



Pet Assisted Learning

Volunteer Handbook

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1. Introduction

The Buddy's PALS volunteer handbook is intended to be an overview of the organization and a comprehensive reference guide for volunteers. The volunteer handbook serves as an operating policy manual for anyone participating as a volunteer with Buddy's PALS, as well as a framework for the Buddy's PALS Board of Directors.

This handbook will not answer all your questions; when in doubt, please reach out to a member of the board of directors for clarification.

2. Organization overview and Mission

Buddy's PALS Pet Assisted Learning, is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, incorporated in the State of Michigan. Buddy's PALS was founded by Lolie Fabela in 2019 and is named after her beloved Boxer, Buddy.

The Buddy's PALS Board of Directors is made up of a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary.

The mission of Buddy's PALS is:

“To support the education of young people in our community. It takes a village to raise every child, and Buddy's PALS promises to be there to provide comfort and growth every step of the way.”

3. General Volunteer Rules

1. Training and Certification Requirements.

Dogs are owned and trained by volunteers and are not the property or responsibility of Buddy's PALS. Any veterinary care or training expenses incurred are the financial responsibility of the volunteer/owner.

- a. Handlers must demonstrate that they always have control of their dogs without the use of force or pain.
- b. Dogs must be a minimum of one year of age to test for certification as part of a Buddy's PALS Team.
- c. The dog must have a friendly temperament.
- d. The dog must not have ever been trained using an electronic, vibration, communication, or e-collar.

- e. Handlers and dogs must pass the Buddy's PALS Certification Exam. The cost to test is \$25.00. The evaluation can be seen at: https://www.buddypals.net/files/ugd/624154_35fc1247029f41829e96cbf44326937c.pdf. *Please note, no treats or toys may be used during the certification test.*
- f. If the team does not pass the certification test, they may test again after taking additional obedience classes and/or allowing the dog more time to mature.
- g. Once a team has passed the certification test, they are required to purchase a Buddy's PALS T-shirt (\$20) and will be given a Buddy's PALS Bandanna for the dog.
- h. Handlers must submit veterinary medical records and a signed rights and responsibilities form along with \$15 each year to re-certify as a volunteer. Medical records should be emailed to the secretary and payment can be made online or by check.

2. Required equipment.

- a. Standard, clip on 6-foot leash of any material, except chain. Retractable leashes are not allowed. No elastic type of material leashes or collars allowed.
- b. Flat buckle, clip-on, Martingale collars are all allowed. Halti or nose slip type collar is allowed when needed to control a very large dog. Slip leads, prong collars, choke chains or other corrective collars are not allowed.
- c. Standard or front attachment harness. Corrective or chest constricting harnesses.

3. Optional equipment.

- d. Mat or blanket for the dog
- e. Official Buddy's PALS Trading Cards. (Trading Cards can be purchased at handler expense here: <https://www.custom-tradingcards.com/BuddysPals>)
- f. Custom stickers of your dog
- g. Poop Bags
- h. Hand Sanitizer
- i. Coloring pages, crayons, games, and books
- j. Customized Dog book): <http://bitly.ws/CUxF>
- k. Dog treats (**NO PEANUT BUTTER TREATS ARE ALLOWED IN SCHOOLS**) (Treats may be used for demonstrations- sit, stay, down, shake, etc.)

4. Veterinary and Licensing Requirement.

- a. Handlers must show proof of current vaccination records:
Required vaccinations: Distemper, Parvo and Rabies.
Recommended vaccinations: Bordetella and Leptospirosis
- b. Handlers must show proof of a recent (within 1 year) fecal test showing no presence of intestinal parasites.
- c. Handlers must show proof of a current dog license. (Dog licenses can be obtained at the Treasurer's Office in the county in which you reside.)
- d. Handlers will be required to provide these documents annually to the Secretary at the prior to the start of the school year or anytime upon request.

5. Volunteer Background Check

All volunteers with Buddy's PALS, including the Board of Directors, must submit a background check form to the Secretary prior to volunteering for any Buddy's PALS event. Background checks are performed using the Michigan State Police Internet Criminal History Access Tool (I-CHAT). <https://www.michigan.gov/msp/services/chr>

Background checks ensure that no volunteer has a criminal history that would prohibit them from working in a school. This requirement is consistent with Michigan law requiring school employees to undergo background checks. Although this step is not required for our volunteers under law, Buddy's PALS has implemented this policy to ensure that all volunteers are able to represent the organization, and that no children are placed in harm's way.

6. Dog requirements

1. Dogs must be clean, well-groomed, healthy, free from parasites and free from odors that may be offensive.
2. Dogs nails must be trimmed and filed to ensure no sharp edges are present.
3. Female dogs must not be in estrus when participating in Buddy's PALS events or visits.
4. Dogs must be kept on no longer than a six-foot leash at all times while participating in Buddy's PALS events or school visits (No retractable, elastic or stretch leashes may be used)

6a. Visiting a school or other site

1. All visits must be approved by Buddy's PALS for insurance purposes.
2. Volunteers must utilize the signup.com link (<https://signup.com/go/ksvUwme>). You will need to create a log-in the first time you visit the site.)
3. Volunteers must wear their official Buddy's PALS t-shirt and dogs must wear the Buddy's PALS bandanna.
4. Arrive 15 minutes prior to your sign-up time to give your dog time to potty.
5. Check in with the office or site representative upon arrival & departure.
6. Contact the Principal or Social Worker/Counsellor to see if there are any special needs for the visit.
7. Allow the representative to introduce you to the classrooms, assembly, or whatever the school has set up.
8. When entering classrooms, ask if anyone is uncomfortable around dogs.
9. Ask if there are any allergies to dogs in the classroom. **(No Peanut Butter treats)**
10. Introduce your dog and tell the students a little bit about your dog.
11. Explain how your dog can help them. Be grade specific. (Reading, playing games, coloring, walking)
12. Teachers may provide classroom materials.
13. Let the child's response lead the direction of any conversation. (i.e., Sports, their pets)
14. Walk through aisles and around desks to let kids meet and pet your dog if desired. Alternatively, you may have the students come up to your dog one or two at a time to pet your dog. Make sure your dog is comfortable with the format.
15. Observe your dog for signs of stress like lip licking, yawning, avoidance, whale eye. This means the dog is not having fun and it's your responsibility to remove them from the stressful situation.
16. Try to keep visits to no longer than two hours. That's usually more than enough time for the dogs and we don't want to over tire them or stress them.

