bowl while the dog is eating.

Once he has eaten, pick up the food bowl immediately and put it away. Your dog has been doing this routine for months in his puppy home. This is not new to him, but your home is new; he does not know the same rules apply until you reinforce them. Once he has had a meal or two in your home, the rules at mealtime will be cemented and his good manners at meal times will become habitual. The importance of this routine is to reinforce the good manners that keep everyone in the home safe from an overly exuberant Labrador.

It will not take long before you will no longer need to use any verbal commands when feeding the dog except for the “break” command. That is because his good behaviors in your home will have turned in to a good habit. The dog will quickly realize the only way he gets his food is by sitting patiently, awaiting the “break” command.

If you have a pet dog in your home, you must ensure the safety of both dogs at all times. It is vital that all meal times are well supervised. Feed one of the dogs in a crate or in another room during the feeding process. The dogs cannot interact again until all meals have been eaten and all bowls have been picked up and put away.

Toileting:

We use the phrase “get busy” to signal to the dog that we want him to relieve himself. It is important that you pick an area in your yard that will become the consistent toileting area. Choose this area before the dog comes home. Even if your yard is fenced in, you must take the dog out on leash to this designated area every time he goes out for a toileting break. Be sure this area is easy for you to get to regardless of the weather or the time. Keep in mind, it should be away from children’s play areas.

Do not allow the dog to drag you away from this area to find a “better spot”. Plant your feet firmly and let him circle. When he begins to go, calmly praise him and say “good boy, get busy.” Again, he knows these words from his puppy home but now he is associating them with you. Always have a pick-up bag or pooper scooper with you for immediate clean up and have somewhere easily accessible to place the waste. Do not send the dog out into a fenced in yard on his own. You must be there to supervise that the dog only goes in this small area. This is important not only for cleanliness, but it is also a quick way to pick up on any stomach upset. When a BluePath dog is home with you all day, he should have a minimum of five park times daily.

Exercise:

BluePath dogs must never be off leash in an unfenced area. They are also not allowed to go to dog parks as they can be dangerous and unhealthy. However, this still leaves lots to do with your new friend. Labrador retrievers and Golden retrievers love long walks through the neighborhood or jaunts through the woods. If you have a friend with a well-socialized friendly dog and she has a fenced in yard, get the dogs together for play dates and let them romp. *See the section titled ‘Meeting / Interacting with Other Dogs’ below.*



Interaction with children:

Be sure that all children in the house know the basic rules and make sure that all interactions are safe for both the child and the dog. NEVER leave a young child and a dog alone together - all interactions must be supervised for safety. Small children and toddlers must be carefully monitored around dogs; a dog can easily knock over a young child and a young child may not know how to touch the dog appropriately. A child must never be near the dog when he is eating or chewing on a bone and a child must never attempt to take an item out of a dog’s mouth.

Young, supervised children and older kids and teens will have endless fun playing retrieving games. However, the game of fetch comes with its own set of rules that you will find in a list of “service dog cues” listed and explained towards the end of this manual.

Chapter 4: Leaving the house with your foster dog

Riding in the car:

Riding in the car is a big part of a service dog's life and it is important that the dog is under control and behaving appropriately. When traveling alone, many people choose the passenger side wheel well. The dog can curl up in that small space and the driver can monitor all behavior in a safe manner. It is a good idea to have a towel or blanket to cover the floor and a good chew toy for the dog to entertain himself while riding. If your car is big enough, you can keep a crate in the back for the dog to ride in. In addition, if your family is riding together, the dog can hang in the back seat with family members.

Never leave the dog alone in the car - not even for a minute. Temperatures can quickly change and create dangerous conditions. A dog can also find the most unlikely thing to ingest when they are not monitored - a stick of gum could cause a life-threatening illness.

Walking your dog in public:

Be sure you give your dog a chance to "park" before heading out in to a public area. Be equipped with all the supplies you may need to make the trip successful. This will include treats, pick-up bags, and a good mind set. When you are out walking with a BluePath dog, you are continuing his training; you want your mind and hands free to assist the dog with anything you might encounter.

Walk your dog by your left side. The collar should be loose with minimal tension on the leash. Use "let's go" when you want to start walking. Use those same words when you want to change direction.

You will often encounter other dogs - do not allow your dog to socialize with them. If a person and dog are coming toward you, calmly move away and create a buffer that keeps your dog safe as the other dog passes. You may even cross the street to prevent any interaction. If the person asks if the two dogs can meet, politely tell him that that you are working with a BluePath service dog in training and this is not the best time for a greeting.



Greeting people:

If you meet a stranger on your walk and he or she would like to interact with the dog, decide if this is a good time. Will this interaction be beneficial? Has your walk thus far been going well or has the dog been overly distracted, leaving you frustrated? If this is a good time for a social greeting, then put the dog in a “sit.” Let the person know that if your dog can not remain in the proper position, you will ask to stop the interaction until he is back in the proper position.

At times it may be easier to put the dog in a “down” position and crouch down next to him. This helps keep your dog in a down position because it will keep his energy down with yours. As you speak with the public, talk calmly to the dog, using phrases such as “Good down, good boy, down” to remind your dog to stay in the proper position.

If your dog just can't settle himself, explain to the person that he is over-stimulated, and it is time for him to go home. Remember, your dog cannot tell the public that he has had enough, but you can. Thank the person for their interest and hand them a business card magnet if you have one readily available. Suggest he or she visit the BluePath website so they can learn about these amazing pups and what their future holds.

Dog and small animal distraction:

This is often the most difficult behavior for dog owners to modify. It never seems to get easy. The dog pulls and strains toward his target and suddenly that 68-pound dog feels like a Clydesdale. We'll talk through your dog's distraction levels with you and work through various options to remediate the behavior.

