

More Than Companions

New Study Reveals Impact of Service Dogs on Family Members



Study Design

Can the benefits of companionship be measured? New research from Purdue University's Center for the Human-Animal Bond says yes.

Parents and spouses of individuals with a disability may experience significant stress, worry and emotional fatigue. In this study, 154 parents and spouses of individuals with disabilities filled out a survey about their mental health and well-being. Of those who participated, 97 had a child or spouse with a service dog, and 57 were on the waiting list to receive one. By comparing the groups, researchers could determine the impact that living with a service dog may have on family members' psychosocial health, worry and quality of life.

Results showed that parents and spouses of those with a service dog reported significantly better well-being than those on the waitlist.

Specifically, family members of service dog recipients experienced:

✓ Less health-related worry¹

✓ Less impact on the family from the child's or spouse's disability¹



✓ Better overall psychosocial health and emotional functioning¹

✓ Better emotional functioning related to the child or spouse's disability¹

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Support for the Biggest Supporters

Dr. Maggie O'Haire led primary research related to the impact of service dogs on recipients and their families. "The study is one of the first to assess a service dog's impact on the entire family unit, beyond just the recipient of the service dog," O'Haire says.

And while numerical results confirm the dogs' impact, the bond itself remains invaluable to families of service dog recipients.



*Family members experienced **less worry** concerning the service dog recipient's health*



*Service dogs may alleviate the worry a family member experiences concerning the **present and future of a child or spouse** with a chronic condition*

*Living with a service dog may positively impact emotional and **overall psychosocial functioning***

Elanco has been a supporter of Canine Assistants, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, since 2013, providing monetary and in-kind donations to help train dogs to become important companions to special people with special needs.

Visit canineassistants.org for more information on service dogs, and visit celebratethebond.com to learn how Elanco enriches the human-animal bond.

1. Rodriguez, KE, Bibbo, J, O'Haire, ME. The effects of service dogs on psychosocial health and wellbeing for individuals with physical disabilities or chronic conditions. *Disabil Rehabil.* 2019 Jan 11;10.1080/09638288.2018.1524520

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