



International Guide Dog Federation Standards 2026

The mission of the International Guide Dog Federation is to support its Accredited Organisations in their efforts to encourage and advance the provision of guide dogs as a means of independent mobility for people who are blind or visually impaired.

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Foreword

These International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) Standards set out the principles of standardisation undertaken by the IGDF. The principles encompass the development, publication, maintenance, and application of IGDF Standards and related documents. These standards are used to provide conformity assessments of the services delivered by providers of guide dog services and facilitate their recognition as being accredited by IGDF to deliver these services.

Accreditation by IGDF allows the use of the IGDF logo and IGDF accredited organisations that achieve this standard will be eligible to become a member of IGDF. Members of IGDF have extra rights, responsibilities, and benefits such as being able to become involved in governance, vote at AGM, consultations on future development of these standards and access to educational materials.

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Introduction

Guide dogs are a particular type of assistance dog used by people who are blind or with low vision to enable and facilitate their unrestricted mobility and independence in their daily life. Certain governments consider providing access to persons with disabilities and their guide / assistance dogs as an essential measure. However, guide dogs and their users are still frequently denied access to public spaces (e.g. shops, restaurants, and public buildings) transportation (e.g. taxis, trains, airplanes) and private accommodation. Granting unrestricted access comes with responsibilities that include ensuring the guide dog is well socialised, fully trained and will not cause a hazard or inconvenience to others.

This document was developed in response to worldwide demand for standards in relation to the provision of guide dogs and associated services that support the needs of people who are blind or with low vision. Conforming to these standards provides independent evidence of high standards of guide dog services from participating IGDF accredited organisations and thus provides reassurance to consumers, public service providers and funding bodies.

Scope

The scope of this document is limited to services related to guide dog provision only. Excluded are other assistance dogs, dogs that offer only emotional support and / or comfort (i.e., emotional support dogs), dog assisted interventions such as facility dogs or dog-assisted therapy, other kinds of working dogs such as herding dogs, police dogs, search and rescue dogs, and any other form of assistance / service animal.

These standards are focused on themes, which together cover the essential areas of guide dog service provision:

Standard 1: Administration, Risk Management and Business Continuity

Standard 2: Staff Education and Professional Development

Standard 3: Client Services

Standard 4: Breeding and Dog Supply

Standard 5: Dog Training and Behaviour

Standard 6: Dog Health and Welfare

Standard 7: Facilities and Kennels

Normative References

In all clauses, for users to be clear about what is a requirement and what is a recommendation, the following verbal forms are used:

- Requirements – shall, shall not
- Recommendations – should, should not
- Permission – may, need not
- Possibility and capability – can, cannot

In addition to these standards at least the following documents should be considered when necessary (in alphabetical order):

- Assistance Dogs International (ADI) Standards
- European Standards EN 17984-1:2024; EN 17984-6:2024
- National, state, and / or regional dog regulations (e.g. welfare, breed specific)
- National, state, and / or regional accessibility regulations
- National standards for assistance and / or guide dogs

1. Standard 1: Administration, Risk Management and Business Continuity

Purpose of standard: To ensure that IGDF accredited organisations demonstrate operational stability; sound and ethical business practices; financial transparency; responsible use of resources; adequate safety and emergency procedures; adherence to applicable governmental laws and regulations; have fair and equal policies and procedures for staff and volunteers.

IGDF accredited organisations shall have documented policies, procedures, and records in the following areas (for full detail refer to individual standards as required):

[Link to guidance notes](#)

1.1 General Administration

1.1.1 Governance

- Organisations shall have a process to provide Board of Directors / Trustees with:
 - An on-boarding / induction that supports effective and relevant decision making.
 - An oversight of compliance with its own governing documents and all applicable laws and regulations.
 - A Conflict-of-interest policy that provides for disclosure, review, and decision on actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
 - A system for external verification of annual accounts by an auditor or equivalent unless local law determines that not to be necessary.
- Organisations shall have a current organisational chart showing formal lines of responsibility.
- Organisations shall have insurance coverage in place in alignment with regional regulations and in support of its day-to-day activities.
- Organisations shall have a written policy and process published or available upon request to address, manage and resolve formal complaints.

1.2 Staff Education and Professional Development

Organisations shall have policies and processes that ensure compliance with the written documentation expected in standard 2, such as:

- Job descriptions.
- Written curriculum.
- Evidence of educational competence and records of professional development for staff in technical roles, especially guide dog trainers and guide dog mobility instructors.

1.3 Client Services

Organisations shall have policies and processes that ensure compliance with the written documentation expected in standard 3, such as:

- Securely retaining all client records including having an archive policy consistent with applicable laws.

- Ensuring the integrity, security and controlled access to clients' records and other confidential data.
- Documented policies and processes for safe working practices, for example written risk assessments for specific activities and safeguarding policies.

1.4 Breeding and Dog Supply

Organisations shall have policies and processes that ensure compliance with the written documentation expected in standard 4, such as:

- Accurate breeding programme records.
- Full puppy development, puppy education, and assessment records.
- Accurate, dated records of the source / acquisition of dogs.

1.5 Dog Training and Behaviour

Organisations shall have policies and processes that ensure compliance with the written documentation expected in standard 5, such as:

- Accurate, dated assessment records for every dog.
- Accurate, dated records relating to the period of dog training.
- Accurate, dated records relating to evaluations of performance standard.

1.6 Dog Health and Welfare

Organisations shall have policies and processes that ensure compliance with the written documentation expected in standard 6.

1.7 Facilities and Kennels

Organisations shall have policies and processes that ensure compliance with the written documentation expected in standard 7, such as:

- Evidence of compliance with any government building regulations that ensure health and safety of clients, staff, and dogs.
- Written process for preparing and dealing with emergencies.
- Written protocol and procedures for maintaining acceptable hygiene.

1.8 Human Resources

- Organisations shall provide evidence of a staff management system for all technical staff (including those contracted on a self-employed or temporary basis) including the following:
 - Terms and conditions of employment.
 - Job description.
 - Staff recruitment, induction and exiting procedures.
 - Annual staff performance and development appraisals.
 - Staff supervision by supervisors and managers.

- Staff training and development records.
- Staff grievance and appeals process.
- Organisations shall employ a minimum of one IGDF recognised guide dog mobility instructor who is available to provide in-person professional support and technical supervision for clients, other staff, and dogs. This GDMI may be someone who has accredited prior experience or learning in this role (see standard 2).
- Organisations should:
 - Have a process for staff or volunteers to raise concerns about poor practice, breaches to standards or wrongdoing (a "whistle blowing" policy).
 - Encourage feedback from staff e.g. via regular surveys or staff meetings.
- Organisations shall have a volunteer management system, including the following:
 - Descriptions of volunteer roles and responsibilities.
 - Records of induction, training, and supervision.
 - Written agreements with guardian / foster families outlining the rights and responsibilities.
 - Grievance and appeals process.

1.9 Risk Management and Business Continuity

- Organisations shall identify, assess, record in writing, and manage strategic and operational risks. For the purposes of this standard, organisations are required to ensure risks that pose a threat to business continuity, client services or dog colony welfare are appropriately identified and managed.
- Organisations shall:
 - Identify strategic or operational risks and the likelihood of identified risks occurring.
 - Identify protocols and practices to avert those risks.
 - Identify practices to mitigate the effects of those risks.
 - Record the risks, the precautions, and the remedies in the form of deliverable checklists.
 - Review risks at least once per year.
 - Record risks on a risk management document.
 - Evidence that they are doing whatever is "reasonably practicable" to manage strategic risks.
- Organisations shall be aware of potential for zoonotic risk associated with raw feeding and implement measures to control this risk.

2. Standard 2: Staff Education and Professional Development

Purpose of standard: To ensure that all staff and / or volunteers who train, care for, or manage dogs have sound theoretical knowledge and practical experience in dog health and welfare, humane training methods, appropriate socialisation, an understanding of the temperaments required for guide dogs, safe public interactions, and client disabilities.

[Link to guidance notes](#)

2.1 Job Descriptions

Every role shall have an accompanying job description and a clear set of expectations that correspond to the employment conditions and legislative requirements of the country of residence of the employer.

2.2 Technical Training

2.2.1 Curriculum

Organisations providing education to learner Guide Dog Trainers (GDTs) or Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMLs) shall have a written (or digital) curriculum containing all the essential competency areas as required by the IGDF curriculum. This document shall be available to Learners.

2.2.2 Educational Expectations

Educational expectations shall be compatible with employment requirements of the role. Learners should be aware of the impact on their employment if they do not demonstrate competency in the theoretical and practical evaluations required for their role.

2.2.3 Educational Materials

The education / instructional materials shall cover all areas of the written curriculum. They should be in written or electronic format. Books, videos, webinars and prerecorded presentations should be available and ensure a modern, positive learning environment.

2.2.4 Entry Qualifications

Organisations shall have clear entry qualifications, in line with the educational / instructional demands of the position.

2.2.5 Assessment of Prior Experience and / or Learning (APEL)

- Organisations shall have a process for assessing evidence of learning that has been developed from a range of experiences, but which has not been provided by the organisation itself.
- A document containing evidence that APEL has been granted shall be available where appropriate and relevant.
- Evidence offered by non IGDF organisation educated GDTs and GDMLs shall demonstrate that their education has equivalence to IGDF organisation educated GDTs and GDMLs.
- Organisations may seek the support of IGDF to validate that GDTs and GDMLs meet the expectations for their role.