17. Remember that all student information is confidential and should only be shared with the school staff. Follow the Buddy's PALS Code of Conduct when dealing with confidential information.

18. Never put your dog in a situation that could harm them. We always want the visits to be fun and enjoyable for the dogs, you, and the students. One bad experience can ruin your dog's ability to continue with this work.

19. Every visit should be viewed as a learning opportunity (for you, the dog AND the students). The dog will open doors for students to learn. Dogs don't judge! They just accept. Dogs can assist with math equations, reading assignments or any other learning. You can demonstrate examples of addition/subtraction with the dogs' ears, paws and tail. Dogs can help students learn to pick out books, point to colors and be a good listener.

20. When interacting with students, remember to use a soft and soothing voice, kneel or sit so you're on their level, and smile!

21. Dogs can teach hygiene too! Talk about how your dog must take regular baths, have their nails trimmed, their teeth brushed, etc. Kids will equate this to their own personal hygiene rituals.

22. Dogs can also help explain why listening is so important! Tell a story about your dog and why listening is important. The kids will begin to associate why it's important for them to listen too. Demonstrate a command to your dog to reinforce this concept.

7. Handler Code of Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to set standards of behavior expected from volunteers of Buddy's PALS. All volunteers should ensure that they have read and comply with these standards.

Volunteers with Buddy's PALS should maintain the highest standards of behavior in the performance of their duties by:

- a. Fulfilling their commitment as outlined in the Buddy's PALS Participation Policy that was signed by the volunteer.
- b. Providing no less than 24-hour notice (Unless the handler or dog as an unforeseen emergency) when the volunteer will not be available for their duties so that alternative arrangements can be made. If there is an emergency less than 24 hours prior to the visit, the handler will be responsible for contacting the scheduler as soon as reasonably possible.
- c. Representing Buddy's PALS in the most professional, ethical efficient and competent way possible, and in accordance with the mission of Buddy's PALS.
- d. Following the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook as well as any instructions given by any member of the board of directors.
- e. Acting honestly, responsibly and with integrity at all times.
- f. Treating others with fairness, equality, dignity and respect.
- g. Communicating respectfully and honestly at all times in both written and verbal communications.
- h. Raising concerns with a member of the board of directors about possible wrongdoing witnessed by the volunteer while during their role as a Buddy's PALS volunteer. If you see something, say something.
- i. Observing all safety procedures, including any obligations concerning the safety, health and welfare of other people or animals.
- j. Reporting any health or safety concerns promptly to a member of the board of directors.
- k. Directing any questions regarding Buddy's PALS policies, procedures, support, or supervision to a member of the board of directors.
- l. Addressing any issues or difficulties about any aspect of the volunteer's role or how they are managed with a member of the board of directors.

- m. Keeping confidential matters confidential.
- n. Exercising care and caution with any documents, materials or devices containing confidential information and at the end of their involvement with Buddy's PALS, returning any such documents or devices in their possession to a member of the board of directors.
- o. Seeking authorization before communicating externally on behalf of Buddy's PALS.
- p. Maintaining an appropriate standard of dress and hygiene when volunteering with Buddy's PALS.
- q. Disclosing any arrest, charge, or conviction of any crime to a member of the board of directors.

Volunteers with Buddy's PALS are expected NOT to:

1. Take any dog or animal not certified through Buddy's PALS to any Buddy's PALS event or visit.
2. Bring Buddy's PALS into disrepute (including using email, social media, other internet sites, engaging with the media, etc.)
3. Seek or accept any gifts, rewards, benefits, or hospitality during their role unless acting as part of an approved fundraising committee.
4. Engage in activity that may cause physical or mental harm or distress to another person (such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, assault, bullying, or discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, or race.)
5. Engage in any activity that may cause physical or mental harm to any animal.
6. Be affected by alcohol, drugs or medication which will impact the volunteer's ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities while volunteering.
7. Provide a false or misleading statement, declaration, document, record, or claim regarding Buddy's PALS, its volunteers, or board of directors.
8. Engage in any activity that may damage property.
9. Take unauthorized possession of property that does not belong to the volunteer.
10. Engage in illegal activity while carrying out their role as a volunteer.
11. Improperly disclose, during or after their involvement with Buddy's PALS ends, confidential information gained during their role with Buddy's PALS.

Volunteers with Buddy's PALS acknowledge that no employment relationship is created in the context of their role with Buddy's PALS.

8. Revocation of Buddy's PALS Volunteer status:

A handler will receive written notification of a violation of policy or procedure upon each incident. The handler will receive two written warnings and upon the third violation, the volunteer's handler status will be revoked. The volunteer will be removed from all electronic communications and social media sites. The board of directors reserves the right to bypass this policy depending on the seriousness of the violation.

The Buddy's PALS Board of Directors will review the Code of Conduct for Volunteers as needed and will make any necessary and appropriate updates. The Secretary of the Buddy's PALS Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring this handbook is implemented effectively and distributed to all Buddy's PALS volunteers at the time the volunteer joins the organization. All other board members and volunteers are expected to facilitate this process.