

Minimum Standards For Training Hearing Dogs

(updated June 2004)

These are the minimum standards for all hearing dog programmes that wish to be affiliated with ADEu. All programmes are encouraged to strive to work at levels above the minimum. Emphasis is placed upon the standard of service to both the client and the dog throughout the training process, ensuring the welfare of both parties. In order to achieve the correct standards it is expected that a period of several months will be necessary during all three phases of training: socialisation/advanced training/placement training. Over these months, training will be carefully scheduled to ensure that each dog learns at its optimum pace and has a sufficient grounding in each stage of training before progressing to the next. The quality of the training of both dog and client will be tested by the programme before the team graduates.

1. Dogs must be carefully selected to ensure maximum potential for the role of a hearing dog. In particular, a careful risk assessment must be undertaken before placing the new recruit with a puppy socialiser.
2. Dogs must receive careful socialisation following selection, to ensure this potential is maximised, either in the home of a volunteer (or volunteer family), or in the home of a staff member. This socialisation period will be supervised by the programme's staff who will ensure that the socialiser receives adequate training and advice. Dogs will be introduced carefully to a variety of new situations. Early obedience will be commenced particularly with regard to social behaviour in the home and outdoors, both on and off lead. Records will be maintained detailing the dog's progress.
3. In the case of "owned-dogs", dogs will be carefully assessed before commencing advanced training to ensure that the correct standards of socialisation and social behaviour have been achieved.
4. Dogs will have a thorough medical evaluation to determine that they do not have any physical problems that would cause difficulty for a working dog and, in countries where routine neutering of dogs is accepted by the veterinary profession, every assistance dog will be neutered prior to graduation.
5. After passing from the socialisation phase to the advanced training phase, each dog will be matched to a potential client, bearing in mind the client's individual circumstances. The matching process does not apply to "owned-dogs".

6. Dogs will be trained for the individual needs of the client to whom they have been matched. These needs will have been discussed with the client at interview. Factors such as the client's degree of speech, routines, abilities, use of public transport etc will be borne in mind throughout training.
7. Dogs must be trained with voice and hand signals to respond to the following commands: sit, down, stay, come, heel and off-lead recall. Dogs must be trained to recall to a whistle. Dogs must be unobtrusive and have good household skills.
8. Dogs must show social behaviour skills as follows: no aggression, no inappropriate barking, no biting, no snapping/growling, no inappropriate jumping on strangers, no begging and no inappropriate sniffing of people.
9. Dogs must be trained to alert to at least three different household sounds that will enhance the client's independence. Dogs must alert by making physical contact with the client and then lead the client to the source of the sound, except in the case of emergency alarms, when dogs will drop to the floor after alerting.
10. Students must be given instruction in the upkeep of their dog during a placement period. This may take place at the programme's premises, in the student's home, or both. By the end of the placement, the student will be able to correctly praise, motivate and discipline the dog, care for the dog, practise the dog's assistive tasks, control the dog and enforce obedience skills. During the placement, the trainer will accompany the student and the dog to train in public places, including shops and restaurants. The programme's trainer will also accompany the student/dog team to a meeting with a local vet and, where applicable, conduct a training session at the workplace of the student. All students will be made aware of their responsibilities, as outlined in ADEu's Minimum Standards for Graduates with Assistance Dogs, and will be trained accordingly.
11. The training programme must require the student to complete a follow-up progress report once a month for the first six months following the placement. Personal contact will be given by qualified staff or trained volunteers within twelve to eighteen (12-18) months of graduation and annually thereafter. The programme will offer further help and advice as required.
12. All teams must be tested by the programme in a number of areas before graduating:
 - Dog welfare and health
 - Training tasks relating specifically to the work of a hearing dog
 - Obedience, both on and off lead
 - Public access behaviour
 - Improvement to quality of life of client.

The standards of the above tests must be approved by ADEu.

13. Identification of the fully qualified hearing dog will include a laminated ID card with a photo of the dog and graduate and names of both. In public the dog must be clearly identifiable as a hearing dog.
14. The staff of the training programme must demonstrate knowledge of the disabilities of the clients with whom they work as well as other relevant medical conditions. They should also be given knowledge of other issues relating to deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and disabled people. Organisations shall make available educational material on different disabilities.
15. The graduate must agree to abide by the Minimum Standards for Graduates with Assistance Dogs.
16. Every hearing dog training programme will have a clearly described procedure for testing the dog/graduate team in the following areas on a regular basis, for the remainder of the dog's working life:
 - Dog welfare and health
 - Training tasks relating specifically to the work of a hearing dog
 - Obedience, both on and off lead
 - Public access behaviour
 - Sustained improvement to quality of life of client.

The standards of the above tests must be approved by ADEu.

17. Training programmes will withdraw ID from any dog/graduate teams failing to meet the correct standards, in the event of all refresher-training proving unsuccessful.