



Applicant's Name: _____

Date: _____

Epilepsy Association of Western and Central PA

1501 Reedsdale Street, Suite 3002

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15233

412-322-5880/800-361-5885

www.eawcp.org

Funded by

Michael R. Zupancic Seizure Response Dog Endowment Fund



Michael Zupancic and his dog, Oscar

The Oscar Project

Funded by the Michael R. Zupancic Seizure Response Dog Endowment Fund

The Oscar Project is funded by the Michael R. Zupancic Seizure Response Dog Endowment Fund. The Zupancic family established this endowment with the EAWCP to honor their son, Michael Zupancic, and to help others living with epilepsy. The fund helps by providing guidance and financial support to children and adults who have epilepsy/seizures who want to obtain specially trained dogs that provide assistance to seizure patients.

Michael Zupancic loved his dog, Oscar. Oscar was a devoted dog and constant companion for Michael. Michael died much too young at the age of 46. The family established the Michael R. Zupancic Seizure Response Dog Endowment Fund to help epilepsy patients gain independence with a seizure dog and to have a constant companion like Oscar.

Recipients are selected periodically based upon need and the availability of funds.

10 Things to Understand Before Getting a Service Dog *Revised from an article by Kea Grace*

Service Dogs enhance their human partner's lives in so many ways. Sometimes, these special dogs even save their human's life through complex and highly trained task work. However, Service Dog partnerships are full of hard, never-ending work for both the handler and dog. Before getting a Service Dog, here are 10 important things to understand.

NOTE: This article assumes all parties involved understand the federal Service Dog laws and the requirements for legally partnering with a Service Dog. In a nutshell, to be eligible for a Service Dog partnership, the human handler MUST have a disability as defined by U.S. federal law, and the dog MUST perform specific, trained tasks to mitigate that disability. This article also assumes the dog in question meets industry-standard requirements of behavior and training.

1. Service Dogs Are Not Pets

Service Dogs are living, breathing, sentient creatures. They possess highly specialized skills meant to aid you in your day to day life. They are not meant to just be a family pet that you can take with you everywhere you go. They're with you to work, so if you're expecting something different, getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

2. Service Dogs Mean You Will Never Be Alone

Are you prepared to have a dog within two to six feet of you for the rest of your/its natural life? In order to perform their tasks, most Service Dogs have to remain in close proximity with their handler. When you move, they'll usually move. They'll follow you from room to room. They'll sleep under your desk or at your feet while you work or watch a movie.

They'll be literally attached to you, either physically or verbally, any time you're outside of the house. They are your Service Dog, your partner, your friend, your helper, your other half, your teammate. If you're the kind of person who needs space or time away from responsibilities or managing others, getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

3. Service Dogs Require Daily Maintenance and Care

Service Dogs, like any dog, are living creatures. They require daily nutrition, exercise, relief breaks, and mental stimulation. They need to be groomed regularly, and they must have their emotional needs met. There are no days off from this, regardless of how you feel. When you're sick, your Service Dog still needs to go outside. When you're at your lowest and darkest, your Service Dog still needs their teeth, ears, and feet taken care of. When you're in so much pain you can't see straight, your Service Dog still needs to eat and to stretch their legs a bit.

If you have someone who can help you with taking care of your Service Dog's needs, that's excellent. If you don't, though, those responsibilities fall to you, and only you. Every day. Rain or shine. Good day or bad day. All days . . . for the next eight to fifteen years. If you're not able to commit to that level of care, getting a Service Dog probably isn't for you.

4. Service Dogs Aren't Easy to Get

Getting a Service Dog is far from easy. Just because you apply for a Service Dog through a program, doesn't mean you will receive one. If you are approved to receive a service dog, it's a long, hard, and quite often, expensive road. There are forms to fill out. Interviews to sit through. Private information to share. Lifestyle choices to discuss. And frequently, there are long, hard waits, for the program to train your dog.

You are literally combing the planet for a near-perfect dog with thousands of dollars of training, and you're probably working with other humans (program staff, rescue coordinators, doctors, therapists, etc.) in order to make that happen. If upheaval, strife, failure, waiting lists, and/or difficulties aren't something you're prepared to accept and handle, then getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

5. Service Dogs Mean You Will Have to Talk and Talk and Talk

You will never, ever, ever be invisible ever again. You can wave bye-bye to "quick errands." Going anywhere with a Service Dog means you'll have to stop and answer (the same 4) questions for most adults you pass, and almost anyone with a child. You will have to explain that the law does, in fact, allow you to have "this dog" with you, and that yes, they are, indeed, a "Helper Dog".

You will have to educate shop owners and store managers. You'll be used as a teaching opportunity for toddlers and elementary schoolers. You'll be asked over and over and over again about your dog, your medical history, your disability, and other private details about your life. You will be stared at, pointed at, yelled at, talked about, and followed. Lots of people are wonderful in public, but just as many are not.

