



Work and Task List

This list is not intended to be comprehensive or definitive, but is merely a guide regarding what a service dog might be trained to do for someone with a psychiatric disability. Each individual has different needs that might be fulfilled in a variety of ways, and each dog has its unique capabilities and challenges.

Many behavior types are listed as “Work or task” because their instances can be cued either by intentional commands (with tasks) or non-intentionally by something else in the environment or person's body (with work). Theoretically, whether an assistance occurrence is work or is a task could be unclear; see PSDP's work and task articles for more information. Regardless of the work/task distinction, what actually matters is the person is getting needed assistance for their disability.

Symptom Assistive/ Behavior Assistance Type

Aggressive driving
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work
Anxiety
Ground handler
Guide handler to a safe place
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task Work or task Work or task
Apathy/disengagement
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Catatonic behavior
Ground handler
Work or task
Change in breathing pattern
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work

Chills
Pressure and warmth stimulation
Work or task
Delusions
Ground handler
Work or task
Depersonalization
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Derealization
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Disorganization
Remind handler to perform daily routines
Work
Difficulty assessing emotions
Provide reliable signals to handler regarding emotions
Work
Difficulty initiating movement
Tactile stimulation to "break the spell"
Work or task
Difficulty navigating
Lead handler to important locations on cue
Work or task
Disorganized speech or behavior
Ground handler
Work or task
Disorientation or confusion
Guide handler home or to a safe place
Work or task
Dissociation
Ground handler
Tactile stimulation to interrupt or deep pressure therapy
Work Work
Dissociative flashback
Ground handler
Tactile stimulation to interrupt or deep pressure therapy
Work
Work
Dissociative fugue
Guide home, to a safe place, or assist crossing streets
Work
Distractibility
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy

Work
Dizziness*
Brace or counterbalance handler
Work or task
Emotional escalation
Alert to (incipient) episode Ground handler
Work
Work or task
Fear
Guide handler to a safe place
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task Work or task
Fear of leaving home
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Feeling overwhelmed
Guide handler to a safe place
Work or task
Feelings of isolation
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Fight or flight response
Guide handler to a safe place
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Work or task
Flashbacks or distress
Ground handler
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task Work or task
Flat affect
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work
Forgotten personal identity
Give identification documents to others for assistance
Work or task
Hallucination
Hallucination discernment—alert to real people or noises
Work
Hyperf ocus
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work
Hyperlocomotion
Alert to (incipient) episode

Work
Hypersomnia
Wake up handler
Work
Hypervigilance
Ground handler
Non-aggressively search house/alert for intruders Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
†
Work or task Work or task Work or task
Increase in heart rate
Alert to (incipient) episode
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work
Work or task
Insomnia
Remind handler to go to bed
Focus/interact until handler initiates sleep preparation
Work
Work or task
Intrusive thoughts/images
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Irritability
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work
Memory loss
Find keys or telephone Remind to take medication
Task Work
Muscle tension
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work
Nausea
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Night terrors
Ground handler Turn on lights Wake up handler
Work or task Work or task Work
Olfactory or behavioral cue
Alert to (incipient) episode
Work
Pounding heart
Alert to (incipient) episode
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work

Work or task
Psychomotor retardation
Guide handler using harness or leash
Work or task
Psychosis
Ground handler
Work or task
Racing thoughts
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Repetitive/compulsive behavior
Interrupt repetitive behaviors
Work
Restlessness or distractibility
Alert to (incipient) episode
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work
Work or task
Sadness or tearfulness
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task
Self-mutilation
Ground handler
Interrupt or prevent by alerting or tactile stimulation
Work or task Work or task
Sensitivity to sound
Close door to block noise Ground handler
Work or task Work or task
Sensory overload
Ground handler
Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy
Work or task Work or task
Sleep disturbance
Alert to intruders Ground handler Keep handler in bed
Work
Work or task Work or task
Social withdrawal
Initiate desired/needed interpersonal interaction
Work or task
Startle response
Alert to presence of others
Ground handler
Non-aggressively stand between handler and others
Work

Work or task Work or task

Suicidal ideation

Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy Ground handler

Work or task Work or task

Trembling

Tactile stimulation or deep pressure therapy

Work or task

It is never acceptable to train work or tasks that involve the service dog being aggressive. Similarly, assistance behaviors intended to be perceived as aggressive are not acceptable.

Loyal Guardians Service Dog Training's purpose is to promote the mental health of people using service dogs for disabilities by educating, advocating, providing expertise, facilitating peer support, and promoting responsible service dog training and handling.