Purpose of This Manual

Pet Partners is recognized for its commitment to high standards. Because we’re a national organization, it’s especially important that our curriculum, policies and procedures be applied uniformly and consistently throughout the country. This manual is intended to support and guide you as you conduct in-person workshops. Moreover, by following the policies and curriculum, you’ll ensure that the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program remains one that’s based on high standards and quality evaluations.

Contact and Support Information

Our goal is to set up all our volunteers for success. You’re encouraged to reach out to Pet Partners any time you need support and assistance.

► For questions about instructor policies and curriculum, email teppi@petpartners.org.
► To proactively address a potential complaint, email operations@petpartners.org.
► To make suggestions for improving the curriculum, use the “Contact Us” page on the Pet Partners website (www.petpartners.org).
► To access resources, log in to the Volunteer Center on the website, and go to the Resource Library.

For all other questions, use the “Contact Us” page on the website.
Contents

Part 1: Instructional Policies .......................................................... 1
  Expectations .................................................................................. 3
  Best Practices .............................................................................. 7

Part 2: Handler Workshop .............................................................. 15
  Curriculum .................................................................................. 17

Part 3: Mini Workshops ................................................................. 91
  Volunteering With Your Animal .................................................. 93
PART 1

Instructional Policies
Expectations

As an instructor, you’re in a position to create a lasting impression in a handler on behalf of Pet Partners. You’re the face of Pet Partners in your community! This section reviews the guiding principles that Pet Partners has identified to define how we want to be perceived. When you represent Pet Partners as an instructor, the expectation is that your actions will align with these values and standards of professionalism.

Core Values

The Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program identifies four core values that guide volunteer leadership as well as Pet Partners staff in their interactions with volunteers, clients, facilities and each other. In your role as an instructor, the expectation is that your interactions will reflect these values.

Respect

► We have respect for those who pursue therapy animal registration. We seek to support them and help them be successful by answering their questions promptly and without judgment, by helping them grow in the knowledge of best practices, and by giving constructive and compassionate feedback that sets them up for success.

► We have respect for animals and ask our volunteers to consistently act as advocates for their animal. Because we recognize that not all animals want to participate in therapy work, for various reasons, we “listen” to them and respect their needs – whether that means not registering them, retiring them or simply ending a visit early.

► We’re committed to supporting ongoing education through respectful dialog. We understand that people make the best choices that they can for themselves and their animals, based on the information that’s available to them, and we can support them in their learning journey.

► We respect that we’re part of a field that’s constantly changing. As such, we’re committed to continuous improvement as individuals and as a program. We accept that best practices are fluid and that we might need to challenge ourselves to grow over time.
Empowerment

- We empower therapy animal teams to access resources that provide answers to their questions and let them continue their education, because this will make them safer and more effective members of the Therapy Animal Program.
- Pet Partners believes in empowering volunteer leaders to make sound decisions that align with the program values.
- Pet Partners considers the relationship with its volunteers a partnership, and empowers all volunteers to make suggestions and share feedback with the goal of strengthening the program.

Inclusion

- In our language and our policies, we’re inclusive of the nine species that Pet Partners registers, so that those who register with non-canines feel welcomed as members of the Pet Partners community.
- The best way to determine who can be a therapy animal team is to invite handlers and animals to demonstrate the necessary skills and aptitude for therapy work. We welcome those who want to pursue registration, and allow them to be evaluated free from assumptions and without bias.
- We strive to be inclusive of handlers and animals with disabilities, working collaboratively to identify accommodations that accomplish the same level of rigor and safety in modified ways.

Transparency

- We believe that there’s value in understanding the “why” behind decisions, and that it’s worth the investment in time to explain our answers.
- We believe that the program is at its strongest when key information is documented, consistent and readily available.
Professionalism

As representatives of a national program, all instructors are expected to demonstrate professionalism when they interact with handlers, fellow instructors, team evaluators and Pet Partners staff.

