

GDUI Guide Dog Schools Survey

The name of your organization: Guide Dogs of America

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Please check here if your program is a member of the International Federation of Guide Dog Schools (IGDF). *checked*

Please check here if your program is a member of the Council of United States Dog Guide Schools (CUSDGS). *checked*

PROGRAM OPTIONS, FACILITIES AND SPECIAL SERVICES

(Please fill in your responses.)

1. How many teams, on average, does the program graduate annually? 50
2. What is the instructor to student ratio for most classes? 10 student maximum, 3 instructors
3. What is the duration (days/weeks) of your school's training program for first-time guide dog handlers? (If the time varies, please indicate the range.)
Mandatory 28 day program
4. For how many days/weeks must previous graduates of your program re-train to receive successor dogs? (If the time varies, please indicate the range.)
3-4 weeks depending on the needs of individual student, we also offer one accelerated 2-week retrain class each year
5. How many days/weeks must handlers who are new to your program, but who are previous graduates of other schools, train with you to receive a successor guide? (If this varies, please indicate the range.)
3-4 weeks, depending on the needs of the individual student, they may also be eligible for the 2 week retrain class

(Please mark all that apply.)

6. "Our training program offers":
- in-home training for any student who requests it
 - in-home training for re-train students ONLY *checked*
 - facility-based training *checked*

- a combination of facility-based and home-based training
 a combination of facility-based and home-based training for re-train students only.
checked

7. Please indicate the statement that describes your program's policies for applicants who are considering the location of your school.

- Your program provides school-subsidized transportation to and from training.
checked
 Your program can offer limited or "case by case" school-subsidized transportation to and from training.
 The program cannot provide transportation to and from training.

8. The program can accommodate non-English speakers.

- No, our training is offered only in English. *checked*
 Yes*, we offer either bilingual training or interpreters for certain languages.
*Please specify the language(s) (other than English) in which your program offers guide dog training.

9. If your program is a strictly home-based training program, please check here *and* skip to APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS/APPLICATION PROCESS.

10. Your organization provides some on-site medical services for students in training, including a school nurse.

- yes *checked*
 no

11. Your residential facility provides meals for students with special dietary considerations. (Please mark all that apply.)

- Not applicable/We do not provide meals.
 No. We provide meals but cannot accommodate special diets.
 Yes, for medical needs. *checked*
 Yes, for vegetarians *checked*
 Yes, for religious considerations (Please specify) *checked*
If we get specific guidelines from the student, we will accommodate

12. Amenities for students on campus include (please mark all that apply):

- private rooms *checked*
 phones in student rooms
 computers adapted with accessible technology *checked*
 internet connection in student rooms
 laundry facilities *checked*
 microwave and/or coffee maker in a common area *checked*
 vending machines from which students may purchase snacks *checked*

- non-smoking public areas (such as dining and lounge facilities) *checked*
- non-smoking student rooms *checked*
- special areas designated for smoking *checked*
- musical instruments *checked*
- library of materials in accessible formats *checked*
- TV/stereo *checked*
- exercise equipment
- other (Please list any other special services or facilities your school provides during training.)

The snacks and drinks in our dorm are provided at no charge to the student. Each room is furnished with a double bed, desk, easy chair and refrigerator. In addition to our library, we offer an array of games for students to play. We have an outdoor grooming area set up with grooming tables, and a 3000 sq. ft. off-leash enclosed play area for each team (1 dog, 1 person at a time) to use. The relieving area is off each individual room.

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS/APPLICATION PROCESS

1. For a first-time handler, how long is the average wait for a dog (including the time from your receipt of the application, to acceptance, to the student's class date)?
2-6 months depending on the individual, although for those with special needs it could be up to a year. . The dog match is our #1 priority.
2. What is the average wait for returning students, seeking a successor dog (from submission of the re-train application to a class date)?
2-6 months, with dog match and need being the major considerations.
3. Qualified applicants for your program include(please mark all that apply):
 - people who are "legally blind" *checked*
 - only blind/visually impaired people with little or no functional vision *checked*
 - blind/visually impaired people who require a dog to work on their right side *checked*
 - visually impaired people who are hard of hearing or deaf *checked*
 - people with little or no functional vision who are hard of hearing or deaf *checked*
 - blind/visually impaired people who walk with a support cane *checked*
 - blind/visually impaired people who use motorized wheelchairs
 - blind/visually impaired people who use manual wheelchairs
 - other (Please provide more information.)

