



Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

NDIS Evidence Advisory Committee Consultation

People who use psychiatric assistance
dogs

Part 1





Australian Government

**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

The Australian Government Department of Health Disability and Ageing wrote this.

We say **DHDA** for short.

When you see the word **we** it means DHDA.



We wrote this in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

Not bold

We have some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.

These are important words.



This is an Easy Read summary of an online **survey**.

Surveys have questions about your ideas.



We can answer any questions by email.

Email us disabilityevidence@health.gov.au



You can ask for help to read this document.

You can ask

- A friend
- Family members
- A support person.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the **Traditional Owners** of the land we live on.



They were the **first people** to live on and use the

- Land
- Waters.

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Who is this survey for



We made a **survey**.



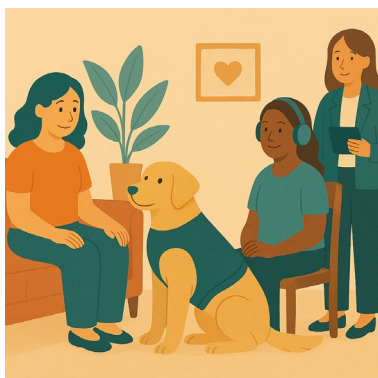
This survey is **only** for people who

- Have a **psychosocial disability**

This is when some people have a disability because of their mental health.

This includes people who have **post traumatic stress disorder**.

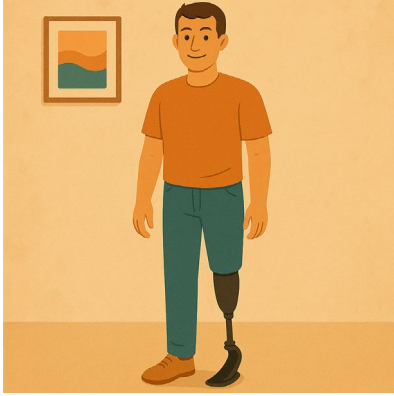
We call it **PTSD** for short.



- Use a **psychiatric** assistance dog.

Psychiatric means

- Mental health
- How we look after mental health.



We have other surveys for people who

- Had a psychiatric assistance dog but do **not** use it any more

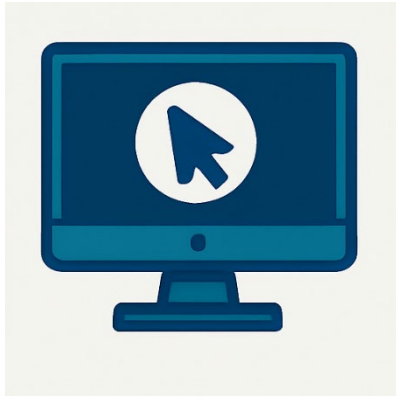


- Use something else



- Family or carers of people who have a psychosocial disability

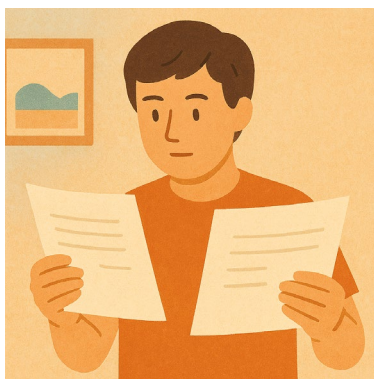
Who use a psychiatric assistance dog.



You can look at the other surveys on our website.

consultations.health.gov.au/evidence-advisory-committee-eac/september2025

It is in Easy Read.



We have **2 parts** to this survey.



You need to do **part 1** first.

This is **part 1**.



You need to send both parts back to us by email.

You need to send it back before

11.59 at night

Sunday 9 November 2025.

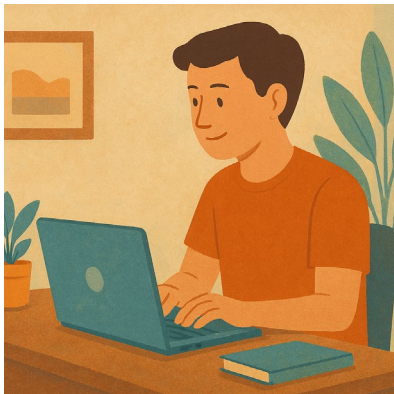
What to do



You need to download both parts of the survey.

You can

- Write your answers



- Type your answers.



