

(Front cover: The Assistant Dog mark)

Assistance Dog Information BOOK Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

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Assistance Dog (Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons) Information

The term “Assistance Dogs” for persons with physical disabilities refers to “guide dogs”, “hearing dogs”, and “service dogs” that assist persons with disabilities of the eyes, ears, or limbs.

These dogs are certified in accordance with “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons” and have received special training. They are partners of persons with disabilities and therefore not pets.

As they are properly trained and taken care of, they are able to follow social manners and are kept clean. Therefore these dogs are accepted in many areas where people tend to go.

Assistance dogs are essential for the independence and social participation of persons with physical disabilities. We hope that everyone will take some time to get a better understanding of assistance dogs and accept them as members of society.

[Illustration 1: An assistance dog and the dog’s user going to a hospital

Illustration 2: An assistance dog and the dog’s user going to a department store

Illustration 3: An assistance dog and the dog’s user getting in a taxi]

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Types of Assistance Dogs

- Guide Dogs

Guide dogs help people who are not able to see or have difficulty seeing safely navigate through town. The dogs avoid obstacles and notify their handlers about the path they are walking on, such as turns in the road. Guide dogs wear harnesses.

[Illustration: A guide dog and user walking]

- Service Dogs

Service dogs help people with disabilities in their limbs with their daily activities. These dogs can aid their handler by picking things up and handing them to him/her, bringing over requested objects, and helping with putting on and removing clothes. Service dogs wear vests with a tag written “Service Dog”.

[Illustration: A service dog hands a key over to the user]

- Hearing Dogs

Hearing dogs notify their handlers, who are not able to hear or have hearing disabilities, of various sounds in daily life. They recognize and notify their handlers of sounds such as doorbells, FAX ring alerts, and babies crying. Hearing dogs wear vests with a tag written “Hearing Dog”.

[Illustration: A hearing dog notifying its user of a car's horn]

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Assistance Dogs go everywhere with their users

It is required under "The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons" that assistance dogs be accepted in various places a person may go. Please do not prohibit their entry just because it is a "dog".

- The following places are required to accept assistance dogs:
  - Public facilities that are managed by the country or local public organizations
  - Public transportation (such as trains, buses and taxis)- Public facilities such as commercial facilities, restaurants, hospitals and hotels which are used by the general public
  - Offices (work places)

Offices of the country or local public organizations

Private businesses with 50 or more employees

[Illustration: A hearing dog lies unobtrusively under the seat in public transportation]

- Places which should make efforts to accept assistance dogs are as follows:
  - Offices (work places)
    - Private businesses with less than 50 employees
  - Private housing

[Illustration: A guide dog lies under the user's desk at work]

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Assistance Dogs have been trained well, and are very healthy.

Users of assistance dogs take great responsibility in managing their assistance dogs' activities and make efforts to maintain the assistance dogs' health and cleanliness.

- Assistance dogs are trained to relieve themselves when and where their users instruct them to.
- Assistance dogs are trained to wait patiently under the charge of their users.
  - At restaurants or eating facilities...Assistance dogs wait in areas such as under the table until the meal is over.
  - At accommodations such as hotels and inns...Assistance dogs wait in places such as the corners of rooms or near the entrance way.
  - In public transportation such as trains, buses, taxis, etc... Assistance dogs avoid soiling the seats by staying by their users' feet.
- Users of assistance dogs make efforts to keep their dog clean by brushing and shampooing them, and also vaccinate and take their dogs for check-ups.

[Illustration: A user in a wheelchair brushes her service dog while thinking of dining out]

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When you come across an Assistance Dog

When an assistance dog is wearing a harness or vest with its user, the dog is “working”.

- Make sure not to talk to, stare, touch without permission, or try to grab the attention of a working assistance dog.
- Make sure not to offer water or food to an assistance dog.  
Users of assistance dogs manage the amount and time the dog eats and drinks, along with the dog’s health and toilet timing.

[Illustration: A user and her guide dog are hesitant before a staring adult and a child trying to give the dog a treat]

Inquiries

- Inquiries/complaints towards accompanying and usage of assistance dogs  
Forward inquiries to the division in charge of welfare for persons with disabilities at each prefecture, or each designated or core city
- The Assistance Dog Homepage and related laws of “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons”  
<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/bunya/shougaihoken/hojoken/index.html>  
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Homepage “Welfare for the Disabled” within the “Information by Administrative Category”  
→ “Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons” within “Policy Information by Field”

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To facilities accepting assistance dogs

- Assistance dogs are able to wait under their users’ instruction, so there is no special equipment or furnishings needed to accommodate them.
- If there are complaints from other customers about accepting the assistance dog along with its user, please ask for understanding by explaining the obligation to accept these dogs under “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons”, and also that the users are highly responsible for their dog’s actions and health maintenance.
- If the assistance dog blocks passageways, sniffs around or makes any other trouble, please communicate it clearly to the dog’s user.
- There are occasions where the assistance dog’s user needs help, even when accompanied by his/her dog. If you see an assistance dog user in trouble, please try communicating with them by speaking to him/her or through writing (in case of hearing dog users).

[Illustration: Staff at a restaurant welcomes three users with their assistance dogs]

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#### Summary of “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons”

- The purpose of “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons” is to contribute to the promotion of independence and social participation of persons with physical disabilities (Article 1 of the Act).
- “Assistance dogs for physically disabled persons” is the generic term for certified guide dogs, service dogs and hearing dogs (Article 2 of the Act).
- Assistance dogs under “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons” wear a sign stating information such as their breed, certification number and date. Additionally, users should carry documents stating information such as the assistance dog’s health care record and proof of being an assistance dog such as the dog’s Assistance Dog Certificate when using or visiting facilities. These documents should be displayed at the request of related parties (Article 12 of the Act).
- The following facilities may not refuse assistance dogs and their users, except under unavoidable circumstances that may lead to substantial harm to the facilities, related areas, and to the users of the facilities (Article 7, 8, 9, 10 of the Act):
  - Public facilities that are managed by the country or local public organizations and public transportation (such as trains, buses and taxis)
  - Public facilities such as commercial facilities, restaurants, and hospitals which are used by the general public
  - Private businesses with 50 or more employees (work places)
- \* The “Act” within the parenthesis indicates “The Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons”

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