

mindDogs in the Workplace

Introducing an employee with an mindDog/ assistance dog to the workplace requires careful planning and communication to ensure a smooth transition and a supportive environment. Here are some steps you can take:

Understand Legal Requirements

Familiarise yourself with the national law regarding assistance animals in the workplace. mindDogs are protected by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 this is Federal Law and supersedes ALL state laws, including the Queensland Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. The QLD legislation does make mention that you can also work under the DDA. mindDog are also protected by the Human Rights Commission.

Open Communication/Zoom Meeting with Management, Employee & mindDog

Discuss the situation with the employee in advance. Understand their needs, preferences, and any specific requirements related to their assistance dog.

Workplace Walkthrough with mindDog Assessor and/or Representative

The employee and their mindDog should be able to do a walkthrough assessment with their assessor or a mindDog representative present. This is to determine that the workplace is a safe environment for the mindDog and that there are areas accessible for toileting breaks for the mindDog etc.

Inform Colleagues

Communicate with other employees about the new team member and their assistance dog. This could include an announcement, an email, or a meeting to raise awareness and address any concerns. mindDog can also organise a zoom meeting where all employees can attend and raise any questions or concerns.

Designate a Point of Contact (POC)

Designate a point of contact (POC) within the organisation to manage questions or concerns related to the employee and their assistance dog. This person can be a resource for both the employee and their colleagues. mindDog can also provide information for the Point of Contact (POC).

Training and Education

Provide training for employees about assistance animals, their purpose, and appropriate behaviour around them. This can help dispel misconceptions and create a more inclusive workplace. mindDog can supply information sheets to assist with this.

Create a Welcoming Environment

Ensure that the physical workplace is accommodating for the employee and their assistance dog. This may involve making adjustments to the workspace or providing specific accommodations.

Establish Ground Rules

Set clear guidelines for the behaviour of the assistance dog in the workplace. This may include rules about where the dog can go, where they can take breaks. The assistance dog can go into the Staff lunch room/ cafeteria. In the case of a hospital the dog can not go into laboratories or sterile rooms.

Health and Safety Considerations

Address any health and safety concerns related to the presence of the assistance dog. This includes considerations for colleagues who may have allergies or fear of dogs.

Provide Resources

mindDog can offer resources to employees who may not be familiar with assistance dogs. This can help foster understanding and support.

Evaluate and Adjust

Regularly check in with the employee and your team to evaluate how things are going. Be open to feedback and make adjustments as needed to ensure a positive and inclusive work environment.

Confidentiality

Respect the privacy of the employee and avoid discussing their disability or the need for an assistance dog unless they have given explicit permission. Mental Health is the invisible disability.

Remember that each situation is unique, and flexibility is key. By taking these steps, you can help create an inclusive and supportive workplace for both the employee and their assistance dog.

