



## Epilepsy Florida's Seizure Response Dog Scholarship: Information and Application

### Overview of Seizure Dog Scholarship Fund – Parameters and Process

We appreciate you reaching out to Epilepsy Florida regarding our seizure response dog financial assistance application, made possible through the Seizure Response Dog Scholarship. Before you apply, please read over the following details:

1. *Research is key.* Epilepsy Florida highly suggests that before you consider applying for a scholarship, patients first have a conversation with treating neurologists to ensure a seizure dog is a good fit for their condition and lifestyle. Seizure response dogs are not pets – they are working dogs! There are seizure "response" dogs and seizure "detection" dogs. Those are two very different dogs, with very different training and indicated for different patients. Overall, we find that most "seizure dogs" are seizure response dogs. This means that when a seizure occurs, the dog may be trained to lick you while you are having a seizure, go find an adult, or some dogs are trained to trigger some kind of alert or push a button or other mechanism. Only a small percentage of dogs are detection dogs and are able to sense ahead of time that a seizure is coming. In addition to researching dogs for the correct, medically-indicated fit with your personal medical situation, it is also important for advance research is to understand any possible limitations of your living quarters, educational institutions, places of employment, within modes of transportation, etc. Attempting to obtain a high-trained seizure dog without first ensuring your ability to safely keep the dog with you at all reasonable times for many years into the future is not appropriate for you or the animal. A placement should be viewed as an enormous commitment on the part of a patient with seizures, as well as their caregivers.
2. *Epilepsy Florida does not breed or train dogs.* Epilepsy Florida provides financial assistance at a minimum in the amount of \$5,000 towards the purchase of a trained seizure dog. It is the applicant's responsibility to secure other financial assistance for the dog. Financial need is not a criterion for the scholarship, and no personal financial information will be requested by Epilepsy Florida as part of the application or decision process.

3. *Seizure response dogs are expensive.* The cost of breeding and training a seizure response dog can vary dramatically. Certain organizations offer their own scholarships and cost sharing opportunities. Others use young and healthy mixed-breed rescue dogs through reputable organizations. Still others employ a complex, long term breeding program that can take many years to lead up to a placement and can cost in the neighborhood of \$30,000. The purpose of the Epilepsy Florida Seizure Response Dog Scholarship is not to provide full payment for the placement of or ongoing costs associated with any particular seizure response dog, or to lead to any conclusions being drawn about the relative strengths and weaknesses of any particular placement option. Instead, it is just to assist toward that end.
4. *Finding reputable training and breeder for the seizure dog.* The applicant will be responsible for providing information on the trainer and breeder of the requested seizure dog. Breed-specific research is also appropriate. The placement program must already have been identified prior to submitting the application for an Epilepsy Florida Seizure Response Dog Scholarship. The contract will be between the applicant and the trainer/breeder. Epilepsy Florida requires the trainer/breeder to sign documents and submit a W-9 before payment can be made in the allocated scholarship amount, directly to that program.
5. *Training a seizure response dog takes time.* Training a seizure response dog can take up to two years. Certainly, in the experience of Epilepsy Florida, reputable programs require a minimum of twelve months' lead time. Therefore, individuals who suffer from seizures and who are interested in exploring options should begin researching the topic well in advance of the expected placement date. Upon request, Epilepsy Florida can direct individuals to research opportunities, but Epilepsy Florida does not independently maintain or vet such outside research.
6. *Neurologist recommendation needed for seizure response dog.* In order to submit an application for consideration for a Seizure Response Dog Scholarship through Epilepsy Florida, the applicant must provide signed documents from their neurologist or other treating physician indicating that a seizure therapy dog is indicated and would be supported within the overall treatment plan. Medical teams should not be asked to opine as to whether the seizure therapy dog would actually accomplish all safety and community engagement goals that may be held by patients with seizures. But rather, the key question is whether the medical team would be supportive of a seizure therapy dog placement, if the individual patient (and his/her family, if a minor or under the care of an adult) so desires.

