



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if one of these dogs is right for me?

We cannot fully determine this for you. However, we can tell you that you should make sure you are at a place in life where you can accept such a responsibility. It is life changing...literally. If you could not bring home a toddler and be able to cope well with such, you should not consider this. If you are not experiencing seizures, blackouts, or comas, this is not going to be worth all the effort you will need to put into it.

Are there other options for catching dangerous "lows" and "highs"?

Yes. One option we are aware of is called a Continuous Glucose Monitoring System (CGMS). A CGMS works for some and not for others. While it is a very individual decision, you must admit that you do not have to groom, feed, potty, or train a CGMS. A CGMS is fairly inconspicuous in comparison to a dog. There are some the CGMS works for wonderfully and others that it does not work for. You'll want to consult with your Endocrinologist or Physician about the CGMS and make your decision.

Are these dogs "fail proof"?

No. A dog is a dog and prone to mistakes at times - even service dogs. In the beginning, you will find alerting is spotty. With proper training and time, the consistency of the alerting should increase.

If a dog is sick, it may not alert, depending on the circumstances. If a dog is overly tired, it may not alert, depending on the circumstances. They are not robots and have needs that must be met for them to best perform and those include being healthy and well rested.

A diabetes alert service dog is not a replacement for testing and should never be what you rely on completely. Common sense should be used and a diabetes alert service dog should never be your only or primary tool for control. It is simply an additional tool in your arsenal.

How long is the waiting list?

We do not have a waiting list. Instead, once accepted into the program, you will be assigned a time slot of 10-14 days (time needed will be determined by HSP) to come to Missouri and go through "Boot Camp". These times slots are made available as the Reinkemeyer family has time available.

Where would I be staying during Boot Camp?

You will be staying at a hotel in Jefferson City, Missouri called Hotel DeVille. HSP has arranged for discount rates for our clients but you are responsible for the hotel fees.

What expenses am I responsible for during Boot Camp?

This list is by no means meant to be all encompassing but should give you a pretty clear indication of what you are responsible for. You are responsible for the following: your hotel room, your meals while here, your travel to and from Missouri, your transportation while here (you will need a rental car if you are flying in), costs pertaining to the outings made for training purposes, and any other expenses you might incur while here.

Who needs to come to Boot Camp if the dog is for a child?

If the Service Dog is for a child, the child will need to be present for the duration of Boot Camp, along with both parents. Please understand that we are very much in support of the family, as a unit, tackling anything and everything. However, other siblings will not be able to come to Missouri due to the need for consistent focus by both the parents and the child who will be using the Service Dog.

Who needs to come to Boot Camp if the dog is for an adult?

If the Service Dog is for an adult, they should seriously consider bringing their spouse if married.

What if I want a specific type of dog?

In short, we do not cater to requests for specific breeds, colors, or sex. If a person truly needs one of these dogs, they are not going to be too particular about what type of breed it will be. The only exception we will make is for an allergy to dogs, that is medically documented by doctors. We may then attempt to accommodate by placing a breed that is considered "hypo allergenic". However, we cannot guarantee such.

What do these dogs cost?

You are not charged anything for the dog. If HSP selects, purchases, raises, trains, and places a dog, the cost of doing such along with the lifetime support can be as much as \$25,000. We realize families do not often have these funds. Instead, we offer the "Boot Camp" option and ask that each family help raise approximately \$7500. We are always grateful to those families who choose to fundraise a greater amount.

We realize this seems like a great deal of money but it often takes no more than a few weeks to raise this amount or more. This helps assure that our clients are not burdened financially and helps HSP continue providing our services. It also allows for more public awareness of type I diabetes as well as service dogs in general.

By the time you are raising funds, the dog you will be placed with has most likely already been paid for and in training, so you are, in essence, fundraising in a “pay it forward” manner. These funds are not FOR YOU. These funds are for HSP. It is a type of partnership whereby you are helping HSP raise funds to continue the program. You are not raising funds for your dog or for yourself. These funds are not refundable nor are they transferable. For more information, please read the fundraising guidelines.

What is the average age of one of the dogs?

12-18 months of age is average. Some may be older or younger.

What am I getting into?