2.3 Competency Assessments / Evaluations

2.3.1 Evaluations

There shall be a policy in place regarding the assessment process. This process shall have a clearly defined competency criteria, evaluation and appeals process allowing the Learner to receive feedback relative to their progress.

Evaluations shall comprehensively cover the learning and performance areas, being appropriate to the skills required for the task to be performed. Each Organisation shall provide evidence that the Learner has received sufficient theoretical and practical learning and experience with a diverse range of clients and dogs to satisfy the educator that the Learner has the skills and knowledge to work unsupervised.

2.3.2 Academic Integrity

Organisations shall take steps to ensure academic integrity (refer to the [IGDF website](#) for a document on IGDF Academic Integrity).

2.3.3 Appeals

Organisations shall have an appeals policy in place, including assessment resit / retake opportunities, and Learners shall be aware of it.

2.3.4 Feedback

Organisations shall seek feedback from Learners and provide documentary evidence of this.

2.3.5 Guide Dog Trainers (GDT)

Guide Dog Trainers shall be competent in training a guide dog from intake for training to 'class or match' ready standard.

The minimum number of dogs, to validate qualification as a Guide Dog Trainer shall be six (6):

- Fully or partially supervised - Four (4)
- Unsupervised - Two (2)

A competency assessment, prior to qualification as a GDT, shall be in place.

2.3.6 Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMI)

GDMI shall be proficient GDTs and therefore competent in training a guide dog from intake for training to 'class or match' ready standard and demonstrate extensive skills and knowledge about Guide dog training from intake to certification, including a final blindfold walk, as well as the client work including matching, initial placement, class training, certification of the team, follow up, retirement of the guide dog and successor planning.

To graduate as a GDMI the minimum number of teams (guide dog and client working together from matching to qualification) shall be six (6):

- Fully or partially supervised - Four (4) incorporating client training.
- Unsupervised - Two (2) incorporating client training.

In organisations where initial training is conducted by GDT's, the GDMI shall be responsible for advanced training and final certification of each guide dog, prior to placement with a client.

A competency assessment, prior to qualification as a GDMI, shall be in place.

Qualified GDMI's may undertake specific elements of their role (such as advanced training of dogs, class, or aftercare) according to the requirements of the organisation.

2.4 Continuing Professional Development

Organisations shall have a documented Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme for all GDTs and GDMI's. Other technical roles should also be required to demonstrate CPD.

2.5 Records

All records of Learner and post graduate achievement shall be maintained in line with relevant data protection requirements and made available to Learners, upon request.

2.6 Educators

- Educators and / or supervisory staff shall possess the appropriate knowledge, professional recognition, interpersonal skills, and education to be able to teach and support technical staff effectively.
- Direct supervisors of GDMI education and practical work shall have an equal level of education proficiency, practical experience, and competency as an IGDF accredited organisation qualified and experienced GDMI; other educators shall have an equivalent level of recognised expertise in the subject area they are responsible for.

3 Standard 3: Client Services

Purpose of standard: To ensure that IGDF accredited organisations have clear and comprehensive application, screening, and matching processes for clients; clients are treated with equity, respect and dignity; clients receive a thorough and individualised educational process regarding all aspects of guide dog partnership; and organisations provide lifetime follow-up and team support.

[Link to guidance notes](#)

3.1 Client Service Procedure

3.1.1 Client Services

Organisations shall have a consistent approach to how they respond to enquiries, assess applications, and provide guide dog services.

3.1.2 Communication

All communication with an applicant, their families, volunteers, and paraprofessionals shall be in an accessible format and should be completed by competent staff (this may include competent volunteers).

3.1.3 Data Protection

Communication, storing and accessing personal data shall be confidential and compliant with the relevant data protection laws.

3.1.4 Client Consent

Clients shall consent to gathering, storing and use of personal data through written or electronic confirmation.

3.2 Managing Application

3.2.1 Initial Enquiries

On receipt of an enquiry, organisations shall provide an applicant with essential accessible information about guide dog mobility.

3.2.2 Provision of Policies

Any policy that may impact an application should be made available.

3.2.3 Applicant Assessment

All guide dog mobility assessments, training or inputs shall be undertaken by a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI) or Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Instructor. Any trainee instructor shall be under the stage appropriate supervision of a qualified instructor.

3.2.4 Assessment Criteria

The assessor shall assess the applicant's suitability for guide dog mobility against defined criteria.

3.2.5 Notification of Acceptance / Non-acceptance

An applicant shall be advised of their acceptance / non-acceptance, with the reasons for non-acceptance provided.

3.2.6 Referrals

Where further professional training or experience could bring an unsuccessful applicant to a level of readiness for future guide dog work, appropriate referrals or support should be provided.

3.2.7 Appeal Process

An internal appeal process shall be available, to allow an unsuccessful applicant to request re-consideration of the decision.

3.2.8 Reapplication Process

Individuals should be made aware of the reapplication process where this may be appropriate.

3.3 Client / Guide Dog Matching Process

3.3.1 Dog Selection and Matching

Dog(s) shall be selected for each applicant to ensure a suitable person / dog match.

3.3.2 Client Specific Training

Specific training to prepare the dog for the applicant's particular requirements should be undertaken during the final weeks of dog training.

3.3.3 Additional Needs

Applicants with additional needs may require a suitable dog to be selected and specifically trained at an earlier stage.

3.3.4 Matching Decisions

The matching decision shall be the responsibility of a GDMI but may also involve an applicant / guide dog matching panel.

3.3.5 Guide Dog Leasing / Retirement / Repossession Policy

Applicants shall be informed about the guide dog leasing / ownership and retirement / repossession policies when applying for or training with a new guide dog.

3.4 Client and Guide Dog Training

3.4.1 Individualised Training

Training shall be individualised e.g. some elements may be modified considering knowledge previously gained from guide dog mobility.

3.4.2 Training Programme Duration

The training programme duration shall not be less than ten (10) days. The duration should be determined by the time taken for the applicant / guide dog team to achieve competence as outline in 3.4.14

3.4.3 Training Programme Location

Training may be conducted in the venue(s) most appropriate to the individuals needs and / or needs of the dog. This may be dependent on the resources available.

3.4.4 Training Schedule

Applicants should arrange their schedules to give priority to the requirements of their training programme.

3.4.5 Discontinued Training

The training programme may be discontinued at any time if the GDMI and / or the applicant feel the team does not achieve competence in guide dog mobility. This may be due to lack of progress, poor health, incompatibility between dog and client or other such factors.

3.4.6 Unsuccessful Applicants

Where an applicant is unsuccessful but requires further assistance or training, this shall be provided, or referrals may be made.

3.4.7 Training Plan

The guide dog mobility training course shall include the core theoretical and practical exercises listed in these standards and guidance. A documented agreed training plan covering the training curriculum (and any additional specific training) shall be provided.

3.4.8 Experience and Practice

The training shall provide sufficient experience and practice to achieve a competent standard of independent mobility with a guide dog.

3.4.9 Humane Care

The training content shall adhere to the principles of humane care as outlined in Standard 6.

3.4.10 In-Harness and Out-Of-Harness Training

All clients shall receive in-harness (mobility related) and out-of-harness (public access / social / domestic) training.

3.4.11 Evidence / Demonstration of Competency

- Organisations shall evaluate the individual performance of the client and the dog and how they operate together as a team. This evaluation shall be completed by a competent expert and / or a multi-disciplinary team of experts.
- Upon completion of the training, the guide dog team shall demonstrate competence in in-harness training (mobility), out-of-harness training (public access / social / domestic), dog welfare and have built a strong human-dog bond.

3.4.12 Certification (graduation / qualification) of guide dog teams

Guide dog teams should not be solely certified by the person(s) responsible for the delivery of the training.

3.4.13 Certification Documentation

Certification as a guide dog team shall include formal certification documents such as an identity card and / or signed document. This will enable public access rights as defined in relevant national laws and regulations.

3.4.14 Client Input

The client shall be included in the decision-making process whereby the training programme should be considered as either completed, extended, changed or discontinued.

3.5 Aftercare

3.5.1 Post-training Aftercare

Organisations shall offer follow-up / aftercare on completion of training, if requested or as deemed necessary. This may be to meet the needs of the client, assess the competency and safety of the client, guide dog team and / or the health and well-being of the guide dog.

3.5.2 Life-time Aftercare

Organisations shall provide an aftercare service for the lifetime of the team.

3.5.3 Provision of Aftercare

Where clients request aftercare, this should be provided within a time frame and in a manner that reflects the nature of the request. This request may be for follow-up, routine or emergency aftercare and may be provided in person or through use of telephone / technology.

3.5.4 Annual Veterinary Checks

Organisations shall ensure the health and welfare of the dog is maintained by annual vet checks or providing the necessary information on the frequency of veterinary check-ups and appropriate care. This shall be included in training materials and / or client agreements or contracts.

3.6 Guide Dog Retirement and Bereavement Support

3.6.1 Retirement Advice

Organisations shall provide specific advice regarding the retirement and welfare of the aging guide dog in line with the retirement policy.

