



Application Process FAQs

Q. Who takes care of the monkey's needs?

A. Our recipients must have a personal care attendant or family member who is willing to provide personal care for their service monkey on a daily basis. Since this secondary person will be the primary caregiver to the monkey (feeding, bathing, nail filing, etc.) it is critically important that he/she also be involved in the decision to apply for a service monkey.

Q. What is involved in the application process for becoming a monkey helper recipient?

A. The application process for becoming a monkey helper recipient is an extensive multi-step process. Our goal is to assure that each placement represents the best environment for the monkey helper and the best match for his/her recipient. After meeting all of our [eligibility requirements](#), the process begins by completing a 10 page paper application, providing medical and personal references, and making a home video.

Helping Hands will typically make a home visit prior to placement. During this visit we continue to assess your readiness for a monkey helper, and talk in person about the placement week, expectations, home modifications, and the roles and responsibilities that you and your family and caretakers will need to perform if you are approved as a recipient.

The amount of time the application process takes depends on how quickly you get all application materials returned to Helping Hands. Once ALL application materials are received, the Placement Team reviews all your information and discusses if we have an appropriate monkey that will meet your needs in training at that time.

Q. How long is the waiting list to receive a monkey helper?

A. The pool of potential monkey helper recipients fluctuates throughout any given time period. As mentioned above, we place an average of 6-8 monkeys/year. However, our waiting list is not, "first come, first served." Because our monkey matching process is so unique we are really looking for the "right fit" when it comes to matching our monkeys with recipients. An individual may hear immediately after we review their application that they are accepted, while others can wait up to a year for an appropriate monkey to finish training. That being said, we don't want our applicants to feel discouraged – we want you to assume you may be a perfect fit for a monkey we have in training right now.

Q. How do you decide who makes a good candidate?

A. We base this decision on several different factors. Our monkeys, much like humans, have a variety of different personalities. Some of our monkeys are very outgoing, some are shy, some like to explore, some like to cuddle, some are reserved while others are confident. Some monkeys prefer men over woman or vice versa, some need a dominant personality in their life while others would prefer someone passive.

We base our "monkey matching" on personality profiles of our candidates and the monkeys that are currently in training. We often say that applying for a monkey is, "half adoption process, half dating-service." Other factors that we consider are: other individuals in your life, home environment, a candidate's task needs, and general personality traits required to develop a positive relationship of trust and understanding with a monkey.

Established in 1979, Helping Hands, a non-profit organization, raises, and trains capuchin monkeys to provide daily assistance to people living with spinal cord injury or other mobility impairments. Relying on private contributions, we provide these specifically trained service animals and their lifetime support free of charge.

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Q. What happens once a candidate is accepted?

A. Once a candidate is accepted, we will call them and let them know. At that time we will further discuss what it is like to have a helper monkey and details of the [placement week](#). We ask that you further discuss this commitment with your caregivers/family members and often arrange for a call with them to answer their questions. Once we have scheduled the placement week, we begin shipping supplies to your home that we'll use to outfit you with everything you need to begin life with your new service monkey.

Q. What is the placement week?

A. The [placement week](#) is when the Helping Hands staff comes to your home to bring the service monkey and to train you and your family and caretakers. This training usually lasts 4-6 days and you can expect to work between 6-8 hours/day with our staff and your new monkey. We try to plan our schedule as much as possible around your daily routine but we do require that recipients clear their schedules that week to give us the maximum amount of time together.

Q. Does the Helping Hands staff stay at our house?

A. No, during the placement week our staff stays at a hotel nearby. During our pre-placement planning, it is helpful if you can direct us to a hotel near a shopping plaza (Home Depot, Walmart, etc.) so we can purchase supplies as needed.

Q. What happens during the placement week?

A. During the placement week, the Helping Hands staff works on setting up a successful relationship between you and your monkey. This is largely a week where we teach you monkey behaviors, hierarchy, relationship development, etc. During this week, we will set up and adapt equipment you will use in the future to help your monkey learn tasks in your home. We will show you some of the tasks that your monkey will eventually do for you. However, it is important that you understand that you need to build a relationship with your monkey first before you will be able to complete tasks independently without the assistance of our staff trainers. Working successfully with tasks usually begins after a few months, once you develop a strong and trusting relationship with your monkey. Again, your staff advisor will instruct you every step of the way.

Q. What happens after the placement week?

A. Before the Helping Hands staff leaves your home, you will be assigned to a staff member who will provide phone support or internet video using SKYPE. You will continue to have daily support for the next few weeks and months, depending on the ongoing level of support that is needed. Once you develop a strong relationship with your monkey, task training will begin. This is usually the period of time many recipients find most stressful. Your monkey is still getting used to his/her new home and once our staff leaves, the monkey has to restructure his/her hierarchy in the new home.

Moving slowly is very important in the first few months of any new placement. This allows for a successful transition for both the recipient and the monkey. It is extraordinarily important to follow all of the instructions of your staff advisor as our experience helps prevent you from making mistakes during this crucial relationship building period.