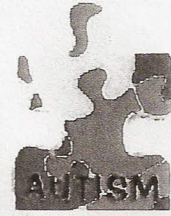


**Dogs for Children with Autism Program
Dogs for the Deaf, Inc.**



SUMMARY and FACT SHEET

Program Goals:

- **To provide safety for the child when out in public** - The child is attached to the dog's harness and the parent handles the leash. The dog is trained to act like an anchor and sit if the child begins to "bolt or run." (This is a huge problem for many parents of children with Autism.)
- **To provide a calming effect on the child** – Needed sometimes more in the home environment. Once the dog and child are bonded, the dog can have a tremendous calming effect during daily transitions from one activity/environment to another—this is when "meltdowns or tantrums" are likely to occur. The dog can also make a real difference in decreasing the number or severity of the "tantrums."
- **Increasing the child's ability/willingness to connect and communicate** – Eye contact is often given to the dog by the child that may never be given to parents/people. Some kids may become more verbal just by trying to give the dog a command or praise. Increased physical contact with the dog has also been observed.

Characteristics of Children with Autism Assistance Dog:

- They need to be a larger dog that can act as an "anchor" using their weight when needed to stop the child.
- They must allow and love being physically tugged at, pulled, poked, touched all over
- Have a very gentle demeanor with a confident personality
- Must love children of all ages
- They must remain calm during chaotic activity, yelling, tantrums, etc.
- Able to adjust to change quickly
- They need to be almost "*bomb proof*" in public situations and aware of their environment

Expectations of Clients:

- Must love bigger dogs and allow them in their homes (no worry of hair, dirt, slobber, etc.)
- There must be no other dogs in the home
- They must have realistic expectations that this is not a miracle cure, and may not work in all situations with all children
- It is very hard work to maintain the training, especially the first year—a huge time commitment for the family
- Financial commitment (dogs health care needs, food, etc)