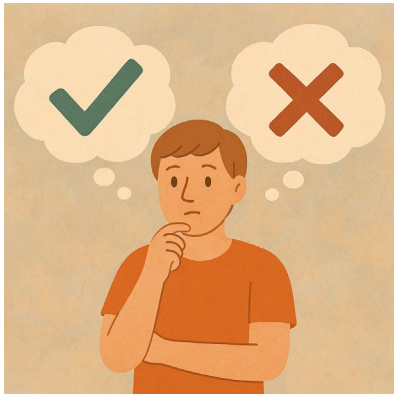
You need to send your answers back to us by email.

disabilityevidence@health.gov.au



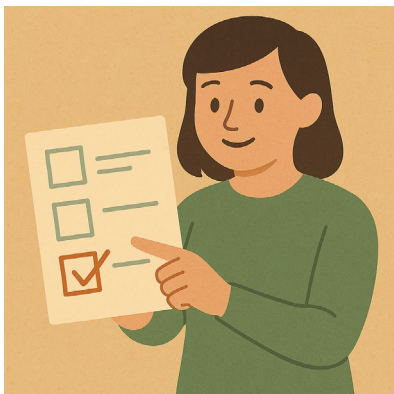
Each part will have some

- Information
- Questions.



There are no right or wrong answers.

Do your best.



You can choose what questions to answer.

You do **not** have to answer them all.

About your disability



What is your disability

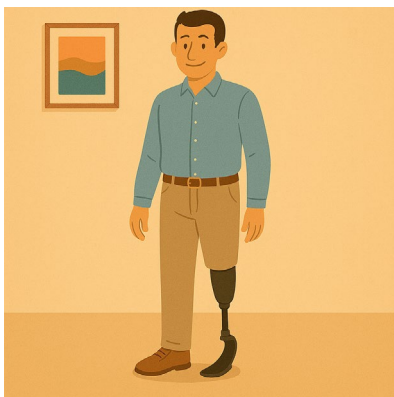
You can pick as many you have



- Acquired Brain Injury

This is anything that damages your brain after you were born like

- Stroke
- Injury to your head
- Diseases.



- Amputations

This is when you have an operation to remove part of your body like your leg.

They only do this if they have to.



- Arthritis

This is pain or swelling in your joints like in your hands.

It can happen in

- 1 part of your body
- Many parts of your body.



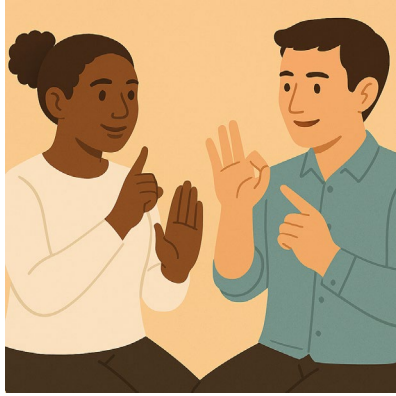
- Autism



- Cerebral palsy

This is a physical disability that can change how you

- Move
- Stand
- Sit.



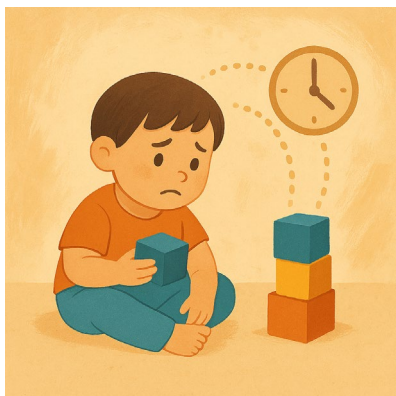
- Deaf or hard of hearing



- Dementia

This is when you have trouble

- Thinking
- Remembering
- Doing things for yourself.

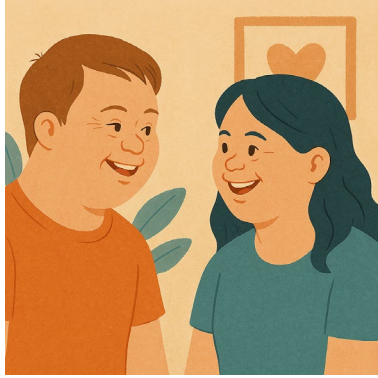


- Developmental Delay

This is when someone learns slower than other people their age.

They might need extra help with

- Talking
- Moving
- Their emotions.

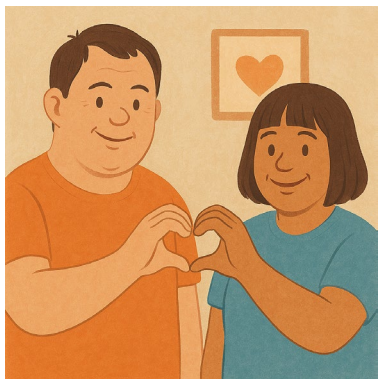


- Down Syndrome

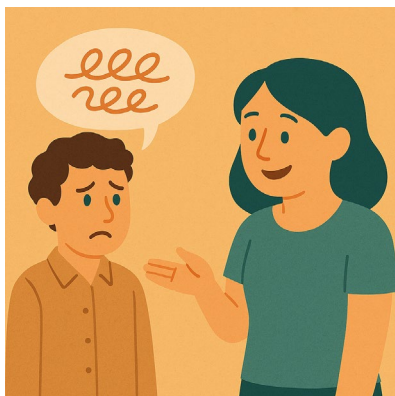


- Epilepsy

This is when someone has seizures.



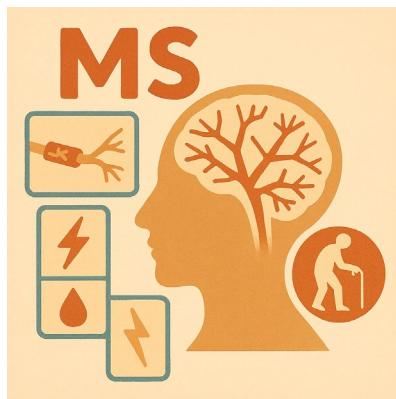
- Intellectual disability



- Language disorders

This is when someone has a hard time understanding or using language that is

- Spoken
- Written down
- Signed.

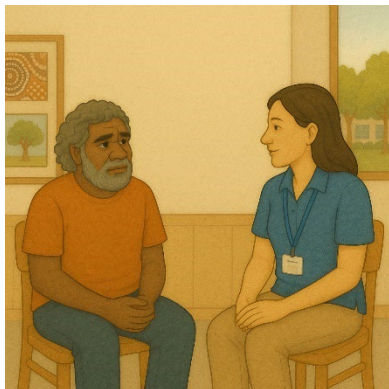


- Multiple sclerosis

This affects your

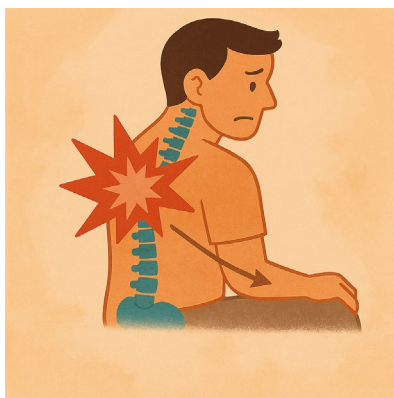
- Brain
- Spine
- Nerves

It is called **MS** for short.



- Psychosocial disability

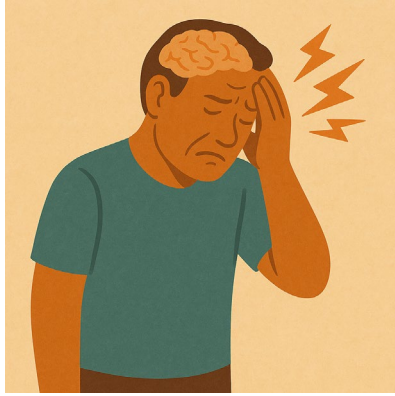
This is a disability because of your mental health.



- Spinal cord injury

This is when you have damaged your spine.

This can change what you can do for yourself.



- Stroke

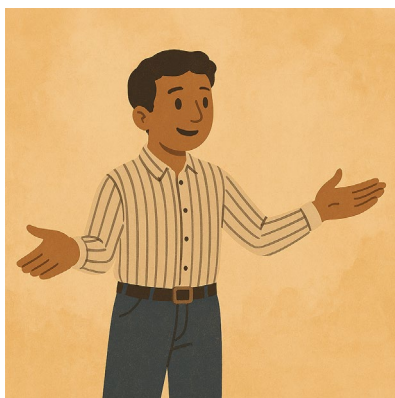
This is when the blood in your brain

- Is stopped for a time
- Can **not** get to where it needs to.

This can cause damage to your brain.



- Blind or have low vision



- Anything else

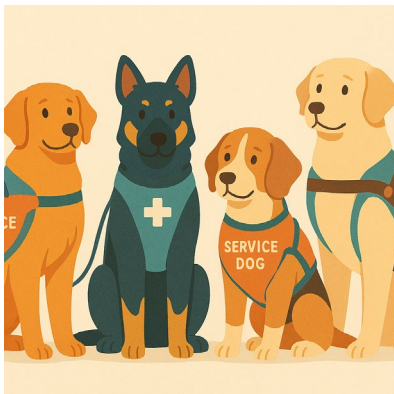
Please write in the box

Question 1 support

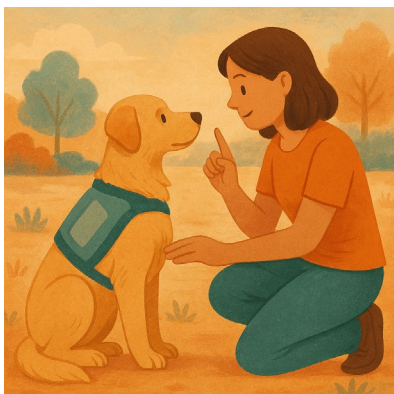


We want you to think about **psychiatric assistance dogs** for

- People with psychosocial disabilities



Psychiatric assistance dogs are a type of assistance animal.



