



Service Dog Neurological Disorders

Neurological Service Dogs (Dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's, Brain Injury, Lupus)

Diseases involving the nervous system are devastating to the individual and their families. In certain diagnosis such as **Dementia, Alzheimer's, Huntington's**, etc. the disease is progressive. Over time the individual loses control of their arms and legs (as a result of the destruction of the nerves). Additionally, thought processes become progressively impaired as the disease advances. The person's safety becomes increasingly at risk related to the disease. The individual may:

- Leave the stove on
- Leave water running
- Become more prone to falling and unable to get up
- Wandering and becoming lost

Day to day tasks become more overwhelming as the individual can experience:

- Disorientation
- Mood swings
- Forget where items are located
- Forget how to do simple tasks
- Forget to take medication

The care giving tasks become increasingly needed from the person's friends and family. Such care can be expensive or if separated from loved ones, unavailable. The goal of the service dog for these individuals is to keep them as independent as long as possible. Statistically once a service dog is placed, the individual is able to stay out of assisted living (nursing homes) an average of 3 years longer. This is a substantial savings annually. Being able to stay in one's home longer and with greater independence is priceless.

Another category of neurological disorders are those which are non-progressive. A few examples are:



- a). **Brain Damage (chemical or organic)**
- b). **Stroke**
- c). **Down Syndrome**
- d). **Brain Tumor**

Individuals experiencing these type of diagnosis can have a wide range of symptoms. They may struggle with:

1. Balance
2. Confusion
3. Disorientation
4. Communication Difficulties
5. Physical Symptoms

The goal of the service dog for such persons is to aid them in achieving as much independence as possible. Service dogs also offer companionship, decrease isolation and improve physical mobility.

Though the range of illnesses involving the brain is expansive, there are a few key symptoms that cross nearly all neurological diseases. Animals Deserve Better, Inc., in the last three months of training, customize tasks for each dog to the client’s specific needs.

Symptom	Service Dog Response
Cognitive (poor decision making, environmental safety issues)	Alert to hazards, alert to client leaving home, alert to night awakenings
Perceptual (decrease function of five senses, decrease balance)	Guide on stairs, balance, assist with rising and sitting
Physical (headaches, fatigue, tremors, decrease sleep)	Retrieve items, retrieve medication, snuggle, lean, deep pressure
Emotional/Behavioural (irritability, mood swings, aggression)	Snuggle, touch, companionship, increase independence, distraction

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us by mail or phone: