



Atlas Assistance Dogs® Assistance Dogs Set in Motion™ Program

Last Updated May 9, 2022

Contents

Introduction	1
Atlas Assistance Dogs.....	2
Our Values and Training Methods	2
Who Would Benefit from This Program?.....	3
Who Purchases the Puppy?	3
Who is Responsible for Upkeep of the Puppy?.....	3
What is the Estimated Cost for This Program?	3
Client Cost Responsibilities:	5
Where Do the Puppies Come From?	5
Who Trains the Puppies and Qualifications?	5
How Does a Person Qualify for the Assistance Dogs Set in Motion Program?.....	5
Is This a Good fit for You?	6
What Types of Dogs Do We Train?	6
What Is Required of the Client During this Process?	6
Teams Set in Motion™	8
What Happens if the Puppy Does Not Become a Service Dog?.....	8
What Happens if the Client Cannot Keep the Dog?.....	8
Atlas Client Certification Program	9
Conclusion.....	9
Appendix: Program Cost Breakdown - Where is the Money Going?.....	10



Introduction

Thank you for your interest in Atlas' Assistance Dogs Set in Motion (ADSiM) Program. We have partnered with breeders and skilled foster raisers and trainers to find and start puppies and dogs for people who qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for a service dog. There are many options you may be looking at for how to obtain or train a dog to help mitigate your disability. The Assistance Dogs Set in Motion program provides an option that may enable purchase and training of a puppy suitable for service work at a much lower cost than purchasing a dog directly from a trainer.

There are currently two models to the ADSiM Program.

Model #1: Atlas purchases and owns the puppy until after Client Certification

Atlas purchases the puppy from an ethical and qualified breeder. The puppy will either stay with the breeder in the breeder's puppy raising program or go directly to an Atlas Puppy Raiser, who will begin foundation training. The puppy will stay in training with the Atlas Puppy Raiser until they are approximately one year old. At one year of age, the client will take over care of the dog, go through a transition training period where they and their dog acclimate with each other, and then enter our Client Certification Program. When the team completes the Client Certification Program and passes their Public Access Test, **the dog's ownership will be transferred from Atlas to the client.**

Atlas' ability to purchase and raise puppies through this model depends on the availability of funds from grants and donations.

Model #2: The Client purchases and owns the puppy from the start

The client, upon being accepted into the ADSiM program, works in tandem with Atlas to purchase a puppy from an ethical and reputable breeder. The client assumes **all** costs related to purchase, Atlas programs, and care for the puppy. (See What Is the Estimated Cost for this Program on page 3.) The puppy will either stay with the breeder in the breeder's puppy program or will go directly to an Atlas Puppy Raiser who will begin/continue foundation training. The puppy will stay in training with the Atlas Puppy Raiser until they are approximately one year old. At one year of age, the client will take over care of the dog, go through a transition training period where they and their dog acclimate with each other, and then enter our Client Certification Program.

Depending on available scholarships and allocated funding, Atlas may be able to cover partial costs for this model.

We hope the following program description can help you in your decision process. Should you have any questions at all, please contact info@atlasdog.org.



Atlas Assistance Dogs

Atlas Assistance Dogs is working to eliminate obstacles that prevent qualified individuals from obtaining an assistance dog. Some of the ways we do this are by:

- Training and providing certification based on internationally recognized standards for service dog handler teams
- Teaching, testing, and certifying qualified service dog trainers
- Working with all breeds of dogs
- Serving a wide range of disabilities and age group
- Operating in multiple geographical areas
- Providing funding for clients who need financial assistance to obtain and train a service dog
- Maintaining a peer support network for clients to ask questions, share ideas, and encourage each other
- Participating in research and development that will lead to better support for assistance dog teams
- Finding and starting potential service dog candidates for clients
- Offering a foundation course to people whose dogs are not ready to enter our client training program

Our Values and Training Methods

Our Mission: Atlas fundamentally expands access to assistance dogs. We support people with disabilities to train and certify their own service dog using positive, ethical training methods. At Atlas, we believe anyone who would benefit from a qualified assistance dog should be able to have one.