Scavenging:

Your dog is not permitted to scavenge items from the floor at any time. Keep a close eye out for any tempting items that are on the floor ahead of you and anticipate if you think the dog will try to pick them up. You can take a wide arc around the item so your dog does not have access to it, or you can tell the dog to 'leave it' in a calm, firm tone, then praise and reward him with a treat when he does not try to go for the item on the ground. Both of these methods will help the dog be successful.

The goal is for the dog to see something on the ground and then look at you. He is letting you know that he has made a good choice by leaving the item on the floor and he should be rewarded for that good decision. BluePath dogs are particularly smart and will sometimes be quite sneaky when they want something off the floor; if there is ever an instance when the dog does manage to get something in his mouth, tell him “out” and praise and reward him when he releases the item.

Meeting/Interacting with other dogs:

If you don't have to interact with another dog, don't.

You may have a friend or family member whose dog you know well and you've noticed how comfortable and playful they are around other dogs. If this is a dog you would like your foster to meet, then it is important that you follow the steps below to ensure the safety of all involved.

1. Let the dogs meet on common turf, outside the yard or the home. In this way, neither dog feels any territorial pressure. Do not let the dogs walk up to each other head on. Try a parallel walk. Both dogs must be on leash. Let the dogs sniff each other but continue walking until it is clear that the dogs are becoming comfortable with each other.
2. If there are any signs of aggression and you are concerned for your dog's safety, keep your dog away from the other dog.
3. If the dogs are comfortable together, return to the house but keep them both on leash.
4. When you come in to the house, be sure **all dog toys and food bowls are picked up** so there is no resource guarding.
5. If you are visiting a friend or relative and you are not staying more than a few hours, then keep your dog on leash next to you. Do not let the dog loose in their home.
6. If you are staying overnight and the dogs must interact, let the dogs loose in a fenced in area (backyard). This must be done after the initial walk.
7. Never allow pet dogs and foster dogs to be alone unsupervised. Supervision is imperative to ensure the safety of all the dogs.



Chapter 5: A BluePath Dog's Work Life

Your dog's work schedule:

BluePath staff will work with you to determine which days each week the dog will be working and which days the dog will be staying at your home for the day. There may be times that BluePath staff will keep the dog overnight. As you have agreed, some pick up and drop offs will be done by you while others will be done by BluePath staff; it will depend on where the training session is being held and the hours the dog will be working. If you are coming home later than 5pm, assume picking up the dog from BluePath is your responsibility.

Remember that BluePath dogs work hard. Living with you gives the dog a chance to “turn off” and just be a dog. This is exactly what your home is for. Don't worry if you can't get him out for a walk. Chances are good he will just want to sleep. Dogs, like people, need days off too.

BluePath dogs usually train together in small groups. We transport them to the day's training location in vans, which are specially equipped with crates with soft mats and durable chew toys. Dogs may train in schools, restaurants, malls, department stores, bike paths, ball fields, or play grounds, to name a few. The dog is learning to work comfortably in all environments that a child and family might go.

The dog will also learn to work in a team of three. He will learn to “anchor” to stop a child from bolting or wandering away. He'll learn to work alongside a grocery cart and in some cases, a baby stroller. In schools, he'll work with a variety of children, some who may be “typical” and others who may have physical or neurological disabilities. The dogs and the children are learning together, while bringing a greater understanding to the community of the importance of autism service dogs.



Chapter 6: Next Steps

Graduation:

After many months of hard work, your dog will be matched and placed with a child with autism. This family has been waiting a long time for their child's service dog to finish training, so it is exciting that their wait is coming to an end. Although this will cause sadness and loss for your family, remember that you have been instrumental in profoundly changing the life of a child and family in need. The parent(s) will stay in a local hotel for five days and four nights while they learn to work with the dog.

You and your family will be invited to join us at a graduation luncheon towards the end of the week. Your dog's volunteer puppy raiser is also invited, as well as BluePath staff, donors and other volunteers. It is a beautiful and emotional time for everyone, with lifelong friendships often created through shared love of a dog.

What happens if my foster dog isn't suited to be a service dog?

We're devoted to our dogs' health and well-being throughout their lifetimes. Dogs not suitable to work as service dogs will find alternative placements in special needs classrooms or in loving adoptive homes. Dogs retiring from service work will remain in their homes as cherished pets.

We hope you find fostering to be an incredibly rewarding experience. We rely on the generosity of volunteers like you to fulfill our mission and we are profoundly grateful for your support.

From all of us, thank you.



Appendix 1.1: BluePath Commands

Back

Break - This command tells your dog that he is free from the last position cued. This includes releasing your puppy to eat his food, exiting a vehicle, or releasing them from the other commands included in this list.

Close - This command tells the dog to move into a sit position in between the handler's legs, head facing out. This is done when the handler is sitting in a chair.

Down

Dress - Dress tells the dog to put his head through a collar or jacket.

Drop - This command tells the dog to drop whatever he has in his mouth.

Get Busy - This command tells the dog to toilet.

Heel - This command tells the dog to sit at your left side.

Here - This command tells the dog to come swiftly to you.

Hup - This command tells the dog to jump up on to a raised object.

Kennel - This command tells the dog to go into the crate.

Let's Go - This command tells the puppy to walk casually next to you.

Load Up - This is the command to use when telling your puppy to get into the car, whether he is getting into the passenger footwell or into a crate.

Off - Off is used for getting the dog off of people and furniture and any other object he should not be on.

Place - Place tells your puppy to go to a bed or mat and lay down.

Quiet

Sit

Stand

Stay

Wait - This command tells the puppy to remain in the last position cued and not to cross a threshold or barrier until told otherwise.