- These are NOT fully trained dogs. Their obedience is well started and they know and typically exercise the do's and don'ts appropriately but you MUST follow through with your training in order for it to progress and be maintained. We teach you how to do this during HSP Boot Camp. This is so for fully trained dogs as well. If you do not maintain the obedience, the alerting will stop.
- These are NOT fully scent trained dogs. We play scent games with them in order to encourage scent discrimination skills. The amount of time spent doing so depends on the amount of time we have the dog. We also spend a couple of weeks playing scent games with the dogs and the scented socks you send us before Boot Camp (these are due months before Boot Camp starts). This allows us to make sure the dogs will not have an aversion to the actual low scent created by that person as well getting them familiar with that scent and ready for you to take over. We start the scent training but it will be up to you to go forward with it. We then teach you to do the scent training in boot camp and allow the dog to pick their own alert. Over many months, the dogs progress with their alerting and go from 10% alerting to 25% to 50%, etc....each at their own pace. Once they get above the 80-90% mark, we start helping you fine tune the alert to be a very specific behavior that you can see and identify with more ease. This is one method of training any type of scent detection dog and is how HSP has chosen to go about things as it seems to work best for our dogs and their families over time and for more accurate alerts down the road.
- We say it over and over but I'll say it again. Night time alerting will most likely not even start for at least 6 months. These dogs are going from a training environment where they work for 2-3 hrs a day into a sudden and drastic change of who they are with, where they are, and most of all they are now working 24/7. Just like when you bring a newborn home and start suffering long hrs of work and sleep deprivation, these dogs take a while to adjust to such and be able to work day and night.
- There are many reasons we have chosen not to have a very specific dog for each person before meeting them. If we did have a very specific alert that was definite each and every time, and the dog was fully trained, we would be back at the 5-6 year waiting list. Few are able to wait that long. If we did such and the person got here and they were not a good match for THAT dog, what then? We would have to go back to the drawing board and spend 6 months or so training a different dog and the person would have to come back to Missouri again. Not too many people have multiple sets of weeks off work and school as well as the funds to do so multiple times. We narrow it down to a few dogs per person and know which dog we feel would work best by the 2nd day of Boot Camp. There ARE times we must switch out dogs so make SURE you are aware of such. Some fight us on this and are never happy with the end result.

- There are organizations out there that train the dogs in a much different manner so that they alert on all diabetic lows, meaning your service dog or your child's service dog may not be paying attention to your low or highs as they have smelled a stronger scent around them of another diabetic having a low or high. The other programs do not conduct classes but rather place dogs one at a time, creating much longer waits. This is how some prefer to go through the process and we would never discourage such. This is a very individual decision and should be allowed to be just that. However, it is not how we have chosen to train.
- We have always highly discouraged and been quick to ask that no negativity or disrespect be allowed to be fostered in order to avoid everyone having to deal with someone's attitude and taking the rest of the group down with them. We have a 0 tolerance policy for such. I hate that it has come to this but it has been found to be necessary for the sake of all involved. It just makes it too emotionally difficult and tense for the others attending and makes it even harder in an already difficult situation with a difficult disease. It also sets up others for failure. Our goal is to help others...not hinder them or bring them into a spirit of negativity.
- Some people do not like how direct our trainers may need to be. We are left with little to no choice. We do not yell or cuss at anyone. In fact, we often try to make a joke of something to ease it but will impress it upon you as best possible when you are not grasping a concept or forgetting to complete a task as you are supposed to. We try very hard to work with various types of learning styles as everyone is different in how they best learn.
- Now, if you choose to be difficult or refuse to abide by the guidelines, you WILL be called out on the carpet over it. It's absolutely necessary and vital to your and everyone else's success.
- Communication. Communication is key. Keeping a positive attitude, exercising patience, realizing this will NOT happen overnight, and keeping your eye on the final goal of making this work should always be kept in sight. Realizing we will work with you as long as you stay in touch and communicate as well as follow through on direction you are given is vital. We sometimes have folks who drop all communication and then months later are angry that it is not working for them. If we can't get you to tell us what is going on, we can't help you. We're not going to chase you. If you need help, you need to tell us so we can address it. We won't just "drop you" after you leave Missouri. We prefer to stay highly involved with our clients over the long haul.
- Some people get home and begin experiencing "buyer's remorse" when they realize we really were telling them the truth when we said they had to continue the training and it is hard work. They then get upset as they feel they should have a fully trained dog vs. the Boot Camp program. We want to make sure you know exactly what you are getting into before going any further.
- During Boot Camp, we start class in the morning (usually 9am) and work through till lunch. We then have training sessions in the afternoon. During your spare time, you are expected to be doing your homework and working alone with your dog. Spare time is not time for gatherings or socialization. While that may sound harsh, we have a lot to shove into a small time frame. Do not bring work, schoolwork, or make plans to socialize while here. You won't have time.

I've read through everything and am still interested. How do we get started?

First, read through the rest of the FAQ. Call or email us if you have any questions. You may then apply by filling out the "Application" and the "Getting to Know You" forms.

What is the average age of one of the dogs?