All people and dogs deserve to be treated ethically, compassionately, and as individuals. This is core to Atlas' values. We partner with trainers, doctors, educators, clients, and researchers to ensure that the most ethical, scientific, and effective training approaches are available to each person and each dog we work with.

We believe training is about forming trusting relationships with dogs and people. All Atlas Team Facilitators and certified Atlas Certified Trainers have committed to using positive, non-aversive training methods, and we require the same of our clients.

We understand that learning how to train a dog can be difficult and that there is a wide variety of information about different methods of training. When you start working with Atlas, we will ensure you are using non-aversive methods. We are dedicated to teaching you how to use the science behind positive reinforcement to train your service dog.



Who Would Benefit from This Program?

Though many disabled people can and want to participate in the training of their own service dog, starting fresh with a puppy or young adolescent is not always a viable option. This can be for a variety of reasons. Raising a puppy may take a far too great emotional, mental, or physical toll. An untrained puppy or adolescent dog may actually be a hazard or danger for someone with limited mobility or other type of disability. And working with a private trainer in the early stages of training may simply not be possible.

Also, just finding and starting off with the right puppy can be incredibly difficult. Not all dogs can be service dogs, and it is important to know what traits to look for in a puppy when looking for your candidate. Understanding what to look for in a breeder is also crucial. These are all complex processes, and navigating this system is not the right path for everyone. And that's okay!

Assistance Dogs Set in Motion is for the person who can work with a slightly more mature and skilled adolescent, but for whom finding, raising, and training a puppy and young adolescent is simply not feasible.

Who Purchases the Puppy?

Currently, we have two models:

- Model #1 Atlas purchases the puppy directly from the breeder.
- Model #2 The client purchases the puppy directly from the breeder.

Who is Responsible for Upkeep of the Puppy?

In model #1 Atlas funding has been allotted to cover all or some of the cost of the puppy, including training, regular veterinary care, pet insurance, gear, food, treats etc., until the puppy is approximately one year old and they start living with the client. At this point, the client will assume all costs for Atlas programs and for the care and wellbeing of the puppy.

Atlas will retain ownership of the puppy until the Client/Dog team successfully passes our Public Access Test, at which point ownership will be transferred to the client.

In model #2 the client is responsible for all costs and care of the puppy, including purchasing the puppy, training, medical expenses, gear, etc. from the start.

What is the Estimated Cost for This Program?

Note, costs will vary depending on the breeder's fees, distance between the breeder and Team Facilitator, age at which the puppy will go to the facilitator, as well as local veterinary and supply costs.



Payments will be due in increments throughout the program. Depending on scholarship availability, Atlas may be able to cover a majority of the program and fees and fees to obtain the puppy. The application fee is always the responsibility of the client, no matter which model is chosen

The table below are rounded numbers. See Appendix 1 for detailed cost breakdown.

General Costs Overview

ADSiM Application Fees	\$200
Obtaining the puppy, puppy starter program*, and transit fee	\$0 – \$5,400
Atlas ADSiM Program fees and puppy maintenance (assumed for 8 to 10 months duration and until 12 months of age)**	\$3,570 – \$5,000
Atlas Transition support and Team Certification Program fees (age 12 months to certification (at 20 or 22 months))	\$855 – \$1,055
Total application, obtaining the puppy, ADSiM program, and Client Certification Program fees***	\$4,425 – \$11,655 <i>[clients who own their dogs may forgo insurance for an additional savings of ~\$1350-1500 off program total]****</i>

*Breeder puppy starter program: In some cases, the puppy stays with the breeder for an additional two to four months in the breeder starter program. This is the breeder’s own program and may vary by breeder. This option may be chosen if:

- The breeder has an exceptional puppy starter program
- The breeder might be closer to the client
- Atlas may not have an Atlas Puppy Raiser available to take in the puppy right away

**Lower range assumes that the puppy started with a breeder head start program and will be with the Atlas Puppy Raiser for fewer months.

