

## RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

This sheet is intended to help you understand how important guide dogs are to people who are blind or visually impaired and to stress the importance of responsible pet ownership. Please help us keep these valuable service animals from becoming injured or disabled.

### **WORKING GUIDES**

Guide dogs have been used to enhance mobility for more than eighty years in North America. A guide dog is specially trained to lead a person in a straight line, stop for curbs and stairs and avoid obstacles. Their job is to help their human partners move about in the world safely and with confidence, whether they are going through crowds of pedestrians, across busy intersections, or facing other travel challenges. The job requires concentration and distractions can endanger the safety of the team.

Most guide dogs are Labrador Retrievers or Golden Retrievers, although other breeds are used as well. These dogs are well-suited to their work as guides and are bred for their excellent temperament, intelligence and health. Guide dogs are allowed by law to have access to all public places including: restaurants, businesses, stores, hotels, busses, taxis, trains and airplanes.

### **DOG ATTACKS**

According to Kenneth Phillips, the nation's leading legal expert in dog bite law: There are almost 5 million dog bites per year. About 800,000 victims per year require medical treatment. 1,000 dog bite victims per day are seen in hospital emergency rooms. This is a serious matter for the general public and is even more so for blind or visually impaired persons who choose to use guide dogs as their primary means of mobility. Loose dogs can be a significant threat to guide dog teams.

### **LIABILITY**

A guide dog that is attacked or intimidated by an aggressive or unruly pet dog may become damaged for life and unable to work as a guide. An attack can take a huge emotional toll on the guide dog user. In many states, laws have been enacted to protect guide dog handlers and their dogs from attack and harassment by errant dogs and people. The irresponsible dog owner can be held financially liable for the actions of their unsupervised pets, and may be

accountable for the replacement costs of \$50,000 or more for the guide dog. Under certain circumstances the pet owner can also be incarcerated for up to six months. For more information on Federal and State legislation relating to dog attacks on working guides, visit our website at [www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com)

### TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP

- Please do not allow your pet dog to roam freely in your neighborhood or to be unsupervised in an unfenced yard. Educate your family about how to prevent your pet from escaping from your yard and roaming in your neighborhood. Self-closing gates can be the answer to keeping your dog at home.
- If you have your dog on leash, make sure that he is under control. Do not allow your dog to be walked by a person who is not strong enough to control or restrain him.
- Learn about canine behavior and take obedience classes with your pet dog. Be sure your dog is well socialized around other animals and people.
- Be aware of your own dog's temperament and potential for biting. Even an overly friendly pet that jumps on people or other dogs can cause serious problems. Dogs are often territorial in their own yards, and sometimes even beyond the boundaries of their own home. Irresponsibility or apathy in this regard may cost you dearly!
- When choosing a pet dog, research the breed before you bring the dog home. Some breeds require more exercise, attention, control, and leadership than others. Although any dog or breed of dog can become aggressive, there are certain breeds that are more prone to problematic behavior than others.
- Be aware of your city and county leash laws and obey them.
- Take pride in being a responsible, intelligent, and capable pet owner.

If you witness an attack on a guide dog team, please call animal control and the police to report it. Include as many details as possible. Even though the guide dog user may be blind, they are perfectly capable of noting identifying information and reporting an attack.

Animal Control: \_\_\_\_\_ Police: \_\_\_\_\_

Penal codes: \_\_\_\_\_

Civil codes: \_\_\_\_\_

Leash laws: \_\_\_\_\_