

SERVICE DOG TRAINING

Application Process

*Yoopers Service Dogs (YSD) does not train therapy dogs (for groups of people) or for total blindness.
Web addresses are case sensitive.*

***We will not be opening applications this Spring (2025).
Please check back in the Spring of 2026.***

YSD typically accepts new applications each spring. If there's room in training, applications sometimes open in the winter as well.

Like or Follow our [Facebook page](#) to be notified when applications open.
Join our [Handlers group](#) on Facebook for early access to the application.

Applying for Training

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Things to Know Before You Begin

Travel: Training is generally conducted in the Rapid River and Escanaba, MI areas. You will need reliable transportation to this area at least every other week for up to two years to complete training.

\$100 Deposit: YSD breaks this deposit into two increments. We require the first \$50 deposit with your application (Step 3), and the second \$50 deposit upon completing Level 1 training (can be as soon as 3-5 months into training). Start saving or planning for this now. The deposit is not intended to trap you in training, only to ensure communication and make sure laws and standards are followed. If you choose to leave training during Level 1 (without any misconduct), the deposit is refunded.

Cost: Training is \$20 per month or \$100 per six months (\$20 discount). This includes two to four, 2-hour training sessions per month, and access to training help via phone, internet, email, etc. during the week. If finances will be an issue, ask us about other options that may be available for you.

Note: Service dog training can take anywhere from 15 months to two years to complete depending on the disability(s), the dog's needs, and especially how much work the client does with the dog at home. The average length of training is 18 months. Eighteen months of training would be a fee total of \$360 or \$300 with the discount.

Please keep in mind the fees charged for basic obedience training (as of Sep 2023):

- [Petsmart](#), Marquette: 4 weeks of obedience training \$99¹
- [Bay de Noc Kennel Club](#), Escanaba: 4 weeks of obedience training \$83²
- [Yoopers Service Dogs](#), Rapid River: two months of training, 4-8 sessions \$40

And fees charged by other service dog organizations (cost per dog as of Nov 2017):

- [Capable Canines of Wisconsin](#) (fundraising may lower cost) \$8,000 - \$25,000
- [4 Paws for Ability](#), Ohio \$17,000
- [Yoopers Service Dogs](#) (based on a training time of 2 years with no discounts) \$480

We're doing what we can to ensure training is financially accessible and that our operations are sustainable to continue helping those in need for years to come.

*Note: **Paws With A Cause** (near Grand Rapids, MI) provides service dogs to Yoopers at no charge for [some disabilities](#). Go to their [website](#) or contact their field representative to get started.*

Paws' U.P. Field Representative: Andrew Bek abek@thebekgroup.com / 906-869-8453

Dog: If you haven't bought a dog yet, DON'T! Wait until you know how you will train the dog. Most organizations will not train a dog you already have. Once you decide on an organization, contact that organization to see if you should get a dog or not. For YSD, you will be placed with a dog during the application process so we can make sure the dog will suit your disability needs.

¹ Petsmart: 6 classes is \$149, which mathematically comes out to \$99.33 for four classes

² Kennel Club: Based on their 6 class rate (\$125), which comes out to \$88.33 for 4 classes.

If you already have a dog, we will temperament test it to ensure this. We recommend new dogs are at least 40 lbs (adult weight) and are less than 2 years old.

Do NOT use online registration sites; they have no legal or practical use.

*Note: Due to COVID-19, the availability of dogs has been unpredictable. The search for a dog after applying may take as long as a year, so there will be a lag between applying and starting training. **We discourage you from getting a dog completely on your own.** For safety and ethical reasons, we cannot train dogs that do not pass the temperament test. Since 85-90% fail this test, getting a dog on your own often means needing to rehome it, which is difficult for you and the dog.*

Training Required to Start: Dogs beginning our training are required to be housebroken and have reliable basic obedience training (at least sit, down, and stay for 3 seconds). This can be done through an obedience trainer or by the owner. We cannot give in person help for this, but can offer limited help by phone and internet if needed. To apply for training, there is no minimum age for the dog (i.e. the dog could be 5 weeks old when you first apply).

