Addendum X
WWSDP Best Practices

1. GENERAL REQUIREMENT

All awardees of the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program must be able to implement, test, and evaluate the best practices set forth in this document. This requirement applies to Service Members (SM), veterans, and dogs regardless of disability, breed, age, size, or sex. Implementation of these best practices must be supported by documents or records and canine records must include signalment (name, breed or cross, age, sex, microchip #, and coat color). This requirement does not prescribe the number of canines, humans, or teams that must be tested and evaluated. These numbers depend on the best practice, the capacity of the organization, and the need to conduct additional evidence-based evaluations, as appropriate. **Best practices in bold are grant requirements and must be implemented on all canines, SMs, veterans, or teams funded by the WWSDP grant.**
Note. This benchmark was developed using existing industry best practices and with the direct input of ADI, AKC, ASDP, IGDF, managers, trainers, SMs and veterans, and veterinarians.

2. ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION

To be eligible for consideration, humans and canines must demonstrate basic aptitude, including, but not restricted to—

2.1. SMs and veterans must submit the following records prior to acceptance into the program (failure to provide records or to meet eligibility criteria is disqualifying):

2.1.1. Official disability diagnosis or rating as vetted by organization;

2.1.2. Healthcare provider affirmation that the SM or veteran is capable of caring for a dog and participating in handler training, including required travel, if appropriate; Organizations must provide the healthcare provider with expected physical and cognitive requirements for the SM or veteran.

2.1.3. SM or veteran affirmation of adequate financial resource to care for a dog. Organizations must provide SM or veteran with a projected breakdown of expenses and any cost share by the organization for the anticipated life of the dog. The breakdown must include, but is not limited to, the provision of annual veterinary care (at minimum), veterinarian approved dog food, required tags and licensure, breed-specific grooming, and any required medications or medical treatments. For a detailed list see: https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/know-true-cost-owning-dog/;

2.1.4. Proof that SM or veteran has residency that will permit completion of training, as vetted by organization;

2.1.5. Affirmation statement from other adult house members to have a dog, if applicable;

2.1.6. SM or veteran consent to undergo a national criminal background check; and

2.1.7. SM or veteran affirmation that past convictions of any of the following crimes will make an individual unsuitable for a service dog: Animal abuse, child abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and violent crimes.

2.1.8. Organizations must conduct a criminal background check, per internal standard operating procedures. Organizations should consult the criminal background checks for foster and adoption by state (see https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-laws-by-state/criminal-background-checks/)

2.2. For nonbreeding dogs, hip and elbow radiographs with proper positioning (per OFA or Penn Hip) must be performed by a licensed veterinarian to document lack of evidence of dysplasia.

2.3. To be eligible for consideration, canines must have a documented physical examination by a licensed veterinarian prior to graduation. Any abnormal finding must be discussed to determine likely impact on performance of desired task(s). Documentation must include the examining veterinarian, date, and, if applicable, clinic. At minimum, the exam must include:

2.3.1. Oral cavity and dentition;

2.3.2. Eyes;

2.3.3. Cardiovascular;

2.3.4. Respiratory;

2.3.5. Gastrointestinal;

2.3.6. Ears, skin, coat;

2.3.7. Musculoskeletal;

2.3.8. Urinary;

2.3.9. Reproductive;

2.3.10. Neurological; and

2.3.11. Lymph nodes;

2.4. To be eligible for consideration, all canines must have the following required documentation, as specified by a local licensed veterinarian prior to graduation. Records must include canine name and microchip number, veterinarian, date, and if applicable clinic.

2.4.1. Parasite prevention/control treatments. Records must include medication, dosage, and date of administration;

2.4.2. Laboratory tests with negative results on the vector-borne disease panel and fecal exam, as well as normal-range CBC with Chemistry Panel and complete urine analyses; and

2.4.3. Vaccination history including vaccine type and dates administered.

2.5. All canines must have proof of spay/neuter surgery (with the exception of breeders) prior to graduation.

2.6. All canines must graduate prior to reaching 1/3 of their working life expectancy when trained for the first time, unless the SM has a prior relationship with the dog, in which case appropriate age determination may be made on a case-by-case basis.

2.7. Conduct interview(s) with SM or veteran, prior to acceptance into the program, to assess desired SM or veteran objectives and suitability of service dogs. Interviews should include, at minimum, lifestyle habits, physical traits, and personality characteristics.

