



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Canine Evaluation Committee

Q&A

For a general overview of the CEC, please review [Canine Evaluation Committee Information for Raisers](#).

What is the Goal of the CEC?

The goal of the CEC is to take dogs that exhibit threatening behaviors towards people or other dogs and develop a specialized training plan with a focus on building a positive association to whatever the dog may show fear, discomfort, or anxiety with. To do this, we utilize a variety of positive reinforcement and counterconditioning training in an effort to help change the dog's emotional response. For dogs with resource guarding, it might be getting them to drop a toy or bone, exchange prized items for treats, or go happily into a crate for mealtime. For dogs who are reactive around other dogs, it may be helping them be more relaxed and calmer when other dogs pass. For dogs who show fear or anxiety with body handling, it may be getting them comfortable having their feet touched, accepting a muzzle, or allowing grooming or nail clipping. Dogs may even go on occasional trips to the vet clinic, to increase their comfort with body handling and the medical equipment they may encounter at a local vet's office. In some cases, dogs may be referred to see a Veterinary Behavioral Specialist, or the dog could be prescribed a medication to help regulate their emotional response.

Without this intensive training and behavioral management, a dog may continue to have aversive or fearful responses throughout their lifetime and/or these behaviors could escalate, creating a safety or management concern. Our responsibility is to best prepare the dog for a successful placement, and ensuring quality of life, by modifying the behavior to a manageable level.

What does it mean when a CEC dog is on a “management plan?”

Each dog is evaluated once they arrive on campus. First, they are assigned a special handling team, with our experienced staff. By having an assigned team work one-on-one with the dog, the dog learns to trust and work with their handlers. The dog is then given a thorough medical check by our skilled veterinary team members to ensure there is not a medical cause for why the dog may be exhibiting threatening behaviors. All members of our vet team on both campuses are certified as fear free. This means we focus on understanding, recognizing, and alleviating fear and accompanying stress on dogs in veterinary settings.

Once the dog has been assigned a team and completed health examinations, it's time for their individualized training plans. Daily trainings are tailored to each dog and are focused on helping them build confidence in the areas they need. In addition to training sessions focused on behavior modification, each dog also participates in fun training games. These can be basic obedience, platform training, or even tricks. We find that interchanging behavioral training alongside fun training games can help a dog be more relaxed, engaged, and open to learning. Kennel enrichment includes campus walks, grass time, recreational “sniffy” walks on the campus hiking trails, stuffed Kongs, toys, scent enrichment, bubble machines, music, calming lights, and snuggles. And of course, plenty of play and exercise with members of their care team, and other dogs when appropriate. Rest assured, each dog gets out of the kennel for daily training, exercise, and enrichment like the training dogs do, and are well-loved and cared for by the staff working with them.

How long will the puppy I raised be on the GDB campus?

We are unable to give a specific time frame for how long a dog will be on campus. A dog must show improvement and no longer be displaying concerning levels of threatening behaviors before they are released for adoption, and we must proceed at the dog's pace. Behavioral modification takes time and patience. When big emotions like fear, anxiety, and hyperarousal are involved, it is beneficial to progress at a slow and steady pace, only moving to the next level of training when the dog demonstrates they are ready. It is not uncommon for dogs to stay on campus between 3-5 months, with some dogs requiring longer stays.

How often will I get updates on the puppy I raised?

It can take 4-6 weeks before a first update is provided. The first report may take extra time as the dog gets settled on campus, goes through health examinations and in some cases fully recovers from a spay or neuter. Once a dog has settled in and begins training, a puppy raiser will get their first report. After that, reports should arrive monthly. If you do not receive a report in this period, please reach out to the PFM so we can request an update on your behalf.

Can I or another club member foster the puppy I raised?

Consistency is key when working through a dog's management plan. With this in mind, we do not allow puppy raisers or other club members to foster a dog while they are on campus. If we feel a dog would benefit from foster care, we will arrange for one of our local experienced foster care providers to care for them. Regular visits to campus for training, and close communication with the team working with the dog, are part of this.

What is the adoption policy for dogs on the CEC?

Once the dog completes training and is ready to be adopted, the Canine Evaluation Committee will meet to determine any factors that may be necessary in determining final placement. For some dogs, it may be recommended they live in a child-free home. Other dogs may be required to go to a home without other dogs, pets, or GDB puppies. If a puppy raiser expresses interest in adopting or placing a dog, an application may need to be submitted, and a potential adopter interviewed to see whether the placement is suitable under the parameters defined by the CEC. A placement may be denied if the potential family cannot meet the necessary parameters. Interested adopters will only be contacted once the Canine Evaluation Committee releases the dog for adoption, at the end of their campus stay.