



Virginia Department for the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Service Animal Resources for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) is pleased to provide you with this listing of Service Animal Resources for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. This list of resources is not meant to be exhaustive and will be periodically updated.

VDDHH works to reduce the communication barriers between people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and those who are hearing, including family members, service providers and the public. As part of this mission, our agency responds to requests for information and referrals regarding a variety of topics related to hearing loss including but not limited to assistive technology, communication needs, captioning, hearing aids, interpreting, telecommunications, and sign language. Please feel free to contact VDDHH by phone at (804) 662-9502, videophone at (804) 325-1290, or by email at info@vddhh.virginia.gov.

We appreciate your interest in the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Thank you for allowing us to serve you.

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Alternative Format:

Upon request, this document is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

Know the Differences:

Emotional Support Animal, Guide Dog, Hearing Dog, Service Dog, Therapy Dog, & Working Dog

When you notice terms like emotional support animal, guide dog, service dog, therapy dog, or working dog, it is easy to assume they all play similar roles. While all these animals enhance lives in significant ways, they each support people differently and have clear training standards. They are recognized under different laws. Understanding these differences will help you to determine what type of service animal would meet your need.

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs):

An emotional support animal is a companion animal that provides comfort and support to individuals with mental health, or emotional disabilities, helping to ease symptoms of their conditions.

- ❖ No specialized training required
- ❖ ESAs do not have public access rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ❖ Covered under the Fair Housing Act. Individuals with ESAs may request reasonable accommodations with necessary documentation.
- ❖ Not considered as a service animal.

Guide Dogs:

A guide dog is a specially trained service animal that assists individuals who are blind or vision impaired in navigating their environment. Guide dogs lead their handlers around obstacles, indicate stairs and street curbs, target doorways and other useful landmarks, among countless other tasks. In addition to physical assistance, guide dogs also provide companionship and emotional support.

- ❖ Professional, specialized, and rigorous training.
- ❖ Guide dogs are granted full access to accompany their partner under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA), Fair Housing Act (FHA), and similar federal laws.
- ❖ Considered a service animal.

Hearing Dogs:

A hearing dog is a specialized assistance dog specifically selected and trained to assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing by alerting their handler to important sounds and then physically lead them to the source. Examples include doorbells, smoke alarms, ringing telephones, baby cries, or alarm clocks. They may also work outside the home, alerting their handler to sounds such as sirens, forklifts, or a person calling the handler's name.

- ❖ Professional and specialized training.
- ❖ Full access under the ADA, ACAA, FHA, and related federal laws.
- ❖ Is considered a service animal.

Service Dogs:

A service dog is a specially trained dog that assists individuals with disabilities by performing specific tasks to help them manage their condition. These tasks can include guiding individuals with visual impairments, alerting those with hearing loss, pulling a wheelchair, or providing support during a seizure. They are trained to tasks directly to a person's disability.

- ❖ Extensive, task-specific training through accredited program.
- ❖ Full access under the ADA, ACAA, FHA, and related federal laws.
- ❖ Definitely a service animal.

Therapy Dogs:

A therapy dog is a trained dog that provides affection, comfort and support to individuals in various settings, such as hospitals, schools, nursing homes and disaster response environments.

- ❖ Basic obedience and temperament screening; certified through therapy dog organizations.
- ❖ Therapy dogs do not have public access rights under the ADA or other laws. They may only enter facilities by invitation.
- ❖ Not considered as a service animal.

Working Dogs:

A working dog is a dog specifically trained to assist humans in various tasks, distinguishing them from pet or companion dogs. They are often bred for specific roles such as guarding, herding, search and rescue, and detecting narcotics.

- ❖ Extensive, task-specific training through accredited programs.
- ❖ Working dogs do not have general public access rights. Access must be directly tied to the work they and their handler are doing.
- ❖ Not considered as a service animal.



Americans with Disability Act: Service Animals

<https://www.ada.gov/topics/service-animals/>

The ADA explains what businesses and state/local governments must do to make sure that they do not discriminate against a member of the public with a disability who uses a service animal. Generally, businesses and non-profits that are open to the public as well as state/local governments must allow service animals to go to most places where the public can go. This is true even if they have a “no pets” policy.

Virginia Disability Act - § 51.5-44.E.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title51.5/chapter9/section51.5-44/>

E. Every totally or partially blind person shall have the right to be accompanied by a dog in harness trained as a guide dog, every person who is deaf or hard of hearing shall have the right to be accompanied by a dog trained as a hearing dog on a blaze orange leash, and every mobility-impaired or otherwise disabled person shall have the right to be accompanied by a dog trained as a service dog in a harness, backpack, or vest identifying the dog as a trained service dog in any of the places listed in subsection B without being required to pay an extra charge for the dog, provided that he shall be liable for any damage done to the premises or facilities by such dog. The provisions of this section shall apply to persons accompanied by a dog that is in training, at least six months of age, and is (i) in harness, provided such person is an experienced trainer of guide dogs or is conducting continuing training of a guide dog; (ii) on a blaze orange leash, provided such person is an experienced trainer of hearing dogs or is conducting continuing training of a hearing dog; (iii) in a harness, backpack, or vest identifying the dog as a trained service dog, provided such person is an experienced trainer of service dogs or is conducting continuing training of a service dog; (iv) wearing a jacket identifying the recognized guide, hearing, or service dog organization,

provided such person is an experienced trainer of the organization identified on the jacket; or
(v) the person is part of a three-unit service dog team and is conducting continuing training of a service dog.



