



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Dear Veterinarians,

Thank you for providing outstanding care to our clients and their dogs. This letter explains how we provide support to our clients to ensure finances are not a barrier to quality veterinary care.

Our Veterinary Financial Assistance (VFA) program was established to assist our clients with veterinary costs for their working guide dogs. This financial support for veterinary care continues into retirement if the dogs are adopted by their handler or an immediate family member.

More recently, the VFA program was expanded to include support for K9 Buddy dogs. The K9 Buddy program partners specially selected dogs with a person who is blind or visually impaired but may be too young, or not need or desire a guide dog at this time. These dogs provide companionship and a connection to the Guide Dogs for the Blind community.

Our own veterinarians play an important role in the dogs' care to help ensure that our teams have long, successful partnerships. We serve as a liaison between local veterinarians and our clients, helping them better understand the details of their dogs' illnesses, recommended treatments, and how it relates to the working life of an active guide dog. We frequently become involved in more complicated cases to help manage care and costs. As a non-profit fully funded by private donations, we are very conscious of how we spend our donor dollars and take an active role in our dogs' care. We greatly appreciate any donation or discount you are able to provide for your services.

Details about the VFA program are included in this packet.

Thank you for your understanding, partnership and support in caring for these life-changing dogs! If you have any further questions about this letter or the VFA program, please feel free to call 800-295-4050, then press option 2, then option 2 again to speak with our VFA staff.

Warm regards,

Erin Matern – DVM
Veterinary Financial Assistance Program Veterinarian

(800) 295-4050 | [guidedogs.com](https://www.guidedogs.com)

National Headquarters: P.O. Box 151200, San Rafael, CA 94915-1200

California Campus: 350 Los Ranchitos Road, San Rafael, CA 94903 | (415) 499-4000

Oregon Campus: 32901 SE Kelso Road, Boring, OR 97009 | (503) 668-2100



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VFA Program Summary for Veterinarians

The Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) VFA program helps defray the cost of veterinary care for guide dogs and K9 Buddy dogs when our clients request financial assistance. Funds are available for both **Wellness care** and for **Illness/Emergencies** as described below.

Wellness Care:

GDB will reimburse up to \$250 (USD) per fiscal year (July 1-June 30) for Wellness and Preventive Care which includes some or all of the following:

- Routine annual physical exams
 - Any medical concerns found during a wellness exam that lead to additional diagnostics, treatments or medications require authorization. Please have the client call for authorization during the appointment if during normal business hours, or the next business day for weekend or evening appointments.
- Vaccinations
 - Core vaccines--GDB advises our clients to obtain core vaccines DA2PP and Rabies every 3 years (unless required more frequently per state law)
 - Non-core vaccines--GDB advises lifestyle risk assessment to determine the need for the following: Leptospirosis (annual), Lyme (annual), Influenza (annual) and Bordetella (annual). Leptospirosis, Influenza and Bordetella are required for dogs traveling to a GDB campus.
- Heartworm test

Senior Wellness (dogs 8 years of age and up):

- Routine laboratory screening including CBC/Chem and Urinalysis is recommended annually for senior dogs. An additional \$250 (USD) per year for this labwork is allowed for senior dogs without pre-authorization.
- Please call for pre-authorization for additional or specialized labwork.

Heartworm and Flea Prevention:

- GDB will reimburse up to \$400 annually towards the combined cost of Flea/Tick and Heartworm prevention products. No pre-authorization is needed.

Illness/Injuries:

Pre-authorization is required for VFA assistance for non-routine care. Please verify that the client has obtained pre-approval by requesting the authorization number. If the client does not have an authorization number, please have them contact VFA staff for assistance with the pre-authorization process.

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Emergencies:

In the event of a life threatening emergency, please perform emergency treatment first, then contact us (or have the client contact us) once the dog has been stabilized.

After-hours care:

If a dog presents for veterinary care during non-business hours, please provide the necessary treatments. You may proceed with urgent or emergency care up to \$3000 outside of normal business hours without pre-authorization.

- If care will exceed \$3000, or if immediate payment assistance or collaboration with GDB is needed please call 800-295-4050 to reach our answering service. They will connect you to an appropriate GDB staff member or take a message and someone will call you back in a timely manner.
- If care is less than \$3000, please have the client contact us the following business day to provide an update and receive an authorization number.

Non-reimbursible items:

GDB will **not** reimburse for acupuncture, holistic medicine, chiropractic therapy, vitamins, supplements, routine boarding, non-medical bathing or grooming, health certificates, city/town licensing, vaccine titers or non-prescription dog food. We will cover 50% of the cost of prescription dog food when medically necessary and pre-approved by a GDB veterinarian.

Reimbursement: To receive reimbursement, the client or veterinarian must send in an itemized invoice along with a reimbursement form. The reimbursement form has been included in this packet and can be copied for additional invoices. Reimbursement requests are processed within 30 days of the date received by GDB.

VFA Program staff can be reached at 800-295-4050, option 2, option 2 to make pre-authorizations on behalf of our clients and answer questions about the VFA program. Medical records, estimates and questions can be emailed to vetsupport@guidedogs.com (preferred) or faxed to 877-556-8401.

Normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm (Pacific Time), excluding major holidays.

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