



GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG CLUB OF AMERICA

HELPER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Levels of Helpers

- Apprentice Helper

An Apprentice Helper is allowed to be a Trial Helper ONLY at the Club they are a member of. These helpers are not allowed to do Helper Work at any other Club trial. The Apprentice Helper must be capable of working Club dogs. The Apprentice Helper must certify as a Club Level Helper within 1 year.

- Club Trial Helper

A Club Trial Helper may travel to any club and be the helper for a club trial. They have the responsibility of working dogs in all three levels of protection work during any local club trial. The Helper must be capable of working both club dogs as well as those from outside the club in a fair, correct, and safe fashion.

- Regional Trial Helper

A regional Trial Helper has the responsibility of working dogs in all three levels of protection work during a Club or Regional competition. The Helper must be capable of working powerful, quick dogs that they have not worked before; in a fair, demanding, correct and safe fashion.

- National Trial Helper

A National Trial Helper has the responsibility of working dogs in all three levels of protection work during a Club, Regional or National competition. The Helper must be capable of working powerful, quick dogs that they have not worked before; in a fair, demanding, correct and safe fashion.

- Teaching Helper

A Teaching Helper has the responsibility of teaching and certifying Helpers at the Club, Regional and National level. A Teaching Helper should have extensive knowledge about dog behavior and training principles, and demonstrate the ability to conduct seminars and to disseminate that knowledge to diverse groups of Helpers.

Prerequisites for Certification

- The applicant must be a minimum of 16 years of age. Applicants between the ages of 16-18 years of age require a “waiver” signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- The applicant must be a GSDCA member or a member applicant. If membership is pending at the time of the seminar, the Helper applicant may still participate and receive a rating according to his/her skill level (without a Trial Helper Book). The Helper applicant will receive his/her Trial Helper Book only after all membership requirements have been fulfilled.
- The applicant should have a thorough understanding of the protection trial rules for all three Working Dog levels.
- The applicant should show good physical conditioning and coordination sufficient to perform the Helper’s duties in an assertive, fair, consistent and safe manner during an event.

The Certification Process

- Apprentice Helper

GSDCA Apprentice Trial Helpers may be certified through a one or two-day qualification event, depending on the number of Helpers to be qualified, and may be presented by one (1) Teaching Helper.

- **Club Trial Helper**

GSDCA Club Trial Helpers may be certified through a one or two-day certification event, depending on the number of Helpers to be certified, and may be presented by one (1) Teaching Helper. A Certified Club Level Helper from another sanctioned IPO organization with proof of a current helper book, will be recognized by the GSDCA Helper Program as a GSDCA Club Level Trial Helper.

- **Regional Trial Helpers**

The applicant must attend an official GSDCA Helper Certification event. All requirements must be successfully completed within a single event. Regional Certification events may be hosted by local GSDCA affiliated clubs or by the GSDCA. Regional Certification may be a one (1) or two (2) day event depending on the number of Helpers to be certified and may be presented by one (1) Teaching Helper. A Certified Regional Level Trial Helper from another sanctioned IPO organization with a current helper book, where all Trial Helper work has been rated Very Good or Excellent, will be recognized by the GSDCA Helper Program as a GSDCA Regional Level Trial Helper.

- **National Trial Helpers**

To become certified an applicant must attend an official GSDCA certification event. National Trial Qualification events may be hosted by local GSDCA affiliated clubs or by the GSDCA. National Qualifications may be a one (1) or two (2) day event depending on the number of Helpers to be qualified and must be presented by two (2) Teaching Helpers. The National level applicant may attend two separate qualifications conducted by two (2) different Teaching Helpers to obtain the seminar requirements. A prerequisite may be waived with the unanimous approval of the Helper Committee.

Helpers who already have National Level status from another organization may obtain a National Level rating with the GSDCA by: 1) attend a GSDCA Helper Qualification Seminar and fulfill the standard of National Level competence in the seminar; OR 2) have previously worked a Regional or National IPO Trial and by sending in a video of their work at that trial to the GSDCA Helper committee.(a minimum of working 3 different dogs). 3) A copy of their current Helper Book must accompany their application.

- **Teaching Helpers**

The candidate for Teaching Helper must:

- ✓ Be a member in good standing of GSDCA
- ✓ Have at least eight (8) years of experience as a Helper
- ✓ Have served as a Club Training Director or assistant to the Training Director or in an equivalent position for a service dog agency
- ✓ Have performed as a trial Helper for at least four (4) club trials

Prospective candidates must attend a Helper Certification Event wherein, through the interaction with people and dogs, the presiding Teaching Helper can determine if they possess the physical and communication skills to be a Teaching Helper. The seminar can be a two (2) day event or two one (1) day events but the candidate must complete the process and be evaluated by two (2) different Teaching Helpers.

Following the completion of the GSDCA Helper Seminar/Certification, the reports from the two (2) Teaching Helpers shall be forwarded to the Helper Committee. The Helper Committee will issue a decision about the candidate.

A prerequisite may be waived with the unanimous approval of the Helper Committee

Certification Events

Certification events may be scheduled for one (1) or two (2) days.

Certification events shall include a presentation of the fundamentals of protection work with emphasis on trial procedure and practical implementation followed by the evaluation of the applicant Helpers.

The Club Trial Helper must work several dogs, no more than four (4), at different trial levels. At least one (1) dog must be working at the highest level. A Regional or National Trial Helper aspirant who is attending a certification event for the first time shall work several dogs, but no more than eight (8) at different trial levels; at least four (4) dogs shall be working at the highest level.

