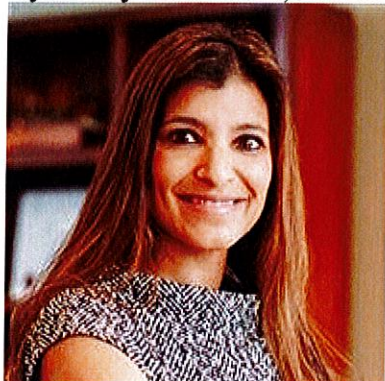


Personal Injury

No downside to facility dogs in court: Daya

By Kathy Rumleski, [AdvocateDaily.com](#) Contributor



Accredited facility dogs should be approved for use in courtrooms to assist children and youth who must testify in criminal cases, says Toronto personal injury lawyer [Jasmine Daya](#).

"It's such an easy fix to include the use of such dogs within the Criminal Code of Canada, Daya tells [AdvocateDaily.com](#).

"Right now, a judge would have to agree to this in his or her courtroom, but they're not all familiar with these accredited facility dogs."

However, it is not unprecedented to have a dog in a courtroom, Daya says.

She refers to a case in which a Superior Court judge ruled last fall that a 12-year-old victim of crime could be accompanied by a facility dog to give her comfort while

testifying.

Daya, managing principal with [Jasmine Daya & Co.](#), met one such dog named Iggy, who was profiled in a recent [CBC story](#).

Daya is afraid of large dogs but says she was immediately put at ease when Iggy, a three-year-old black Labrador Retriever and Bernese Mountain Dog mix, sat at her feet.

"He sat beside me and I felt totally calm. Normally I'm not comfortable around big dogs."

Daya met Iggy at [Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre](#) (Boost CYAC), a child and youth advocacy centre with offices in Toronto, Barrie and Peterborough.

He works as part of the child victim witness support program, she says, and is trained in a service capacity to help kids feel more relaxed.

A vest is put on Iggy so that he knows it is time to work. When he isn't wearing it, Daya says he is a normal dog who likes to play.

Daya has been volunteering her time and talents to Boost CYAC for the past few months as a way to give back to the community. She became aware of the organization after visiting her brother's private equity firm, which was located in the same building as Boost CYAC's Toronto office.

When Daya mentioned to her parents that she was looking for a charity to aid, her father suggested the organization as a good fit for her because of its benefits to children in the court system.

"They do amazing work. It's impossible for us to comprehend the pain of a child who is the victim of crime," Daya says.

"Their testimony is crucial in court, but it can be so daunting. Boost helps in that process."

Daya says the facility dog will sit in the witness box at the feet of a child who is testifying in court.

"When a child's feet don't even touch the ground, they can touch the dog. The canine doesn't cause any issue or disruption to the court. There is no downside here," she says.

"They give kids added comfort so it just makes sense that they should be part of the court system if required."

Daya says a service dog is also involved with the child throughout the various steps of the court process so they are able to develop a relationship with the canine.

She hopes to raise public awareness about the work Boost CYAC does to help children through challenging ordeals.

"Using my firm's voice and social media networks helps to spread information about what Boost provides."

For example, to prepare children for court, Daya explains that Boost CYAC gives them colouring books that show what a courtroom looks like and the people they will see there. They also have DVDs to help ready them to testify.

Daya's firm is supporting Boost in different ways, she says, including providing any legal research they might require.

"I'm here for them in whatever way they need," she says. "My firm is always willing to help."