

- Consistent discipline is essential to a successful guide dog team. Ordinarily oral admonitions are used to maintain control. If these fail, it may become necessary for the blind person to use a firm tug on the leash. This does not hurt the dog; it brings its attention back to its job.

You see more blind people on the streets today, not because there are more of us, but because we have learned to make our own way in the world. A major factor in this progress is the National Federation of the Blind, the oldest and largest organization of the blind. We are blind people speaking and acting for ourselves, working as equal partners with our sighted neighbors.

If you have found this information useful, perhaps you know of others who would as well. Please feel free to pass this on.

For further information, visit our Web site: <http://nagdu.org>

National Association of Guide Dog Users (NAGDU), a division of the National Federation of the Blind  
Marion Gwizdala, President  
(813) 626-2789  
President@NAGDU.ORG

The NAGDU Education & Advocacy Hotline provides valuable information about guide dogs and their use, including legal protections for service animal users, guidance concerning service animals to specific industries, such as restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and taxicabs, and other valuable resources. Callers may also access a live, trained advocate who can offer specific guidance or resolve an urgent issue. The NAGDU Education & Advocacy Hotline can be accessed 24/7 by calling: (888) NAGDU-411 or (888) 624-3841



*Voice of the Nation's Blind*

National Federation of the Blind  
200 East Wells Street  
at Jernigan Place  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
(410) 659-9314  
Marc Maurer, President

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Meeting a Working Guide Dog Team

Have you ever seen a blind person with a guide dog and wanted to know more about how they work together? When you see a guide dog at work, you are watching a highly trained team. Each partner's contribution is essential for independent travel. As the head of the team, the blind person's role is to maintain control of the guide dog and to direct the animal where the handler wants to go. He or she does this by giving the dog directional commands such as "Forward," "Left," and "Right," which are sometimes accompanied by hand gestures. The guide dog's role in this partnership is to obey these commands, except when to do so would place the team in danger.

Since the guide dog and handler function as a team, the following should be kept in mind:

- It is a violation of state and federal laws to deny service to or segregate a disabled person accompanied by a service animal. This includes stores, restaurants, taxicabs, parks, health care facilities, zoos, or any other place the general public is admitted. The law prohibits public carriers such as buses, trains, or planes from refusing to serve a disabled individual accompanied by a service animal. Furthermore, disabled people accompanied by service animals have

the same rights as other passengers to choose where they sit on such carriers where no other legally established seating requirements exist.

- Businesses may ask if a dog is a service animal and what tasks the animal is trained to perform but may not ask about the nature of the disability or require any sort of identification or documentation for the service dog.
- Businesses may exclude a service dog only if it causes a direct threat to the health or safety of others or is out of control and the handler does not take immediate action to correct the behavior.
- When you see a guide dog or other service animal in public, it is working. It is important that others not interfere with the dog's work; therefore, never touch a guide dog or its gear, never call a guide dog by name or speak to it, and do not make noises or do anything intentionally to distract the dog.
- Never feed a service dog, since feeding it may make working the dog difficult to control in places where food is present, such as restaurants and grocery stores. In addition, dogs can have sensitivities to certain types of foods, so there is a very real possibility that feeding the dog may make it ill and unable to work.

- Assume that the disabled person can function safely and independently in most situations. Therefore, never take hold of the person, the dog, its leash, or harness at any time. This is especially important when the team is making a street crossing. Blind people know when it is safe to cross by listening to traffic patterns. It is the blind person who tells the dog when it is safe to cross the street; it is NOT the dog that makes this decision.
- The guide dog does not necessarily know where the blind person wants to go. The handler gives the directional commands, and the dog avoids obstacles along the way such as other people, shopping carts, overhanging trees, and steps or staircases. If you think a blind person needs some assistance, feel free to ask.
- When blind people travel to an unfamiliar area, they may ask directions as anyone else would. When giving directions to a blind person, speak to the person. Do not call the dog or try to get it to follow you. Guide dog users sometimes use a "Follow" command, but the blind person will give it. Also let the blind person know about turns to be made so he or she can give the proper direction to the dog.