We carefully evaluate applicants who have some hearing loss to determine whether there might be any limitations to the communication between us. Other considerations are whether the hearing impaired applicant is an experienced guide dog handler, or a first time handler. We refer applicants who are deaf to schools that offer specific deaf/blind programs.

4. Are there upper or lower age limits for acceptance into your program?
 No, we have no age restrictions at all.

Yes. *(Please specify details.) *checked* An individual may apply after age 16, but generally students are out of high school when they come in. We have no upper age limit.

5. Your program requires applicants to demonstrate O&M proficiency before training with a dog.

Yes, O&M skill is required and we assess this in our admission process. *checked*

Only a basic level of O&M proficiency is required for training with our program.

We have no O&M requirement for applicants.

6. To satisfy our O&M requirement we offer pre-class O&M training.

Yes.

No. *checked*

We do not offer pre-class O&M training, but will supplement the training experience with some O&M work, if needed, during class. *checked*

7. As part of the applicant assessment process (please mark all that apply):

The school requires home interviews. *checked*

The school uses phone interviews. *checked*

Applicant-submitted videos are reviewed to assess qualification. *checked*

Character references are required to be submitted on the applicant's behalf.

checked

Documentation of disability and a doctor's exam are required. *checked*

8. Please list any additional admission requirements, if any. To be accepted, applicants must be experienced, independent travelers, and be able to provide the leadership needed for a successful guide dog team.

9. If there are any physical or psychological conditions which would make an applicant's acceptance to your program unlikely, please list them here.

An applicant must be physically and psychologically capable of handling a dog during the training course and in the home environment. Individuals with some physical challenges and mild cognitive conditions are assessed and considered on a case by case basis.

10. Upon acceptance to the program, what informational materials do applicants receive prior to class? (i.e., training lecture notes, information on what to bring, contact information, etc.)

Our application materials include fairly extensive information about the class experience, how a guide dog team works, state and federal laws and other general information. The Admissions and Training Departments discuss in detail with each applicant the many aspects of training and living with a guide dog. Prior to arriving for class, each student

receives a letter suggesting what to bring, confirmation of travel arrangements, maps and other pertinent contact information.

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

1. To become qualified as an instructor, a candidate must (mark all that apply):
- complete an in-house apprenticeship program of (a minimum of 3) years duration.
(Fill in number of years.) *checked*
 - meet governmentally mandated requirements for licensure. *checked*
 - have prior work experience as a guide dog instructor.
 - have prior dog-training experience. *checked*
 - have experience or a degree in orientation and mobility instruction.
 - other (please explain)
2. The testing used in the instructor training process complies with (mark all that apply):
- standards specific to your program. *checked*
 - state mandated standards. *checked*
 - standards set by the International Federation of Guide Dog Schools *checked*
 - other (please explain)
3. Please mark all that apply.
- All instructors undergo a blindfold-living experience. *checked*
 - All instructors do some work in the field with graduates in the home environment.
checked
 - The program has field-instructors permanently assigned to specific regions.

BREEDING AND SELECTION

1. Please indicate the breed(s) that your program trains for guide work **and** fill in the approximate percentage of your total dogs that the specified breed represents.

German Shepherd	()% of total dogs.
Golden Retriever	()% of total dogs.
Labrador Retriever	(70)% of total dogs.
Labrador-Golden Cross	()% of total dogs.
Labrador-Poodle Cross	()% of total dogs.
Standard Poodle	()% of total dogs.

Other (please specify Percentages for other breeds vary. Cross breeds alternative breeds are new to GDA, however we are having good success with them) ()% of total dogs.