3.6.2 Additional Services

Organisations should discuss and agree ongoing services that are required or available to the client prior to the retirement of the dog.

3.6.3 Guide Dog Retirement

Retirement of the dog should be made at an appropriate time and consider the interests / needs of both the client and the dog.

3.6.4 Bereavement Support

Organisations shall, upon request, provide bereavement support (or refer to such services) to clients when their dogs retire or pass away.

4 Standard 4: Breeding and Dog Supply

Purpose of standard: To ensure that IGDF accredited organisations produce and raise dogs with the highest likelihood of success in the role they are intended for, operate ethical breeding practices, raise puppies that are appropriately socialised to prepare them for their role as guide dogs; and ensure any alternative sources of dog supply also conform to ethical standards and demonstrate commitment to dog welfare.

[Link to guidance notes](#)

4.1 Breeding Programmes

4.1.1 Staff Competency

Organisations shall ensure that the person(s) responsible for managing the breeding programme have or have access to knowledge, expertise and data relating to:

- Dog health / welfare / veterinary advice.
- Behaviour, temperament, and guide dog training.
- Genetics
- Colony management and breeding planning.

4.1.2 Veterinary Services

Organisations shall have access to veterinary services with the ability to perform caesarean section and ideally with expertise in reproductive medicine.

4.1.3 Pre-breeding Health Screening

Organisations shall minimise the risk of producing puppies affected by heritable health conditions significant in their breed(s) and programme by performing pre-breeding health screening.

Pre-breeding health screening shall include:

- Radiographic examination that excludes evidence of hip and elbow dysplasia.
- Examination that excludes evidence of ophthalmologic abnormalities or cardiac disease.
- DNA testing.

4.1.4 Behaviour Assessment

Organisations shall assess behaviour on all breeding dogs and should gather behaviour data on all dogs in the programme.

4.1.5 Behaviour Data

Behaviour data shall be utilised by breeding programmes in such a way that increases the likelihood of producing dogs that will be successful, considering heritability and the programme's individual priorities and client needs.

4.1.6 Genealogy / Pedigrees

Organisations shall maintain records of genealogy of all dogs used for breeding, documented by a pedigree containing at least three generations, which should be from purpose bred guide or other assistance dog lines.

4.1.7 Production Planning

Organisations shall have a production plan that supports production of sufficient puppies to meet the programme's needs whilst minimising surplus production.

4.1.8 Surplus Production

Organisations shall have a plan in place to address surplus production, especially for ensuring appropriate homes are available for puppies to meet their socialisation, enrichment, and long-term welfare needs.

4.1.9 Female Minimum Breeding Age

Females shall be at least 16 months of age, have met skeletal maturity and have completed all required health screening prior to whelping their first litter.

4.1.10 Female Maximum Number of Litters

Breeding females shall not have more than five (5) litters but should not have more than four (4) litters. Breeding females may have a fifth litter in exceptional circumstances and only with the written agreement of a veterinarian certifying the health and wellbeing of the bitch.

4.1.11 Female Maximum Breeding Age

Breeding females shall not whelp a litter beyond the age of seven (7) but should not whelp a litter beyond the age of six (6). Breeding females may whelp a litter up to the age of seven (7) with the written agreement of a veterinarian certifying the health and wellbeing of the bitch.

4.1.12 Breeding Female Veterinary Assessment

Breeding females should be assessed by a veterinarian prior to each time she will be bred from.

4.1.13 Breeding Female Care

Organisations shall provide additional care tailored to the specific needs of a breeding bitch during pregnancy, whelp, and lactation.

4.1.14 Male Minimum Breeding Age

Males shall be at least 12 months old and have completed all required health screening prior to being used for breeding purposes.

4.1.15 Breeding Male Veterinary Assessment

Breeding males shall be assessed by a veterinarian no less than once per year (to ensure fitness for breeding). A general health check should be performed prior to each mating to ensure absence of any physical problems that may interfere with mating.

4.1.16 Breeding Male Fertility Assessment

Stud dogs shall have a fertility assessment performed at the outset of their breeding career and after any misconceptions. If a stud dog is used for breeding less than once per year, they shall have a fertility assessment before next used.

4.1.17 Breeding Programme Documentation

Organisations with their own breeding programmes shall keep detailed breeding records.

4.1.18 Bitch and Neonate Environment

Organisations shall provide a suitable, safe and clean environment for nursing bitches and their puppies during the neonatal stage and shall have procedures in place to reduce the risk of introducing infectious disease to areas where pregnant or nursing bitches and/or neonates are housed.

4.1.19 Puppies with Health Conditions

Organisations shall have policies in place for puppies that are born with or develop conditions that are incompatible with a comfortable life.

4.1.20 Puppy Rearing Enrichment and Interaction

Puppies shall receive ongoing human interaction as well as age-appropriate social interactions and environmental enrichment prior to being placed with puppy raisers.

4.1.21 Volunteer Support for Whelping and Rearing

Organisations shall provide advice, education and support to volunteers that assist throughout the breeding, whelping and neonatal rearing process. During whelping and the immediate neonatal period, support should be available 24/7.

4.2 Acquired Puppies / Adult Dogs (Purchased or Donated)

4.2.1 Screening and Assessment

Organisations shall assess acquired dogs / puppies for behavioural and physical suitability prior to acceptance. Organisations should confirm acceptable health screening results for parents of acquired dogs and obtain a pedigree containing at least three (3) generations.

4.2.2 Screening and Assessment of Acquired Dogs used for Breeding

Acquired dogs shall undergo the same level of health screening and behaviour assessment as detailed in 4.1 if used for breeding.

4.2.3 Responsible Breeders

Organisations should only obtain dogs / puppies from sources that uphold high standards of animal welfare and responsible breeding practices.

4.3 Puppy Raising

4.3.1 Staff Competency

Any puppy raising programme shall be the responsibility of a person with appropriate professional expertise / competence in and knowledge of puppy development and guide dog training.

4.3.2 Puppy Raising Environment

Organisations should raise puppies in a domestic environment that provides human interaction, age-appropriate social interactions, and socialisation to a range of environmental stimuli and situations that will best prepare the puppy for life as a guide dog.

4.3.3 Puppy Raising Programme

Puppy raising programmes shall adhere to the principles of Standard 5 and shall be designed to set puppies up for the greatest chance of success in the role they were bred for by providing appropriate social interactions, socialisation, enrichment and equipment-use.

4.3.4 Puppy Placement

Organisations shall place puppies in carefully selected homes after the age of seven weeks, balancing the need for effective vaccine and parasite protection with the importance of early social interactions and socialisation.

4.3.5 Puppy Handling Equipment

Organisations shall ensure the use of handling equipment appropriate to the life-stage, behaviour, and training needs of each individual puppy.

4.3.6 Puppy Social Interactions and Socialisation

Organisations shall provide age-appropriate social interactions, and socialisation to a range of environmental stimuli, under the guidance of staff or competent volunteers.

4.3.7 Puppy Raising Documentation

Organisations shall maintain a documented history of each puppy's progress. Puppy Raising records shall include reports of a puppy's performance, behaviour, socialisation, enrichment and social interactions, and supervisory visits with sufficient frequency and detail to evaluate progress and provide support to puppy raisers.

4.3.8 Puppy Raiser Agreement

Organisations shall provide a written agreement, including the rights and responsibilities of both organisation and puppy raiser.

4.3.9 Volunteer Support in Puppy Raising

Any volunteers involved in the puppy raising program shall receive regular guidance, education, and support from the organisation to ensure they can meet the mental, behavioural and physical needs of any puppy in their care.

5 Standard 5: Dog Training and Behaviour

Purpose of standard: To ensure that all policies and procedures regarding selection, training, and care of dogs are in accordance with the standards for dog health and welfare; that there is a comprehensive education and training program individualised to the needs of the dog and client; and that there are detailed training records.

5.1 Assessment

Prior to entering formal guide dog training, dogs shall be assessed by competent staff for their physical and temperamental suitability for guide dog work.

5.1.1 Essential Physical Qualities

Dogs shall:

- Be physically healthy.
- Be of a suitable appearance so that the client does not receive adverse or frequent negative comments from the public.
- Be a minimum age of 12 months at the commencement of training.

5.1.2 Essential Temperamental Qualities

Dogs shall:

- Be positively motivated by guide work, and responsive to vocal and physical cues from the handler.
- Be confident when encountering different stimuli such as sights, sounds, smells, and sensations in diverse situations.
- Be able to develop and maintain concentration, even in the presence of distraction.
- Be adaptable to reasonable environmental and / or handler changes.
- Have low chase instinct (predatory drive).
- Possess appropriate working drive and the ability to guide through the harness.
- Not be shy, sound shy, nervous or evidence excessive suspicion or protective nature.
- Not be aggressive in any way.

5.1.3 Essential Social Behaviour Qualities

Dogs shall exhibit the following qualities:

- Quiet and calm behaviour when off duty and in social situations.
- Not solicit or steal food in working or social situations.
- Have clean toileting habits e.g. relieving in appropriate locations.
- Be able to use transportation to meet the needs of the matched client.

