Guidelines for authorisation to certify disability assist dogs
under the Dog Control Act 1996
Introduction

The Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) provides for the authorisation of organisations to certify disability assist dogs. These dogs, which are trained (or in training) to assist a person with a disability, may legally enter any public place or premises registered under regulations made under section 120 of the Health Act 1956.

For an organisation to be authorised to certify disability assist dogs, it needs to be either listed in the Act\(^1\), or authorised under the Act. These guidelines help organisations apply for authorisation.

Legislation

The Minister of Local Government (the Minister) may recommend that the Governor-General authorise (by Order in Council under section 78D of the Act) further organisations to certify dogs as disability assist dogs. The Minister must consult with the Minister for Disability Issues before making a recommendation.

The Department of Internal Affairs (the Department) provides advice to the Minister when considering an application to help him make an informed decision.

Criteria for authorising organisations

The Minister may take into account the following criteria before deciding to make a recommendation to the Governor-General:

- there is a need for the organisation’s disability assist dog service;
- the organisation will have appropriate training practices and resources, and support for clients; and
- the organisation has a legal, management and governance structure that will ensure it can perform its role.

These criteria take into account the ongoing viability of the organisation, the quality of its service, and its accountability to its clients.

Required information

Your application should include:

- a letter outlining the purpose of the organisation, its functions and facilities, why clients will need assistance from disability assist dogs with exemptions for working in public places, and how the organisation will provide this assistance;
- the organisation’s legal name;
- other names (if any) it is known by;
- contact person/s for the application and contact details;
- evidence of the organisation’s status as a legal entity;
- evidence of training standards and criteria for dogs working in public places, with use of humane training methods. See Assistance Dogs International’s minimum standards for assistance dogs in public at: [www.assistancedogsinternational.org](http://www.assistancedogsinternational.org) for best practice guidance;
- evidence of policies to assess clients’ need and ability to manage a specially trained disability assist dog, and to ensure suitable dogs are matched to clients;
- evidence of ongoing training, testing, support and follow-up procedures for clients and dogs, including the removal of certification as a disability assist dog as required; and
- documents that set out how the organisation is governed and operates. Relevant documents could be a constitution, plans, reports, rules, trust deed or charter.

---

1 Organisations currently listed in section two of the Act that are authorised to certify dogs as disability assist dogs are: Hearing Dogs for Deaf People New Zealand, Mobility Assistance Dogs Trust, New Zealand Epilepsy Assist Dogs Trust, Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, and Top Dog Companion Trust (now defunct).
Additional evidence

Along with the information listed above, the following additional information will help assess the extent to which the application meets the criteria.

**Criterion 1: There is a need for the organisation’s dogs**

Possible evidence includes:

- how dogs will assist their partners, particularly in public places; and
- the demand for dogs in the community. This could include letters or emails from interested clients, statistics, etc.

**Criterion 2: The organisation will have appropriate training practices and resources, and support for clients**

Possible evidence includes:

- endorsement/s of the organisation’s training practices by appropriate organisations or individuals (with contact information for verification);
- documentation outlining the qualifications and experience of the organisation’s dog trainers, which are relevant to training dogs to work in public places;
- a procedure for evaluating and supervising staff;
- documentation showing that the organisation has or will have a reliable supply of dogs for training. This could include a breeding and puppy-raising programme or policies to procure suitable adult dogs;
- an identifying coat or harness and/or identification card for certified partnerships or trainee dogs;
- a policy for re-homing dogs that, in the course of being trained, do not meet the requirements for becoming disability assist dogs;
- a policy for re-homing dogs that are disability assist dogs, but because of illness, injury or old age are no longer able to continue to function as disability assist dogs;
- the quality of the organisation’s services – this could include feedback, audit, review, evaluation etc; and
- full or provisional membership with Assistance Dogs International, the International Guide Dog Federation or equivalent best-practice assistance dog organisation.

**Criterion 3: The organisation has an appropriate legal, management and governance structure**

Possible evidence includes:

- registration with the Charities Commission. If the organisation is not a charitable entity, documentation showing the organisation has effective governance and management. This could include information in addition to your governing documents such as a list of trustees or board members and their expertise;
- sources of the organisation’s funds; and
- documentation showing the organisation has a procedure to consider feedback and complaints from clients and staff, and staff performance evaluation practices.
Consideration of applications

Contact information

A request for accreditation and attached information should be sent to:

The Department of Internal Affairs
Local Government Services
PO Box 805
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Notification

The Department will confirm receipt of the application and may request additional information or clarification.

Information analysis

In considering an application, where necessary the Department will seek advice from the Office for Disability Issues, disability sector groups and interested animal groups before providing advice to the Minister. As each application is likely to have different evaluation needs, the time taken to process each application may vary.

Decision on authorisation

The Minister makes the final decision on whether to recommend that the Governor-General authorise an organisation in the Act, whether or not the organisation meets the criteria listed above. After the Minister has considered the application, and advice from the Minister for Disability Issues and the Department, the Minister or the Department will notify the applicant of the decision.

Ongoing monitoring of organisations

The Department administers the Dog Control Act 1996, and can therefore monitor authorised organisations to ensure that they continue to operate to a sufficient standard. The Governor-General may remove an organisation from the Act upon advice from the Minister that an authorised organisation is no longer operating to a sufficient standard.