



## HOW KSDS Assistance Dogs, Inc. WORKS



Our many dedicated volunteers and excellent staff provide the heart and soul of KSDS; the graduates are the people that train with their canine partner successfully; the canines are purpose bred dogs. Puppies are initially trained by selected volunteer puppy raisers and subsequently by our professional training staff. Training is completed once the team (individual and canine) partnerships are formed. Most of our dogs are born at KSDS in Washington, Kansas from our ongoing breeding program of Golden and Labrador Retrievers. We are also a member of the International ABC Breeding program that provides breeding stock and puppies with documented successful genetics of guide and service dogs. The puppies selected to be potential breeders are kept in KSDS volunteer puppy raiser homes and are periodically evaluated for inclusion into the breeding program.

Newborn puppies spend their early days isolated from other dogs and the public with their moms and litter mates in the Canine Housing Unit (CHU). They are then moved into the public kennel area in the CHU where they continue to receive loving attention by our staff. During the next six weeks, the pups undergo a scientific program of early puppy socialization and environmental exposures, including handling, crate training, recordings of thunder storms and street noises and routine health checks including deworming and vaccines. At six weeks of age, the puppies are weaned and begin socializing with volunteers including adults, children and students from K-State to prepare them for their next step in life.

At eight weeks, the names of the puppies are announced as they go out into private homes with their puppy raisers. Some puppies are placed into the Pooches and Pals program at the women's correctional facility in Topeka KS (TCF). As a Puppy-In-Training (PIT), the pups learn basic obedience and are exposed to the daily routine of the puppy raiser's family and their local community. The pups are returned to the KSDS campus at 18 to 20 months of age. Before advanced training begins, the pups are evaluated for temperament and then transported to the Veterinary Health Center at Kansas State University (VHC at KSU) for complete physical examinations including OFA radiographs (bone and joint) and CERT's (eye exams). If the puppy passes all of these rigorous health and temperament checks, they



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are evaluated for specific intermediate training in the Guide, Service or Facility Training programs. Some puppies are sent to the TCF to learn intermediate and/or specific working dog skills. The next step in training is matching the temperament and physical attributes of the dog to the specific needs of a person who has submitted an application to KSDS. Further training then continues with the goal of providing the perfect dog for each individual.

In order to graduate from the program, the team (student and dog) must train together on the KSDS campus or in the handler's home town (commonly for guide teams) for one to three weeks. The estimated cost of each dog placement is in excess of \$25,000. However, other than the initial \$25.00 application fee, training is provided at no cost to the applicant. The students are housed in totally accessible housing on campus and most meals are provided. Transportation for classes off campus and training materials (special collars, leashes and harnesses) are also provided. Before graduation from the program, all recipients of a KSDS assistant dog must demonstrate their ability to give effective commands and maintain control of their new partner in public and pass both the KSDS Assistance Dog skills and the Assistance Dogs International Public Access Test. They must also be able to provide a safe and loving home environment as well as feed, groom and clean up after for their new canine partner.

After one year of successful team work, the graduate is given full ownership of their canine partner. The KSDS training staff provides on-going training support to all graduate teams including a group Graduate Retreat each year on the KSDS campus as well as individual help as needed. KSDS has trained and maintained over 500 teams (guide, service, facility). The youngest person to receive an assistance dog from KSDS was seven years of age and the oldest was 83. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, KSDS operates entirely on donations and no tax dollars are used to support these programs.