5.2 Dog Training

5.2.1 Training Principles

- The guiding principles for dog training shall be in accordance with standard 6.
- Training and handling techniques should be as effective as possible while remaining within the LIMA framework.
- Programme volunteers, staff, and clients shall not be permitted to utilise the following equipment on any dog at any time for any reason: shock collars, prong collars, collars made fully of chain.
- Training records shall be maintained for each dog that detail the training process, training duration, and evaluation of temperament, behaviour and performance standards outlined in 5.2.2.

5.2.2 Performance Standards

- By the completion of training, the fully trained dog shall:
 - Perform competently, maintaining concentration and effective work despite any competing external stimuli (distractions) within the range of environmental conditions required by the matched client.
 - Maintain focus on the environment and task and not persistently solicit food / reinforcement from the handler.
 - Consistently deliver performance requiring reinforcement methods compatible with the skills and capabilities of the matched client.
- During the finishing stages of the dog's training, the training shall focus on any specific requirements of the dog's future handler.
- Prior to allocation, a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI) shall assess each dog's work, including under blindfold conditions, to assure that the dog meets the performance standards as listed below.

5.2.3 Foundation Training (Obedience)

- The dog shall demonstrate competency in recognising and responding to specific cues such as "sit", "down" "stay" and "come. "
- The dog shall respond appropriately to these cues in any social setting.
- The dog shall walk on a lead in a controlled manner by the handler's side without causing the handler discomfort through excessive tension.

5.2.4 Recall

The dog shall return to and make physical contact with the handler when called during free running exercises or in social settings.

5.2.5 Tension / Speed Control / Directional Cues

The dog, whilst working in harness, shall:

- Be relaxed when walking whilst providing appropriate tension for the needs of their client.
- Walk at a consistent speed appropriate to the handler's needs, providing competent guiding and fluid movement appropriate to its handler and environmental conditions.
- Respond accurately to directional cues such as forward, right, left, and back.

5.2.6 Obstacle Avoidance

The dog, whilst working in harness, shall:

- Avoid obstacles (e.g. static objects and people) in such a way that there is sufficient clearance for a handler to continue their way safely.
- Avoid obstructions blocking the whole footpath and subsequently indicate the need for the handler to return to the footpath at the first opportunity.
- Respond appropriately (e.g. avoid or stop) to height obstacles.

5.2.7 Pavement / Footpath / Sidewalk

- The dog shall maintain an appropriate position and indicate any change in surface level (e.g. kerb, road crossing, steps, stairs, and break in surface) by stopping as close to the edge as practical to enable the handler to determine the most appropriate response.
- The dog should indicate the most appropriate location for road crossings.
- Handlers shall have adequate orientation skills to provide clear directions to the dog.

5.2.8 Road Crossings

- Decisions to initiate when it is appropriate to proceed shall be made by the handler, not the dog.
- Roads shall be crossed, in response to handler cue, in a straight line.
- Where a vehicle intersects the path of travel during a road crossing, the dog shall stop and only proceed when appropriate to do so.
- Where an obstacle is located on the far side of a road crossing, the dog shall respond accordingly by avoiding the obstacle but locating the far kerb.

5.2.9 Traffic Safety Training

- Guide dog teams shall be taught how to function safely within their own traffic and travel situations.
- Guide dog handlers shall demonstrate a knowledge of making decisions to cross streets and traverse along roadways.
- Guide dogs shall be confident guiding in their local traffic situation without endangering the handler.

- Guide dogs shall stop or refuse to move forward when approached by a vehicle that would intersect its path or risk a collision with the guide dog and handler.
- Guide dogs shall not resume travel, even if instructed to do so by the handler, until it is appropriate to continue without risk of a collision with a vehicle.
- Organisations may teach traffic awareness to their dogs and handlers according to their own cultural norms and to meet the agreed needs of their own clients.

5.2.10 Non-Footpath Travel

- The dog shall be capable of working in a situation where there are no defined footpaths, for example, by the edge of a road or in a rural situation.
- Dogs required to work regularly in such areas shall be capable of consistently maintaining their distance close to the shoreline whilst working on the left or right side of the road.

5.2.11 Distractions / Focus / Concentration

It is normal for a dog to be distracted by certain stimuli such as other animals, food or people; however, the dog shall readily return to its working task when directed.

5.3 Public Access

5.3.1 Public Places

- The dog shall be trained to be well-behaved, and unobtrusive to the public.
- The dog shall remain close to the handler and stay where directed when at rest in social settings.
- The client shall manage the dog's behaviour to ensure it is socially acceptable and not a risk to public safety.

5.3.2 Doorways

Doorways shall be located on cue.

5.3.3 Stairs

The dog shall:

- Locate stairs on cue.
- Indicate the change in surface level by stopping as close as practical to the stairs or step. The dog may indicate by placing its front paws on the rise where there is an upward change in surface level (e.g. an up-step).
- Walk the stairs at a speed appropriate to the handler's needs.

5.3.4 Elevators

- Elevators shall be located on cue.
- After entering an elevator, the dog shall wait calmly for a cue to exit.

5.3.5 Escalators / Travellers

- If trained to ride an escalator / traveller, the dog shall locate the entrance and stop as close to the mounting location as possible.
- The dog shall then wait for the cue to proceed onto the escalator / traveler and remain calm whilst travelling and on exit.

5.3.6 Public Transport

Where required by the client the dog shall:

- Be confident with the approach and environment of public transport.
- Display specific guiding behaviours (e.g. location of entry / exit points) in these contexts with the appropriate cues from the handler.
- Be trained for the specific form of transport and the transport environment (e.g. car, bus, train) required by the client.

6 Standard 6: Health and Welfare

Purpose of standard: The intent of these standards is to ensure commitment to upholding the highest standards of animal welfare for assistance dogs, as outlined in the joint ADI/IGDF position statement. These standards ensure that all dogs receive humane care and treatment throughout their lifetime, with thorough welfare assessments and procedures in place to address any areas of welfare concerns, ensures that all dog handlers possess the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain high welfare standards and that comprehensive health care plans are created and implemented in collaboration between qualified staff and veterinarians. Emphasising the "Five Domains" model, these standards ensure dogs have opportunities for positive mental state (domain 5) through meeting their needs in the other four domains, and adhere to the Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) principles. These standards reflect the organisation's lifelong commitment to the welfare of their dogs.

[Link to guidance notes](#)

6.1 Domain 1: Nutrition

6.1.1 Food and Water

Organisations shall provide dogs with sufficient clean drinking water to meet their individual physiological and psychological needs and shall document food and feeding requirements for individual dogs, ensuring the feeding meets nutritional requirements and optimises physiological and emotional health.

6.1.2 Weight and Body Condition

Organisations shall have methods in place to maintain healthy body condition of the dog at all stages. Dogs shall be at an appropriate weight and body condition at the time of certification (graduation / qualification) with a client, and the dog's ideal body weight range shall be documented for the client.

6.2 Domain 2: Environment

6.2.1 Environment

Organisations shall optimise the environment to best meet the individual needs and ensure each dog to exercise agency, as appropriate, in:

- Thermal comfort and ability to move as needed to achieve a comfortable temperature.
- Moving freely and resting comfortably.
- Seeing and interacting with people and other dogs in the environment.
- When and where to toilet several times per day as appropriate for the individual dog.
- Opportunities and area for safe exercise on a regular basis.
- Opportunities for daily positive psychological and physiological experiences including play, rest, enrichment and social interactions.

6.2.2 Ambient Conditions

Organisations shall have methods in place to manage noise levels, lighting, and air quality to optimise the comfort of each dog.

6.2.3 Extreme Weather

Organisations shall have documented processes that detail requirements to protect dog welfare during extreme weather. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Anytime they are exposed to the outdoor elements.
- In vehicles.

6.3 Domain 3: Health

6.3.1 Veterinary Care

Organisations shall have procedures to prevent and rapidly identify disease, pain, and injury and shall ensure veterinary care is provided in a timely fashion when required.

6.3.2 Veterinary Services

Organisations shall have access to veterinary services that can provide veterinary care for all dogs under management of the organisation and shall ensure that all dogs are examined by a veterinarian frequently enough to ensure they remain in suitable health and fitness.

6.3.3 Veterinary Evaluations

Organisations shall have procedures for veterinary evaluations prior to graduation to determine the absence of health or medical issues that would cause difficulty for a working dog in their specific role.

6.3.4 Vaccinations

Organisations shall have an evidence-based vaccination program in place to ensure that all dogs in the program are protected against vaccine-preventable-diseases relevant to the region in which the dog lives. Organisations shall maintain documentation of current vaccination-preventable-disease protection status for all dogs under the management of the organisation.

6.3.5 Parasite Prevention

Organisations shall follow a comprehensive preventative health program under the direction of a veterinarian and local requirements for internal and external parasite control / prevention.

Organisations shall educate all dog handlers about common parasites, and the corresponding preventative measures, local to where they live.

6.3.6 Grooming

Organisations shall have procedures in place to ensure that all dogs are groomed frequently enough to maintain health and cleanliness.

6.3.7 Dog First Aid

Organisations shall have canine first aid kits available where training and / or dog care occurs for all staff or volunteers in staff-like roles.