They are **trained** by special trainers that might help people with psychosocial disabilities.

Trained means they have learned something.



Psychiatric assistance dogs can be used

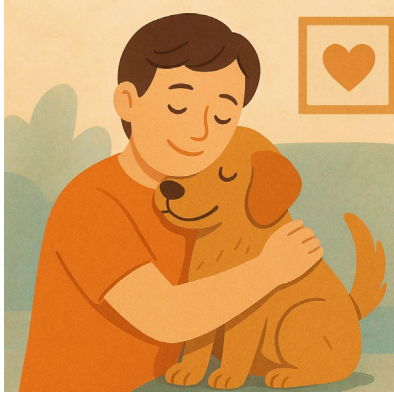
- In the community



- At home.



They are used every day.



They can be trained to help with

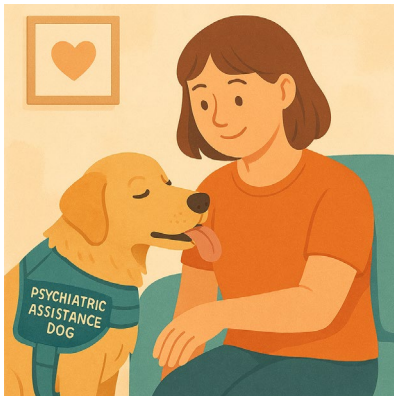
- **Grounding**

This might help the person when they are upset.

The assistance dog might touch the person or be close by.

This **aims** to help them calm down.

Aims are things you want to do.



- **Alerting**

This can be the assistance dog letting the person know when they are starting to get upset.

It might help them to notice early.

They might

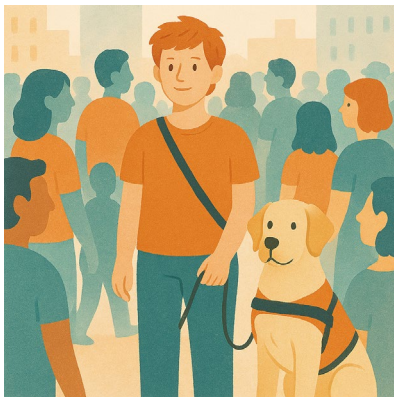
- Make a noise
- Touch the person
- Lick the person.



- Stopping **harmful behaviours**

Harmful behaviours are things that the person does that hurts themselves.

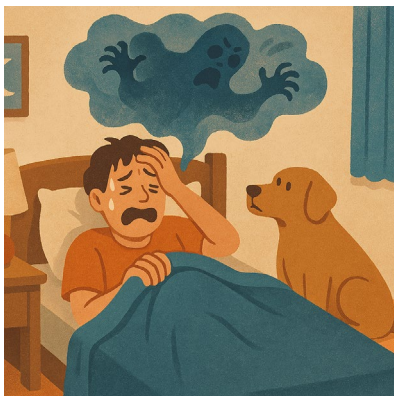
The assistance dog will try to stop the person from hurting themselves.



- Giving more space in crowds



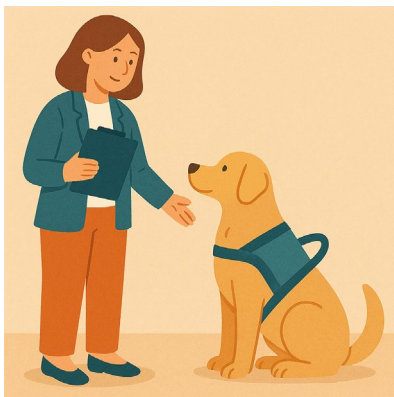
- Helping the person find the way out



- Waking the person if they have a bad dream.



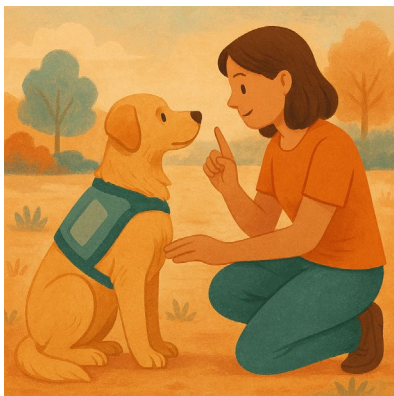
Assistance animals are different to emotional support animals.



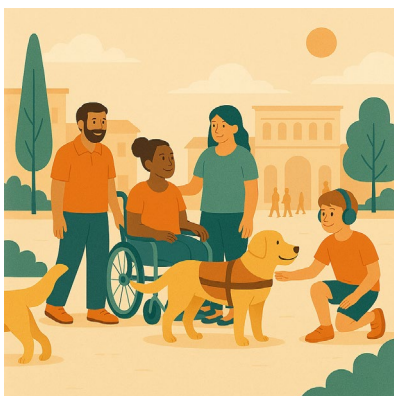
Psychiatric assistance dogs need to

- Have the right **accreditation**

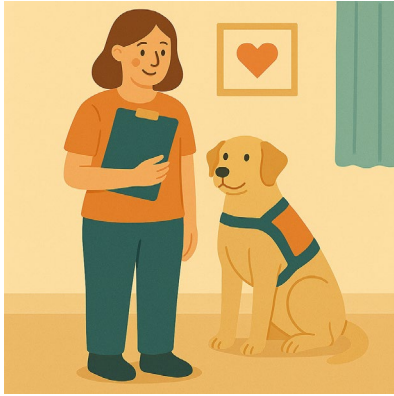
Accreditation means someone has come to check that the rules have been followed.



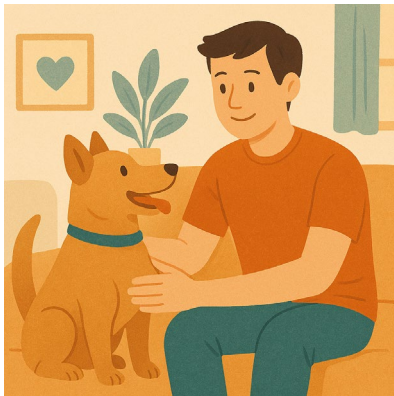
- Be trained to do certain things



- Be safe and healthy in the community

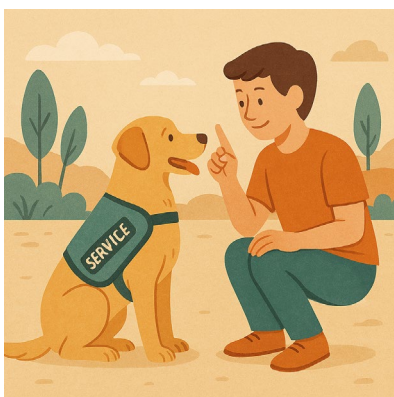


Psychiatric assistance dogs need to have a test to check they are ready to support a person.



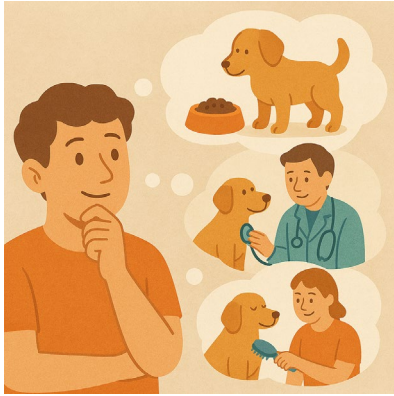
It is important to match the right dog to the right person.

The person is called the **handler**.



All handlers need to agree to

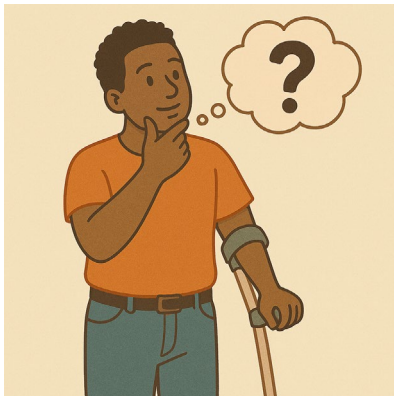
- Keep doing training with their assistance dog



- Look after the assistance dog

Like

- Buying it food
- Taking it to the vet
- Looking after its fur.



Question 1

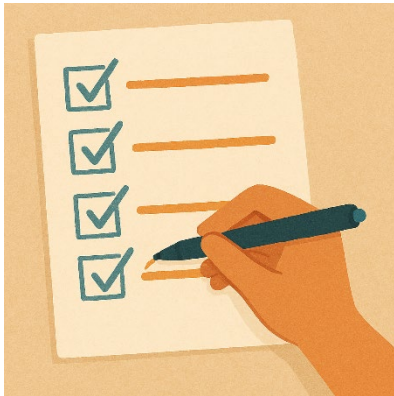
Do you think we have said everything about what

- A psychiatric assistance dog is
- They do.



Please tick only 1 box.

Yes



No

I want to change something.

Please write what you want to change in the box.

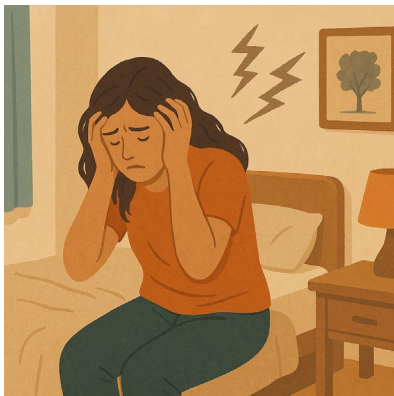
You can

- Add something
- Take something away.

