



Thank you for your interest in volunteering for **Puppies Behind Bars**. You must be at least 18 years old and must live in New York City or within 45 minutes of one of our correctional facilities in New York or New Jersey to participate as a “puppy sitter.”

**Please note the following considerations:**

It is important that our prospective volunteers understand that this is a serious commitment to a challenging and, at times, exhausting volunteer program. Since we trust our volunteers with a live being, we expect that you uphold your commitment to the program, meaning you “puppy sit” for at least one overnight or two day-trips per month for one year. If you do not follow through you will become inactive and may no longer puppy sit. We are very strict with this guideline, so please take this into consideration before committing to the program.

Many of our puppies are energetic and very strong. They pull on lead, they may bark during the night, they could have an “accident” on your living room rug – it is not always easy! This is a rewarding opportunity, but you must understand the less glamorous details before you commit your time. Give serious consideration before committing, so Puppies Behind Bars and you as a volunteer are both satisfied.

As a volunteer, you must agree to do all of the following:

- Attend the required training sessions for the correctional facility from which you will take out puppies. You must live in Manhattan or Brooklyn, or within **45 minutes** from one of these facilities. Our correctional facility locations are:

**Bedford Hills** (Bedford Hills, NY)

**Downstate** (Beacon, NY)

**Edna Mahan** (Clinton, NJ)

**Fishkill** (Beacon, NY)

**Otisville** (Middletown, NY)

**Wallkill** (Wallkill, NY)

- Training sessions for the above facilities are held on weekday evenings, typically from 6 to 9:00pm. For New York City volunteers, training sessions are held on the weekend, typically from 11am to 2pm. All training sessions are done in two parts, which means you will be asked to attend both trainings in order to be made an active volunteer.
- New York City volunteers train at our midtown office and take puppies from our weekend shuttle, which drives puppies into Manhattan every weekend. New York City volunteers commit to hosting a puppy one (1) weekend a month in their home from mid-morning Saturday until mid-afternoon

Sunday (people that do not meet this commitment will become inactive – no exceptions.) NYC training is only open to those who reside in Manhattan and Brooklyn, NY.

- Please note that our dogs may not be taken on the subway, on PATH trains, or on the ferry, so New York City volunteers who do not live within walking distance of the midtown shuttle must be willing to ride a city bus with our pup or drive to and from the shuttle location (our dogs are permitted to ride in buses, taxis, or private vehicles.)
- New York City volunteers may also participate in our Paws & Reflect program that provides homebound senior citizens with visits from our pups in training and their volunteer handlers. Additional training is required for Paws & Reflect. The commitment to volunteer is two (2) visits per month for six months or one (1) visit per month for a year (people that do not meet this commitment will become inactive – no exceptions.)
- At all correctional facilities, regardless of facility, you will learn more about picking up and dropping off dogs at the facility, about the supplies you'll need, what commands the puppies know, and how to read dogs' body language, among other things.
- Volunteers must stay active for a minimum of one year.
- Potential volunteers must submit a pre-application, which will be sent to you when we schedule training. New Jersey and Bedford Hills sitters must also agree to a background check, required by the correctional facility. You must be approved before you are registered to attend puppy trainings.
- Volunteers must be able to pick up and drop off the puppy at the correctional facility closest to your residence or pick up and drop off the puppy at the shuttle location in NYC.
- Volunteers must submit three written references at the time of training in order to complete your application.
- Begin puppy sitting within 30 days of completing the PBB training sessions and being approved.
- Volunteers are required to write feedback letters and take photos of your visiting puppy after each outing.

No one under the age of 18 may come to prison, walk one of our puppies or be given primary responsibility for one of our puppies at any time. Children are allowed to interact with the puppies while supervised and in the comforts of your home only.

**Please be aware that our dogs are not allowed in homes with:**

- A cat that has its front claws, or more than one cat.
- More than one dog or an aggressive dog. A NYC resident with a dog at home may not volunteer as a weekend sitter, but may volunteer as a Paws & Reflect sitter.

- Certain breeds of dogs, which we will discuss with you on an individual basis. If you have dogs, or any other animals, please mention them when you email us.

If you live in a home where any of the above applies, you may participate in the **day sitting program only** (excluding NYC residents) and must agree not to bring the puppy back to your home – no exceptions.

**Examples of things that you can do with a puppy on your outings include:**

Going into stores and restaurants, walking on different streets or attending sporting events.

This program is about training future working dogs, either service dogs for wounded war veterans or explosive detection dogs for law enforcement. Please do not get involved in volunteering only to gauge whether your family is ready for a dog of its own. Our dogs are not pets.

Please note that we do not have a pre-set schedule of upcoming training sessions for the year; trainings are scheduled when we need to train more volunteers to provide socialization outings for our pups. It may take over a year before we announce training sessions for any given facility.

Again, thank you for your interest. Volunteering as a puppy sitter involves a big commitment and can be very challenging, but it is also very rewarding!

Thank you.

For more information or to apply to become a volunteer, please contact Tito Tyson, Director of Volunteers, at 212.680.9562 or [tito@puppiesbehindbars.com](mailto:tito@puppiesbehindbars.com).