



Honoring Veterans with disabilities by providing new levels of independence with professionally trained Service Dogs

Job Title: Shelter Dog Trainer

Reports to: Shelter Dog Training Manager

Employment Type: Full-time, Non-exempt

About the Organization

Liberty Dogs™ is a premier Service Dog training program whose goal is to empower Veterans with disabilities to lead more independent and fulfilling lives - enhancing their well-being through the unconditional support that Liberty Service Dogs provide. Located on a 27-acre campus, it includes a training facility, dog housing, an administrative and multipurpose building, and accommodations for Veterans staying on campus to train with their Liberty Service Dogs.

Position Summary:

The Shelter Dog Trainer is responsible for assessing, training, and behaviorally supporting dogs in a shelter environment to improve welfare, adoptability, and appropriate placement outcomes. This role focuses on humane, evidence-based training and behavior modification to address stress-related and common shelter behaviors while promoting safety for dogs, staff, volunteers, and the public.

The Shelter Dog Trainer collaborates with shelter leadership, veterinary staff, and adoption teams to develop individualized behavior and enrichment plans and may identify dogs suitable for advanced training programs, adoption, foster placement, or alternative career paths.

Key Responsibilities:

Behavior Assessment & Training

- Conduct behavioral assessments for all incoming dogs, focusing on temperament, stress-related behaviors, handling tolerance, and adoptability.
- Develop and implement individualized training and behavior modification plans using LIMA-based, humane methods.
- Address common shelter behavior concerns including fear, reactivity, barrier frustration, leash skills, handling sensitivity, and kennel stress.
- Provide ongoing evaluation and adjust training plans based on length of stay, behavioral progress, and welfare indicators.
- Identify dogs who may be suitable candidates for advanced training programs or alternative placement pathways.

Welfare & Enrichment

- Design and implement enrichment plans to support mental and emotional well-being and reduce stress-related behaviors.
- Monitor daily welfare indicators and advocate for behavioral or environmental interventions when needed.
- Work closely with veterinary staff regarding behavioral health, medication considerations, and overall welfare.

- Ensure dogs maintain appropriate body condition and are physically and behaviorally supported during their shelter stay.

Shelter Operations & Collaboration

- Maintain detailed and accurate records of each dog's behavior, training progress, and evaluations in the shelter database.
- Collaborate with adoption, foster, and transfer teams to support appropriate placement decisions.
- Provide behavioral insights and recommendations to assist with adopter counseling and matchmaking.
- Support population management efforts by prioritizing training and behavior interventions that improve live outcomes.

Volunteer & Staff Support

- Train and mentor shelter staff and volunteers in safe handling, basic training techniques, and reading canine body language.
- Promote consistency in training and handling across all departments.
- Model professional, compassionate, and ethical animal care at all times.

Public Engagement & Professional Conduct

- Represent the organization professionally during public interactions, events, and educational opportunities.
- Communicate clearly, respectfully, and compassionately with adopters, volunteers, and community members.
- Adhere to organizational policies related to safety, infectious disease control, and animal welfare standards.

Training Philosophy & Compliance

- Maintain a thorough understanding of the LIMA training framework and ensure all training practices align with organizational and accreditation standards.
- Educate staff, volunteers, and foster caregivers on humane training principles and best practices.
- Remain current with evolving shelter behavior research and training methodologies.

Required Skills & Qualifications:

Minimum Skills:

- Minimum of 3 years of professional dog training experience, preferably in a shelter, rescue, or animal welfare environment.
- Demonstrated experience working with dogs exhibiting fear, anxiety, reactivity, and other stress-related behaviors.
- Strong knowledge of canine body language, learning theory, and humane training practices.
- Commitment to LIMA-based training methods.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced, high-volume environment.
- Excellent documentation and organizational skills.
- Professional demeanor with strong interpersonal and communication skills.
- Physical ability to walk 3–5 miles per day and handle medium to large dogs (60+ lbs) of varying breeds and temperaments.
- Willingness to adhere to all local laws regarding personally owned animals.

Additional Qualifications:

- Certification from a recognized professional organization (CPDT-KA, KPA, IAABC, CDBC, PPG, FearFree Certified Professional or equivalent).
- Experience working in an animal shelter or high-turnover animal care environment.



- Canine Good Citizen preparation group or individual class training experience a plus.
- Service dog and/or Therapy Dog training experience in PTSD, Psychiatric Service Dog, Mobility, Hearing, Facility Dog Training or experience with a certifying therapy dog agency such as Pet Partners or Therapy Dog International a plus.
- Degree, certification or continuing education in Applied Behavior Analysis, Ethology, Animal Science or a related field a plus.
- Knowledge of shelter medicine, infectious disease protocols, and cleaning/disinfection standards.
- Experience training volunteers or leading group instruction.
- Comfort with basic computer applications and shelter management software.
- Valid driver's license with a clean driving and criminal record.
- A positive, adaptable, and solution-oriented attitude.

Physical Demands & Work Environment:

- Frequent standing, walking, bending, kneeling, crouching, and physical engagement with dogs throughout the workday.
- Ability to safely handle multiple dogs daily, including dogs up to 100 pounds, on and off leash.
- Regular lifting and carrying of up to 50 pounds, including dog food, supplies, and equipment.
- Use of training tools and equipment including leashes, harnesses, clickers, and enrichment devices.
- Exposure to cleaning agents and disinfectants; ability to follow all safety and usage guidelines.
- Work is performed in kennels, outdoor play yards, training spaces, and public areas with varying noise levels and environmental conditions.
- This position requires regular operation of a company vehicle, generally 1–2 times per week. Candidates must have a valid driver's license and meet Liberty Dogs' requirements for driving company vehicles.

Compensation: \$32 - \$42 per hour

Why Join Liberty Dogs?

At Liberty Dogs Foundation, we live by a simple truth: We take care of those who have taken care of our great nation. This role is your opportunity to shape a program that will set a national standard in Veteran wellness and service dog partnerships—changing lives, one Veteran and one dog at a time.

How to Apply

Please visit our careers page at <https://libertydogs.bamboohr.com/careers/>. You can also visit our website at www.libertydogs.org.

We are an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability status, genetic information, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.