***Puppy donation would require longer ADSiM duration due to lack of head start training from breeder in this situation

****Not recommended, but clients may choose not to insure their own dog. All Atlas-owned dogs will be insured as part of program costs until ownership of the dog is transferred to the client.



Client Cost Responsibilities:

In all cases, the client is also responsible for care/maintenance costs of the puppy, spay neuter fees, and X-ray fees once the dog is placed in their care at approximately one year of age.

The client will also be responsible for any travel costs to their Atlas Puppy Raiser if they wish to work/meet with them during the process. Those costs are not included in the above table.

Where Do the Puppies Come From?

Atlas has partnered with breeders throughout the United States that are ethical, qualified and whose standards, goals, and mission align with ours.

This program assumes the puppy is purchased and/or selected by Atlas and the breeder at eight weeks of age. There may be cases where we might be starting with a slightly older puppy, thus dates in this program would shift according to the puppy's age.

Who Trains the Puppies and Qualifications?

The puppy typically goes directly to an Atlas Puppy Raiser at eight weeks. They raise the puppy following Atlas' puppy raising guidelines, customized to the puppy and the anticipated needs of the client.

If the puppy remains with the breeder in their puppy raising program, the breeder and their puppy raisers will begin the initial training. The breeder will start the puppy's foundation training and socialization to meet Atlas' standards and protocols. When the puppy leaves the breeder, they will be placed with an Atlas Puppy Raiser until the puppy is approximately one year of age.

How Does a Person Qualify for the Assistance Dogs Set in Motion Program?

- The person has a disability and meets ADA requirements for a service dog.
- The person needs to provide a Letter of Medical Necessity from their doctor.
- The person believes it would be a significant hardship to raise a puppy and feels they could be successful starting with an adolescent puppy.
- The person must commit to going through our Teams Set in Motion program.
- The person needs to have the ability to work and train a service dog, starting with a puppy that is at least one year of age.
- The person needs to commit to working with Atlas for the time it takes to reach certification.
- The person commits to having the dog spayed/neutered before two years of age and before certification, whichever is sooner.
- The person has the ability to care for the dog's needs for the dog's entire life.
- The person lives in a location that Atlas is presently serving.



- The person commits to learning and using only positive, force-free training methods.
- The person is willing to have their puppy's training journey documented on social media while with the breeder and Atlas Puppy Raiser.

Is This a Good fit for You?

Owner-based training is not a good fit for everyone. It requires a long-term commitment of daily work and a need for a good support system. When deciding whether owner-based training and getting certified through Atlas is for you, you might want to ask yourself some of the following:

- What type of tasks will you need your dog to do? How complex are they? Is this realistic for self-training?
- Are you able to commit to training and working with your dog on a consistent basis from adolescence to adulthood and to maintain training the rest of their life?
- Do you have a good support network to help you with training, emotional or physical challenges you may face, and emergency care for your dog puppy?
- Can you commit to meeting with your Team Facilitator on average twice a month for a minimum of six months?

Be honest with yourself about your needs, desires, and abilities. If you are unsure about these questions, we will happily discuss them with you and see if this program is indeed a good fit for you!

What Types of Dogs Do We Train?

- Mobility
- Psychiatric
- Cognitive and developmental
- Medical response and alert
- Seizure response

What Is Required of the Client During this Process?

Stage 1: Application

- The client fills out Atlas' initial pre-application.
- Based on the pre-application, the client is sent a full application
- If Atlas and the client feel this program is a good fit for each other, the client has a video chat interview with Atlas to discuss the program in more detail.