Question 2 disability group



We want to think about all the different groups of people who might use psychiatric assistance dogs



So far we think they are

- People with **PTSD**

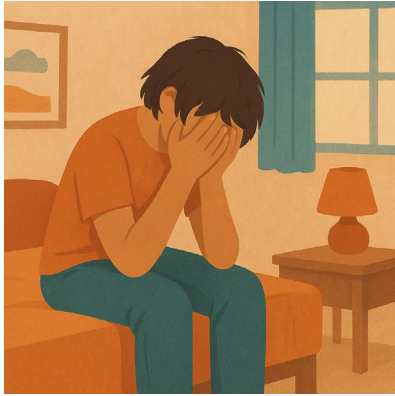
This can happen after a very scary thing has happened to you.



- Anxiety

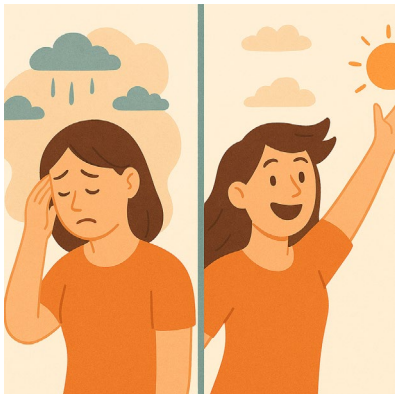
This is when you feel worried a lot of the time.

Sometimes you might worry about things that have **not** happened.



- Depression

This is when you feel really sad for a long time.

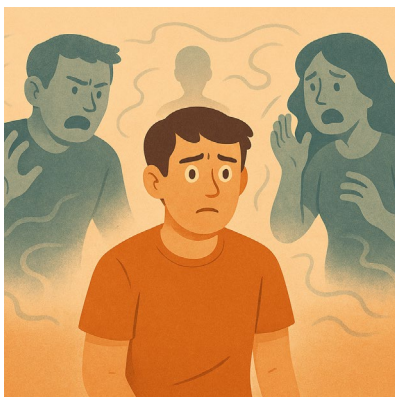


- Bipolar disorder

This is when your moods can change a lot.

You might feel

- Very happy
- Very sad
- Happy and sad at the same time.



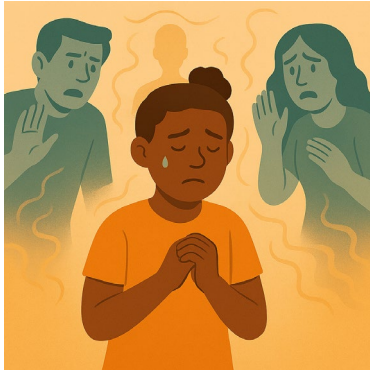
- Schizophrenia

This is when you can

- Hear
- See

Things that are **not** there.

It can be hard to tell if they are real.



- Schizoaffective disorders

This is when someone has both

- Schizophrenia
- A mental health condition that affects their mood.



- Other mental health conditions.

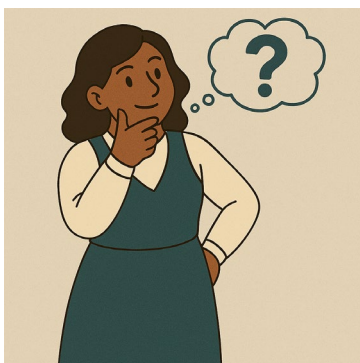


We think they are mostly used by adults.

People might have more than 1 **diagnosis**.

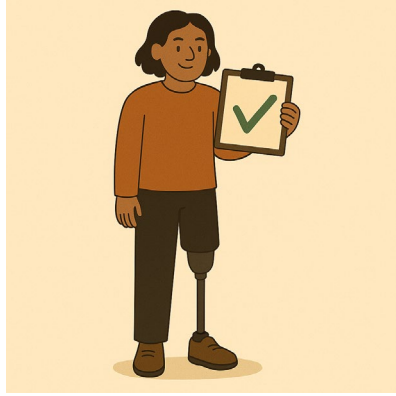
Diagnosis means the way we work out if someone has a condition.

It is done by a medical worker.



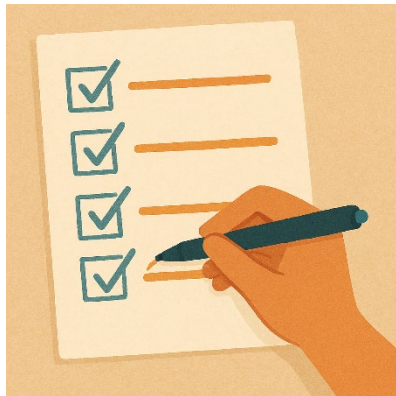
Question 2

Do you think we have said all the groups of people who might use psychiatric assistance dogs.



