



AUTISM ASSISTANCE DOGS



4 Paws for Ability was the first service dog agency in the United States to begin placing highly skilled Autism Assistance Dogs, and the first agency known to place assistance dogs with tracking skills. *4 Paws* is proud to be the Autism Assistance Dog Program most recognized by national Autism organizations.

4 Paws provides the highest quality dogs to every child that applies. Unlike almost every other agency, we do not pick and choose which child will get a dog. As long as the child's physician approves the dog, and it is safe to place a dog in the home, no family is turned away. We continue our services with no long waiting lists, and always "pawtner" with our families to provide the autism service dog their child needs.

Search and Rescue

As parents of children with autism know, autism presents even more unique challenges than other more prevalent disabilities. One of those challenges is the tendency of their children to wander away. Parents often refer to them as "Houdini", stating their children are able to escape from even the most secured environment. When this happens, the child may be in a life-threatening situation, especially if they are already out of sight of their caregiver. **A 4 Paws Autism Assistance Dog is trained in search and rescue, and quickly leads the adult to the**



missing child by following the scent of dead skin cells released from the body as the child runs away.

According to the June 2014 *National Geographic Magazine*, a dog's extraordinary sense of smell is up to 100,000 times more acute than a human's is. That is already evident when we take our pet dog for a walk and notice the intense sniffing that dogs do. National Geographic states, "Sniffing up to five times a second, a dog constantly surveys its surroundings, and even knows through which nostril it detects a scent." At *4 Paws*, we are using the natural ability of a dog's nose to save children's lives.

Tethering

Another safety measure that some parents choose to use is to tether their child to the dog from the dog's harness to the child's belt loop. Parents hold a leash attached to the dog to stop the dog, using basic obedience commands. In this manner, parents may engage in tasks such as paying for groceries without the fear their child will disappear in the few moments it takes to do this. Parents can ask the dog to either "stop" momentarily, or "stop and sit down" when more time is needed.

Behavior Disruption—Touch, Lap, Nuzzle, Kiss

A 4 Paws Autism Assistance Dog is also specifically trained to interrupt self-injurious behaviors that parents tell us their children engage in, such as head banging for example. Parents send videos of their children to our trainers so the trainers can observe and then emulate those behaviors while a child's dog is being trained. Our dogs are trained to touch, lap, nuzzle, or kiss the child in order to try to redirect the self-injurious behaviors, reduce meltdowns, and decrease overall anxiety a child may experience in public or new situations.

Parents that have received 4 Paws Autism Assistance Dogs for their children have reported many positive, success stories. One is about Ben and his Autism Assistance Dog, Dublin, as told by his mom.

"When Dublin joined our family, he became a true friend for our Ben. He is someone who loves Ben for everything he is and everything he's not; he's someone who wants nothing more than for Ben to be happy, joy-filled, and loving. Well, that and a Pup-Peroni every once in awhile!

"Life is definitely better with Dublin in it. We take a family trip to Disney World every year, and this year was the first time Ben didn't get lost during a trip; we credit that to Dublin staying with him and keeping him safe. Dublin rides the bus to and from school every day and has gladly accepted the job of keeping Ben awake during school hours—usually by licking his face!

"We live a crazy life, but Dublin fits into our family perfectly because he simply wants Ben to have all the same things we want him to have. It's hard to imagine life without our Dublin!"



More stories can be found on the 4 Paws website by going to <http://4pawsforability.org/autism-assistance-dog/>

To learn more, make a donation, or apply for *your* child, please visit <http://www.4pawsforability.org>.