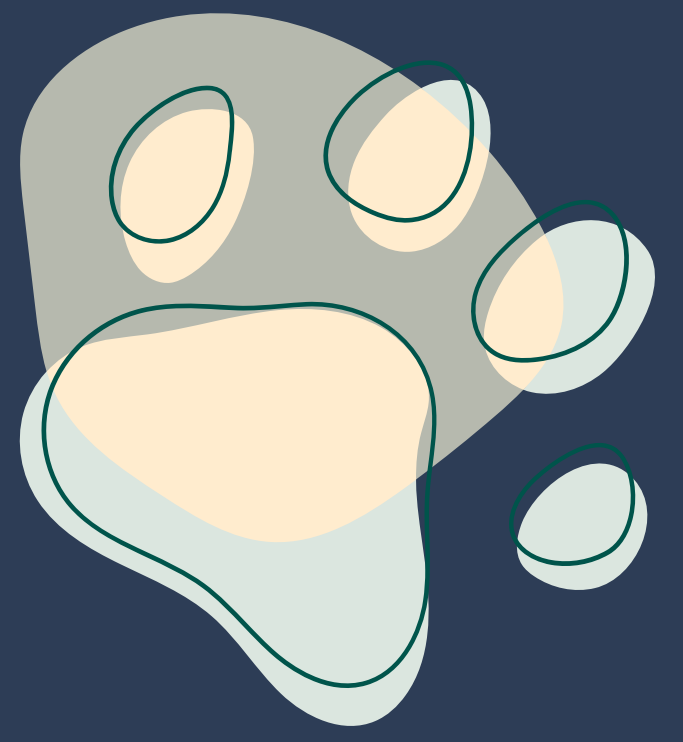


ASSISTIVE K9S – THERAPY DOG TRAINING PATHWAY



At Assistive K9s, we take pride in developing therapy dogs who not only excel in their working roles, but who are also able to switch off, relax, and enjoy life as much-loved members of the family. We place great importance on maintaining a clear and an off-duty personality, ensuring every dog is confident, resilient, and able to thrive both inside and outside the workplace.

Our program supports dogs working in a wide range of roles, including school therapy dogs, aged care companions, healthcare and allied health support dogs, and corporate or workplace wellbeing dogs. Each pathway is tailored to suit the handler's context and the dog's temperament, while always protecting the dog's wellbeing.

Each stage builds on the last, supporting your dog's growth while strengthening your partnership as a team. Training is always paced carefully to avoid stress or burnout, and to create a sustainable, positive working future for your therapy dog.

STAGE 1 : PUPPY FOUNDATIONS (IF APPLICABLE)

- Building resilience, confidence, and curiosity in your puppy.
- Developing early learning skills and positive habits.
- Introducing the world at a gentle pace to avoid stress or overwhelm.
- Encouraging trust, bonding, and a strong relationship between dog and handler.
- By the end of this stage, you will have a clearer idea of whether your puppy is suited to continue in the program.

STAGE 2: FUNDAMENTALS

- Establishing everyday obedience and good manners.
- Developing strong communication between handler and dog.
- Building the basic skills that will form the foundation for therapy-specific work.
- Early introduction of settle skills and impulse control in safe environments.
- At this stage, we also begin to explore your workplace context and your dog's potential fit for a therapy role.

STAGE 3 : DOG-FRIENDLY PUBLIC SPACES & CONTROLLED INTRODUCTIONS

- Training in dog-friendly public places (such as pet-friendly shops, cafes, and community areas).
- Reinforcing settle, focus, and impulse control in higher-distraction environments where dogs are legally allowed.
- Carefully managed after-hours or low-pressure workplace introductions, supervised by a trainer.
- Examples: meeting staff, walking through facilities when clients are not present.
- Building resilience and confidence without pressure, ensuring your dog develops the reliability needed for future workplace sessions.

STAGE 4: WORKPLACE ROUTINE & EARLY VISITS

- Introduction of your dog into your workplace routine, with trainer supervision.
- Short, structured sessions with clients, introduced gradually and in a controlled way.
- Providing your workplace with support tools, including:
 - An incident recording book
 - “How to Interact with the Dog” guidelines for staff, clients, and visitors
- Focus on maintaining balance and wellbeing — ensuring your dog has clear downtime alongside their work.
- Independent visits may begin once your dog has shown consistent calmness and reliability under supervision, and both handler and trainer agree readiness is achieved.

STAGE 5: ADVANCED WORKPLACE & THERAPY TASKS

- Developing therapy-specific tasks suited to your workplace and client group.
- Expanding your dog’s skills to include structured, goal-oriented interactions.
- Strengthening resilience, confidence, and role-specific behaviours to prevent overwork or burnout.
- Tailoring tasks to your dog’s strengths and your workplace’s needs.

STAGE 6: ACCREDITATION

- Accreditation requires the successful completion of three separate assessments over your first year of workplace practice.
- These assessments confirm your dog’s welfare, skill reliability, and overall suitability for ongoing therapy work.
- Once fully signed off, your dog is accredited as a certified therapy dog through Assistive K9s.

STAGE 7: ONGOING MAINTENANCE & SUPPORT

Accreditation is not the end of the journey — ongoing support ensures your therapy dog remains happy, healthy, and reliable in their role. This includes:

- Six-monthly check-ins with Assistive K9s (minimum) to discuss progress, wellbeing, and any challenges.
- Annual reassessments (lighter in scope) to confirm welfare, behaviour, and workplace suitability.
- Access to guidance and support whenever needed — whether for changes in workplace environment, emerging behaviour concerns, preparing for a major transition, or simply needing reassurance.

This pathway is designed to ensure every therapy dog works in a way that is safe, ethical, and sustainable. Our goal is to create teams that are not only skilled and reliable in their work, but also balanced, happy, and resilient in their everyday lives.

Therapy work can be busy and emotionally demanding, which is why our program emphasises your dog’s wellbeing, mental health, and off-duty life as much as their professional skills.

You and your dog are supported through every stage of the journey. Training is never rushed, and progress is tailored to your needs. From early foundations to accreditation and beyond, Assistive K9s is here to guide you, celebrate your successes, and provide support whenever you need it.

By following this pathway, your therapy dog will be well-prepared to support others while also enjoying a fulfilling life at home. The result is a partnership built on trust, respect, and care — one that benefits you, your dog, and the people you work with.