12-18 months of age is average. Some may be older or younger.

Why is an application fee required?

In short, to make sure the individual is serious in their inquiries. We must also cover the cost of the time taken to review and evaluate the application as well as the calls made for further questions, etc. Each application that is accepted generates a great deal of paperwork as well.

What happens once we are accepted into the HSP program?

If you are accepted into the program you will receive an acceptance letter via email with instructions and your various contracts. You will also be asked to sign the contracts and return them. Once the Fundraising Agreement Contract, Placement Contract, Confidentiality/Non-Compete Contract, and Hold Harmless Contracts have been returned, you may start your fundraising.

When will the dog start going to school with my child?

When HSP feels the child is fully capable and responsible enough to care for the dog on their own, 100% of the time. The school is not legally responsible to provide this care so the child must be able to do so consistently and responsibly. The age for such varies from child to child. However, it is safe to say most children under the age of 12 will not do so for at least 6 months. If they are under the age of 10, it is more likely to be 12 months or more. If they are under the age of 7, it could be multiple years. Remember, you are combining a dog and a child and asking them to go into public on their own and behave and respond to each other properly. When the dog alerts, will the child respond appropriately? When friends want to play, will the dog be properly supervised and responded to when alerting? Each activity, no matter how small, requires direction from the child. Will they always remember to do so? A dog is always being trained...for the good or the bad. If a child is not able to be consistent in their directions and supervision, they will teach their dog bad habits. If a child does not properly respond to the dog's alert, the dog may become confused and quit alerting. These are only a few things to consider.

What type of follow up service can I expect?

We ask that you call or email any time you are having an issue. We are available for 24 hr emergency support for those clients with one of our dogs in their home and with a true emergency. You may have to leave a message but we strive to return those messages quickly for true emergencies.

You are required to fax in "low/alert" sheets each Friday. This allows us to see the progression of alerts and make sure things are progressing forward properly. We also require you to send in a monthly video tape showing the various tasks and scenarios we need to see in order to make sure things are progressing forward properly. It also allows us to catch issues before they become much larger issues. We are not there to see everything so the faxed sheets and video tapes are vital to us being able to properly support our clients. If they fail to do so, we are unable to support them in the manner needed.

Many families wish to train their dogs for additional tasks. We help point you in the right direction when the timing is appropriate.

Why are you so “big” on people not being negative?

When people ask this question, we respond with the following questions:

1. Have you ever seen anything good come of a person who is persistently negative?
2. Do you enjoy being around someone who is persistently negative?
3. Can you imagine being stuck spending 2 weeks with someone who is persistently negative and sets that tone for the entire group?
4. Which do you see happen more often – the positive lift up the negative or the negative drag down the positive?
5. Why should volunteers or other class members be asked to deal with someone who won't take responsibility for themselves and / or their actions and follow through while at the same time they go about being negative?

What if I want a fully trained dog that I have to do nothing with once it gets home?

One of our dogs will not work for you then. While other programs may be somewhat different, no dog, service dog or otherwise, will ever stop needing constant care and training on some level. Furthermore, we start the dogs off well in obedience and have made sure they are capable of scent discrimination as well as having started them on scent training. However, you must continue this and further the training after Boot Camp. This is part of why you attend training. Each day, we teach you skills and techniques to further the training once you get back home.

Do you offer the “Fully Trained Dog” program anymore?

No. We have not offered the “Fully Trained Dog” program as an option for new clients for over 2 years. The waiting list was over 5 years long and growing due to demand. Those families who are dedicated and have the lifestyle and commitment that lends itself to a service dog will be able to complete the Boot Camp training and finish the training at home with the skills acquired during Boot Camp.

Why don't you offer the “Do It Yourself” program anymore?

The “Do It Yourself” program was discontinued due to abuse of the program. Individuals were purchasing it and not following through with training or would purchase it and then expect HSP to fully support them in that program without paying anything further for that support. If they did not get the support, they would file complaints with the BBB or other agencies, using their disability for sympathy. Our volunteers got tired of dealing with people wanting something for nothing while those individuals did nothing to help themselves but expecting HSP to perform miracles. It is often referred to as a “sense of entitlement”. We at HSP do not promote such and refused to be buy into such. We truly wish to empower others to help themselves and be independent; not further their dependence on others. As with many things, the bad apples spoiled it for everyone.

What about other pets in the home?

This is looked at on a case by case basis. However, we no longer allow other dogs in the home, inside or outside. Other pets may or may not be allowed depending on the variables involved. Ferrets are one example of other pets that are not allowed.

What if we plan to add another dog to our home in a year's time?