7. *Applying for financial assistance.* Applications will only be accepted and then considered for a possible seizure response dog scholarship if the following requirements are met:
- A. With application, affidavit signed by individual (or his/her parent, if a minor) that individual's primary place of residence is within the state of Florida at the time of the application's submission to Epilepsy Florida;
  - B. With application, individual has included signed documentation from treating neurologist of his/her support of the placement of a seizure therapy dog;
  - C. With application, written documentation from seizure dog placement organization or breeder that individual has signed contract for the placement of a seizure therapy dog and the placement is reasonably expected within the six (6) months following the application submission date; and
  - D. With application, affidavit signed by individual (or his/her parent, if a minor) that individual will cover all remaining costs of the dog and the future medical, training, and other expenses of the dog for the remainder of its natural life.

Also, please note the following:

1. Epilepsy Florida reserves the right to interview any and all applicants prior to reaching a decision on the scholarship award. Epilepsy Florida will attempt to process all applications within forty (40) days of receipt, funding permitting. In response, Epilepsy Florida will either (a) approve the scholarship in a designated amount, (b) place you on a wait list for up to six (6) months, to be re-evaluated at that time, or (c) decline the requested scholarship. Epilepsy Florida makes no promises about the continued availability of funds, and reserves the right to decline any application for any reason, including but not limited to the lack of availability of dedicated funds at any given time.
2. If a scholarship request has been declined by Epilepsy Florida, applicants may not re-apply for the same dog placement. These scholarships are intended to be single payments made directly from Epilepsy Florida to the placement agency or breeder (and not to the individual with seizures himself/herself), to contribute toward the overall cost for securing a trained seizure therapy dog. These scholarships are not intended to fully pay for the placement and training fees. Similarly, these scholarships are not intended for the ongoing costs associated with maintaining a service dog, licensing the dog, or otherwise providing for its lifelong health and safety. And so following a declined application, there would not be any reason for an applicant to "re-apply", since the present opportunity necessarily would have passed due to the passage of time. Of course, if a new dog placement is to be made in the future, an applicant is welcome to again submit an application.
3. Employees of Epilepsy Florida and members of their immediate family are not eligible to participate as applicants to this program. Board members of Epilepsy Florida and members of their immediate family are not eligible to participate as applicants to this

program. The term “immediate family” includes spouses, siblings, parents, children, grandparents, and grandchildren, whether as “in-laws,” or by current or past marriage(s), remarriage(s), adoption, co-habitation or other family extension, and any other persons residing at the same household whether or not related.

4. In addition to purchasing the dog and training, there are many financial costs to maintain a service dog. There is health insurance, renewal service dog registration, regular veterinarian check-ups and vaccinations, quality food and treats, travel-related accommodation fees, possible local fees, and others. Also, as with any dog, at the time of placement, there will be no way to know how long the dog will continue to remain healthy and active. It is always possible that a highly-trained seizure dog may fall ill and cease to be able to serve in the intended role long-term. In such unfortunate situations, a new service dog may need to be obtained, with the ensuing expense and commitment.
  
5. Applicants should understand that any placed dog is NOT a pet, but rather is a working dog. It may feel like they are a part of the family, but there will be strict instructions as to how the dog must be treated, how it will interact with your child and members of the family, etc. There have been situations where an individual or family paid a lot of money to have a dog trained, waited over a year to be able to take their dog home. Then, they played with the dog, treated him/her like a pet, and did not stick to the routines established by the trainer. The dog then forgets how to react appropriately when their owner has a seizure, because they don't understand when they are "working" and when they are not. This would obviously be a very unfortunate result. Epilepsy Florida's Seizure Response Dog Scholarship is reserved for those applicants who are ready, willing and able to uphold their end of the response dog/patient relationship.