2.8. Develop an Action Plan with SM or veteran prior to matching or prior to training if own dog is used. Each Action Plan must—

2.8.1. be SM- or veteran-specific;

2.8.2. be developed in a collaborative fashion with the SM or veteran;

2.8.3. identify at least one outcome objective that mitigates an impairment per SM or veteran. The objective must be a verb, representing an action that improves participation in a life activity;

2.8.4. focus on the SM or veteran, not the canine (canine tasks are merely a means to an end). For example, interruption is not an appropriate outcome objective because it does not represent an action by the SM or veteran. On the other hand, going out to the mall, twice per month, is an appropriate objective;

2.8.5. be limited to observable objectives (e.g., going to the mall, as opposed to feeling comfortable going to the mall);

2.8.6. include quantifiable performance-based objectives. For infrequent objectives (e.g., going out to a movie, walking around the block, doing laundry), use discrete behaviors (e.g., once per day/week/month). For frequent objectives (e.g., retrieving a dropped item, opening a drawer), use fluency (e.g., use of appropriate cues to retrieve a dropped item 9 of 10 items on first cue/command per hour/day/week, etc.);

2.8.7. specify objective methods to record behaviors (e.g., picture, video), with consent of SM or veteran;

2.8.8. be modified or revised if the needs/wishes of the SM or veteran change, as practicable; and

2.8.9. continue until performance criteria has been met for each objective.

3. CANINE CARE

3.1. Maintain records of adequate grooming practices, until graduation, and consult a veterinarian if an abnormality is noted. Adequate practices should be defined in internal standard operating procedures based on discussions with licensed veterinarian, but must include, at minimum:

3.1.1. Bathing (depending on coat type, health, and lifestyle);

3.1.2. Brushing coat and providing dematting and deshedding treatments;

3.1.3. Eye checking;

3.1.4. Ear checking;

3.1.5. Nail trimming;

3.1.6. Hair trimming; and

3.1.7. Teeth, gums, and mouth checking.

3.2. Consult a licensed veterinarian for any abnormality noted, such as foul odor, discharges, scooting, excessive scratching or licking.

3.3. Maintain canines on anti-parasitic medication, per local licensed veterinarian, and document medication, dosage, date of administration, prescribing veterinarian, and clinic.

3.4. Microchip the canine with a ISO-standard chip and enroll canine in microchip registry. If history is unknown, scan canine with a universal scanner for identification.

3.5. Ensure adequate water provisions and maintain adequate documentation, as deemed relevant by internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.6; 9 CFR § 3.9; 9 CFR § 3.17), prior to graduation.

3.6. Ensure adequate food provisions and maintain adequate documentation, as deemed relevant by internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.1; 9 CFR § 3.9; 9 CFR § 3.10; 9 CFR § 3.17), prior to graduation.

3.7. Keep canine records (electronic or on paper) in separate distinct categories (e.g., medical, training, husbandry) for ready access, prior to graduation.

4.   FACILITY

4.1. Meet minimum kennel physical dimensions requirements per 9 CFR § 3.6(c) and 9 CFR § 3.8, if appropriate.

4.2. Provide canines with a safe indoor and outdoor environment, based on internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.1-3.4, 9 CFR § 3.6, as appropriate).

4.3. Ensure adequate temperature and humidity parameters and maintain adequate documentation as deemed relevant by internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.2; 9 CFR § 3.3; 9 CFR § 3.4; 9 CFR § 3.6; 9 CFR § 3.19)

4.4. Ensure adequate ventilation parameters and maintain adequate documentation as deemed relevant by internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.1; 9 CFR § 3.2; 9 CFR § 3.3; 9 CFR § 3.19).

4.5. Ensure adequate lighting parameters and maintain adequate documentation as deemed relevant by internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.1; 9 CFR § 3.2; 9 CFR § 3.3).

4.6. Ensure adequate sanitation parameters and maintain adequate documentation as deemed relevant by internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.1; 9 CFR § 3.6; CFR § 3.11).

4.7. Ensure adequate compatible grouping (consult 9 CFR § 3.6 and 9 CFR § 3.7)

4.8. Ensure adequate safety and health equipment (consult OSHA 1910.157(c)(1))

5.   TESTS, INSPECTIONS, AND CERTIFICATIONS

5.1. Train canines to pass obedience and public access tests.

5.2. All SM and veterans must pass an obedience and a public access test prior to graduation, even if the service dog is already proficient.

5.3. Organizations must use external published tests (e.g., AKC CGC, Pet Partners PPST & PPAT, ADI PAT, AKC CGCU, PSDP PAT) in addition to any "in-house" testing, if applicable.

5.4. Test-specific policies and procedures must be adhered to.

5.5. Tests must be administered, graded, and certified by test-specific evaluators (e.g., AKC evaluator, ADI accredited organization), as applicable.

5.6. If specific evaluators are not required (e.g., PSDP PAT), organizations must use external certified trainers (e.g., CCPDT).

5.7. At graduation, SM or veterans must be provided with pertinent records to share with their veterinarian and any future trainers. This packet must include, at minimum, training milestones and certificates for both human and canine as well as canine medical records, temperament, and care.