The following expectations are considered requirements for instructors:

- Stay current on Pet Partners policies and operations, so that you can accurately answer questions from teams.
- Communicate in a manner that’s consistent with Pet Partners standards.
- Observe confidentiality, and avoid negative public comments about handlers or teams that you interact with.
- Offer feedback and guidance in a balanced manner that’s supportive of a team’s growth and learning.
- Strive to manage your emotions, even when you’re confronted by others who are unable to do so.
- Respect those with differing opinions, and if you need help interpreting policy, request support from Pet Partners.
- Be collaborative with and respectful of all volunteers, regardless of group or facility affiliations.
- Be willing to learn, change and grow, based on your experiences and feedback.

Communication Standards

In your role as an instructor, there’s necessary communication with handlers. Well in advance of the session date, you should contact those who have signed up for one of your workshops and provide them with the necessary details. By doing this, and by promptly responding to email inquiries, you show respect for the team as well as the process.

When you communicate with handlers in writing, a professional, courteous tone and style are important. We want handlers to feel confident about the skill and experience of our team evaluators and instructors, and writing style helps demonstrate that. By using full sentences and punctuation, just as you would if you were writing to a business or government agency, you help communicate the “gold standard” that Pet Partners prides itself on being, and handlers can be confident that even though our team evaluators and instructors are volunteers, their experience and ability are of high quality.
Best Practices

Curriculum Materials

All workshop courses provide an introduction not only to the Pet Partners organization and the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program, but also to the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI) in general. In addition to teaching prospective handlers the details of the Therapy Animal Program and what it means to be a successful therapy animal team, your goal is to represent Pet Partners in a professional and consistent way.

All licensed Pet Partners instructors are required to follow the course curriculum and use the Pet Partners–branded Microsoft PowerPoint presentations and materials that are available in the Resource Library to support the delivery of this information. This requirement includes but isn’t limited to:

- Teaching the curriculum in full, without making changes or additions to the content, except where expressly permitted in the curriculum.
- Using the PowerPoint presentations without making changes or additions, except where expressly permitted in the curriculum.
- Using all required handouts as they were designed.
- Adhering to workshop timing, within reason.
- Conducting the workshop in a single session, and not dividing it among multiple days or combining it with other non–Pet Partners activities.

During workshops, instructors are also expected to use accurate terminology for the industry (such as AAI instead of pet therapy) and to make professional and respectful language choices (for example, by using person-first language). For more details, see Lessons 1.2 and 5.4 of your Pet Partners Handler Guide, and the “Terminology” page on the Pet Partners website, at www.petpartners.org/terminology.
Fees: What to Charge for a Workshop

The critical test for insurance coverage through Pet Partners is whether an instructor is a “volunteer.” To be considered a volunteer, the instructor may not take money or charge for his or her time; however, the instructor may charge fees to cover expenses (such as room rentals and mileage). If any question arises, Pet Partners might ask you to show how you arrive at your fees.

Pet Partners recognizes that attendance can be variable, and that you could inadvertently end up making money at a workshop. The insurance company would look at several of your events to determine whether there’s a pattern of covering more than incidental expenses. If the insurance company found that you often recovered more than you spent, your status as a volunteer, for insurance purposes, could be questioned.

You may not charge different fees for different students. Because fees must be based on the real costs that are incurred, by extension this means that everyone must pay the same amount for a workshop. Workshops must be made available individually on the Pet Partners calendar and may not be bundled with other costs, such as evaluation fees or membership fees to join a group. For more details, see the Fee FAQ in the Resource Library.

As the instructor, you can decide whether to include the cost of the Handler Guide in the cost of the handler workshop. We strongly encourage instructors to have students purchase their own copy of the Handler Guide. In this way, instructors limit the financial risk involved in having more books than are needed or books that could become outdated. In addition, making a commitment to volunteer in the community requires significant personal responsibility on the part of a therapy animal team. Therefore, as their first step, let students take responsibility for obtaining their own copy of the Handler Guide.