6.3.8 Veterinary Records

Organisations shall maintain dated health records for every dog from birth / acquisition while under management of the organisation. Health records shall include, but not be limited to:

- Any veterinary diagnosis and / or treatment
- Weight checks
- Health checks
- Vaccinations
- Internal and external parasitic control.

6.3.9 Dog Records

Organisations shall keep and maintain information / records on each dog. Dog records shall include, but not be limited to:

- Name
- Microchip ID number
- Date of birth.
- Sex
- Breed
- Colour
- Parentage / copy of breeding stock pedigree
- Training records
- Name(s), address(es), and date(s) of volunteer home(s), if applicable.
- Name and address of client partner, date, and type of placement, if applicable.
- Date and reason for "release" from program, if applicable.
- Name, address, and date of new "career", if applicable.
- Type, date, and contact information of acquisition, if applicable.

6.3.10 Spay and Neuter

- Organisations shall have a clear evidence-based spay / neuter policy developed in collaboration with their veterinarian(s) and/or other experts where relevant.
- All guide dogs shall be spayed / neutered prior to being placed / graduated with clients.
- Organisations may elect not to spay/neuter some dogs for the following reasons:
 - Dogs that are transferred with the specific intent of breeding or
 - Released dogs where a clause in a legally binding adoption agreement permits delay of spay/neuter until a later age or
 - Released dogs where the organization determines that it is in the dog's best interests (health and/or behaviour) to not be spay/neutered. In this case, the adoption agreement shall include a clause stating that the dog must not be bred

6.3.11 Euthanasia

Organisations shall ensure the euthanasia of any dog under their management is conducted humanely under the guidance of a veterinarian.

6.4 Domain 4: Behaviour Interactions

6.4.1 Enrichment and Social Interaction

Organisations shall ensure sufficient enrichment and social interaction opportunities are provided to all dogs, enabling positive mental experiences and learning. Social interaction with the environment, people, other dogs, and enrichment in a variety of forms shall be provided. Enrichment and social interaction shall occur at a frequency and duration that is individualised for each dog's life stage, behaviour and health needs.

6.4.2 Handling

Organisations shall ensure that all staff, volunteers, and clients handling dogs are educated such that all strategies of handling and cooperative care shall be effectively balanced with due regard to both welfare, effectiveness, and long-term outcomes, following a least intrusive and minimally aversive approach. This includes methods that maximise use of positive reinforcement and minimise methods, or techniques that cause undue mental or physical distress.

6.5 Domain 5: Mental State and Lifetime Wellbeing

6.5.2 Individual Needs

Organisations shall ensure that all staff, volunteers and clients handling dogs are educated to:

- Recognise, interpret, and respond to the dog's body language, aiming to ensure that signs and symptoms of stress or anxiety are mitigated and managed.
- Treat each dog as an individual who may have specific needs.

6.5.3 Lifetime Wellbeing

Organisations shall ensure that prior to placement of a dog with a volunteer or client, the handler is informed of any special health or maintenance care requirements for the dog.

6.5.4 Annual Veterinary Checks

Organisations shall ensure the health and welfare of the dog is maintained and that clients have their dogs examined by a veterinarian at least once a year.

6.5.5 Withdrawal / Retirement / Career-change

Organisations shall have a policy in place outlining how and when a dog may be withdrawn from a handler, retired, and / or career changed when determined not suitable for work and / or welfare grounds which prevent the dog from experiencing a good life.

6.5.6 Rehoming / Adoption

Organisations shall:

- Have a policy regarding the re-homing of dogs.
- Have a procedure to assess the suitability of potential adopters to provide care that will meet the needs of the individual dog, for the lifetime of the dog.
- Have a written agreement with each adopter of a re-homed dog that details a requirement to continue to provide a high level of welfare for the dog.

7 Standard 7: Facilities and Kennels

Purpose of standard: To ensure that all facilities, kennels, and environments used to house dogs provide the care needed to meet the individual needs of each dog and client; that kennels provide a safe and enriched environment; that there are proper maintenance and cleaning procedures; that all facilities are accessible to the population served.

7.1 Buildings

7.1.1 Statutory Regulations

Buildings shall comply with applicable building regulations and practices, meeting requirements of access and health and safety of clients, volunteers, staff and dogs.

7.1.2 Emergency Equipment

Buildings shall have accessible emergency equipment / first aid supplies for use with people and dogs.

7.1.3 Domestic Settings

Organisations shall ensure that dogs housed in a domestic setting or away from a main facility have suitable accommodation, care and management that aligns with those of dogs housed at the facility.

7.2 Transport and Vehicles

7.2.1 Accident Prevention

Organisations shall ensure that dogs are managed to prevent accidents or injury e.g. by using dog crates, safety harness or dog guards when transported by staff or volunteers.

7.2.2 Dog Crates

Organisations shall ensure that dog crates, when used, are of adequate size for the dog to stand, lie down and turn around. Crates shall be designed to provide good ventilation and be firmly secured.

7.2.3 Extreme Weather

Organisations shall ensure that extreme weather policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of the dogs whilst travelling or when left in vehicles.

7.2.4 Vehicle Requirements

Organisations that provide vehicles for the transport of staff, clients, volunteers, and dogs, shall ensure their vehicles:

- Comply with government / legal regulations.
- Are designed or modified to ensure the comfort and security of staff, clients, volunteers and dogs.
- Have climate control or be continuously ventilated when parked.

7.3 Kennel Buildings

7.3.1 Statutory Regulations

Kennels shall comply with applicable government / statutory building regulations and practices, meeting requirements of access, health and safety and the kennelling of dogs.

7.3.2 Hygiene

Kennels shall be designed and constructed with materials that promote best practice in hygiene and canine husbandry. Hard flooring in kennel units shall be non-permeable, with suitable drainage to facilitate drying.

7.3.3 Temperature Control

Kennels shall provide ventilation and temperature control to ensure the health and safety of people and dogs.

7.3.4 Security

Kennels shall be designed to ensure the security of people and dogs.

7.3.5 Facilitation of Specific Functions

Kennels shall be designed to facilitate specific individual kennel functions, such as breeding, boarding, training, isolation, veterinary clinic, and hospital.

7.3.6 Isolation

Organisations shall have a facility to isolate any dog who is injured, sick, infectious, or carrying a serious infectious disease. This facility may be at another location, such as a local veterinary practice.

7.3.7 Emergency Equipment

Kennels shall have accessible emergency equipment / first aid supplies for use with people and dogs.

7.3.8 Storage

Kennels shall have a system for safe storage of cleaning chemicals, medications, and food.

7.3.9 Weather Protection

Kennels shall provide protection from the prevailing weather conditions.

7.3.10 Utilities

Kennels shall provide access to hot and cold running water, a sewer system, and power supply.

7.3.11 Free Running Area

Kennels shall provide toileting and free running areas, that are utilised to provide exercise and enrichment opportunities, in accordance with Standard 6.

7.3.12 Kennel Size

Kennels shall be large enough for the dog to fully stand, stretch, lie down, and turn around without restriction.

7.3.13 Noise Management

Kennels should be designed to promote noise management to support the comfort of people, dogs and prevent noise nuisance to the wider community.

7.3.14 Natural Light

Kennels should provide dogs with access to natural light.

7.3.15 Grouping Compatible Dogs

Kennels should be large enough to house dogs in compatible pairs / groups with sufficient resources to meet the needs of each dog.

7.3.16 Freedom of Movement

Kennels should not routinely restrict the dog's freedom of movement through use of tethers or crates. Such management may be used by exception e.g. to manage recovery from a health condition or for short periods of time.

7.4 Kennel Management

7.4.1 Staff / Volunteer Competency

Organisations shall ensure that sufficient competent people are available to meet the welfare needs of each dog.

7.4.2 Emergency Procedures

Organisations shall have a documented procedure for dealing with emergencies, such as fire, flood, and extremes of weather conditions (both hot and cold). This procedure should include an evacuation procedure and a plan for housing the dogs should the premises become uninhabitable.

7.4.3 Hygiene Protocol

Organisations shall have a written hygiene protocol for cleaning, disinfection and rodent / pest control which is applied in practice. All staff should understand the procedures to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

7.4.4 Accommodating Breeding Dogs

Organisations shall accommodate breeding dogs and any puppies separately to other dogs, with special attention given to hygiene and infection control.

7.4.5 Inspections

Organisations shall ensure that kennels are inspected at least every day and kept in a clean condition, in accordance with the hygiene protocol for cleaning and disinfection.

7.4.6 Removal of Faeces

Organisations shall remove faeces from all indoor or external areas as often as necessary to maintain hygiene and prevent dogs from living in urine / faeces.

7.4.7 Bedding

Organisations shall provide dry, comfortable bed spaces in draft free spaces to allow dogs the choice of where to rest. Soft bedding materials should be provided for dogs with special needs.

7.4.8 Health Care and Enrichment

Organisations shall provide the dogs with health care and enrichment opportunities (such as through provision of regular grooming, toys, regular opportunities for play / socialisation / exercise / sensory activities) that meet their welfare needs whilst in the kennel environment. A daily enrichment schedule for each dog should be documented.

7.4.9 Leaving Dogs Alone

Organisations shall have methods in place to avoid negative welfare outcomes when dogs are left unattended. Organisations should ensure that dogs are not left unattended for more than 12 hours.