Please tick only 1 box.

Yes



No

I want to change something.

Please write what you want to change in the box.

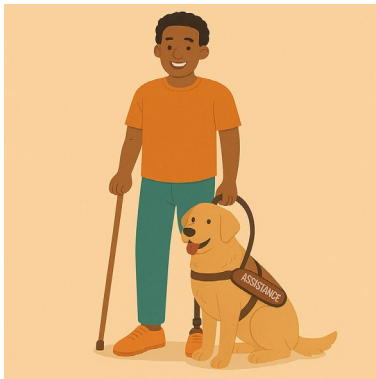
You can

- Add something
- Take something away.

Question 3 outcomes



Supports are used to get good outcomes.

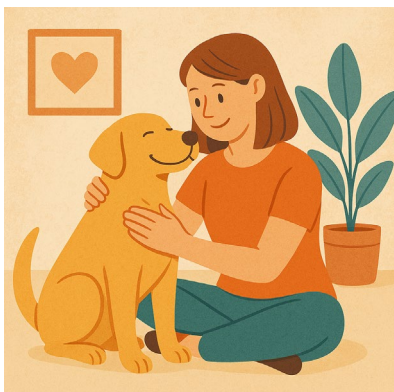


Outcomes can

- Make peoples lives better



- Keep people safer.



We think that psychiatric assistance dogs aim to help with



- Keeping a daily **routine**

A routine are the things you do.

They can be done

- In an order
- On a day
- At a time.

Everyone will have different routines.



- Being able to have a job



- Being able to go to school



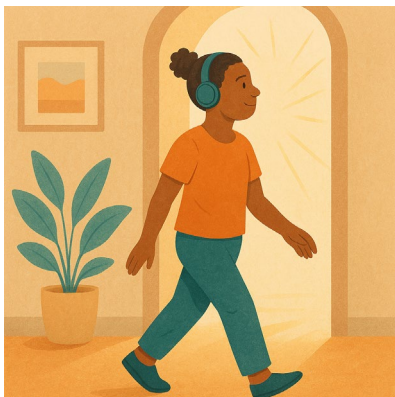
- Keeping relationships



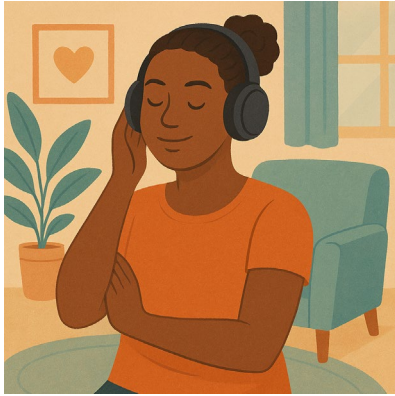
- Being able to do things for themselves



- Take part in the community

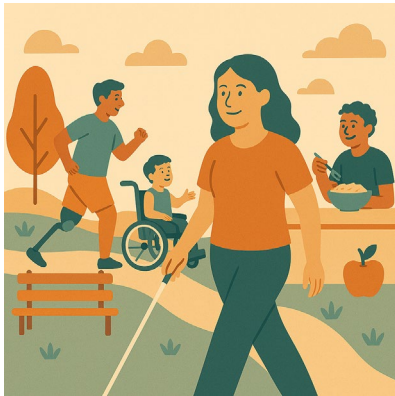


- To help people feel hope



- Feel **confident** they can look after their mental health

Confident means knowing you can do something.



- **Quality of life**

Quality of life means being

- Happy
- Healthy.



- Feel like they belong



- To do **self care**

Self care is making sure you are

- Eating well
- Exercising
- Sleeping
- Showering.



- Helping them have a healthy body

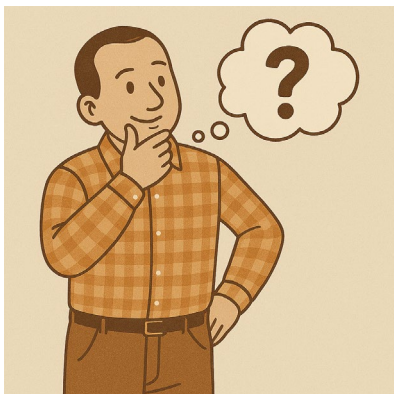


- Helping have less mental health **symptoms**

Symptoms are the things you notice when you are becoming unwell.