Because in-person instructional events are a great opportunity to introduce the public to AAI, we encourage instructors to offer, for free or at a nominal cost, mini workshops that don’t require extensive materials. One example of such a workshop is Volunteering With Your Pet, which is described starting on page 93 of this guide.
Publicizing Workshops

Per the Instructor Licensing Agreement, instructors are required to list their upcoming workshops on the Pet Partners website. Not only does this drive students to your sessions, but people often search the website to see what’s available in their area before they choose Pet Partners. By listing your workshops, you’re demonstrating program activity in your area. We encourage you to provide as much advance notice as possible, so that students have ample opportunity to discover that you’re holding a workshop. In addition, when it’s time for you to renew, your instructor activity level will be determined based on events that are completed via the online calendar (see “Instructor Renewal” on page 11 of this guide).

Up to two instructors may be listed as the instructors of record for each workshop. Instructions for posting your workshop event can be found in the Resource Library in the Volunteer Center. If you require additional assistance, contact teppi@petpartners.org.

Who to Instruct

As a Pet Partners instructor, you must be willing to instruct any student, regardless of his or her affiliation with any group, such as a community partner, or any facility. In addition to prospective handlers, Pet Partners welcomes facility staff, professional practitioners and interested members of the public to attend workshops to learn more about AAI.

The Pet Partners instructional curriculum may only be used to conduct educational workshops on behalf of Pet Partners. The content may not be reused, repackaged or repurposed, and branding may not be adjusted or shared without the express consent of Pet Partners.

Student Assessment

Starting July 1, 2017, all handler workshop students will be required to complete the same online assessment as the students of the online Pet Partners Handler Course. This will not only provide an additional point of data about areas where the curriculum could be strengthened but will also provide a level of consistency between the two types of students.
The assessment will be free of charge for handler workshop students and may be taken multiple times until a passing score of 80% is achieved. The assessment is available for workshop students now, but it’s elective until July 1, 2017.

The additional mini workshops don’t include an assessment component, because they aren’t required for registration as a therapy animal team.

Workshop Evaluation

A workshop evaluation (similar to a student satisfaction survey) is available for all workshop offerings through the Training Center. Although we encourage all students to participate, to help us obtain comprehensive national data about the curriculum that Pet Partners offers, participation is elective.

As an instructor, if you want to ask your students to complete an evaluation or survey to provide feedback about how you personally can improve, you may. However, you aren’t required to, and those evaluations or surveys don’t need to be sent to Pet Partners. Additionally, they don’t take the place of the Pet Partners workshop evaluation, which you should encourage your students to complete as well.

Class Size and Location

There’s no stated minimum or maximum class size for any workshop. However, the handler workshop has been designed to allow for a level of interactivity and role-play, so we suggest 8–12 students. Other mini workshops (see Part 3 of this guide, starting on page 91) are more lecture-based and therefore lend themselves to higher levels of enrollment.

As an instructor, it’s your responsibility to ensure that workshop sites are suitable and cost-efficient. Ultimately, the goal is to identify a site that comfortably seats all students with room for any necessary activities. This might be a library, community center, church hall or room at a facility where teams volunteer. Workshops shouldn’t take place inside your personal home.

We strongly encourage you to identify locations with free meeting space. Some facilities might want to make an in-kind donation of space to Pet Partners for tax purposes. The Facility Space In Kind Donation Form is available in the Resource Library.
Animals at Workshops

Students may not bring current or prospective therapy animals to the workshops that they’re attending. The only exceptions are working assistance (service, hearing or guide) animals. If a registered therapy animal is brought to a workshop as part of the presentation, its presence must be consistent with all Pet Partners policies. For example, the length of visits may not exceed 2 hours, and the animal must be on a leash at all times.

Timely Submission of Attendance

As an instructor, it’s your responsibility to submit attendance to Pet Partners for every workshop that you conduct. If two instructors partner for a workshop, only one must submit attendance.

You should submit your attendance via the Pet Partners website within 2 business days of your workshop.

