

## Valuing the Benefits and Costs of Dog Guides for the Blind

The utilization of guide dogs—highly trained animals taught to lead the user in a straight line and maneuver around obstacles—can potentially mitigate many of the social and economic costs of blindness for those who are able to use them. Case studies and anecdotal evidence suggest guide dogs serve as companions, providing an emotional connection and building the confidence and self-esteem of blind recipient. This 2007 study estimated the costs of providing and maintaining dog guide services over the 8-year working life of the dog, considering the monetary value of savings from decreased utilization of formal and informal home assistance care services. The study estimated a total cost per dog guide over its working life of \$40,598, of which \$21,568 were off-set by reductions in other costs. The average net cost of dog guide ownership per year over the working life of the animal was \$2,379.

### Discounted Costs Associated with Dog Guides Over an Estimated 8 year Lifespan, in cumulative 2005

	Year								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Formal and Informal Care									
Formal care savings	\$1,491	\$3,802	\$6,047	\$8,225	\$10,341	\$12,394	\$14,388	\$16,324	\$16,324
Informal care savings	\$455	\$1,202	\$1,926	\$2,630	\$3,313	\$3,976	\$4,619	\$5,244	\$5,244
Benefit subtotal	\$1,946	\$5,004	\$7,973	\$10,855	\$13,653	\$16,370	\$19,007	\$21,568	\$21,568
Dog Provision and Maintenance Cost	\$36,236	\$36,916	\$37,576	\$38,216	\$38,838	\$39,442	\$40,028	\$40,598	\$40,598
Cumulative net cost per year of services	\$34,290	\$15,956	\$9,868	\$6,840	\$5,037	\$3,845	\$3,003	\$2,379	\$2,379

Wirth KE, Rein DB. The economic costs and benefits of dog guides for the blind. *Ophthalmic Epidemiol.* Mar-Apr 2008;15(2):92-98.