Facility Dog Process

The following outlines the eligibility requirements and Handler process for Facility Dog Handlers of paws4people. A Facility Dog Handler is defined as a selected applicant who will be matched with a paws4people Facility Dog to utilize within clinical or human services work.

paws4people & paws4vets considers Facility Dog placement with:

- Mental Health Professionals
- Social Workers & Advocates
- Physical, Occupational, Recreational, & Speech Therapists
- Law Enforcement, Corrections & First Responders
- Educational Professionals & Reading Specialists
- Clergy & Religious affiliates
- Other utilizations always considered

Where does a Facility Dog live?

- It is important to note that each of our Facility Dogs must have a primary caretaker who is the primary trained handler as well as the person who enters into the placement agreement and other requisite handler agreements with paws4people. The person who fulfills this role is also the person with whom the Facility Dog will reside with (i.e. in his/her personal home).

- Secondary handlers - other professionals who work at the facility - can also be trained and certified with paws4people so that the Facility Dog can be utilized to its fullest potential within the work environment. paws4people creates a customized training plan for each Facility Dog to ensure the Dog’s therapeutic potential is maximized for every individual situation.

Meeting the above criteria does not guarantee acceptance. Selection of Potential Handlers is made by the Application Committee based on a full analysis of the best interests of both the applicant and the organization. All decisions of the Application Committee are final. paws4people reserves the right to decline any application at any time for any reason that is deemed in the best interest of the organization, without the necessity of disclosure.

In order to be eligible, applicants must complete the full application process, agree to all of the documents and policies therein, be approved by the Application Committee as a good candidate with proper support network in place to care for and fully utilize one of our Facility Dogs.

Applicants will be considered regardless of geographic location; but their ability to travel to the extent necessary for the paws4people training, placement, and recertification requirements will be taken into account.

Applicants must be able to meet the physical and financial needs to care for a dog per paws4people standards.

Applicants will be considered regardless of race, sex, religion, or creed and other categories protected by law.

All applications shall be processed in a timely and organized manner, per our Application Review Policy.

All applicants and handlers shall be treated with dignity and respect by all staff, volunteers, and fellow handlers of the organization.

Any applicant with prior substance abuse or addiction history must have a minimum of 90 days of sobriety to engage in the application process and must maintain sobriety, at the oversight of a licensed medical or mental health professional working with our pMET*, throughout the training process and the duration of custody of a Facility Dog or be subject to suspension and/or dismissal.

Any applicant with mental health or behavioral diagnoses must be in active mental health treatment and have a mental healthcare provider willing and able to work with our pMET* throughout the training process.

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*(The paws4people Medical Evaluation Team (pMET) is a team of licensed medical and Master’s level (or higher) mental health professionals who volunteer their time with p4p/p4v serving as liaisons for applicants, and all levels of handlers living with medical, psychiatric, psychological, or behavioral health diagnoses.)
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1 **Applicant**

Individuals are considered Applicants until:

- Completing the initial application at paws4people.org/apply.
- Receiving correspondence from the Application Committee with either declination, or instructions to move on to the Potential Handler phase.

2 **Potential Handler Status**

Individuals are considered Potential Handlers until:

- Successfully completing the paws4people application process, including all required and necessary paperwork, forms and submissions, the phone interview, home visit, work/facility visit, and pMET¹.
- Signing acceptance and acknowledgement of the paws4people Agreement for the Private Placement of a paws4people Assistance Dog Custody Contract.
- Singing acceptance and acknowledgement of all paws4people Policies & Procedures.
- Signing acceptance of paws4people Pay-It-Forward (PIF) requirements.
- Attending a Bump, and being assigned a paws4people-trained Facility Dog (In-Training).

3 **Conditional Handler Status**

Individuals are considered Conditional Handlers until:

- Successfully completing a paws4people Client Training Seminar².
- Successfully completing a minimum of three Handler Training 3-day sessions³ and/or any Facility-based training as applicable for each placement.
- Successfully completing the paws4people placement Facility Observation Test.
- Signing a final copy of the Agreement for the Private Placement of a paws4people Facility Dog.
- Being assigned an Advocate who becomes the Handler's sole point of contact with the organization.
- Obtaining final certification authorization by a member of the paws4people Executive Committee.

4 **Certified Handler Status**

To remain certified, insured, and a Handler in good standing, each Handler must:

- Adhere to all organizational policies and procedures.
- Re-certify annually or bi-annually per re-certification policies and schedule their recertification testing through his/her Advocate.

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¹Required of ALL Clients who are seeking certification for an Assistance Dog. paws4people reserves the right to require pMET evaluation of any Conditional Handler as deemed necessary by staff.

²Seminar + Handler Training (Handler Training Sessions) together constitute what ADI refers to as “Team Training.” Handlers are not charged in any way for attending Team Training, but bear the costs associated with their travel, lodging, etc.

³The final determination of the number of Handler Training Sessions required by any Handler is at the sole discretion of the Executive Committee of paws4people. No minimum number of Handler Training sessions is ever guaranteed to any Conditional Handler.

paws4people reserves the right to deny, revoke, and/or otherwise modify Handler status at any time and in its sole discretion when determined to be in the best interest of the organization. paws4people controls the decision of when a dog retires from active service.