

SERVICE DOGS

COME IN ALL SHAPES & SIZES



HOW IS A SERVICE DOG SELECTED?

It is not the **size** of a canine that determines if it can become a service dog; it is the canine's **temperament** and **ability to learn** and **perform tasks** required by their handler to assist in the daily activities of the individual's life. Service dogs can be as big as an **Irish Wolfhound** or as small as a **Yorkie**.



Although some of the most common breeds to train for invisible disabilities are **Labrador Retrievers**, **Golden Retrievers**, **Poodles**, or crosses between these three breeds, most other breeds can be trained to be a service dog.



Teacup Yorkie
SMALL



Aussiedoodle
MEDIUM



Goldendoodle
LARGE

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS DO SERVICE DOGS USUALLY HAVE?

“The canine must have an extremely sound temperament, a high ability or willingness to learn and the strength of character to insist their handler does what the canine was trained to do under specific circumstances. With smaller canines, the handler must be willing and able to abide by what their dog is telling them, regardless of the circumstances. When those conditions are met, you have the potential of an excellent service dog team.”

(George Leonard, MSAR, Certified Master Dog Trainer)

In addition to having canines trained from puppies, it is possible for service dogs to be trained by their owners. Courageous Companions’ owner-trained program puts the canine through an extensive assessment. Temperament, ability to learn and strength of character are criteria that are examined to determine if the canine can be trained as a service animal. Most canines can become a certified service dog, **no matter the size, breed, or the chosen training program.**

CAN A SERVICE ANIMAL BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN A DOG?

Yes! Under the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act), there are no restrictions on what type of animal can be used as a service animal in Ontario. As long as it is readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person’s disability (e.g. the animal is wearing a vest), or if the owner can provide appropriate documentation from a regulated health professional, the service animal can be a cat, ferret, rabbit, or even a turtle.



“Courageous Companions do not screen by breed and therefore, regardless of the breed or size, if the canine can pass our assessment criteria, they are in our service dog program. Therefore, you could see breeds you never expected to be service dogs walk into a public space. My advice is that if you are uncertain, ask the handler of the service dog team, in a dignified manner, for proof of certification of their canine as a service dog. If the handler produces a certification document or some other document, like a letter from their medical professional, that the canine is a service dog, that should be the end of any such inquiry.”

(John Dugas, National Chairperson, Courageous Companions, Inc.)