Some Service Dog teams love this part of things, but it can be very frustrating to others. If lots of personal interaction and conflict resolution aren't high on your list of skills or wants, and/or if you suffer from social anxiety, getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

6. Service Dogs Require Lots of Ongoing Training

You have to maintain a sort of professional relationship with your Service Dog, and that means continuously upholding your dog's training and skill sets. It's not like having a pet, even when your dog is "off duty." As an example, if you don't stick to the rules because you think it's cute to give your dog snacks off your plate, you will pay for your indiscretion for a long time when you need to go to a restaurant.

Service Dogs have to meet behavioral and training standards, and how you handle and love them at home is a big part of that. You have to reinforce their training while, hopefully, continuing their education. What you don't use, you lose, so their skills have to be practiced regularly, and their skills are the entire point of the partnership. Pets exist for companionship, so if that's all you want, get a pet. Service Dogs are meant to work, so if you're not ready to support your dog in their learning needs, getting a Service Dog probably isn't for you.

7. Service Dogs Need You to Be Assertive

When you have a Service Dog, you and you alone are responsible for standing up for both yourself AND your dog. That includes to your spouse. To family. To the veterinarian. To groomers. To doctors. To complete strangers. To children. You need your Service Dog; that's why you have them. You need your dog to be happy, focused, responsive, and attentive, so they can be at their best, which results in you being closer to your best.

You will have to tell people they can't pet your dog. You will have to ask them to not make noises at or otherwise interact with your dog. You will need to be assertive enough to tell strangers "No you can't

feed my service dog a bite of your food." You might need to tell your veterinarian *not* to restrain your dog for nail trims, as you need your dog to be comfortable with full-body touch, and you'll work on desensitizing nail trims at home. You'll have to tell groomers you won't just drop your dog off, as you need to be with your dog. You'll have to tell family that your dog's attention needs to be on you, so if they're playing with or distracting your dog, your dog can't do their job.

You're going to have to learn how to say "no" to a lot of people. You're going to have to deny lots of people what they want. You're going to have to prevent (pet) professionals who are "just doing their job" from setting back your dog's training and/or socialization. You're going to have to lay down the law and expect people to adhere to it, for the good of your Service Dog and your partnership. If being assertive isn't one of your specialties or something you're willing to do, getting a Service Dog probably isn't for you.

8. Service Dogs Necessitate a Sense of Humor

People are going to say and do the strangest things to you, to your dog, and/or around you or your dog. Your Service Dog will do some pretty groan-inducing things at least once or twice. These circumstances regularly involve explosive diarrhea or your dog stealing something off a shelf without you noticing and the two of you accidentally walking out and getting stopped by security for theft. Things will go wrong, sometimes horrifically wrong, and it's never going to happen when you're feeling good.

You're going to have to laugh at situations, at your dog, at people, at life. Maybe it's only so you don't cry, but you're definitely going to need to be able to laugh. If you tend to sweat the small stuff, then getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

9. Service Dogs Mean You Will Be Ignored

Coming after the first point which can be summed up with, "You're never going to be invisible again," this one sounds a little strange. However, it simply means that you, the person, the human half of this Service Dog team, are going to be ignored on a routine and regular basis. People like dogs. Nay, people LOVE dogs. People especially love really good dogs.

People are going to talk to your dog before they talk to you. People are going to do things without asking you, almost as if you're not even there. People may even try to talk to you through your Service Dog. People will look at your dog and not you, even if they're talking to you. Expect this. Own it. Be prepared for it. If you're unable to accept playing second fiddle to a dog, then getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

10. Service Dogs Mean "Spontaneous" is No Longer a Thing

You are never going to be able to just pick up and go somewhere or do something ever again. Having a Service Dog is akin to having a toddler. Where's the treat pouch? Where's the Gentle Leader? The regular collar? Is the right tag on the collar? Where's the vest? Not that one, the other one. Yeah, that one. And the over-the-shoulder leash. Oh, and it's hot outside; need to grab the boots. And a place mat. Better grab a bag to put all this in, plus a couple spares, and some food and water and bowl, just in case. Plus everything I myself need, like medication, snacks, documentation, a sweater, and a book.

You are going to have to plan and prepare for everything. For bigger outings, like the zoo or a theme park, you may be required to get specific vaccinations or to meet special criteria. You might have to check which areas your Service Dog is or is not allowed, so you can better plan your day. Before you go anywhere, your dog has to be dressed and given a quick once over. The days of just walking or rolling out the front door are over, so if you're the kind of person who thrives on being as free as a bird, getting a Service Dog may not be for you.