Instructor Renewal

To maintain active status, instructors must renew their license every 2 years by completing the instructor renewal online. Any workshop that you conduct without a current license won’t be considered valid, and students who attend those workshops won’t be able to complete their team’s application to the Therapy Animal Program.

Workshops where attendance is submitted through the Pet Partners website and events are scheduled through the Pet Partners calendar are automatically tracked as part of your renewal. You don’t need to provide additional logs of these events to Pet Partners, although you might want to keep records for yourself.

Minimum Activity Level

All instructors are asked to meet a minimum level of activity at the time of their renewal, as demonstrated by the number of available workshop dates that have been listed on the Pet Partners website. The target number of available workshop dates is four over 2 years. By listing an available date on the calendar, you demonstrate your ability to conduct a workshop, even if no one registers. Therefore, if you must cancel a workshop date because no one has signed up, it’s still considered demonstrated activity and is counted toward your activity level.
If you haven’t been able to meet the minimum activity level because of extenuating circumstances, such as an extended illness, you’ll be asked to put future workshop dates on the calendar in order to renew. Instructors can also take a leave of absence for up to 2 years without affecting their ability to renew, as long as they meet all requirements for the reinstatement of a registration after a leave of absence. Such requirements might include completion of a knowledge assessment.

All workshop types count equally toward the minimum activity level.

**No Team Registration Requirement**
Instructors aren’t required to maintain a therapy animal team registration in order to renew their license. Although we believe that experience as a handler is critical for people who want to become instructors, we want to support all decisions that our handlers make as advocates for their animals — including decisions about retirement, when appropriate.

**Knowledge Assessment**
In 2017, Pet Partners will be introducing an online knowledge assessment as part of the renewal process for instructors and team evaluators. The goal of the knowledge assessment is to ensure that all volunteer leaders are aware of current Pet Partners policy. Instructors and team evaluators who want to be recognized as knowledge-assessed before their next renewal may choose to complete the online assessment at any time.

**Registrations With Other Organizations**
Pet Partners views instructors as ambassadors of the Therapy Animal Program. Therefore, all volunteers must represent Pet Partners exclusively, and may not affiliate with any other organization that registers therapy animal teams or charges a fee to participate in a program that’s similar to a Pet Partners offering. For more details, see the Multiple Registrations FAQ in the Resource Library.
Quality Assurance

Instructors are responsible for staying current on all changes to the Pet Partners Instructor Guide and the Handler Guide, as well as supplemental materials. Pet Partners will provide updates via email and the Pet Partners website. If Pet Partners becomes aware of an error or perceived error on your part as an instructor, we’ll contact you to clarify the relevant best practice or policy, in the spirit of assistance and support.

If a complaint is submitted against an instructor, Pet Partners will contact the instructor to investigate the complaint. If you believe that a complaint will be submitted against you, based on your interactions with a student, you’re welcome to contact Pet Partners proactively to help us better address the situation. Although our goal is to support instructors in the field, Pet Partners will, if warranted, send a letter indicating the corrective actions that must be taken in response to a complaint.

When an instructor’s license is due for renewal, Pet Partners will review the instructor’s file to determine whether he or she is eligible for renewal. Pet Partners reserves the right to deny license renewal to any instructor who has had repeated complaints and/or repeated errors with no improvement in performance.

Incident Reporting

Although incident reporting is more typical in visiting situations, any actual injury to a person, the perception of an injury and any damage to property that occurs during a workshop must be reported to Pet Partners within 24 hours. Pet Partners will then follow up with all the relevant parties as needed.

To report an incident, use the Incident Report Form, which can be found in the Resource Library, at www.petpartners.org/resource/incident-report.
Insurance

As Pet Partners volunteers, instructors are covered by Pet Partners’ commercial general liability insurance (CGLI) policy for its employees, subject to policy limits. If an instructor is conducting a workshop on behalf of Pet Partners, this coverage also extends to the instructor’s assistants and other Pet Partners volunteers.