Service Animal Resources for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing & DeafBlind

Virginia

St. Francis of Assisi Service Dogs

PO Box 19538

Roanoke, Virginia 24019

Phone: (540) 342-3647

Email: info@saintfrancisdogs.org

Website: <https://saintfrancisdogs.org/service-dogs/>

Saint Francis Service Dogs are professionally trained dogs that are placed with children and adults with physical or developmental disabilities.

Virginia Disabled Veterans

Hero Dogs, Inc.

P.O. Box 64

Brookeville, MD 20833-0064

Phone and Fax: 1 (888) 570-8653

Email: hero@hero-dogs.org

Website: <https://www.hero-dogs.org/hero-dogs-programs/service-dogs/>

Hero Dogs trains dogs to assist veterans and first responders with physical disabilities, mobility limitations, hearing loss, and psychiatric disabilities. Hero Dogs place service dogs in the greater Washington, DC area.

Leashes of Valor

8407 Old Plank Road

Fredericksburg, Virginia 22407

Website: <https://leashesofvalor.org/>

The Leashes of Valor provides service dogs at no cost to wounded and disabled post-9/11 veterans.

Mutts With A Mission

2700 Shirley Landing Drive

Virginia Beach, Virginia 23457

Phone: (757) 465-1033

Fax: (757) 465-1088

Email: info@muttswithamission.org

Website: <https://www.muttswithamission.org>

Mutts With A Mission trains Service Dogs for disabled Veterans, First Responders, and Law Enforcement at no cost to the recipients.

Paws for Purple Hearts – Virginia

7404 Commerce Way, Unit D

Ruther Glen, Virginia 22546

Phone: (804) 589-0077

Southeast Region Website: <https://www.pawsforhearts.org/southeast-region>

Website: <https://www.pawsforpurplehearts.org>

Paws for Purple Hearts improves the lives of America's Warriors facing mobility challenges and trauma-related conditions such as PTSD and TBI by providing the highest quality Assistance Dogs and canine-assisted therapy programs; and by building public awareness about the important role dogs play in helping Warriors along the road to recovery. Serves Washington, DC, Maryland, **Virginia**, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida.

Out of State serving Virginia

Canine Companions

Northeast Regional Office

Miller Family Campus

286 Middle Island Road

Medford, New York 11763

Main: (631) 561-0200 (Voice)

Fax: (631) 561-0230

Website: <https://canine.org/location/northeast/>

Canine Companions provide service dogs to adults, children and veterans with disabilities and facility dogs to professionals working in healthcare, criminal justice and education settings. The Northeast Region serves Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Eastern Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, **Virginia**, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

Compass Key

Phone: (312) 681-7119

Email: info@ckdogs.org

Website: <https://ckdogs.org/>

Compass Key's Assistance Dog Training Program specialized in training dogs to assist individuals with various disabilities and needs such as Service Dogs, Therapy Dogs, and Emotion Support Dogs. They have trainers serving **Northern Virginia** & Maryland.

(Washington, DC, **Virginia** -**Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Leesburg, Manassas, Woodbridge**, Maryland – Baltimore, Frederick and all surrounding areas)

Fidos for Freedom

1200 Sandy Spring Road

Laurel, Maryland 20707

Phone: (301) 490-4005

Email: fidos@fidosforfreedom.org

Website: <https://fidosforfreedom.org/assistance-dog-programs/>

These hearing dogs that are trained by Fidos volunteers will spend approximately 2 to 3 years being socialized, learning basic obedience, and the specialized work that they will perform once they are matched with a client who can utilize their special talents. Serves Maryland, Washington, DC, and **Virginia** who live within 75 miles radius of Laurel, MD.

National Education for Assistance Dog Services (NEADS)

P.O. Box 1100

Princeton, Massachusetts 01541

Phone: (978) 422-9064

Fax: (978) 422-3255

Email: info@neads.org

Website: <https://neads.org/service-dog-programs/hearing-dogs-deaf-and-hearing-loss/>

NEADS Service Dogs for Hearing are primarily black and yellow Labrador Retrievers. The Service Dogs for Hearing program is available to anyone ages 15 and older. NEADS has services available for Disabled Veterans, and Adults/Children with Physical Disabilities. They also offer Assistance Dogs for Counseling, Courtroom, Military, School, and Hospital.

paws4people

1121C-324 Military Cutoff Rd

Wilmington NC 28405

Phone: 1 (888) 762-7297

Email: info@paws4people.org

Website: <https://paws4people.org/types-of-dogs-trained/#service>

Paws4people offer a Medical Alert Assistance Dog trained to assist people with hearing loss by alerting them to everyday sounds – a ringing doorbell or a knock on the door, a telephone, an alarm clock, or a smoke detector. Outside, they may alert the handler to a siren sound, a vehicle's back-up beep, or someone calling the handler's name. Hearing Dogs are trained to get the handler's attention and lead the handler to the source of the sound.

Paws With a Cause (PAWS)

4646 Division Avenue

Wayland, Michigan 49348

Phone: (616) 877-7297

Email: paws@pawswithacause.org

Website: <https://pawswithacause.org/hearing-dogs/>

Applications accepted only from January to March each year.

PAWS hearing dogs are individually trained to alert people with hearing loss to important sounds, creating safer and more connected daily experiences. In addition to performing tasks related to hearing loss, a PAWS dog can also be trained to assist with tasks related to a seizure disorder or physical disability. PAWS has field representatives in **Virginia - only in Northern Virginia and Richmond Regions.**