Stage 2: Obtaining and Transporting the Puppy

- A breeder/puppy is identified and selected by Atlas.
(A puppy may already have been selected and acquired by Atlas and be working with an Atlas Puppy Raiser.)
- The client meets the puppy either in person or via Zoom.
- The client meets the Atlas Puppy Raiser either in person or via Zoom.
- The client and Atlas Puppy Raiser agree how to communicate and track the puppy's progress.
- The puppy completes their time with their breeder and is handed over to the Atlas Puppy Raiser

Stage 3: Puppy Training

- The puppy is in training with the Atlas Puppy Raiser until the dog is one year of age.
- Two months prior to receiving the puppy, the client starts Atlas' Teams Set in Motion online course

Stage 4: Transition Training

- Approximately one month prior to receiving the puppy, the client will start transfer training with the Atlas Puppy Raiser to prepare the client for when the puppy goes to live with them.
- When the puppy is approximately 12 months old, they will go to live with the client.
- During the two months between when the client takes the puppy home and when they start the Client Certification Program, the client will have support from the puppy raiser and the Atlas Team Facilitator transition coordinator along with a two-month training plan, logs, and video assignments to complete.

Stage 5: Team Certification Program

- When the dog is 13 months old, the client has a check-in call with Atlas to ensure all is on track.
- The client works through the Team Certification Program over the next six to eight months.
- The client passes the Public Access Test to become an Atlas Certified Team.
- If the client does not own the puppy, ownership will be transferred to the client.
- The Team will re-certify each year.

Note: The above stages will be explained in more detail upon acceptance into the Assistance Dogs Set in Motion Program.



Teams Set in Motion™

Launched in March 2021, Teams Set in Motion is an online self-paced program that includes a private Facebook group and twice-monthly Zoom office hours for additional support. It was created to address the need of many people who had a potential service dog candidate but needed more support with foundational training and either did not live near a qualified trainer or could not afford to hire a trainer.

In general, most people will take six to nine months to complete the program.

For this model, clients will spend approximately four months going through Teams Set in Motion to help them with the transition period before they enter our Client Certification Program.

This program is designed to cover all foundation skills needed by a dog to enter our Client Certification Program. It is also, an excellent foundation for people who wish to work with their dog as a therapy dog, emotional support dog, or as a confident and happy family pet.

More details can be found here: <https://www.atlasdog.org/teams-set-in-motion/>

What Happens if the Puppy Does Not Become a Service Dog?

Unfortunately, not all dogs are suited for service work. There is no guarantee the puppy will complete service dog training. We will be monitoring their progress the entire time and will let the client know as soon as possible about any concerns along the way.

- **Client-purchased puppy:** The dog may remain in your household, or the client may re-home the dog as they choose. Atlas may be able to support the re-homing process.
- **Atlas-purchased puppy:** The dog will be returned to Atlas, or, at Atlas' discretion, the client may have the option to purchase the dog from Atlas.

What Happens if the Client Cannot Keep the Dog?

- **Atlas-purchased dog:** If, prior to transfer of ownership to the client, the client or their immediate family can no longer assume responsibility for the dog, the dog will be returned to Atlas. No monies will be reimbursed by Atlas or the breeder. At any point after transfer of ownership, Atlas reserves right of first refusal to reclaim the dog before the client or immediate family consider other rehoming options.
- **Client-purchased dog:** If the client or their immediate family can no longer assume responsibility for a client-owned dog, Atlas may, at our discretion, offer to purchase the dog or assist the client with rehoming options.



Atlas Client Certification Program

Atlas' Client Certification program is designed to help those who already have a dog who is at least 14 months of age and has a core foundation of obedience skills. In this program, we create a customized training plan to meet the client's and dog's needs. We teach them disability-mitigating skills and how to self-advocate. We help refine the dog and handler's ability to work in distracting public environments and ensure the dog and client/handler have the skills and confidence necessary to navigate anywhere they frequent in day-to-day life. Our skilled Team Facilitator volunteers work hands-on, at least twice a month for a minimum of 6 months, with our clients and their dogs training and coaching them throughout the program. Training is usually private, though sometimes when applicable and beneficial to the clients, we will do small group training with multiple teams. All ADSiM clients transition to our standard client certification program once the dog is at least 14 months of age.