Pet Partners’ CGLI policy covers only those acts on the part of an instructor that are within the scope of Pet Partners policies and procedures for volunteers, subject to exclusions. These exclusions include but aren’t limited to acts that occur between Pet Partners team members, acts of gross negligence and intentional acts.

So what does all of this mean for you as an instructor? When you’re acting in the capacity of an instructor within Pet Partners guidelines, you’ll have coverage if you’re sued for damages to third parties (for example, those who interact with teams that received handler training from you). If you or someone else sustains an injury during a workshop, the person who was responsible for the injury will be liable. However, under certain circumstances, Pet Partners’ CGLI policy includes coverage for medical services.

Pet Partners’ CGLI policy doesn’t cover facilities where workshops take place. Some facilities might ask for an indemnification form that is signed by all students before the workshop, and that exempts the facility from liability.

Videotaping and Photographing Workshops

You may videotape or photograph a workshop only if every participant in the workshop completes and signs a photo/video release form. A parent or guardian must sign the consent form for any handler who’s younger than 18.

If any participant chooses not to sign the consent and release forms, he or she may not be videotaped or photographed. Videotapes and photographs may not be used for any purpose other than those that are specifically stated in the consent and release forms.

The Pet Partners photo/video release form is available in the Resource Library in the Volunteer Center.
PART 2

Handler Workshop
Curriculum

About the Format
The following curriculum is written in a narrative form that can be treated as a loose script. There’s no expectation that you’ll read or recite this content word for word. Instructors are empowered to use their own word choices and speak in their own style, as long as content isn’t omitted. Throughout, you’ll find white boxes that contain additional instructor notes and gray boxes that describe class activities or discussions. An effort has been made to call out references to the Pet Partners Handler Guide for student/instructor reference. All unit, lesson and page numbers apply to the 2016 edition.

About the Schedule
The following curriculum is for an 8-hour in-person workshop. Per the Instructor Licensing Agreement, it must be taught as written, without significant deviation in content, order or timing. However, the curriculum doesn’t stipulate when breaks or lunch must be taken, or the length of those breaks or lunch.

As the instructor, you should base these decisions on your students’ preferences and the facility location. Some instructors prefer to schedule 10-minute breaks at specific times, whereas others prefer to have students get up and break individually, based on their needs. Some workshops have lunch onsite, so that the lunch break can be shorter; for others, students leave to get lunch, which might require slightly more time. Determine what’s most appropriate for your workshop, and clearly communicate your expectations to your students.

Different classes move at different paces, for various reasons. If you find that you’re getting through the content more quickly than expected, additional visit scenarios are available at the end of this part of the guide, starting on page 89. You can add these as needed to give your students additional role-playing practice.
About Personalization
Pet Partners values the unique perspectives that instructors have and how their personal experiences as handlers can provide examples and context that enrich the workshop content. Therefore, instructors are encouraged to share stories about their visits throughout the workshop. However, all these stories must preserve the privacy of clients and facilities.

Note that this personalization doesn’t extend to adding or removing content, or changing/supplementing the handouts or PowerPoint (PPT) presentations. If you have suggestions for improving the workshop, send constructive feedback through the Contact Us form in the Volunteer Center.

Supplies

Go to the Pet Partners Resource Library, and use the keyword “workshop materials” to search for all supporting materials.

Required Supplies

► Computer loaded with Pet Partners PPT presentations, and a projector
  Note: If the room where you’re conducting your workshop doesn’t have Internet access, contact Pet Partners to obtain a disc that contains copies of the videos for the class.
► Pet Partners Handler Workshop handouts, which are available in the Resource Library
► Sticky notes, extra pens/pencils, extra loose-leaf paper and workshop handouts distributed at student tables
► Class roster from the Pet Partners calendar, for attendance tracking
► Table or wall area to post photos for the “Yes Sir, That’s My Baby” activity
► “Dog Park” area
  Often known as a “parking lot” in meetings, the “Dog Park” is a section of the wall/board/flip chart where questions that will be covered later or don’t fit the current topic can be posted on sticky notes and kept for later, when it will make more sense to answer them.
► Stuffed animals that are wearing a collar/harness and leash, for visiting scenario role-plays
► Handheld clickers for the skill spotting portion of visiting scenario role-plays
Pieces of disability equipment for use in role-plays, to help simulate what a visit might be like for a person who has a disability
- Sunglasses with petroleum jelly or lip balm smeared on the lenses to simulate vision impairment
- Earmuffs, noise reduction ear protection or disposable ear plug to simulate hearing impairment
- Arm sling worn on the dominant arm (right arm for a right-handed person) to restrict movement