**Epilepsy Association of Western and Central PA
The Oscar Project: Seizure Response Dog Application**

Primary Contact Information

Date:			
First Name:		Last Name:	
Relationship to Applicant:			
Address:			
City, State Zip:			
Best Phone Number to Contact You:			
Email Address:			

Person in Need of a Seizure Dog (the Applicant)

First Name:		Last Name:	
Age:		Date of Birth:	
Address (if different from above):			
City, State Zip:			
Phone :			
Email :			

If applicant is a minor:

Full Name of Father:		Phone:	
Father's Email:			
Full Name of Mother:		Phone:	
Mother's Email:			
Best Phone Number to Reach Parent:			
Best Email to Reach Parent:			

Please provide the age and relationship to applicant of everyone that lives in the applicant's household or spends significant time in the applicant's home on a daily or regular basis

Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	
Name:		Relationship:		Age:	

Emergency Contact Information (Someone who does not live with applicant)

Full Name (First and Last):	
Relationship to Applicant:	
Best Number for Contacting:	

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Medical Information

Neurologist:			
Address:			
Address 2:			
City, State, Zip:			
Phone:			
Date of Epilepsy Diagnosis:			
Type(s) of Seizures:			
Frequency of Seizures:			
Describe a Typical Episode of a Seizure:			
List All Medications, Including Dosages:			
Medication Side Effects:			
VNS Surgery:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Date of VNS Surgery:
Brain Surgery:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Date of Brain Surgery:
How Does Epilepsy affect the applicant's daily life?			
Other Medical Diagnosis:			
Any Mental Health Diagnosis:			
What are the cognitive and physical limitations of the applicant?			
Are there any restrictions or precautions we should be aware of?			
Is the applicant currently receiving medical treatment? If so, for what?			
What, if any, adaptive equipment is used for speech, hearing, or mobility?			

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Information Relating to a Seizure Dog

What is the applicant's response to the possibility of getting a seizure dog?	
Is the applicant or anyone in the house afraid of dogs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the applicant or anyone in the house allergic to dogs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Who will be the primary caregiver for the dog?	
Is the applicant physically able to handle the dog alone?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Annual Family Income:	
Can the applicant assist with the care of the dog?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is everyone in the household aware that a working service dog is not a pet, and must be treated as a working dog and not a pet ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the applicant have a fenced yard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Where would the service dog be required to go on a normal day?	
If the applicant is a child, would the dog be going to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, are school officials aware of this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If the applicant is an adult, do they work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, where?	
Describe the job duties:	
How do you feel a seizure dog would benefit the applicant?	
What duties would you like a seizure dog to perform?	
What are 3 specific seizure-related tasks you would like a seizure dog to perform for you?	
1.	
2.	
3.	

**Epilepsy Association of Western and Central PA
The Oscar Project: Seizure Response Dog Application**

Personal Interview

An interview is required.

Are you able to travel to the EAWCP Pittsburgh, PA office for an interview? Yes No

If no, are you able to participate in a skype interview? Yes No

Financial Responsibility

All persons who receive a service dog from The Oscar Project must travel to Pittsburgh, PA for a minimum of 2 three-day stays to train with their dog before taking him home. All cost of the trips including travel, room and board, will be the responsibility of the recipient. Are you able to participate in these trainings? _____

Once placed, the applicant has the responsibility of caring for their service animal. This requires a financial commitment to the dog's health and well-being. Are you able to afford to feed and care for your animal, including veterinary care? _____

Additional training sessions, training tools, etc. may be required and would be at the cost of the recipient. Are these extra costs you are prepared to incur? _____

Additional Documents Required

Attach a brief essay (one page minimum) stating how you feel a service dog would change your (the applicant's) life and what types of tasks you may want a service dog to perform for you.

A physician's verification of diagnosis of Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder must be included with your application. A letter from your physician or a statement on a prescription pad stating your diagnosis can be included with this application or it can be faxed to our office at 412-322-7885.

Ongoing Commitments Required

Owning a service dog is a commitment. If you are approved to receive a service dog through The Oscar Project, you must commit to providing the required care for your service dog. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining communication with the service dog trainers and the EAWCP, continue training and working with your service dog as instructed by your trainers, updating the trainers and EAWCP on any issues or changes immediately as they arise, and recertifying your service dog on a yearly basis.

Advocacy/Education

A service dog is a wonderful tool for individuals with disabilities, however, the general public is not always aware of the laws in place to protect these individuals and the tools needed to help them live every day with their disability, in this case a service dog. Part of your commitment to life with a service dog through The Oscar Project is being willing to advocate for yourself and educate the public on service dog laws and etiquette. Do you feel you are willing and able to do this? _____

Epilepsy Association of Western and Central PA
The Oscar Project: Seizure Response Dog Application

Mail completed application, personal essay and physician's verification of diagnosis to:

Epilepsy Association of Western and Central PA
Attn: Oscar Project
1501 Reedsdale Street, Suite 3002
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

DISCLAIMER: A completed application does not guarantee applicant will receive a seizure response dog. The EAWCP, The Oscar Project and any agency working with The Oscar Project reserves the right to deny any applicant a service dog for any reason.

Signature _____
(Applicant)

Date _____

Signature _____
(Parent/Guardian if under 18)

Date _____