Please allow up to two weeks for us to respond to forms, paperwork, or other information you submit. If you do not hear from us within two weeks of us receiving your submission, please call or email us to check the status: 906-553-2347 / YoooperServiceDogs@gmail.com.

Note: The application links below will not work properly if we are not currently taking applications. Please see the bold red text at the beginning of this document for information on when applications open.

1. Professional Organizations

Yoooper Service Dogs (YSD) does not have a certified service dog trainer. This will not affect the legality of your service dog. However, for this reason and to keep our resources up to date, we ask that you first contact several professional organizations for assistance. You can find our list of known organizations here [<goo.gl/O48bB4>](https://goo.gl/O48bB4). You can find our *Guide to Getting a Service Dog* here [<goo.gl/XpTqvp>](https://goo.gl/XpTqvp). If you have any problems or questions when working with other organizations, feel free to contact us for assistance or clarification (contact info at end).

\$\$ Note: For every service dog organization you review, you will get \$5 off of training fees. The organization must specifically train for service animals. There is no limit to how many you can review, but reviews must have substance and be meaningful to others who need a dog trained.

2. Organization Review & Screening Form

If you could not find an organization willing or able to assist you, fill out our [Organization Review](#) to help others who are looking for service dog services in the U.P. The review form will then take you to the Screening Questionnaire (if we're currently taking applications).

This is the first step to apply for YSD's training, and it will help us determine if you'd be a good fit for our program. YSD cannot train for all disabilities or situations. The Screening

Questionnaire is only accessible during the times specified in red at the beginning of this document.

*This is where you'll review any organizations you contacted in Step 1 to get your \$5 off.
Be sure to tell us you did this at Orientation so we can find your review in the system and apply your discount.*

3. Application

Upon receiving your Screening Questionnaire, YSD will contact you before proceeding if we have questions. If not, we'll email you our Application for you to print and mail to us with your first \$50 deposit (checks payable to Yooper Service Dogs).

You won't have a spot reserved in training until we receive your application and \$50 deposit.

4. Paperwork

After receiving your application, we will either determine you should move forward or we'll contact you for more information. If it's determined that you will move forward, we'll email you. At this time, you will be expected to review our [Service Dog Introduction](#) and list of possible [service dog tasks](#) before Orientation (Step 5). Begin considering what tasks you may want your dog to do for you. You don't need to already know what tasks, just have started considering it. Please have questions about these documents ready for Orientation (Step 5). We will also provide our Deposit Agreement and Training Agreement for you to preview if you like before signing them at Orientation. You do not need to print these agreements. Feel free to contact us before Orientation if you have questions about any of these documents.

To prepare for the next step, you will need to have the following ready:

- \$20 for first month of training, or \$100 if paying for six months (discounted rate)
Cash or check made out to Yooper Service Dogs. If you leave training early for any reason, unused training fees are refunded.
- Dog's vaccination records if applicable (rabies, distemper, & parvo are required when the dog is old enough)
- The person in need of the dog (if not you)
- Your questions about any of the paperwork
- Your questions about what tasks your dog could be trained to perform
- *Do not bring your dog unless requested*

Once you have all of these items prepared and have reviewed the paperwork from Step 4, please email YSD to set up an appointment for Step 5: Orientation.

YooperServiceDogs@gmail.com

5. Orientation

Once you've prepared all the items listed in Step 4, we'll schedule this one-on-one meeting with the trainer to complete paperwork and discuss the needs of you and your dog (if applicable). Plan about three hours for Orientation in Rapid River.

Bringing Guests

You're encouraged to bring your spouse, caregiver, or other adult that lives with you. However, please do not bring more than one guest (no kids). In the case of a child with a disability, both parents are encouraged to attend. If you do not feel you can speak openly about your struggles in front of someone, please *do not invite them to Orientation*.

Discussion

Disabilities. It is important that Katie understands your disabilities and how they affect your life. Since Katie cannot be an expert in all disabilities, this discussion is a crucial step. This information is kept confidential and is not shared outside of YSD staff.