2. How does your program obtain dogs for training as guides? (Mark all that apply.)

- in-house breeding *checked*
- purchase from commercial breeders *checked*
- donation *checked*
- exchange with other guide dog schools *checked*
- other sources not listed above (please explain)

3. Donated dogs are obtained from: (Mark all that apply.)

- not applicable (No donated dogs are part of our program.)
- other guide dog training programs *checked*
- cryogenics/artificial insemination or other high-tech means *checked*
- commercial breeders *checked*
- private parties
- rescue shelters
- other sources (please specify)

4 Do you have a licensed veterinarian on staff?

- yes *checked*
- no

5. Does your program consult with or have on-staff a degreed geneticist in its breeding department?

- yes *checked*
- no

PUPPY SOCIALIZATION/ASSESSMENT

1. Your school's policies regarding puppy raisers are best described as: (Mark all that apply.)

- We encourage contact between the raiser and graduate and facilitate such contact. *checked*
- We do not encourage contact between graduates and puppy raisers.
- We pass along some puppy raiser-provided information about the dog to the handler during training. *checked*
- We pass along communications between graduates and puppy raisers upon request. *checked*
- We discourage contact between graduates and puppy raisers for a prescribed period of time after graduation.

2. Your school's puppy socialization/assessment program includes: (Mark all that apply.)

- members of school-organized raiser groups *checked*
- 4H club members
- adult volunteers *checked*
- youth volunteers *checked*
- school-screened applicants *checked*
- selected residents of correctional facilities who are part of an organized program
- school staff members *checked*
- other (Please specify .)

3. Please mark all statements that describe your puppy socialization/assessment program.

- Participants in the puppy raising program are not subject to formal guidelines from the school.
- The puppy raising program is formally organized with a puppy raising manual that sets out specific guidelines for raisers to follow. *checked*
- Participants in the school's puppy raising/socialization program must attend regular meetings. *checked*
- Periodic assessment takes place to insure that participants in the program regularly and strictly adhere to established procedures for puppy raising/socialization. *checked*
- Raisers are responsible for teaching basic obedience to the puppies. *checked*
- Raisers are responsible for making sure puppies learn appropriate house behaviors. *checked*

4. How frequently are puppies evaluated by school approved staff or volunteers? (Please indicate.) All puppies come to the school at 8 months of age for a formal evaluation and of course also when they are turned in for training. Puppies are observed and assessed at monthly meetings by GDA staff members or area leaders. Those who require extra attention are seen as often as needed to resolve any problems.

5. Behaviors that may cause a puppy to be dropped from training include: (Please mark all that apply.)

- dog aggression *checked*
- aggression toward people *checked*
- regular relieving accidents *checked*
- fear of loud noises *checked*
- pronounced fear-reactions to environmental stimuli *checked*

6. Your program's health screening for puppies includes: (Indicate all that apply.)

- a complete physical exam performed by a veterinarian *checked*
- screening for skeletal problems including hip and elbow dysplasia *checked*
- screening for common chronic conditions that could necessitate ongoing treatment or medication for the dog *checked*

TRAINING AND STANDARDS FOR GUIDE WORK

1. Upon completion of team training, clients can be assured that a dog from your program (check all that apply):
 - will be house broken *checked*
 - will have been trained to behave well in public, eg. no barking or stealing food. *checked*
 - will exhibit no aggression toward people or other animals. *checked*
 - will respond to basic obedience commands *checked*
 - will disobey the handler's commands when it would be unsafe to comply (intelligent disobedience) *checked*
 - will be trained to work safely in traffic *checked*
 - will be trained to safely negotiate "traffic checks" *checked*
 - will be trained to work in a variety of street crossing settings *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably stop at changes in elevation, i.e. steps, curbs and drop-offs *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably avoid or indicate obstacles *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably avoid or indicate overhead obstacles *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably turn left, right or to move forward on the hand signal from the handler *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably turn left, right or to move forward on the verbal command of the handler. *checked*
 - will be trained to ride escalators. *checked*
 - will be trained to safely navigate revolving doors with its handler *checked*
 - will be trained to follow members of the public when commanded to do so by the handler.
 - will be trained to enter, exit and ride quietly in passenger cars or other vehicles *checked*
 - will be trained to enter, exit and ride quietly on buses *checked*
 - will be trained to enter, exit and ride quietly on subways, light rail systems or passenger trains and to safely navigate elevated platforms *checked*
 - will have been exposed to security checkpoints such as those found in airports
 - will have been trained in urban environments *checked*
 - will have been trained in small towns or suburbia *checked*
 - will have been trained in rural environments *checked*
 - will have been trained to guide safely along roads with no sidewalks or footpaths *checked*
 - will have been trained to work in environments such as university campuses or shopping malls where there are multiple locations which must be accessed via nonlinear pathways *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably retrieve dropped items for the handler
 - will be trained to locate some specific objects/landmarks on command *checked*
 - will be trained to reliably come when called while off leash *checked*
 - will be trained to formally guide on leash

other (please list) Regarding escalators - most, but not all will work on escalators. A dog that does not work escalators is discussed with a student prior to a match being made.

