



Nova Scotia Service Dog Assessment

The purpose of the service dog assessment is to ensure the service dog demonstrates appropriate public behavior, proper disposition, and is unobtrusive in public places.

The assessment consists of 40 exercises and examines the temperament and disposition of the dog in a general public setting, such as a shopping mall.

The dog's behavior will be assessed to determine if his or her disposition is calm, stable and reliable in situations commonly encountered by dog/handler teams. The assessment will also ensure that the handler has control over the dog at all times, that the dog is safe to be in public, and that the dog is able to demonstrate the high standard of training expected of service dogs.

The validator will explain the assessment to the handler before the testing begins. Once the assessment begins, the validator will follow the dog/handler team in a discreet manner, unless required to interact with the dog/handler team for an assessed task. The assessment will be performed primarily on-leash, with the occasional tight leash being acceptable.

A dog is not ready for the assessment if the dog displays behaviour that requires major restraint or a continuously tight leash to perform the tasks (unless required due to mobility issues).

The dog/handler team must pass all of the tasks below in order to pass the assessment. The results of the assessment will then be forwarded to the Registrar of Service Dogs.

To ensure the dog and handler team are still operating to a high standard, the renewal process for the service dog team certification (every 2 years) will require the dog/handler to complete a service dog reassessment.

There is a \$187.50 fee for the service dog assessment which is payable to St. John Ambulance prior to the assessment. If you are receiving income supports you may be eligible to have the fee waived. Please contact the Service Dog Program Office for additional information.

Service Dog Assessment - Description of Tasks

Exercise/Observation	Description of Task
#1 Obedience inside vehicle before unloading	The dog waited calmly and remained in the vehicle until the release command was given by handler
#2 Obedience outside the vehicle after unloading	The dog was on-leash, under control and waited calmly outside the vehicle, attentive to the commands of handler
#3 Heel position when approaching the building or through parking lot	The dog must remain in a heel position, not pulling on the leash, not trying to run ahead or lag behind.
#4 Calmness around traffic	The dog demonstrated calm/relaxed behavior and no fearful attitude around traffic, noise and distractions while navigating through the parking lot and approaching building.
#5 Obedient stop before entering doorway	When the handler came to a halt, the dog stopped and waited calmly.
#6 Obedience before entering doorway	The dog waited calmly at the doorway until the command to enter was received.
#7 Obedience going through doorway	The dog entered the building through the door in a safe, calm manner.
#8 Obedience after entering doorway	The dog waited after entering the building, attentive to handler until able to resume the heeling position.
#9 Heeling inside building	The dog walked beside handler in a controlled way. The dog remained within 1 foot of handler or at indicated distance. The team should be able to manage slippery floors, stairs, escalators and/or elevators depending upon the location chosen.
#10 No soliciting public attention	The dog remained focused on handler and ignored other people.
#11 Adjusting to speed changes	The dog was able to adjust to changes in handlers' speed. Did not pull on leash (unless required to do so due to mobility issues).

#12 Adjusting to changes in direction	The dog adjusted readily to changes in direction or to turning corners. No coaxing or dragging needed by handler
#13 Obedience through narrow/tight areas	The dog had the ability to negotiate calmly through tight quarters without disturbing or trying to play with merchandise on shelves.
#14 Obedience through crowds	The dog had the ability to maneuver calmly through a crowd of people without trying to interact with people.
#15 Six-foot recall on leash: Command	The dog remained focused on handler and under control at all times, did not try to pull away or seek attention from the public. The dog responded right away to the recall command, did not try to ignore the command or respond hesitantly/slowly.
#16 Six-foot recall on leash: Control	The dog remained focused on handler and under control at all times, did not try to pull away or seek attention from the public.
#17 Six-foot recall on leash: Distance	The dog came within the appropriate distance of handler, or so that the handler could readily touch the dog.
#18 Six-foot recall on leash: Direction	The dog came directly to the handler and did not try to take any detours along the way.
#19 Sit command	The dog responded to the "sit" command with no greater than two asks by handler.
#20 Sit command next to plate of food	The dog did not attempt to eat or sniff food. The dog held a sit-stay position and ignored the food. The dog did not require repeated corrections. Note: the handler may correct the dog verbally or physically away from the food. The dog should not be taunted or teased with the food.
#21 Sit command while shopping cart passes	The dog remained sitting and was relaxed while the shopping cart passed by and did not show signs of fear, moving away or anxiety. Note: the shopping cart should be pushed in a normal manner.

#22 Sit command while being petted by stranger	The dog remained in the sit position while a stranger walked up, talked to the handler and then petted the dog. The dog did not break the sit position, show aggression or solicit attention from stranger
#23 Down command	The dog responded to the “down” command with no greater than two asks by handler
#24 Down command with food dropped on floor	The dog remained in a down position and under control when food was dropped onto floor. Did not try to get food and did not need repeated corrections from handler.
#25 Down command while child approaches	The dog remained in a down position and in a calm manner when an adult and child approach and pet the dog. The dog did not solicit attention or need repeated corrections from handler. Note: The child should not taunt the dog or act dramatically.
#26 Noise distraction (drop object on floor behind dog)	The dog remained in a composed manner during noise distraction. It is acceptable that the dog turns or shows quick startle/reaction at the noise. It is not acceptable if the dog exhibits fear, aggression or continued negative behaviour due to the noise.
#27 Behaviour in restaurant	The dog was not a nuisance and was quiet in the restaurant. The dog stayed out of the way of people. If applicable, the dog should remain in a down-stay position under the table, close to the handler.
#28 Ignoring food in restaurant	The dog ignored food and other distractions in the restaurant.
#29 Off-leash exercise	The handler dropped the leash - the dog should be aware that the leash had been dropped. The dog remained under control while the leash was dropped and the handler was able to pick up the leash and get dog back into proper position.
#30 Human aggression test	The validator passively took the dog's leash without giving any commands and moved 20 feet away from handler and stayed there for one minute. The dog did not display any aggression, stress or whining.
#31 Obedience before exiting doorway	When approaching the exit doorway, the dog maintained a relaxed, heeling position.
#32 Obedience going through doorway during exit of building	While going through the doorway when exiting the building, the dog maintained relaxed, heeling position, no straining on leash to exit rapidly.
#33 Obedience after exiting the building	After exiting the building the dog maintains a relaxed, heeling position beside the handler.

#34 Calm around traffic after exiting building	The dog maintained a relaxed and calm demeanor around traffic noise after exiting the building.
#35 Obedient stop after exiting building	When the handler came to a halt, the dog stopped and waited calmly.
#36 Dog aggression test	In the parking lot, a non-aggressive dog or puppy approaches with a person to six feet away and the person had a short conversation with the handler. The assistance dog remained calm and under the control of handler, not displaying aggression toward other dog, vocalizations or wanting to play with other dog. The team will be evaluated on how they handled the situation.
#37 Public transit test	The dog and handler team successfully boarded and exited a city bus, ferry or train. The dog remained calm, unobtrusive and relaxed, not soliciting public attention. Not showing fear or shyness.
#38 Obedient load into vehicle	The dog waited patiently until commanded to load into vehicle and waited calmly inside vehicle.
#39 Evident team relationship & knowledge of access rights	The handler was in control and praised the dog when the dog did well. Handler coped calmly with an access problem when questioned about their right to bring dog into establishment.
#40 Care and wellbeing of Dog	The dog was clean and groomed (nails, fur) with no offensive odour. The dog was friendly and relaxed. The handler's responses to random questions about the care of the dog during the test indicate the handler understands and is responsive to the dog's needs.

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