



Puppy Sitter Description

Puppy sitters are crucial to our mission. They assist with providing a solid foundation for our puppies and adolescents to grow into valuable, life-changing service dogs for people living with disabilities. Puppy sitters are there to care for our dogs in a variety of situations, including when a longer-term puppy raiser is on vacation, when the dogs are on a break from our prison training program, or when a dog could benefit from exposure to a new environment.

What are the requirements of puppy sitting?

- Attend foster home orientation, a series of fundamentals classes, and regular training classes, either in person or on Zoom (held weekly)
- Have a strong interest in developing positive reinforcement dog training skills
- Provide appropriate socialization (as instructed by the Puppy Raising Program Coordinator)
- Have a safe home environment with a fully fenced yard

What is the difference between puppy raising and puppy sitting?

Puppy *raising* is a long-term commitment, often lasting around 8-14 months. Puppy raisers need to have extensive dog training and behavior education, as well as a home environment that is conducive to longer term raising. Puppy *sitting* is a more flexible, shorter-term, yet equally valuable opportunity to help care for our dogs in training and develop positive reinforcement dog training skills. Puppy raisers and sitters fall under the umbrella of foster homes.

How long would we have the dog and how old will he/she be?

Our needed timeframes for puppy sitting range anywhere from a few hours to a few months at a time. Puppies/dogs may range from 3-24 months old, with the vast majority of dogs available for sitting being over 4 months of age.

What are the steps to become a puppy sitter?

- Complete a foster home application, liability waiver, and media release form
- Attend a foster home orientation and fundamentals classes
- Have a home visit with our Puppy Raising Program Coordinator
- Attend training classes on a regular basis (via Zoom and/or in person)

Where are the classes held?

We are operating with reduced classes and class sizes due to COVID-19 precautions. Classes are currently being held at the following locations and times:

- *Online via Zoom – Monday evenings
- Whidbey Island (Summit property) – Thursday evenings
- Seattle (Various locations) – Thursday evenings

Note: *Attending classes is beneficial as it allows you to learn our fundamental handling requirements and allows our trainers to assess your dog handling/training skills. We will prioritize getting dogs to puppy sitters who consistently attend online or in-person classes, as they will be the most up to date on Summit training and care information.*



Do I need dog training experience to be a puppy sitter?

No, you do not need any past experience with dog training to be considered to puppy sit. However, you DO need to have a high level of interest in and commitment to learning about positive reinforcement training. Our puppies begin learning the foundational skills that they need to become a service dog as young as 8 weeks old, so sitters for any age group (ranging from 3-24 months old) will need to be familiar with dog behavior and our training philosophy.

Will I have access to support outside of the weekly classes?

Absolutely! Summit provides lots of support to our puppy sitters through our trainers, Puppy Raising Program Coordinator, dedicated Facebook page, and secure foster home website.

What costs will I be responsible for while I have the dog?

We ask our puppy sitters to provide the dog with a high-quality food (approximately \$45/month) and monthly flea treatments (approximately \$10/month). These will be provided to you for shorter stays (under one week).

Is a fenced yard a requirement?

A fully fenced yard is required for puppy sitting. Exceptions may be made if the sitter has reliable access to a safe, fenced area for a dog to utilize near the home. We rarely place young puppies in high-trafficked, urban environments such as downtown Seattle due to the high level of risk associated with such dense conditions.

Can my children be involved with puppy sitting?

While being socialized to children is beneficial to the dogs in training, we must remember to always prioritize safe and respectful handling of the dogs. If you have very young children (under 5 years old), it may be better to wait to apply until they are a bit older. We encourage older children (over 13 years old) with an interest in helping to attend orientation and classes with you. The parent/guardian in the household will remain the primary responsible party for the dog's health, safety, and training.

What if I have pet dogs in the home?

Puppy raisers may have pet dogs of their own, as long as the pet dog is healthy, not aggressive, doesn't engage in behaviors that we wouldn't want modeled to a puppy, and the raiser abides by Summit's dog separation policy. Summit dogs are not permitted to play with other dogs as it can interfere with their ability to succeed as service dogs. Summit dogs and pet dogs may coexist in the home through proper home management including crates, ex-pens, baby gates, and separate yards or rotations in the yard.

What if puppy sitting doesn't seem like a good fit for me, but I still want to help?

If you have concerns about the requirements of puppy sitting, please reach out to us to see if there are other ways you can help. We often have a need for volunteers in other areas including: Transportation, puppy socialization, kennel assistance, photography/videography, sewing, outreach, and fundraising.

We hope you will consider becoming part of our foster home community. To request an application or ask any other questions, please send an email to info@summitdogs.org.