Epilepsy Florida wishes you and your family the best of luck in this opportunity. Epilepsy Florida thanks you for the opportunity to support your needs in living your best life, with seizures. If you have any further questions, please feel free to email Roxana Galera at [rgalera@eafla.org](mailto:rgalera@eafla.org).



## Epilepsy Florida Seizure Dog Scholarship Application

### *Page 1 of 2- Terms and Conditions.*

Please submit this application to Roxana Galera at [rgalera@eafla.org](mailto:rgalera@eafla.org) no sooner than six (6) months prior to expected dog placement. Ms. Galera will facilitate getting you a response within forty (40) days of receipt of a full, complete application (as of the date that all required attachments are submitted).

Epilepsy Florida is not currently publishing the amounts of available scholarship funds. Please understand that any awarded scholarship will NOT reasonably cover even the breeding and placement costs, let alone the ongoing ancillary costs of maintaining a healthy seizure dog over its natural life. Rather, any awarded scholarship is intended to assist the patient in defraying the placement costs. For that reason, this scholarship application is to be completed only after a binding contract for a seizure dog placement is in hand.

No statement of financial need or details about the applicant's financial resources is required with this application. Though you may be asked to speak with representatives of Epilepsy Florida through an interview in the selection process, please do not feel compelled to share any personal medical or financial information. Out of respect of your personal health information, Epilepsy Florida will entirely rely upon the below attestations and attached documentation, and will not contact your medical provider for additional proof or explanation. Instead, you will be the only individual who will be in contact with your medical provider.

Should a scholarship be awarded, Epilepsy Florida will work with you to notify the breeder and to facilitate direct payment from Epilepsy Florida to that organization. Though you will be welcome to share any photos or information with Epilepsy Florida at your discretion, please note that Epilepsy Florida will always respect your privacy and will not use your image, likeness, or personal medical journey in any materials without your express written approval.

By signing below, you are attesting to your understanding that if you are ultimately found to have submitted an application with documentation that is not legitimate, or if you do not obtain the seizure dog that you have contracted to purchase, you will be required to immediately repay Epilepsy Florida the full amount of the awarded scholarship.

By signing below, you are waiving any and all liability on the part of Epilepsy Florida for any acts or omissions of any placed seizure dog vis-à-vis yourself as the owner or third parties. Epilepsy Florida has borne no role in the breeding, selection, training, placement, evaluation, or medical judgments associated with the seizure dog placement. If approved, Epilepsy Florida is merely providing a flat scholarship fund award to defray the initial costs of the seizure dog. No remaining financial obligations remain with Epilepsy Florida or its directors, officers, or employees, based on any scholarship award.



**Page 2 of 2 - Application Details**

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name (if Minor): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Neurologist Name/Practice: \_\_\_\_\_

**Initial in Each Box Below Prior to Submission:**

**Attestation that Applicant (or Parent) Will Consent to be Interviewed as Part of Evaluation Process, Upon Request:**

**Attestation that Applicant (or Parent) has secured additional payment means**

**Attestation that Applicant Has Conducted Appropriate Research into Seizure Dog and Appropriateness for Own Medical and Life Situation:**

**Attestation that Applicant's Primary Place of Residence is Florida:**

**Attestation that Applicant Bears All Costs for the Remainder of the Dog's Natural Life:**

**Attestation that Applicant Has Reasonably Ensured that Seizure Dog is Permitted and Will be Supported within Applicant's Currently-Known Living, Working, and/or Schooling Environment:**

**Is Neurologist's Signed Approval for Placement of Seizure Dog with Applicant Attached?**

**Is Signed Seizure Dog Contract for Placement within 6 months with Applicant Attached?**

Under penalties of perjury, I attest that the above and the attached are full, complete, and accurate statements and representations, and I understand that Epilepsy Florida will rely upon each statement as a material factor in evaluating a possible seizure dog scholarship award.

Signature of Applicant (or Parent, if Minor): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_