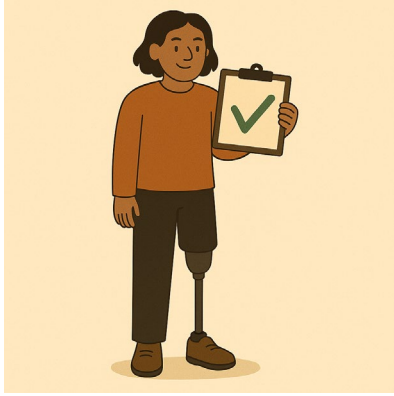
You might

- Feel things in your body
- Feel pain
- Have different thoughts
- Act differently.



Question 3

Do you think we have said the most important outcomes for this support.

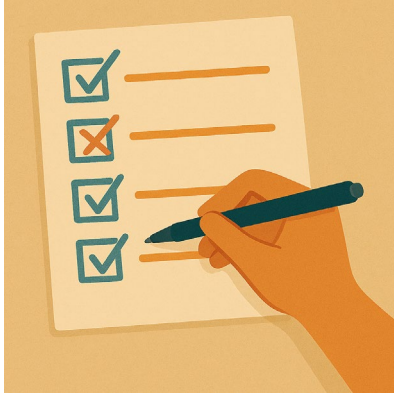


Please tick only 1 box.

Yes

You can write extra things if you want.

You can put the outcomes you think are the most important.



No

I want to change the list.

Please write what you want to change in the box.

You can

- Add something
- Take something away.

Question 4 compare with other supports



We need to **compare** how well psychiatric assistance dogs work.



Compare means to look at 2 or more things.

You might look at what

- Is different
- Is the same
- Works best.

This will help us say if 1 support is best.



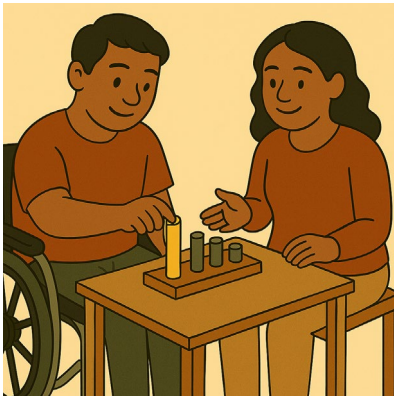
Other supports we could compare psychiatric assistance dogs with are

- Support workers



- Community programs

Like peer support groups.



- Therapy

Therapy is something to help you

- Feel better
- Grow stronger.

There are lots of different types of therapy.



- Recovery programs

Like

- Peer work
- Recovery colleges.



- Medicines



- Other animals

They could be

- Pets
- Emotional support animals

They can also be called **companion animals**.



We think these supports will aim to help people with the same **outcomes**.

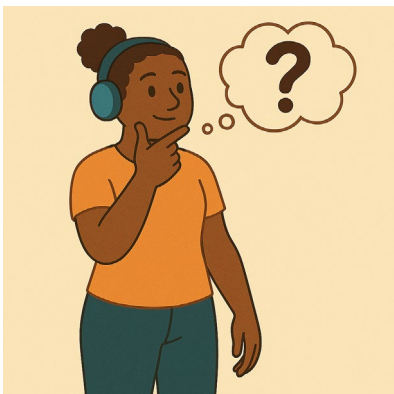
Outcomes are the things we see when our plans are working.



Have you tried different supports.

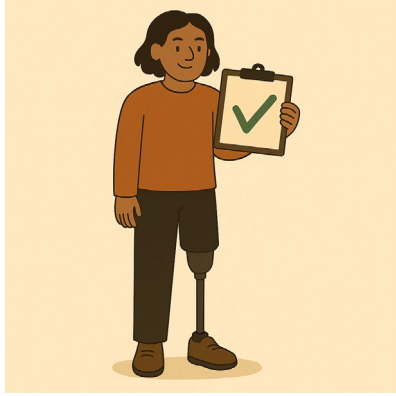


What supports would you use if you could **not** use a psychiatric assistance dog.



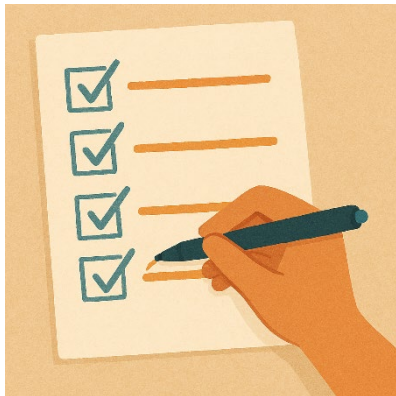
Question 4

Are these the best supports to compare to psychiatric assistance dogs.



Please tick only 1 box.

Yes



No

I want to change something.

Please write what you want to change in the box.

You can

- Add something
- Take something away.



Thank you for doing **part 1**.

Please do **part 2** next.



You can take a break if you need it.

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