



Enable Ireland

GUIDE AND ASSISTANCE DOGS

POLICY & PROCEDURE

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1.0 Introduction

Enable Ireland is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all service users, service owners, families, employees, contractors, customers and volunteers, including those who rely on Guide or Assistance dogs to assist with daily tasks. All trained and registered Guide and Assistance Dogs are welcome to access Enable Ireland buildings and grounds in the company of their registered owner. This policy outlines the responsibilities and guidelines regarding the use of Guide and Assistance dogs within Enable Ireland's facilities, services, retail units and other premises, ensuring the safety, comfort, and dignity of both Guide and Assistance Dog users and other individuals.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that individuals who rely on Guide or Assistance dogs have equal access to Enable Ireland services and premises. It aims to establish clear guidelines for the interaction between Guide or Assistance dog users, other service users, service owners, families, employees, contractors, customers and volunteers, ensuring that the rights of all are respected. It is the responsibility of Enable Ireland to ensure that the above individuals are informed about the Equal Status Act¹, the rights of blind or vision impaired people with a Guide Dog and the rights of people with an Assistance Dog.

3.0 Scope

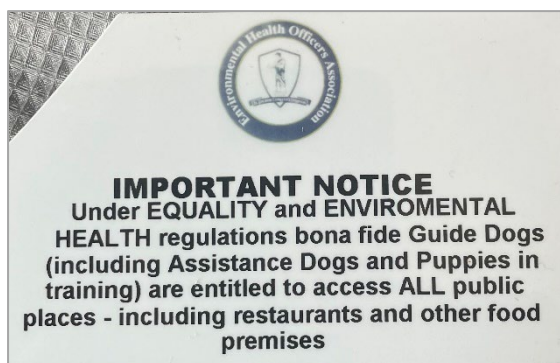
This policy applies to all service users, service owners, employees, customers, volunteers and visitors of Enable Ireland across its locations, including service centres, administrative offices, respite houses, residential services, shops and commercial buildings, and public events run by Enable Ireland.

4.0 Definition of Guide and Assistance Dogs

Guide and Assistance Dogs are dogs trained specifically to assist a person with a disability. They act not only as a mobility aid but also as a support providing both safety and social benefits. The dog must be under control at all times. Guide and Assistance Dogs may assist with a variety of activities such as guiding individuals with vision impairment, alerting to medical conditions, providing support for mobility challenges and providing psychological support in social settings.

¹ [Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018](#)

4.1 Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs: How do you recognise them?



Guide Dog owners and Assistance Dog owners carry an official IGDB photo identification card.

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind is accredited by both the International Guide Dog Federation and Assistance Dogs International. Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs have a yellow sign on their lead and wear a medallion embossed with the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind logo on their collar.



A Guide Dog is a mobility aid for people who are blind or have impaired vision. The Guide Dog steers their owner around obstacles. It helps their owner to locate street crossings and doorways to buildings. Guide Dogs warn their owner when hazards and changes in ground level are approaching. They wear a harness with reflective markings when working.



An Assistance Dog is a dog that receives specialised training to aid an individual with a disability in navigating everyday life.

4.2 Training

Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs undergo a comprehensive training programme in order to become a qualified mobility and safety aid. From an early age, they are socialised by a volunteer Puppy Raiser and learn to be obedient in public places. They then undergo a training programme with an instructor before being matched with their potential owner. Both the potential owner and the Guide Dog or Assistance Dog, undergo a training class to become a safe, confident mobile unit or team. A key feature of the training is that the Guide Dog or Assistance Dog lies quietly beside their owner's feet when they are dining in a school canteen or attending classes or lectures.

4.3 Maximising support to service users and service owners who have Guide or Assistance Dogs

In services, ensure parents and children are informed about not distracting or feeding a working Guide Dog or Assistance Dog.

- Ensure circulation routes in services are kept clear of obstructions and trip hazards, such as bags.
- Ensure indoor stairways are marked with clear colour contrast on the steps and handrails. Guide Dogs walk on the left-hand side of their owner, and as such, blind or vision impaired students will use the handrail on their right-hand side. Handrails should be easily visible with colour contrast and should be on either side of the stairway.
- External stairs should be clearly marked by corduroy tactile paving 400 millimetres from the first and last step nosing of the stairs. The handrail should be continuous along internal and external stairways, and it should not break at landings, unless it is at the edge of the first and the last step.
- Discuss suitable Guide Dog toileting relief arrangements with the child and parent or adult owner.

5.0 Responsibilities of Guide and Assistance Dog Users

Guide and Assistance Dog users are required to:

1. Ensure their dog is kept on a leash or harness and under control at all times while on Enable Ireland premises.
2. Carry identification confirming that the dog is a trained service animal.
3. Maintain the dog's hygiene and cleanliness, including the provision of waste disposal materials.
4. In the event of any episode of vomiting/sickness, alert staff to the event, and seek assistance to ensure that any affected areas are cleaned in a timely manner.

6.0 Responsibilities of Enable Ireland Staff

Enable Ireland employees, contractors, and volunteers are expected to:

1. Treat Guide and Assistance Dogs and their users with respect and dignity.
2. Allow access to all public areas of the premises deemed appropriate to the owner's service needs, customer's / volunteer's needs.
3. Ensure service users, services owners, parents and staff are informed about the Equal Status Acts rights of blind or vision impaired people with a Guide Dog and families of children with an Assistance Dog.
4. Speak with parents of children with a Guide or Assistance Dog on how to accommodate their drop off and collection arrangements with their child and the Guide/Assistance Dog.
5. Accommodate the Guide or Assistance Dog with their owner at all service events such as appointments, reviews, events, launches, etc.
6. Prioritise seating for those with a Guide or Assistance Dog where the dog can lie quietly next to their owner and away from circulation routes.
7. Respond promptly to any concerns regarding a Guide or Assistance Dog's behaviour.
8. Support the needs of those service users/owners and staff who may be uncomfortable in the presence of, or allergic to, dogs in so far as possible without infringing on the rights of the Guide/Assistance Dog user.

There is no requirement on Guide Dog and Assistance Dog owners to give advance notice of owning a Guide Dog or Assistance Dog. Guide Dog and Assistance Dog owners should be treated with the same dignity and respect as other service users, service owners and all with whom Enable Ireland staff interact in the course of their work.

7.0 Exclusion of Guide and Assistance Dogs

A Guide or Assistance Dog may be excluded from Enable Ireland services or buildings if it:

- Poses a threat to the health or safety of others.
- Is not under control, behaves aggressively, or disrupts the environment.

In such cases, Enable Ireland will engage with the Guide/Assistance Dog user to explore alternative accommodations.

8.0 Summary

Enable Ireland is committed to ensuring that all individuals, including those with Guide and Assistance Dogs, can fully participate in the services we provide. By following the guidelines set forth in this policy, we aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment where all who engage with Enable Ireland and/or our services and who use Guide or Assistance Dogs can thrive.

Contact Details

Contact email needed for queries on the policy/from the public.

Supporting Links

- [Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018](#)
- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)