

PAWS WITH A CAUSE

Assistance & Facility Dogs



Foster Puppies in the Workplace

Introduction

Many foster puppy raisers take their puppies into the workplace. Some raisers take their puppies to work on a regular basis, others from time to time. It is important to remember that not all workplaces are suitable for puppies to be present, even if crated, and that employers in private enterprises have the right of refusal. If you are thinking of taking your puppy to work, this document provides some guidelines and considerations to facilitate the process for all stakeholders.

Permission

If you are thinking of taking your puppy to work, you need to get permission from your employer beforehand. When seeking permission, it is often helpful to share the mission of PAWS with your employer. Also, given that so many organizations are now proactive with corporate social responsibility programs, be sure to emphasize that this is a volunteer position that you are undertaking! If you need more general information about PAWS to share with your employer, please either visit our website at: www.pawswithacause.org, or reach out to the foster puppy team: (fosterpuppy@pawswithacause.org) who will be able to direct you to the right person at HQ to help with your inquiry.

Liability & Insurance

One of the questions most frequently asked by employers is “Who is liable if there is a puppy-related incident on our premises?” PAWS has a general liability insurance policy to cover its puppies for these eventualities. We will add your employer to our policy as an additional insured and will provide them with a Certificate of Liability. You will need to contact the foster puppy team: (fosterpuppy@pawswithacause.org) to arrange this.

Other Employer Related Concerns

Aside from liability and insurance, the most common employer concerns regarding taking puppies into the workplace are:

- **Will having the puppy with you at work negatively impact your productivity?**

This is where you will need to have a plan in mind for potty breaks etc and be able to demonstrate that having the puppy with you will only cause very minimal disruption to your daily work. From experience, the older the puppy, the easier they are to have around during the working day!

- **Will the puppy be a distraction for other employees?**

This is closely related to “Educating Your Coworkers” below. Initially there will, of course, be a small amount of distraction to others, but as your puppy becomes a familiar member of the work team, your coworkers will learn to ignore them. You will need to emphasize to your employer that the puppy is not there as entertainment for you or anybody else!

- **Other employees with allergies.**

This is a common concern and will need to be managed on a case-by-case basis. If you share office space with someone with an allergy, then taking your puppy to work may not be an option. If, however, there is someone in your building with an allergy, it may be possible to simply keep away from that person if their allergy is not too severe. Be prepared to compromise!

- **Health and safety considerations in high-risk areas.**

It maybe that you work in an environment that it is combination of office space and laboratories, manufacturing areas, or food preparation areas etc. If you work in the non-office space of such

a facility, most likely you will not be able to take your puppy to work due to health and safety concerns. However, if you normally work in the office space, then you will need to agree with your employer in advance which areas are off-limits for your puppy. If you regularly pass through such areas to get from your office to meetings etc, then your puppy may need to spend some time in a crate while you are at work. See “Practical Considerations” below.

Practical Considerations

Before you start taking your puppy into work, there are some practical considerations to work through. For example:

- Where will you take your puppy to break? How easy is it to get outside? If you work on the 20th floor and you have a young puppy that needs frequent breaks, this might take some serious planning!
- Will your puppy accompany you to meetings? To lunch? If you need to occasionally leave your puppy unattended, even for a few minutes, you will need to purchase a second crate for your office. Do you have room in your office for a crate? Is your puppy quiet in the crate?
- How will you deal with wet/muddy paws on bad weather days if your workplace is very clean and tidy?
- How will you carry training treats and clean-up kit around with you while you are at work? Treat pouches are not always ideal accessories with smart work clothes!

Educating Your Coworkers

Educating your coworkers can be one of the most challenging aspects of taking your puppy to work with you. However, it is also a great opportunity to talk to people about PAWS and assistance dogs in general. Who knows, maybe you will recruit some new volunteers or donors along the way!

Naturally, everyone is going to be very excited that a cute puppy is joining the team, so once you have permission to take your puppy to work, it may be a good idea to communicate with your coworkers and establish the rules and boundaries before you appear with a cute bundle of fluffiness!

Your coworkers will need to know that the puppy is coming to work to learn how to be calm and confident in a working environment, and that this is part of their training in preparation for a future working career. When your puppy is in your workplace with you, they need to stay focused on you and should not be distracted by your coworkers. You may want to explain the following to your coworkers:

- They must always ask permission to pet your puppy, and often the answer will be “no.” We do not want our puppies to learn to solicit attention from people as this could potentially be very dangerous for their future client.
- They must not distract your puppy by making kissy noises, using their name etc, as their attention needs to remain on you. As above, distracting an assistance dog could have serious consequences for their client.
- They must not feed your puppy anything unless you have given them permission. We do not allow our puppies to have people food or many of the treats that people allow for their pet dogs.
- Your puppy is not a corporate therapy dog! An added benefit of having a PAWS puppy in the workplace is that it can be a great morale booster for your coworkers. However, everyone needs to remember that the primary reason the puppy is there is to learn skills for their future job, and not to provide comfort and cuddles.

Your coworkers are helping to train your puppy by ignoring them and following the rules that you set.

Gradual Exposure For Your Puppy

Depending on your workplace, the hours you work, the age of your puppy, and their skill level, it may be a good plan to consider gradually introducing them to going to work with you.

Your workplace is going to initially be a very new and stimulating environment for your puppy, so expecting them to lie quietly under your desk for eight or more hours right off the bat is going to be too big of an ask!

Your puppy will not be issued with a cape until 16 weeks of age, so you will not be able to take them to work with you prior to that. Once they have reached 16 weeks of age, we would recommend waiting until your puppy has at least a couple of hours of duration

between potty breaks, so you are not popping outside every half an hour or risking accidents in the office. It is also a good idea to wait until your puppy has basic leash skills. It will make getting in, out, and around your place of work a lot easier!

Once you feel your puppy has good enough basic skills to go to work with you, we would strongly suggest building the exposure up gradually. So maybe the first week, take them in for a couple of half-days when you don't have a busy schedule. Then the next week, try a whole day, and then if that's successful for both of you, go from there. It may also be a good idea to avoid taking your puppy into the workplace at times when the environment is too busy, for example during Holiday season or busy working times of the year.

Conclusion

Taking your puppy to work with you can provide great exposure for them, can be a rewarding experience for you, and provide wonderful opportunities to spread the word about PAWS and assistance dogs.

There are many things to take into consideration before you take your puppy to work and if you need guidance with any of these points, please contact our foster puppy team (fosterpuppy@pawswithacause.org) who will be able to answer any questions you have.