Dog. If you already have a pet dog you'd like to train, Katie will discuss the dog's background, behavior, current amount of training, and quirks. As a general rule, dogs training for service work should have a healthy adult weight of at least 40 lbs and be less than two years old. Exceptions are sometimes made as the circumstances dictate. **To start training, the dog must be at least four months old, potty trained, and know basic obedience (sit, down, and stay for 3 seconds).** Please do not bring the dog to Orientation unless requested.

If you do not have a dog, Katie will discuss your needs in order to determine what breeds, size, temperament, etc. would best fit your needs and living situation.

Paperwork

If Katie feels you are a good fit for our program, we will fill out the paperwork and get you started. We'll discuss any questions you have. It is very important that you understand YSD standards and continue to ask questions as they arise. YSD's Training Agreement and Deposit Agreement (provided for preview in Step 4) will be discussed before you sign them.

Foundational Classes

Katie will explain YSD's training structure so you'll know what to expect. Katie will also discuss what kind of rewards to use and how/why to keep a training log, which you will need to bring to all training sessions. You will need to prepare your training log before the first day of training.

If you do not have a dog you'd like to train, continue to Step 6.

If you do have a dog you'd like to train, skip to Step 7.

6. Dog Search *(if you don't already have a pet dog to train)*

From the information gathered at Orientation, YSD will begin searching for dogs that fit your needs. Be patient. The best dog for you is not usually the first one you meet.

Note: COVID has made the amount of available, qualified dogs unpredictable. The dog search may take in the vicinity of a year. However, we can't know how this will shift in these times. As things return to normal, the available dogs may jump suddenly.

Temperament Testing

Upon finding a possible candidate, YSD will temperament test the dog before you purchase. This test helps ensure that the dog will be happy and healthy doing service work, but it's important to understand that temperament testing is not a magic formula. While it tremendously improves your chances of success, it cannot guarantee that the dog will work out. (If you already have a dog, the temperament test will be done on the first day of training.)

7. Entrance Quiz

After Orientation or finding a dog, you will be given directions to take our short Entrance Quiz. This is "open book" so to speak, and does not have a time limit. It will cover the Service Dog Introduction and YSD rules and standards covered during Orientation. You can take it as many times as needed. Katie is also available between attempts to answer questions and clarify concerns (contact information at end). Difficulty with this quiz has no bearing on your acceptance into the program. You have already been accepted.

8. First Day of Training

Katie must receive these items BEFORE you can attend the first day of training:

You will not be able to bring them the first day; it must be before.

- *First \$50 Training Deposit (sent in with application)*
- *\$20 for first month of training, or \$100 if paying for six months (cash or check paid at Orientation)*
- *Copy of dog's current vaccination records (at Orientation, unless age waiver)*
- *Training Agreement signed (at Orientation)*
- *Deposit Agreement signed (at Orientation)*
- *Entrance Quiz completed and passed (done online)*

Upon providing the items above, you'll be told when your first Level 1 training session will be. When possible, your first day of training will be one-on-one. Katie will verify your dog's current training and conduct a temperament test (unless already done).

On the first day of training:

- *Bring your training log*
- *Bring your dog and an appropriate leash: generally 6 foot long or less. No retractable leashes.*
- *Training treats and treat bag*
- *Your dog must be able to perform a minimum of sit, down, and stay for 3 seconds*

Temperament Testing

For pet dogs, a temperament test will be conducted. For dogs purchased with YSD's guidance, a test was already done before purchase.

Verify Training

Katie will ask to see the dog perform the required commands: sit, down, and stay for 3 seconds. If the dog cannot perform these, you may be asked to return when the dog knows them. Katie will take the dog's new surroundings into account when performing the test.

Begin Training

Training sessions are in small groups (no more than three teams). Katie will introduce you to your fellow students, then go right into training.

Contact Us <goo.gl/4tr1sl>

Phone: 906-553-2347 (before 5 pm ET) / <YooperserviceDogs@gmail.com>

Facebook: Yooper Service Dogs page <facebook.com/YSDRapid>

Yooper Service Dogs - Handlers group <facebook.com/groups/YSDHandlers>

Links not working? Please [email](#) us and let us know.