2. How long (number of hours of actual training) is formal guide work training for dogs in your program? This depends on each individual dog to complete the qualifications set forth by GDA

3. Are the dogs tested by instructors under blindfold?

Yes, all dogs are tested by instructors under blindfold. *checked*

Yes, many of our dogs are tested by instructors under blindfold.

Yes, a dog may be tested by an instructor under blindfold.

No, our instructors do not generally test the dogs by working them under blindfold.

4. Please mark all statements that describe the components of your program's matching process.

Information gathered from our application process is used to match a student with a dog. *checked*

Instructors contact the incoming student by telephone prior to class to discuss issues relating to the match. *checked*

Instructors assess a student for a suitable match when that student arrives in class. *checked*

When a student begins class, our instructors continue to assess that student for a suitable match. *checked*

Students test walk a few dogs prior to the match to assist in the matching process.

The class instructors meet to discuss and formalize dog matches prior to issuing dogs to students. *checked*

The student and instructors periodically meet during training to discuss the viability of the match. *checked*

An alternative match is available to a student if the need arises. *checked*

An alternative match for a student is sometimes possible. *checked*

Our focus is on training the student with the dog selected for him/her and not really on arranging alternative matches.

5. In the past two years, what percentage of dogs were returned to the school within a year of being placed with a handler? (Please indicate percentage of dogs returned here.)

We don't have an exact figure, but it is a very low percentage.

GRADUATE SERVICES

1. The program's policy on home-based instructional follow-up is best described as (choose one):

Our program cannot currently provide in home instructional follow-up to graduates.

In-home instructional follow-up is available for our graduates throughout the U.S. and Canada. *checked*

In-home instructional follow-up is available to graduates within a specific area. (Please indicate the area where in-home follow-up is provided.)

*For programs that offer home-based follow-up:

2. The school can provide at home instructional follow-up upon graduate request within:

a few days of the request *checked*

a few weeks of the request *checked*

3. Telephone-based support for graduates is best described as:

The program has instructors available during office hours to immediately answer graduates' questions.

An instructor returns a graduate's phone call for advice/assistance on a same-day basis. *checked*

An instructor returns a graduate's phone call for advice/assistance within a few days.

4. The school has vet staff available during business hours to speak with graduates regarding health-concerns they have about their guides.

Yes. *checked*

No.

5. School veterinarians are available to consult with a graduate's local vet as necessary.

Yes. *checked*

No.

6. The school has counseling staff available to speak with graduates regarding stressful or difficult issues concerning their handler-dog partnership.

Yes.

No. *checked*

7. The school offers graduates assistance in placing retired guides if they request it. (Please choose the most accurate reply.)

Yes, we have a program for placing retired guides with screened volunteers.

Yes, we first offer the dog back to its raiser and then to screened applicants from our waiting list, if necessary. *checked*

Yes, we'll help find a home for a retired guide if a graduate has no other option. *checked*

- We are not able to place retired guides in adoptive homes.
8. The school can offer kennel services for a guide, if a graduate requests that.
- Yes. *checked*
- No.

