

## **Potter League for Animals Position on Working Dogs**

*The Potter League for Animals approves of dogs being placed to serve as Working Dogs as long as they are treated as pets when not working and have adequate food, comfortable living conditions, companionship and the opportunity for relaxation each day.*

### **I. What is a Working Dog?**

*A Working Dog is both a pet and a dog that is trained to perform a task or tasks to assist or entertain. Examples of Working Dogs include:*

- *Service Dogs – meet the definition of the American Disability Act and are trained to perform specific tasks that assist disabled persons*
- *Assistance/Emotional Support Dogs - as defined by the Fair Housing Act, provide assistance to individuals with physical disabilities or mental health/emotional disorders*
- *Therapy Dogs - trained to provide affection, comfort and support to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, libraries, hospices and/or disaster sites*
- *Some other examples are dogs that are trained to entertain, hunt, herd, guard, or assist police, military personnel and first responders*

### **II. Pros**

- *Dogs can provide assistance and support that may be cost prohibitive if performed by human service providers*
- *Dogs generally enjoy the positive feedback that comes from a team effort and a job well done which can lead to increased self-confidence and a calmer disposition*
- *Service dogs can build a strong bond with their handler that is mutually beneficial*
- *Dogs who have the physical ability and temperament appropriate for working situations do not always do well as typical companion pets and can live better lives as working dogs*

### **III. Cons**

- *These dogs may be subjected to the potential use of negative training methods and exposed to stressful, abusive or harmful situations*
- *Loose legal definitions can lead to abuse of the accommodations made for those with certain types of working dogs, particularly those classified as Emotional Support Dogs*

### **IV. Conclusion**

*Dogs may benefit from the role of Working Dog provided:*

- *The dog is matched to a job that meets its physical ability and temperament*
- *The dog is trained respectfully and compassionately using LIMA [Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive] training methods to navigate the environment(s) associated with performing the required task(s)*
- *The dog has adequate food, comfortable living conditions, companionship and the opportunity for relaxation each day*

### **References**

Definitions of examples of Working Dogs comes from <http://adata.org/publication/service-animals-booklet>

Bekoff, M;2017. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/animal-emotions/201706/how-we-can-become-better-people-through-teamwork-dogs>

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