ABSTRACT

This thesis is dealing with the role of the service dog with autism spectrum disorder and its benefit. The aim of this thesis is to determine the influence of a dog on socialization in children with ASD within school, leisure activities and to determine its influence within the whole society. The thesis summarizes the opinions of social workers and parents, who can, considering their own experience, evaluate comprehensively the benefit of the service dog for this client group. The thesis is divided into theoretical and research part.

The theoretical part deals with the defining the autism spectrum disorder, etiology, classification, diagnostics, areas of development of social skills and socialization in people with ASD. Further it deals with the topic of service dogs, canistherapy, training and selection of a dog, organizations that help this particular group of clients. It describes in detail the activities of one chosen organisation, so that it comprehensively captures the process in which the service dog can function and its training in the people with ASD.

The research part defines the aim of the research, which is to find out the role of the service dogs on socialisation in the people with ASD. Furthermore it describes the research questions which are: How does the assistance dog contribute to socializing a child with ASD in society? How does the assistance dog contribute to socializing a child with ASD at school? How does the assistance dog contribute to socializing a child with ASD as part of a hobby? Methods, collection of data and analysis are also described in this thesis.

It deals with qualitative research that determines current benefit of service dogs in children with ASD by the use of semi-structured interviews. Six respondents reflect all existing benefits that the service dog brings and not only with socialization, but also in terms of development of the whole personality in children with ASD.

KEYWORDS

Autism spectrum disorder, assistance dog, canistherapy, socialization