POST-TRAINING POLICIES

1. Upon completion of training with your program: (please select one.)
- The school retains some form of ownership of the dog.
- The graduate owns the dog. *checked*
- The school retains ownership of the dog, but a graduate may apply for ownership after a specified period of successful partnership with the dog. Please indicate this amount of required time here. On occasion, we discover during training that we may have questions about whether a student is suitable to use a guide dog (such as lack of leadership issues). We may choose to continue with this team and offer a 1 year conditional contract, along with follow-up visits. After the initial year, the graduate may apply for full ownership.
2. Your program's response to cases of proven abuse would be best represented as:
- The school retains the right to remove a dog from a graduate's home in cases of proven abuse.
- The school works with Animal Control or other appropriate agencies to remove a dog in cases of proven abuse. *checked*
- The school expects that civil authorities will deal directly with the handler to resolve situations of proven dog-abuse.
3. The school retains the right to remove a dog from a graduate in cases where (mark any that apply):
- The training staff deems the working team to be unsafe.
- The school determines the handler's home environment to be unsafe.
- Once a dog is issued, the school does not involve itself in attempting to remove a dog under any circumstances.
4. The program's policy concerning guide-related equipment is (please mark all that apply):
- The graduate owns the dog's work-related equipment upon graduation.
- The school retains ownership of the dog's work-related equipment. *checked*
- The school reserves the right to remove the harness in cases where the training staff deems the team to be unsafe. *checked*
- The school requests that the harness be returned to them upon retirement of the guide. *checked*
5. If replacement equipment is needed by a graduate of your program: (Indicate any that apply.)

The graduate will be referred to vendors from which they can purchase the needed equipment.

The school provides replacement equipment free of charge to its graduates.

checked

6. The school's policy regarding veterinary costs related to the dogs they provide is (please mark any that apply):

Graduates are offered an annual stipend for veterinary care throughout the working career of the dog.

Graduates who keep their retired guides are offered an annual veterinary care stipend to use throughout that dog's entire life.

The school covers the cost of veterinary care for a specified period of time.

checked *Indicate this amount of time here: (Graduates with significant veterinary costs may apply to GDA for assistance. We consider each request on a case by case basis.)

Heartworm and flea and tick preventative medications are offered to graduates free of charge (or the cost is reimbursed).

Heartworm and flea and tick preventative medications are offered to graduates at reduced cost. *checked*

The dog's food is offered to graduates at reduced cost through the school.

The school offers loans or grants to assist graduates with vet costs if need be.

The school assists graduates experiencing financial difficulties in finding organizations that might offer them funding for veterinary costs.

7. Upon completion of training (indicate all that apply):

The school has a graduation ceremony. *checked*

First-time graduates are treated to a dinner to celebrate completion of the program. *checked*

Graduates receive a packet of materials about their dog, their training, and about their access rights. *checked*

Exit interviews are conducted during which graduates are encouraged to comment on their in-class experience. *checked*

8. If a graduate wishes to share feedback about the program with the school

(Indicate all that apply.)

There is a process in place to allow graduates to comment on school programs and policies. *checked*

The school has a Graduate Council.

The school sponsors an email list for graduates and those interested in the school.

The school keeps ongoing communication with its graduates, informing them of program news and/or innovations, using its website as well as school newsletters.

checked

9. Regarding access awareness (indicate all that apply):

Our program provides a booklet containing access laws for the U.S. and Canada.

checked

- we provide graduates with a card that is printed with the access laws for their home region. *checked*
- The school has staff available to assist graduates in advocating for their access rights and to help them educate the public about the working dog-handler team. *checked*
- The school has videos and written materials available to educate the public about the guide dog handlers' civil rights. *checked*
- The school shares information with students about advocacy organizations, such as Guide Dog Users, Inc. (an advocacy organization which assists handlers in advocating for their access rights, and in educating the public about the guide dog-handler team). *checked*

10. If any of the following school policies apply, please indicate.

- Qualified graduates serve on the school's Board of Directors. *checked*
- Qualified graduates are employed at the school. *checked*
- Graduates of your program volunteer on behalf of your program. *checked*
- The school has a program that offers graduates opportunities to speak about the school and their guide dog related experiences in their local areas. *checked*
- Graduates are offered the opportunity to actively raise funds for the school by participating in school-sponsored activities or programs. *checked*

**Please list any policies, programs or services available to graduates from your school that you want prospective applicants to be aware of but which are not described in the above survey.

All grads are treated to a dinner to celebrate completion of the program.

GDA also offers emergency boarding for graduates of other schools.

RE: POST TRAINING POLICIES, Question 3. "...remove a dog..."

If the training staff deems the working team to be unsafe, we will retire the dog, not remove it.

Other than the Labrador, the number of breeds trained by GDA varies from class to class. Crossbreeds (Poodle crosses, Lab/Golden crosses) are new to GDA and they are proving to be very successful.

***Thank you very much for completing the GDUI Guide Dog Schools Survey!
Your participation will benefit current and prospective guide dog handlers
and it will increase your program's visibility among consumers.***