7.4.10 Noise Management Protocol

Organisations should have a noise management protocol (such as through kennel design, management, and use of positive reinforcement) to encourage quiet behaviour, avoid stress and to limit noise generation.

7.4.11 Anxiety and Stress

Organisations should ensure any dogs exhibiting signs of anxiety or stress are housed in the most suitable part of the kennels or an alternative placement identified for them.

Appendix 1: Glossary

A

Accessible communication: Information provided in a format which is best suited to that individuals' communication needs and abilities e.g. using audio, large print, Braille.

Accreditation: Accreditation involves the assessment of the competence of an organisation and the compliance of their work to nationally and internationally recognised standards or schemes, such as those of the IGDF.

Aftercare: A service supplied to a client to assist them with their guide dog. These follow up or aftercare services may be delivered by contact through telephone, digital communication or in person. The client may seek and benefit from follow up or aftercare services to assist them in any aspect of guide dog ownership. Synonymous with "Follow up".

Agency: A dog's ability to exercise choice and control to influence its situation or environment and/or to engage in voluntary, self-motivated behaviour.

Agreement: A written document that defines the terms and conditions of the rights, responsibilities and engagement between the guide dog service provider and the client, volunteer, or other party. See contract.

Appeal: A request by the applicant, client, volunteer or staff member to a guide dog service provider for reconsideration by that provider of a decision it has made to the related service, individual, or team.

Assessment of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL): The process where credit is sought for experience and / or learning which has not been provided and awarded by an accredited member of IGDF.

Applicant: A person, who is blind or has low vision, who has applied to be trained with a guide dog.

B

Behaviour: Anything an individual does, given certain conditions, which can be observed or measured.

Behaviour Analysis: The study of the functional relations between behaviour and environmental events.

Behaviour assessment: The evaluation of the dog's observed behaviour(s) to determine causation and maintenance factors of undesirable behaviours or suitability for its role. A behaviour assessment should be informed by knowledge of the dog's history and clinical / health assessments. Behaviour assessments may be used to select breeding stock, identify an appropriate training strategy or behaviour modification protocol.

C

Career change: When a dog is determined not suitable for guide work and is trained for an alternative role and/or removed from the organisation's program. If removed from the organisation's program, then Career Change may be considered synonymous with 'Release' and "Withdrawal".

Certification: The process of earning official recognition that competency has been achieved against defined standards. E.g. a GDML may be certified at the end of their apprenticeship, a guide dog may be certified at the end of training, a guide dog team may be certified at the end of class.

Class: The training course delivered by a GDMI with a client and a dog to create a guide dog team.

Class ready: The point at the completion of dog training when the dog is ready for allocation to a client. See also “Match ready”.

Classical Conditioning: Involuntary association. A neutral stimulus (NS) becomes a conditioned stimulus (CS) if it is paired several times with an unconditioned stimulus (US). Example is Pavlov’s dogs, after several pairings of a bell (NS) with the presence of food (US), the dogs began to salivate to the sound of a bell, which has now become a conditioned stimulus.

Client: A person who is blind or has low vision, who is being supplied with services by an IGDF accredited organisation.

Contract: A legally binding agreement mutually agreed and signed by all parties. See also “Agreement”.

Co-operative Care: training methods that utilise positive reinforcement and operant conditioning to teach dogs to be willing participants in their handling and husbandry care. Dogs are taught that they have a choice to consent to care behaviours such as nail trims and ear cleaning. Those handling the dogs and giving the husbandry care listen to and respect a dog's choice to halt or stop specific procedure or activity.

Cue: A signal recognised by the dog which elicits a response such as to execute a specific action. Cues may be a verbal or physical signal delivered by the handler (also known as a command) or be environmental such as a kerb becoming the cue to stop.

E

Environment: Any location a dog inhabits, including temporarily. Includes organisation’s premises, volunteer homes, organisation owned or private vehicles, facilities, etc.

Evidence based learning: Learning practices based on the available scientific evidence, rather than tradition, personal judgement, or other influences.

Extinction: The process of decreasing behaviour by permanently removing all reinforcement.

F

Follow-up: See “Aftercare”.

Foundation training: Training the dog to respond to essential cues (such as “sit”, “down” and “come”) that may be used as a foundation for more advanced training. See also “Obedience”.

G

Guide Dog: A dog trained to assist a person who is blind or has low vision by helping them to navigate the environment and therefore their improved mobility and independence.

Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI): A technical professional who can show evidence that they have achieved the outcomes of the IGDF’s GDMI curriculum and the IGDF’s Standards related to GDMI education.

Guide Dog Trainer (GDT): A technical professional who can show evidence that they have achieved the outcomes of the IGDF’s curriculum and the IGDF’s Standards related to GDT education.

Guide Dog Team: The combination of a guide dog and a handler who is blind or has low vision.

H

Habituation: A simple form of learning in which an animal, after a period of exposure to a stimulus, stops responding to that stimulus. For example, a puppy should become habituated to many different noises (such as household noises and traffic) and show no reaction.

Handler: Any person who is directly responsible for managing the care or behaviour of a dog in any situation. This may be a client, staff member or volunteer. There may be multiple handlers per dog.

Health assessment: The evaluation of the health status of a dog by performing a physical examination after reviewing the health history with the aim to determine general health, physical condition, and the early identification of diseases in dogs that may otherwise look and feel well.

Humane dog training / management / care: Interactions between a handler and a dog that uses positive-reinforcement techniques as the primary intervention to achieve an effective outcome and makes every effort to avoid the use of aversive methods that cause pain or increases in fear, anxiety, or stress.

I

Intake for training: The process where a dog of over 12 months of age may be permitted to enter formal training as a guide dog.

Intake age: The age that formal training begins.

K

Kennel: Physical area where dogs are kept, which includes a comfortable, warm, and dry space for sleeping.

Kennel facility: Premises that include all physical areas involved in providing for the housing and care of dogs. Kennel facilities are likely to include a range of indoor and outdoor environments used for activities relating to dogs.

Kennel run: Physical area where dogs are allowed access, generally for toileting and exercise.

Kennel unit: Physical area where the kennel and a larger kennel run are combined into a single unit and the dog has free access between each area.

L

LIMA principle: LIMA is an acronym for the phrase 'Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive'. LIMA principles require the use of the least intrusive, minimally aversive strategy out of a set of humane and effective tactics likely to succeed in achieving a training or behaviour change objective. LIMA adherence also requires people to be adequately educated and skilled to ensure that procedures that are used represent the least necessary intrusion of the human dog bond and causes the dog a minimal amount of discomfort.

M

Matching: Process in which a client and a trained dog are partnered / paired based on specified criteria by the guide dog service provider.

Match ready: The point at the completion of dog training when the dog is ready for matching to a client. The dog may then receive further training to become "class ready". See also "Class ready". Some organisations may not draw this distinction, depending upon their operating model.

N

Negative punishment: A type of operant conditioning, involving the removal of a reinforcing stimulus, following an undesired behaviour that makes it more likely that the undesired behaviour will reduce over time.

Negative reinforcement: A type of operant conditioning, involving the removal of an aversive (unpleasant) stimulus that makes it more likely that the desired behaviour will occur again in the future.

O

Obedience: Traditional dog training term used to describe a dog's ability to respond to verbal cues, signals, and instructions delivered by the handler. Often linked to the term "cue".

Operant Conditioning: Voluntary behaviour; behaviour that occurs at some frequency and is increased or decreased as a function of consequences.

P

Positive punishment: A type of operant conditioning, involving the addition of an aversive (unpleasant) stimulus following an undesired behaviour that makes it more likely that the undesired behaviour will reduce over time.

Positive reinforcement: Type of operant conditioning, involving the addition of a reinforcing (pleasant) stimulus following a desired behaviour that makes it more likely that the desired behaviour will occur again in the future. Also known as reward-based training.

Punishment: The process by which a consequence decreases the strength of the behaviour it follows.

Puppy raising: Period during which puppies over the age of 7 weeks are placed with the puppy raising family who undertake a structured process of habituation and socialisation to prepare the puppy for a guide dog role.

Puppy raiser: Person or family appointed by a guide service provider to care for, socialise and prepare a young dog to enter formal training. Synonymous with "Puppy Carer", "Puppy Walker".

R

Release: When a dog is determined not suitable for guide work and is 'released' from the organisation's program. Synonymous with "career change" and "withdrawal".

Reinforcement: The process by which a consequence increases the strength of the behaviour it follows.

Repossession: Process when the guide dog service provider demands the return of a guide dog or other owned dogs from the client or volunteer. See also "Withdrawal".

Retirement: Process when a guide dog retires or ceases working as a guide. This could be for different reasons relevant to the guide dog or client and is not limited to old age.

S

Social behaviour: Behaviours that are expected from a guide or assistance dog when in a variety of environments and situations such as the home, workplace, public transport, restaurants, parks and when interacting with people and / or other animals. May sometimes be used to describe temperamental traits that are desirable or undesirable in these situations.

Socialisation: The process of learning, especially (but not only) relating to puppies and juvenile dogs, where they adjust to their social environment, become accustomed to other animals and people, and behave in an appropriate manner.