5.8. Conduct a routine local veterinarian health screening at least annually until graduation. The screening must include, at minimum, internal and external parasites, and physical exams, per local licensed veterinarian. All canines must remain free of medical conditions that could impact their working life prior to graduation.

5.9. Conduct, at least, one in-person home inspection prior to matching. Virtual inspections are authorized for non-local SMs or veterans. The purpose of this inspection is to:

5.9.1. Assess suitability of indoors and outdoors environment, based on internal standard operating procedures (Consult 9 CFR § 3.1-3.4, 9 CFR § 3.6, as appropriate);

5.9.2. "Canine-proof" the household for safety, based on internal standard operating procedures (consult 9 CFR § 3.1-3.4, 9 CFR § 3.6, as appropriate). Any remedial action must be recorded and addressed prior to matching;

5.9.3. Evaluate the household for dog compatibility (e.g., family members, lodgers, children, elderly);

5.9.4. Identify and evaluate pets in the household for dog compatibility; and

5.9.5. Identify and evaluate physical environment related to impairment (staircase gradient, drawer dimensions, switches [toggle, rocker, slider, push-button], distance and transportation options to mall), as appropriate.

5.10. Conduct at least one home inspection between 3 and 12 months after graduation to assess changes in living conditions. Virtual inspections are authorized for non-local SMs or veterans. Note. This best practice only applies to Recipients that received a WWSDP grant since 2023.

5.11. If a child in the home is less than 10 years of age, conduct a home inspection within 30 days of graduation and an additional home inspection between 3 and 12 months after graduation. Inspector must look for indicators of canine stress when child is present and instruct family how to monitor canine behavior. Virtual inspections are authorized for non-local SMs or veterans.

5.12. Require any staff recognized as trainers to hold any dog training industry-recognized training certificate (e.g., ABC, CCPDT, NADOI, IACP). Note. This best practice only applies to Recipients that received a WWSDP grant since 2023.

5.13. Require trainers to complete continuing education credits or annual refreshers.

5.14. Require SM or veterans to complete continuing education credits, or annual refreshers, to maintain and improve knowledge, skills, and abilities. Note. This best practice only applies to Recipients that received a WWSDP grant since 2023.

5.15. Require SMs or veterans to participate in annual public access test recertifications. Note. This best practice only applies to Recipients that received a WWSDP grant since 2023.

5.16. Develop, or use existing, empirical tests and performance criteria to verify that SM, veteran, and canine accomplish learning objectives and tasks, as appropriate. These tests must be developed prior to training. For

example, what is the empirical evidence that the canine can reliably turn a light switch on/off or that the SM or veteran mastered the legal aspects of service dogs?

5.17. Require SM or veteran to establish primary care veterinarian within 3 months of graduation. SM or veteran must provide a veterinarian report.

6. TRAINING

6.1. Identify a canine caregiver prior to matching that is proficient in basic dog care to support the SM, veteran, and organization per internal standard operating procedures.

6.2. Provide continuing education, learning opportunities, and refresher training for SMs, veterans, and trainers, as appropriate.

6.3. Keep records of canine socialization, per internal standard operating procedures. At minimum, record type of socialization and outcome to:

6.3.1. Adults

6.3.2. Children

6.3.3. Other animals

6.3.4. Sounds

6.3.5. Variety of environments

6.3.6. Grooming (e.g., teeth brushing), routine care, and veterinary visits

6.4. Train canine and the SM or veteran to pass an obedience certification test.

6.5. Train canine and SM and veteran to pass a public access test.

6.6. Require SMs and veterans to successfully complete a classroom phase (see Enclosure). This preliminary phase permits a more accurate evaluation of training commitment and aptitude. This phase must be offered prior to matching, unless SMs or veterans use their own dog.

6.7. Require practical application of skills and behaviors in public, in addition to any simulated environment, if applicable.

6.8. Train SM or veteran on Action Plan outcome objectives until performance criteria is met (see section 2.9). Note. A new Action Plan must be developed for each new learning objective.

6.9. Train canine on tasks that enable SM or veteran Action Plan outcome objectives until performance criteria is met:

6.9.1. Identify canine tasks that enable SM or veteran objectives. Internal documentations must connect dog tasks with SM or veteran objectives. List task(s) specific for each objective. Example of specific tasks for going out to the mall may include: assist with position changes, provide momentum up hill, carry grocery bag, retrieve dropped items, retrieve item from shelf, find car, and unload grocery items;

6.9.2. Include quantifiable performance-based criteria for each specific canine task (e.g., canine reliability performs task at least 90% of time).