More details can be found here: <https://www.atlasdog.org/client-handler-dog-team-certification>

Conclusion

Thank you for spending the time going through this document to learn about our Assistance Dog Set in Motion program. We know this process can seem overwhelming and that this is a lot of information to take in. We hope this guide will have advanced you in your decision making. Please contact us with any questions you might have about service dogs or our organization at info@atlasdog.org.



Appendix: Program Cost Breakdown - Where is the Money Going?

All costs are budgetary and should be considered estimates. Actual pricing will vary by breeder, client's location and needs, and training progress of the puppy and client.

Items in italics are optional and/or dependent on location and program chosen.

ADSiM Application Fees: \$200

- Application: \$50 – Due at time of application
- Assessment Fee: \$150 – Due upon acceptance

Puppy Transfer to Puppy Raiser and Transit Fee: \$0 – \$5,400

- Purchase of Puppy – Puppy received from the breeder at 8 weeks of age
 - Breeder has donated the puppy: \$0
 - Client purchases the puppy: \$2,500 – Due at transfer to the Atlas Puppy Raiser or confirmation of purchase of the dog
- *Breeder head start training: \$2500 – Due on confirmation of purchase of the dog*
- *Transportation of the dog from the breeder to the Atlas Puppy Raiser: \$400 – Due at time of transportation to the Atlas Puppy Raiser*

Note: Breeder head start not likely to apply with puppy donation, thus if puppy is donated, longer/higher ADSiM program rate listed below would apply.

ADSiM Program Fees and Puppy Maintenance

(Puppy living with an Atlas Puppy Raiser for 8-10 months, or until the dog is approximately one year of age: **\$3,570 – \$5,000** – Can be paid in two-month increments, first payment due upon transfer of the dog to the Atlas Puppy Raiser.

- Starting puppy supply costs: \$500
- Maintenance veterinarian/food: \$125/month
- *Pet insurance: \$75/month (program fee includes 18-20 months of coverage. Required for Atlas-owned dogs; optional but highly encouraged for client-owned dogs) [\$1350-1500]*
- ADSiM Program fees: \$15/month
- *Puppy socialization group class: \$200*
- *Transportation of the dog to the client: \$400 – Due at hand-off*



Note: The number of months of ADSiM will vary depending on the age of the puppy when transferred to the Atlas Puppy Raiser. 10 months is used as typical number in these examples, which assumes the puppy is acquired at 8 weeks of age. If they are in a breeder head start, they will typically be with the Atlas Puppy Raiser only 8 months.

Transition and Team Certification Program Fees

(12 months to 22 months of age): **\$855 - \$1,055** – Due two months before the dog transitions to the client unless otherwise noted.

- Teams Set in Motion Course (one-time fee; four-month access): \$80
- Two months of Transition Support: \$200
- Six months of training with an Atlas Team Facilitator: \$450
- *Extra training with the Team Facilitator if needed, \$75/month [22 month old dog includes two extra months], assessed monthly as needed*
- Public Access Test: \$125 – Due at the time of the test
- *Local group training classes (if available and desired). This is supportive training in parallel with the Atlas program that the client would do on their own. This is not included in the fees above and is paid by the client.*

Ongoing Program Expenses:

- Annual Recertification: \$75

*Note: The client is financially responsible for all care of the dog from the time the dog is placed with them (~ 12 months old) regardless of scholarship/ownership of the dog, unless the dog is returned to Atlas. This includes:

- Veterinary care
- Food, treats and any other maintenance costs
- Spay/Neuter
- X-rays
- *Pet insurance fees*
Pet insurance fees through certification and transfer of ownership to the client are already included in the program costs above