Spay / castrate / neuter: The means with which a dog is rendered infertile. Synonymous with “Desexing”. “Spay” generally refers to the female and “castration” to the male.

Successor (dog or client): A dog which is being provided to a client following the death, retirement, or removal of a previous guide dog. May also be used to describe a client with previous experience as a guide dog handler. Synonymous with “Replacement”.

Supervision: A process of professional learning and development that enables individuals to reflect on and develop their knowledge, skills, and competence, through agreed and regular support with another professional. Supervision levels reduce as a learner’s competency increases.

T

Temperament / personality: These terms are often used as synonyms, but the former is believed to relate more strongly to inherited factors whilst the latter reflects the influence of experience and learning. Personality represents characteristics that describe and may account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving, generally in the adult dog.

Tension: Also known as “pull” or “guiding tension”. The guiding behaviour that allows a client to interpret, by holding the guide dog harness, forward and lateral movements and thus be safely guided through the environment. Guiding tension should not cause discomfort to the person or the dog.

U

Under management of organisation: A dog under the management of the organisation is a dog which the organisation owns and is responsible for ensuring it receives appropriate care, regardless of whether the dog’s primary handler is a staff member, volunteer, client or otherwise. When a dog is sold, transferred, or adopted by a party external to the organisation (including ownership transferred to a client), it is no longer under the management of the organisation.

W

Welfare: The dog’s physical and mental state in relation to the conditions in which they live.

Welfare appropriate: Interactions and management of dogs, respecting animal welfare principles and aiming to achieve lifetime welfare.

Whelping: The process of a dog giving birth to puppies.

Withdrawal: When a dog is determined not suitable for guide work and is removed from the organisation’s program. Synonymous with “Career change” and “Release”. Withdrawal may also refer to withdrawal of a dog from a particular handler or environment without full removal of the dog from the program.

Z

Zoonotic Risk: The risk of diseases or infections that can be transmitted between humans and animals.

Appendix 2: Standard Informative Guidance Notes

1. Administration, Risk Management and Business Continuity Applicant / Client Selection Guidance Notes

1.9 Risk is the likelihood that an organisation may suffer a harmful consequence when exposed to a hazard. Hazards include, but are not limited to:

- Financial
- Physical
- Environmental
- Reputational
- Legal
- Biological

2. Staff Education and Professional Development Guidance Notes

2.1 There are a number of roles in the guide dog industry that are deemed necessary to provide services to the organisation, the client, and the dog.

These roles can be, as an example, administration, support, puppy development, breeding, and guide dog training as well as the role of Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI).

2.2.1 A comprehensive IGDF approved curriculum for GDMI and Guide Dog Trainers (GDT) is available to organisations. Curriculums for other roles are the responsibility of organisations based on their needs. Accredited organisations may decide on the order of content and timing.

2.2.4 Member organisations may decide their entry qualifications, but the entry requirements should be in line with the demands of the task and the education / instruction required.

2.3.2 A document containing evidence of when and why both APL and APEL have been granted should be available.

2.4.1 Practical and / or theoretical assessments should be developed and documented. They should be appropriate for the area to be tested. Examples should be available upon request.

For staff undergoing training and development within the organisation, there shall be no bias in assessment / evaluation. There are different ways that this can be assured, for example, an organisation may opt to use assessors / evaluators external to the organisation.

Staff shall be informed of when the assessments / evaluations will take place.

2.4.3 Organisations may set the criteria, for example, one re-sit only.

2.4.4 For example, records of trainees' comments and confirmation that they were given opportunity to comment.

2.4.5 and 2.4.6 The IGDF recognises that there are variances in the expectations of staff undergoing GDT or GDMI training based on availability of dogs, of clients and of infrastructural complexities based on the size of the organisations. There are also variations in the time taken to train a fully qualified guide dog, this could be from three months to a full year depending on a number of factors. Therefore, the period of time taken to train a GDT to full competency may vary between organisations. It is strongly encouraged that all members

strive to exceed the minimum number of dogs and provide their Learners with as much experience as possible, across a diverse type of dogs / teams.

2.5 All staff should have the opportunity of an ongoing, relevant learning experience. The organisation should maintain and have available, all records of trainee / staff achievement.

All trainees / staff should be provided with or have access to records of their achievements.

It is the responsibility of the accredited organisation to ensure that all staff, volunteers, and clients handling dogs have access to training, workshops and other educational activities that promote the benefits of humane care, training, and management methods.

3. Client Services Guidance Notes

3.1 The Client Service Procedure should include the following tasks:

- Dealing with enquiries
- Information sent to applicant – application form (medical and other reports as required)
- Applicant interview and practical assessment
- Notification of acceptance / non-acceptance of applicant
- Possible referral to other services
- Appeal process
- Client / guide dog matching
- Confirmation of instruction dates and venue
- Pre-instruction programme
- Instruction programme
- Guide dog retirement and / or repossession policy
- Successor dogs

3.2.4 Suitability for guide dog mobility may include assessment in the following elements:

- Has the motivation to train and work with a guide dog on a long-term basis.
- Has the ability to achieve and maintain an effective relationship in a person / guide dog team, as set out below:
- Has the ability to meet the dog's physical, behavioural and emotional needs
- Has the physical ability to manage a guide dog
- Has functional orientation on the routes and to the destinations that they will use
- Has sufficient work for the guide dog to maintain safe guiding skills
- Has a level of vision loss that requires use of a primary mobility aid to ensure safe, independent travel
- Has demonstrated independent and safe road crossings (including the use of appropriate assistance)
- Has a safe and supportive home environment
- Has access to the resources required to maintain the guide dog's ongoing physical, behavioural, and emotional well-being

3.3.1 Careful consideration should be given to each applicant / guide dog match. This involves identifying the following client / guide dog compatibilities including, but not limited to, the following elements:

- Orientation and mobility skills
- Physical compatibility such as size, walking speed and gait

- Personality / temperament
- Social / home environments
- Workplace / educational environments
- Travel routes such as number of different routes and their duration
- Travel environment such as rural / urban / city / public transport
- Ability to meet dogs' welfare needs

3.4.4 and 3.4.5 Clients should be committed and motivated to complete the instruction programme.

3.4.7 Guidance for content that may be expected on a guide dog mobility course (class):

i) Out-of-harness training (public access / social / domestic) training should include (but is not limited to) theoretical and practical instruction in the following elements:

- Non-Working cues.
 - Sit
 - Down
 - Stand
 - Recall
 - Loose Lead Walking
 - Touch
 - Under
 - Retrieve
 - Back up
 - Place
 - Drop
- Social Behaviour
 - Food manners
 - Settling
 - Meeting/greeting people
 - Behaviour around other dogs
 - Getting in and out of a vehicle
 - Lead time out
- Equipment
 - Correct use of lead, collar, gentle leader, walking harness etc.
 - Fitting equipment
- Dog welfare
 - Feeding and weight management
 - Grooming
 - Daily physical health checks
 - Toileting
 - Enrichment
 - Veterinary and health care
 - Cooperative care

ii) In-harness training (mobility) should include (but is not limited to) theoretical and practical instruction in the following elements:

- Handle (Juno) walks
 - Positioning
 - Speed control
 - Following skills
 - Verbal cues
 - Reinforcement techniques
- Directional cues
 - Forward
 - Back
 - Right
 - Left
 - Locating objectives
- Guiding Task Practical Skills
 - Straight Line Principle
 - Kerb work (up & down)
 - Road crossings
 - Obstacle avoidance – static
 - Obstacle avoidance – dynamic (e.g., people and moving objects)
 - Obstacle avoidance - height
 - Off kerb obstacles
 - Traffic responsibilities and road safety
 - Non-pavement work – shopping malls and open spaces
 - Stairs and steps
 - Management of distractions
 - Public Transport
 - Night walks
 - Group walks
 - Country walks
 - Escalators/travellators/elevators
 - Reinforcement of all behaviours

iii) Theoretical knowledge may include (but is not limited to) the following elements:

- Dog ethology and building the human- dog relationship
- Principles of learning theory
- Maintaining dog health and welfare
- Assistance dog legislation and self-advocacy
- Rights and responsibilities of guide dog handlers
- Bereavement and achieving a positive transition to a successor dog

3.5 In circumstances where the safety of the client / guide dog team may be compromised or the physical / temperamental well-being of the guide dog is seriously challenged, the member organisation should make every effort to arrange a personal, professional visit by a

qualified staff member. This visit to the client / guide dog team should be within a time frame that reflects the nature of the request for emergency follow-up / aftercare.

3.5.4 Inclusion in training materials and / or client agreements or contracts of the necessary frequency of veterinary check-ups in situations where the organisation does not retain ownership of the dog.

4. Breeding and Dog Supply Guidance Notes

Health screening:

To minimise the risk of producing puppies affected by genetic disorders, programmes should perform DNA testing (or obtain DNA status via pedigree) on all dogs that will be used for breeding, for known genetic disorders prevalent in the breed for which the causal mutation has been identified and an accurate genetic test is readily available.

Organisations should only breed dogs known to be carrying a genetic mutation of concern in the breed / population with a mate who is clear for that genetic mutation.