6.9.3. Record the performance criteria for each task in Internal training logs; and

6.9.4. Record the date in which each performance criteria was met in Internal training logs.

6.10. Train canine to perform tasks in a nonintrusive, or damaging, manner to people, other animals, and the physical environment. For example, the dog should not scratch a wall surface in an attempt to turn a light switch on or off.

6.11. Adult household members must be taught dog bite prevention (see American Veterinary Medical Association) before matching.

6.12. Develop a training course syllabus for SMs or veterans (see Enclosure for template). At minimum, the syllabus must include:

6.12.1. Required reading material;

6.12.2. Course content;

6.12.3. Outcome objectives and performance criteria;

6.12.4. Average minimum amount of independent, out-of-class, learning expected per week;

6.12.5. Learning Objectives;

6.12.6. Grading;

6.12.7. Important contacts; and

6.12.8. Aftercare and follow-up.

Note. The syllabus describes the curriculum for all students, it is not specific to the needs of a particular SM or veteran. The specific needs of the SM or veteran are addressed in the individualized Action Plan.

Enclosure – Syllabus Template

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]
2025 Veteran Service Dog Training Syllabus

Point of Contact
[Name, Title]
[Telephone]
[Email]

Required Text
(List required text)

Course Content
(List training modules. When listing modules think of chapters in a textbook. Each chapter includes multiple topics, but there is no need to mention them here. For example, reinforcement, clicker training, shaping, etc. are all subtopics under "principles of learning.")
Example: Assistance dogs laws, canine health, canine grooming, canine body language, bite prevention awareness training, handler voice and body language, canine Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), canine good manners and obedience, accessing public spaces.

Outcome Objectives and Performance Criteria
(Do not edit this text)
Students, and dogs, will learn a lot during our program. Dogs will graduate with obedience and public access certifications. Students will graduate with a *[name of organization]* dog handler certificate. However, the ultimate purpose of our training program is to help students gain independence by meeting personalized outcome objectives (e.g., pick up dropped items, visit the mall, etc.). Once students demonstrate proficiency in executing commands to meet their outcome objectives, the student and dog (the Team) will earn the coveted *[name of organization]* certification. Our program is student-centered, so students select their attainable outcome objectives. Here is an example:
Objective: Pick up dropped items.
Performance criteria: Execute appropriate commands to retrieve dropped items (keys, pen, phone) at least 9 out of 10 times (90%) in 10 non-consecutive sessions. The trials must be conducted with distractions (e.g., busy street corner).
Note. Students may graduate, but not certify, until the performance criteria for each objective has been met.

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of-class, learning expected per week
(Specify the in-class and out-of-class time requirement. Include a table summary of training phases, duration, and pass/fail requirement for each phase)
Example: During this 15-day class students are expected to spend a minimum of 120 hours in the classroom and 32 hours outside the classroom (independent learning)

Phase	Duration	Instruction	Performance Criteria
Classroom	2 Days (16 hours)	Knowledge modules	6 multiple-choice tests (70%)
Basic	4 Days (32 hours)	Socialization/Obedience	American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test
Intermediate	6 Days (48 hours)	Public access	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) test,

			Assistance Dogs International (ADI) Public Access Test (PAT)
Advanced	3 Days (24 hours)	Outcome objective(s)	Skills Test (to criteria)
Total	15 days (120 hours)		

Learning Objectives
(Specify the intended outcome for each learning module. Note, items in this section must mirror items in the Course Content (i.e., first content chapter will be the first learning objectives, second chapter will be the second and so on). Start each bullet with a measurable verb and use the highest verb (e.g., use demonstrate instead of discuss). Examples of measurable verbs may be found here:
https://www.utica.edu/academic/Assessment/new/Blooms%20Taxonomy%20-%20Best.pdf)
Example: At the end of this two-week training program, students will be able to:
- List laws pertaining to service dogs
- Describe and demonstrate appropriate canine health and care
- Interpret canine body language
- List canine behaviors and body language that predict dog bites
- Demonstrate effective voice and body language commands and cues
- Perform canine CPR
- Discuss canine good manners and obedience
- Demonstrate proficiency in accessing public spaces principles and commands
- Demonstrate proficiency in executing commands to meet outcome objectives

Grading
(Specify all the tests the SM or veteran is required to pass)
Example: Grading is based on passing 6 multiple-choice tests (70% or more), canine CPR test, AKC CGC test, ADI PAT, and performance to criteria skills test.

Important Contacts
(Specify afterhours, dog care, veterinarian, veterinary clinic, or emergency contracts)

Aftercare and Follow-Up
(Specify SM or veteran requirements post-graduation. Be sure to include all aftercare best practices)
Example: After graduation, students must agree to:
- Recertify the ADI PAT annually
- Complete 10 hours of annual continuing education units
- *(be sure to include all aftercare best practices)*