

Predictable or Complex? Using Qualifications Ratings at Your Facility

A successful visit depends on three factors:

1. The therapy animal team's qualification rating, as determined by skill and aptitude evaluations
2. Staff involvement in the visiting animal program
3. The facility environment that the team will encounter while visiting

1. Team Qualification Rating

Teams vary in experience, confidence and capability. For the safety of both the clients and the teams themselves, teams that visit highly challenging areas must have advanced skills and aptitude.

Upon successful completion of the evaluation and registration with Pet Partners, all teams will receive a qualification rating of "Predictable" or "Complex." A team's rating is noted on the photo ID badge that Pet Partners issues. This rating helps determine what settings are most appropriate visiting.

A team's rating can change each time they are re-evaluated – which occurs a minimum of every 2 years for their renewal with Pet Partners.

- ▶ Over time, as the handler and their animal becomes more experienced as a team, they might progress from a "Predictable" rating to a "Complex" rating.
- ▶ As an animal ages, its temperament might change, and a "Predictable" rating might become more appropriate than a previously held "Complex" rating.

Keep in mind that a team with a "Complex" rating isn't more valuable than one with a "Predictable" rating. Everyone benefits from animal-assisted activities (AAA) and animal-assisted therapy (AAT) when a team is well-suited to its visiting environment.

2. Staff Involvement

At a facility, the staff might be highly involved with a visit, or they might barely be involved at all.

The following table shows some examples of staff involvement.

Moderate to High Involvement	Low Involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Being with the team during the busiest part of the visit and then providing visual supervision from the nursing station during the rest of the time (moderate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Giving the handler a list of everyone who is approved for a visit and then letting the team visit on their own▶ Placing everyone who is approved for a visit into a group room and then leaving the team alone for the visit

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- ▶ Introducing the team to a group of clients and then shadowing to help the handler with names and activities (high)
- ▶ Working with the handler along with each client, identifying goals and helping you determine what to do with that client (high)

3. Facility Environment

By understanding the environments present in your facility, you help set your volunteer therapy animal team up for success.

The following table shows some examples of typical settings and experiences.

Quiet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Predictable environment ▶ Routinely anticipated interactions ▶ Low activity ▶ Few distractions 	Moderate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ranges from a predictable to a complex environment, depending on the facility ▶ Occasionally unanticipated interactions ▶ Moderate activity ▶ Moderate distractions 	Active <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Complex environment ▶ Routinely unanticipated interactions ▶ High activity ▶ Many distractions
<p>Staff members don't move around the facility very much.</p>	<p>Staff members are somewhat active, moving from room to room, supervising clients and so on.</p>	<p>Staff members are active nearly all the time, rushing from room to room, walking hurriedly and with purpose, and wheeling carts (medicine, food, linens and so on).</p>
<p>Clients are too sick to be active; they mostly stay in bed or sit quietly.</p>	<p>Some clients are up and moving around, perhaps using walkers, wheelchairs or canes.</p>	<p>Clients are active during the visit, or you might visit a group of active clients.</p> <p>Client behaviors are unpredictable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clients might lack muscle coordination (which might cause them to make sudden movements). ▶ Clients might be living in a delusional world that's inhabited by people or things that the rest of us can't see. ▶ Clients might be excited and impulsive.

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Quiet	Moderate	Active
Clients don't talk very much, or they talk in very quiet voices.	Clients talk, and there might be occasions of loud talking, laughing or arguing. Clients might be gesturing as they move about or talk.	There's constant noise from clients talking, crying or shouting. There might be noise from music, neighboring rooms, intercom systems, a nearby emergency room or a nearby airport.
Floors are carpeted and don't echo sounds.	Music might be playing, or sounds of other activities might be heard through the walls. Floors might be linoleum or tile, windows might not have curtains, and walls might echo sounds.	General noise might be amplified because of hard flooring, a lack of upholstery on the furniture, a lack of curtains and so on.
There are few noisy machines or carts.	Machines in the environment might include those that dispense canned soft drinks (<i>clunk!</i>), a pneumatic tube communication system (<i>whoosh, thump</i>) and IV or body system monitors (<i>beep, beep</i>).	Machines in the environment include those in moderate environments and may also include sounds which are loud and unpredictable, such as announcements over loudspeakers, mechanical alarms or other jarring noises that happen unexpectedly.

The Team Qualification Matrix

The Team Qualification Matrix shows how the team qualification rating, staff involvement and the facility environment relate to one another. Use this chart to assess whether a predictable or complex team is right for your facility, based on the staff involvement and environment.

Many facilities have predictable and complex areas within the same building. Consider all the areas where you could benefit from the presence of a therapy animal team and identify if a predictable or complex team would be better suited.

	Quiet Facility	Moderate Facility	Active Facility
High Staff Involvement	Predictable & Complex	Predictable & Complex	Complex
Low Staff Involvement	Predictable & Complex	Complex	Complex

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How Teams Use the Matrix

After teams have been evaluated, they must refer to the Team Qualification Matrix to determine the characteristics of the environments that they are qualified to visit. Teams can see how their skills and aptitude fit the combination of staff involvement and environment in those facilities.

When considering a visit to a specific site or a specific area within a facility, we ask teams to consider the characteristics of the people at the facility, their personality and preferences, and the skill level and aptitude of their animal. For example, a well-trained, quiet cat might have the potential to be a great therapy animal, but not around loud teenagers in a program for delinquent behavior. On the other hand, a fearless, energetic dog might do well in that type of program but less well in a nursing home with frail, elderly people who easily lose their balance.

How Facilities Use the Matrix

Facilities can determine whether certain visiting situations are predictable or complex by carefully considering the environment and staff involvement that a visiting team is likely to encounter. By matching the appropriate environment with the appropriate level of staff involvement, a facility can easily determine the required qualification rating for teams that visit it or specific areas of it. The use of this matrix can ensure better matches between teams and facilities, and also safer, more effective relationships.

Sample Situations

Kathleen and her animal, Snowball, have been evaluated as a team and have received a “Predictable” qualification rating. Kathleen is considering the following volunteer opportunities and is using the Team Qualification Matrix to assess the appropriateness of each facility. Compare your answers with the answers at the end of this example set.

- 1.** Kathleen loves children! There’s an after-school program in her town that has a visiting animal program. She first visits without Snowball to learn about the facility. Children are running around. There are loud noises as children play, sing and talk animatedly. During visits, there’s always at least one staff member in the room, but these staff members are usually helping children.
 - a.** What kind of environment is this: predictable or complex?
 - b.** Is this a good fit for Kathleen and Snowball?

- 2.** An assisted living facility in the area is looking for therapy animal teams to visit during activity sessions for clients. Kathleen asks about the setting and finds out that there are typically several clients in the room at the same time. Usually, there’s music or a television on in the background. Sometimes, family members enter the room to visit a client. A staff member is always present and accompanies the teams, introducing them to clients in the room.
 - a.** What kind of environment is this: predictable or complex?
 - b.** Is this a good fit for Kathleen and Snowball?

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Answers

1. This is an active environment with a low level of staff involvement. Because Kathleen and Snowball have a “Predictable” rating, this isn’t an appropriate setting for them.
2. This is a moderate environment with some distractions, but there’s a high level of staff involvement. The high level of staff involvement makes this an appropriate facility for Kathleen to visit with Snowball. If there wasn’t this high level of staff involvement, the facility would be appropriate for teams with “Complex” ratings only.