

While mindDog has no age limits on our potential clients there are a few practical things to bear in mind.

mindDogs are not a universal solution.

A mindDog will not solve your child's problems. It is not unusual for a parent to discover mindDog and see us as a solution and sometimes we can be. But having a mindDog for a child or young person needs very careful consideration.

mindDogs work because of the Bond that is developed between the dog and their human handler. If the child doesn't really like dogs or shows no interest in them, they are not going to be a suitable candidate for a mindDog.

Similarly, a child who is angry or violent would not be a suitable mindDog candidate.

The dog needs to sleep with the child.

For the mindDog to do her job, she needs to understand and recognise changes in your child's physiology. The quickest way to forge this Bond is to sleep together. Some children will love this. Others may be repelled by it. A neurodivergent or autistic child who has difficulty with touch or different textures may find the physicality of a dog next to them to be unbearable.

Teenagers often have problems with not fitting in or being seen as different by their peers.

mindDogs draw public attention. Strangers will try and pet them, they will ask intrusive questions of the handler and will often be rude. A young person who is easily embarrassed or who fears being noticed is not going to be a suitable mindDog candidate.

The child must be physically able to hold the lead and do the training. They must be deeply involved in the everyday care of the dog. Training is regular and ongoing for the working life of the dog which can be 8 — 12 years.

Training records must be regularly submitted to mindDog. It requires focus and commitment and is not something that the parent can do for them. The child must also understand the force free trust-based training philosophy which mindDog insists upon. Again, the parent cannot do the training.

While the law allows assistance dogs to go to school with their handler, mindDog (with very rare exceptions) does not. The noisy chaotic environment of a school can become very stressful for the dog. The interactions with teachers and other students can interfere with the mindDog's training and induce stress. The mindDog's training will deteriorate in the school environment. However, a mindDog can successfully be part of the drop off and pick up process for a school student.

These are all things which a parent needs to consider before making a mindDog application on their child's behalf. Please talk to us before you make that decision.

If you already have a family dog then we suggest you work with a mindDog trainer for six months to see whether the child can fulfill their obligations and then make an application. We can put you in contact with an appropriate mindDog trainer. Please see training report to be submitted with application below.

For some children a mindDog can be great but careful thinking needs to be done before an application is made.



Applicant Requirements

Minors (under the age of 18 years) applying for the mindDog program must work with a mindDog approved trainer for a minimum of six months. This document serves as a record of the training progress and must be signed off by the trainer before submission, with the application form.

Goals to Achieve

Basic Obedience & Handling

Recall, sit, stay

Loose lead walking

Teaching the dog to go to a designated mat

Public Access Preparation

Visiting pet-friendly locations (Bunnings, Pet Barn, Pet Stock, outdoor cafés)

Walking past other dogs on a lead

Sitting calmly out of the way at a table

Environmental Exposure & Socialisation

Navigating crowded areas with distractions

Exposure to public areas

Bonding & Support

The child must be physically capable of holding the lead and participating in training

The dog should sleep in the same room as the child to strengthen their bond

Regular care and handling of the dog must be performed by the child, not the parent

Videos to be provided of:

Loose lead walking

Walking past other dogs on a lead

Walking dog in a busy area

Additional Training Undertaken

To be completed by the applicant and trainer detailing any extra training beyond the core requirements. Note below.

This form must be signed by a mindDog approved trainer and submitted, alongside the application form to show that the team is ready to apply for mindDog.

Trainer's Name _____

Trainer's Signature _____

Date Signed _____