Headquarters and Training Center

611 Granite Springs Rd.

Yorktown Heights, NY 10598

914-245-4024 or Toll-Free 800-942-0149

Client Experience Team

clientexperience@guidingeyes.org

Applicant and Graduate Support: 888-987-2188

**To Whom It May Concern:**

One of your employees has undergone intensive training at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a member of the International Guide Dog Federation, to receive a qualified guide dog. The guide dog completed a rigorous 2-year training course and passed numerous tests to become proficient in their everyday tasks, after which the handler completed a comprehensive two-week class to learn to work with the dog. You may see the team memorizing routes throughout the building, navigating around obstacles, taking note of changes in elevation, and/or targeting certain doors and stairways that they visit frequently. The handler will be the expert on their responsibilities and needs for the guide dog. As handler and guide dog spend more time together and reinforce their skillset, the relationship between dog and handler will grow stronger, and they will adapt to the strategies and routines that work best for them as a team.

Guiding Eyes for the Blind put together the following suggested accommodations and considerations for your reference to ensure a smooth transition for all involved.

**Accommodations:**

* As per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), an individual who is blind is legally allowed to bring their guide dog anywhere throughout the facility. They have the same access rights as their colleagues.
* At no point should the guide dog be separated from the handler. Depending on space limitations, the dog will either lay next to the handler at their desk, on a dog bed, in a crate, or in a secure and enclosed office.
* If space allows, a handler may choose to place a crate in their work area so that they do not always need to hold the leash and allow for some hands-free mobility.
* The guide dog will need to relieve itself every 4 hours or so, or at the handler’s discretion. A trash can should be placed outside in an accessible location so the handler can properly dispose of any waste. The handler has been specifically trained in how to adequately pick up after their dog.
* The handler will provide the dog water throughout the day and potentially store dog bowls in their workspace.

**Considerations:**

* It is of utmost importance that when the dog is guiding their handler, it in no way be distracted by food, eye contact, speech, or petting. Only the handler should offer the dog affection, praise, and attention.
* When a guide dog is not actively guiding their handler, they will always remain under their handler’s control. They should not be pet by others, as that interaction has the potential to interrupt appropriate behavior. Only with the handler’s permission should you ever interact with their guide dog.
* The handler’s work conditions must be safe for a guide dog. For example, the floors should be clean and absent of any safety hazards that could endanger the team.
* If assisting a guide dog handler, please ask about their individual preferences, as everyone’s needs differ. They may choose to hold your elbow, follow you by voice, or receive verbal directions as you walk behind them. Do not touch or grab the person, dog, or equipment without their expressed verbal consent.

We advise all colleagues to educate themselves and work with their fellow employees to understand the purpose of a guide dog, their role in supporting the team, and creating a safe, welcoming, and equitable space for all. If you have any questions about the above accommodations or would like more information on how to welcome a guide dog into your workplace, please contact us at 888-987-2188 or clientexperience@guidingeyes.org.

Sincerely,

The Guiding Eyes for the Blind Client Experience Team