Genetic disorders that are prevalent in the breeds commonly used for guide-dog work include but are not limited to (please note this list is not an exhaustive list of all DNA tests that can or should be performed, as this will vary between populations and over time):

Labrador

- Exercise induced collapse
- Progressive rod-cone dystrophy / Progressive retinal atrophy
- Stargardt disease
- Copper Toxicosis

Golden Retriever:

- Progressive retinal atrophy
- Ichthyosis

German shepherd:

- Degenerative myelopathy

Additional recommended health screening for breeding animals includes:

- Hip and elbow radiographs assessed by an accredited hip dysplasia scheme such as IEWG, OFA, FCI, BVA, Pennhip.
- Radiographic examination of other joints including shoulder, hock, stifle, spine.
- Echocardiographic examination of the heart.
- Registered / board specialist ophthalmological examination.

Exceptional circumstances for breeding bitches beyond four litters and / or six years of age:

Veterinary agreement may be sought for a bitch to whelp a fifth litter, and / or a litter after six years of age but before seven years of age in circumstances such as where a misconception or logistical factors prevented the bitch from whelping the final litter prior to six years of age, or client needs and / or value to the programme justifies a fifth litter.

Organisations must consider individual bitch suitability for these exceptions such as:

- The bitch presents high value to the programme (for example exceptional behavioural and health characteristics, high success rate of progeny, genetic diversity).
- The bitch has demonstrated good reproductive fitness, ease of whelping, ease of return to baseline physiological status in between pregnancies and no significant reproductive complications.

Pregnancy, whelping and nursing care of the bitch:

- Organisations should perform pregnancy diagnosis (e.g. ultrasound, radiograph), ideally performed by or under the supervision of a veterinarian.
- Nutrition should be tailored to specific changing needs of the bitch through pregnancy and lactation.
- Organisations should ensure there is adequate peri-whelp supervision in order to provide timely interventions that reduce the risk of discomfort / distress to the bitch or adverse outcomes for neonates that may occur as a result of whelping complications.
- If whelping takes place in volunteer homes, organisations should provide an adequate level of training, support and / or direct supervision to the volunteer to ensure that the welfare of the bitch or neonates will be upheld at all times.
- Bitches should have a clean, comfortable, quiet, and private area to whelp and nurse their puppies. Access to this area by people or other animals should be minimised.

Breeding programme documentation:

Breeding records should include the following:

- Identity and details of parents / pedigree
- Behavioural assessment of parents
- Forecast planning calendar for mating and whelping
- Mating and whelping history
- Frequency of mating and length of time
- Types and dates of mating – natural or artificial insemination
- Number and details of puppies born
- Number and details of puppies stillborn or that die in the nest
- Health, weight, vaccination, and parasite control history
- Date of weaning
- Success of each puppy / litter
- Type, incidence, and degree of inherited abnormalities

Puppy enrichment and social interactions:

Adequate age-appropriate enrichment, social interactions and socialisation should include:

- Regular human contact such as pats, physical manipulation / touching face, ears, eyes, coat, belly, paws.
- Social interactions with a variety of different types of people.
- Opportunities to play and explore with littermates and mother.
- Opportunities to explore and interact with various surfaces, obstacles, toys and enrichment items.
- Gentle habituation to sounds such as those they will be exposed to on leaving the whelp / puppy raising area such as household sounds, traffic sounds, and storm sounds.
- Access to an outdoor area.

General:

A dog's nutrition and hydration needs will change subject to age, health, exercise, and environment.

A comfortable, enriched and appropriately varied environment should be provided where appropriate levels of exercise, rest and social interactions are possible. Facilities and opportunities should be available (where appropriate) to allow interaction with other dogs and people.

5. Dog Training and Behaviour Guidance Notes

No guidance notes.

6. Dog Health and Welfare Guidance Notes

Food and Water

In general, dogs should have unrestricted access to water (and the ability to choose to drink when they deem necessary) appropriate to their individual needs.

Individual needs include but are not limited to the dog's:

- Physiological requirements such as size, age, exercise amount, environmental temperature, and life stage.
- Behavioural needs (for example water may be temporarily restricted when modifying a behaviour relating to water such as water diffing, psychological polydipsia, etc).
- Health care needs such as if the dog is currently ill and needs additional water
- Need for agency such as offering the dog the ability to choose to drink when it wants. It is understood that the nature of dogs in training and work does not allow for water to be given at all times (such as during travel), but if water cannot be offered at all times allowing for choice, the organisation must offer water in intervals appropriate for the situation.

Organisations should have a method for documenting the type of food, amount, daily feeding time(s), and any feeding requirements for individual dogs. The food must meet nutritional requirements in terms of correct quantities, a balanced diet, and consideration of food given during training outside of meals. Feeding best practice includes ensuring there are opportunities for positive mental affect relating to feeding such as:

- Avoidance of stressful situations of competition between dogs during eating.
- Giving the dog choice around how food is given, especially for picky eaters.
- Enrichment such as puzzle feeders.

Weight and body condition

Body condition is a way of evaluating body fat in dogs that takes into account the individual dog's body composition in terms of musculature and fat. Dogs should have an "ideal" body condition at the time of graduation / certification.

Reference: <https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Body-Condition-Score-Dog.pdf>

Organisations should provide education and training materials to all dog handlers about the importance of maintaining dogs at a healthy body condition, methods to assess body condition, and methods to correct body condition if required.

Environment

Thermal comfort includes both temperature and humidity.

In general housing conditions, dogs should have the choice to move to areas with different lighting and noise levels.

Extreme weather includes heat, cold, and any other extreme weather event.

There should be the option for dogs to choose to move to an area within their environment that provides privacy.

Veterinary Care

The frequency of veterinary examinations required depends on the life stage of the dog and any relevant medical conditions. An otherwise healthy adult dog should be examined by a veterinarian no less frequently than once per year. Young puppies and senior dogs should be examined more frequently.

Dog handlers should be educated on basic dog health and welfare and / or who and when to contact with health and welfare questions.

Organisations should ensure that emergency / after-hour veterinary care is available for all dogs under management of the organisation.

Organisations should have access to veterinary specialists in areas that are relevant to the type of work and breeds used by the organisation (for example orthopaedic specialists, dermatologists, ophthalmologists, internal medicine specialists).

Preventative health care

An evidence-based vaccination program follows current large-scale peer-reviewed research and / or consensus guidelines such as World Small Animal Veterinary Association Guidelines for the Vaccination of Dogs and Cats. Vaccinations required will be based on vaccine preventable diseases prevalent in the program's area and local laws.

For organisations that use titre testing for dogs under their care, the program must provide evidence of gold-standard tests for titres (e.g. high specificity, sensitivity and accurate test methodology such as laboratory performed virus neutralisation and haemagglutination inhibition testing) for each relevant dog and for each relevant disease, from the program's veterinarian.

Since dogs must be protected at all times, all dogs must have current adequate protection against relevant vaccine-preventable diseases prior to placement with their client.

Reference: <https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WSAVA-Vaccination-guidelines-2024.pdf>

Grooming includes caring for the dog's coat as well as dental hygiene, nails, pads, and ears.

Veterinary records

Veterinary diagnosis and health checks may include records of the dog's behaviour. Such behaviour may be medically based and, therefore, separate from training records.

Best practice includes retaining records until the dog's death (or 15 years from date of birth if death date is unknown) and / or handing over comprehensive records to the party taking legal custody at the time of graduation, retirement or career change.

Dog records

Best practice is to microchip puppies once they are old enough to tolerate the procedure (for example 8 weeks of age) prior to placement with a volunteer.

Type of acquisitions may include breeding programme, donation, shelter, etc.

Volunteer home refers to any location the dog is housed if not on the programme's property.

New career may include a transfer to another organisation or becoming a companion / pet.

Spay and neuter

In regard to working guide dogs, an organisation's spay / neuter policy must ensure the dog is rendered infertile, will not have visible oestrus, and will have the physical appearance of being desexed.

When dogs are transferred with the specific intent of breeding, organisations must ensure the appropriateness of the individuals or organisation that the dog is being transferred to in terms of upholding equitable welfare standards.

Adoption agreements for dogs whose spay / neuter may be delayed due to age, behavioural considerations, or medical reasons as per the organisation's spay / neuter policy must include a clause that clearly defines when the procedure must take place.

Where an organization deems it in the best interest of a released dog not to be spayed/neutered, the organization should provide education to the new owner about prevention of unintended breeding.

Euthanasia

Best practice for euthanasia includes the organisation providing support upon request from the client and / or owner during the decision-making process regarding euthanasia of the dog and follow up bereavement support.

Lifetime welfare

Prior to placement, handlers must be informed and educated about any special health or maintenance care requirements of a particular dog. Organisations need to educate the client about the efforts that will be required for the health or maintenance care requirement as well as an estimate of cost.

Inclusion in training materials and / or client agreements or contracts of the necessary frequency of veterinary check-ups would meet the standard in situations where the organisation does not retain ownership of the dog.

It is expected that organisations have a long-term commitment to all dogs. This includes the organisation being willing to confiscate dogs or withdraw guide dog status (such as in the situation that the organisation does not retain ownership of the dog) if the dog is not experiencing a good life while in a working capacity.

7. Facilities and Kennels Guidance Notes

No guidance notes.