The applicant Helper should show good physical conditioning and coordination sufficient to carry out a Helper's task in an assertive, fair, equitable, consistent and safe fashion for all dogs in a trial. The protection phase in a Working Dog trial is a contest between Helper and dog. The National Trial Helper has to be able to put real psychological and physical pressure on the dogs.

All Apprentice and Club Level Helpers should be videotaped. After the test their work will be discussed with the Teaching Helper while watching the videotape.

All Regional and National Level Certifications will be videotaped and sent to the Helper Committee for Review.

A Helper who is attending for re-evaluation shall successfully work dogs at the IPO 3 level. The number of dogs worked will be at the Teaching Helpers discretion.

The Helper should be able to recite all applicable rule changes to the evaluator.

Note: The applicants will be required to provide his/her own protection equipment. If the applicant fails to have the requisite equipment, the examiner may excuse the applicant.

Maintaining Certification

- 1) GSDCA Apprentice Helper Certification is good for 1 year only. You cannot re-certify as an Apprentice Helper. You must move up to a minimum Club Level Helper before your 1 year time frame expires.
- 2) GSDCA Club Trial Helper Certification is valid for two (2) years. The Helper should do helper work at a GSDCA, DVG, USCA or GSSCC sanctioned trial at least once every two (2) years and if the officiating licensed judge at the trial approves of the work and marks this in the GSDCA Trial Helper Book, the Helper's certification will be extended for another two (2) years.
- 3) GSDCA Regional Trial Helper certification is valid for a period of two (2) years. The Helper must re-qualify on or before his/her anniversary date either by attending a certification event or by working a GSDCA Club or Regional trial. If the officiating judge at the trial approves of the work, his certification will be renewed for two (2) years from that date.
- 4) GSDCA National Trial Helper certification is valid for a period of four (4) years. The Helper must re-qualify on or before his/her anniversary date either by attending a certification event or by working a GSDCA National trial. If the officiating judge at the trial approves of the work, his certification will be renewed for four years from that date.
- 5) Upon retirement as a National Level Helper they will have the designation of "retired" after their name on the Helper List. The Helper may continue to perform Helper work at Club Level Trials and Breed Surveys with the approval of a Teaching Helper.
- 6) Teaching Helper certification is valid for as long as the Teaching Helper is a member of the GSDCA.
- 7) Certified Helpers are responsible for reviewing all information published about rule changes as they occur. Certification may be revoked if the Helper is not aware of current rules. All Helpers are encouraged to attend various seminars, whenever possible, for their own continuing educational improvement. It is the responsibility of the Helper to provide the GSDCA SV/WUSV Programs Office with proof of re-evaluation. Upon receipt of a copy of the Trial Helper Book page completed and signed by the officiating judge, qualification will be extended two (2) years.
- 8) Certification status will automatically expire if the Helper's membership in the GSDCA is cancelled for any reason. Any Helper whose membership expires will be reconsidered by the GSDCA Helper Committee after reactivating their membership.
- 9) Teaching Helper certification will automatically expire if the Helper's membership in the GSDCA is cancelled for any reason. Any Teaching Helper whose membership expires will be reconsidered by the GSDCA Helper Committee after reactivating their membership.

Event Requirements

Helpers at National trials must be certified National Trial Helpers. Helpers at these trials will receive expenses for travel, meals and lodging and a daily fee of \$50. The agreed upon Helper expenses are the responsibility of the host club.

- Helpers at Breed Surveys must be certified Club, Regional or National Trial Helpers.
- Helpers at Regional trials must be certified Regional or National Trial Helpers.
- Helpers at local club trials must be at minimum certified Club Trial Helpers. (with the exception of an Apprentice Helper who is allowed to be a helper at their own Club Trial). Exceptions for Helpers at all trial levels can be made by the Helper Committee.

Helper Equipment

Complete Helper equipment consists of protection pants, protection jacket, groin protector, protection sleeve, trial helper stick and proper shoes. The Trial Helper stick must be padded and the outer cover should be leather.

Helpers are required to have jackets available at a club trial. The judge will decide whether or not they must be worn.

At Breed Surveys, Regional and National trials, wearing of the jacket shall comply with the rules in force at that time.

Record Keeping and Privileges

All *original* Helper Certification documents (tests, evaluations, videotapes, etc.) will be sent to the GSDCA SV/WUSV Programs Office by the Teaching Helper within five (5) business days of the Helper Certification event by traceable mail or delivery service.

The GSDCA SV/WUSV Programs Office shall maintain a list of Certified Helpers and expiration dates. A listing of all Certified Helpers shall be posted on the GSDCA website. All Certified Helpers must maintain a Trial Helper Book in which the trial performance will be documented and assessed by the presiding judge. The Trial Helper Book is available at the GSDCA SV/WUSV Programs Office.

The position of GSDCA Certified Helper is an honorific designation. Certified Helpers may “advertise” their GSDCA status only in association with official GSDCA events.

National Trial Helpers and Teaching Helpers will be given free entrance and a catalog to all GSDCA events. This is in effect only if the Helper is a spectator or working as a Helper, not if he/she is an entrant in the event.

Disciplinary Action

Any Certified Helper who fails to perform at any trial in an equitable, safe and sportsmanlike manner shall be excused from a trial by the judge who may recommend censure or other disciplinary action to the Helper Program Committee. Improper behavior on the part of any GSDCA Certified Teaching Helper shall be reported to the Helper Program Committee for disciplinary action. If all original Helper documents are not sent within ten (10) business days, the Helper may be subject to disciplinary action as recommended by the Helper Program Committee.