



Will my life change with a PSD?

YES! You will receive love and support from your PSD, but you will also become more visible to the public. Some will question your need for a service dog. Some will attempt to deny your access to public spaces. Dealing with public scrutiny is a skill that is developed over time. Having a support network (e.g., physician, therapist, dog trainer, peer mentors) in place before you get your PSD will alleviate some of the initial stress. PSD are not for everyone. If your interest is serious, then be sure to connect with other PSD handlers in your community or online before obtaining a dog. Learn about the demands of working a dog in public, before taking on the responsibility of a dog's life.

Want More Information?

PSDS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

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*Dedicated To Responsible Psychiatric
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FOR CONSUMERS

PSYCHIATRIC SERVICE DOGS

What is a Psychiatric Service Dog (PSD)?

A dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual disabled by severe mental illness.

What is a disability?

A disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Having a psychiatric diagnosis does not necessarily mean you are disabled under the law. What matters is that the degree of impairment is 'substantial'. Consequently, it is in your best interest to document your disability. Working with your doctor is a good first step. Ask your doctor to write a letter stating that you are disabled and that he/she supports your use of a PSD. Keep this a letter in your personal files.

What diagnoses may be assisted by a PSD?

All DSM-IV Axis I disorders such as, Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Panic Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Agoraphobia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, etc.



What tasks can PSD be trained to perform?

- ◆ Remind handler to take medication on time
- ◆ Turn on lights & search a room for intruders
- ◆ Warm handler's body during a panic attack
- ◆ Interrupt repetitive behaviors
- ◆ Attend to handler during emotional distress
- ◆ Accompany handler outside of the home
- ◆ Alert to mania, panic attacks or dissociation
- ◆ Interrupt dissociative episodes or flashbacks
- ◆ Hallucination discernment
- ◆ Mitigate hyper-vigilance and fear
- ◆ Provide a safe grounding presence
- ◆ Mitigate paranoia w/reality testing

How are PSD trained & where can I get one?

The law allows disabled persons to train their own PSD. We recommend that you do so under the guidance of a 'regular' professional dog trainer in private sessions. Ask your trainer to help you select a dog with an appropriate temperament for a Service Dog. While you can try to identify organizations that will train a PSD for you (good luck), this will deprive you of the benefits of learning how to communicate effectively with your dog through daily training interactions.

Does the PSD have to be certified?

No. Although you should be equipped to defend your assertion that the dog is your Service Dog. Accumulate evidence of training in three domains: basic obedience, public access skills, and disability-related tasks or trained therapeutic functions.



Where are PSD allowed to go?

PSD are allowed to access public spaces including but not limited to: restaurants, hospitals, airplanes, doctor's offices, cabs, zoos, stores, etc.

Where may PSD be lawfully excluded?

PSD may be lawfully excluded from private spaces including but not limited to private homes, country clubs, churches, etc. They may also be excluded from spaces where their presence would constitute a safety risk (e.g., operating rooms, research laboratories, construction sites) or situations in which the animal poses a direct threat to others.

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