Again, we no longer allow other dogs in the home, inside or outside. If this is a stumbling stone for your family, you will want to reconsider just how serious you are about adding a service dog to the family.

What about temperament?

We have multiple layers of testing for behavior and temperament.

As most experienced trainers or behaviorists will tell you, the behavior and temperament of a dog is greatly influenced by the environment the dog is in. This means the home environment and family dynamics play a very large role in such. Factors that may result in negative behaviors include but are not limited to the following: abuse in the home, abuse of the dog, bullying, human aggression, excessive anger issues, total lack of structure and/or boundaries in the home, or other negative human behaviors can and will influence the behaviors and temperament of the dog. Other things that may influence how your dog reacts to your home environment are major life events such as: prolonged periods of seclusion, a death in the family, a divorce, a traumatic event, or even the addition of a new family member, if not addressed properly.

A dog is like a child. They must have an alpha (you) and continued reinforcement of proper behaviors. They must have well defined boundaries to maintain their proper behaviors. They must also have security, love, and proper care. While many look at this and think it is simply common sense, there is a vast difference between recognizing such and executing it consistently within the home. For some families it may not be possible due to their family dynamics. This should be considered before going any further. Make sure you will be able to carry through on your end of the bargain so as to ensure the greatest chance of success for both yourself and your service dog.

For this reason, in our contracts, we require our clients to report any show of aggression and maintain the right to remove the dog from the home for the safety of the dog and client. While some deem this to be extreme, we believe it to be responsible.

What about fencing?

We require a fully fenced yard, of adequate size, for the dog's safety while it plays. The yard must be capable of containing the dog and keeping other dogs out.

When will my child be able to begin taking their dog to school?

If under the age of 10, it may be a while. Between the ages of 10-14 is "iffy", depending on the child's abilities and willing responsibility levels. Your child must be able to fully handle the dog on their own with no help from school staff before they will be allowed to take the dog to school. HSP evaluates each child and their progress before making such determinations.

What service dog organizations does HSP belong to?

We proudly belong to IAADP (International Association of Assistance Dog Partners) as a Provider Member. We feel that IAADP best advocates for service dog users and have their best interests at heart. We encourage our clients to also obtain IAADP membership.

What if I do my part and this still fails?

If you go home, properly carry through with your training, properly fill out your weekly reports and fax them in on time, send in your completed monthly videos on time, follow through with directions given, maintain the healthcare of the dog, and stay in cooperative communication with us, and things still do not work out, HSP will evaluate the dog and family and see if there is anything else that should be changed. If the dog is failing to alert due to no fault of the family and/or individual or their circumstances and the family and/or individual are properly carrying through with all direction and responsibilities, HSP will gladly exchange the dog for another that we determine would be the best fit. If the family is only failing in certain areas but trying very hard, and the dog is not alerting, and we feel another dog would still suit the situation better, we may opt to exchange the dog in that situation as well.

Some families have gone home and failed to do their part. Some feel it is just too much work. Some have a hard time taking direction from others. Some are just not going to be happy no matter what anyone does or doesn't do. They then are accountable to their community as the community has helped them raise funds during fundraising and would like to know how things are going. Rather than do their part, they choose to blame HSP. Bottom line they did not follow through with their training homework and / or their responsibilities. If they do not do their part, doing their training homework, following through with the guidance given, and work with HSP, following instruction in a cooperative spirit, of course it will not work.

Those who have followed through, have made it work and done a wonderful job not only for themselves but for the service dog community as a whole. These clients we will help through most anything we humanly can. We have had clients forget vet paperwork while trying to cross a border and we made sure to intervene and provide the paperwork so they could cross. We have had clients forget the dog's service dog vest and we over-nighted one to them. We have had clients who literally had an emotional breakdown when confronted by store personnel who did not wish to permit public access and we have intervened there as well. We have had clients who have encountered a rebellious or overwhelmed teenager who no longer felt they could deal with their service dog's needs and have intervened there as well. We have had clients who just need to vent as this is not easy. We gladly listen. We have had clients need a dog exchanged for one reason or another and we have driven up the same day or the next to exchange the dog when possible. We have even had some clients who needed more than the average help once they got back home and have arranged for a trainer in their area to help them after helping that trainer understand what we do, how, and why. We truly will go out of our way as long as the individual and/or family is willing to do their part and try.

We are here to empower you to help your child or yourself. We'll give you the tools, the dog, the training, and the knowledge. We'll walk you through things, step by step and help you rework things when one path doesn't work for you or your family. We are not here to wave a magic wand. You must do your part too. If you do your part in earnest, we will be thrilled to work with you to make sure this is successful, if at all possible.