Optional Supplies
- Copies of the *Handler Guide* for any students who are purchasing them directly from you (see “Fees: What to Charge for a Workshop” on page 8 of this guide)
- Samples of acceptable and unacceptable equipment and brushes, and Pet Partners accessories such as bandanas and vests
- A bowl that contains all student names on slips of paper, if you want to randomly select participants for activities

Student Check-In

Instructor Notes

Check-in is your first opportunity to set the tone for what we hope will be a long and positive relationship between volunteers and Pet Partners.

- Warmly greet students with eye contact and a smile while taking attendance.
- Collect each student’s animal photo for the “Yes Sir, That’s My Baby” activity.
- Point out the instructions for the Welcome Activity that follows, and encourage students to actively participate.
Welcome Activity
(As students arrive, 10–15 minutes before class)


This activity will give students something to do as they arrive in the classroom. Designate an appropriate wall space where students can place their sticky notes. The PowerPoint slide will list the instructions.

- Write down two things that you want to learn today.
- Introduce yourself to at least one person, and compare sticky notes.
- Place all sticky notes on a wall where everyone can see them.

Introductions and Housekeeping

Goals

1. Set expectations for your time together.
2. Answer any basic questions, so that students can focus on content for the rest of the day.

Introductions

Instructor Notes

Display slide 3, “Introductions and Orientation,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Briefly introduce yourself and your assistants. Share 2–3 things about yourself, such as how long you’ve been with Pet Partners, what animals you have or what you like best about volunteering with your animal.

Depending on the size of the class, consider having students quickly introduce themselves.
Orientation

Instructor Notes
Review the general schedule for the day, including when lunch will be and when the workshop will end. Make sure that students know where the restrooms are located and any other information that’s unique to your setting.

Ground Rules

Instructor Notes

Discuss workshop expectations. As the instructor, you can choose to have the group help you define these expectations. At a minimum, we suggest the following ground rules:

- Pet Partners prides itself on having professional volunteers. We ask that your interactions during this workshop mirror the professionalism that you’d show during visits. This includes respecting everyone who’s present, through both your words and your actions.
- Ask questions as they come up. If the question will be covered later or doesn’t fit with what we’re currently discussing, we’ll put the question in our “Dog Park.” (Point out the location of that area.) You can also write a question on a sticky note and put it in the Dog Park during a break.
- Please turn off cell phones.
Today’s Agenda

Instructor Notes

Display slide 5, “Today’s Agenda,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Students who participated in the Welcome Activity before class should already have identified at least two things that they want to learn today and shared them with a neighbor. Those sticky notes are now on a wall somewhere in the room.

- Ask whether any of the students who shared with each other had the same goals for what they want to learn today and whether they would like to share these goals.
- Repeat or summarize each statement to make sure that you understand what the student means. If you can, share when you’ll cover the content that’s mentioned. (For example, say, “We’ll be discussing that after lunch.”)

Today, we’ll cover a lot of information about the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program. By the end of today:

- You’ll acquire the basic skills that you need to visit successfully.
- You’ll understand the basic expectations, requirements, policies and procedures of the Therapy Animal Program.
- You’ll know what’s needed to pass the Pet Partners team evaluation, which is also known as the Pet Partners Skills and Aptitude Test.
- You’ll have started to write a Personal Action Plan for success (point out the worksheet).

Resources

There are various resources that are important for prospective handlers as well as seasoned Pet Partners handlers.

The Handler Guide

There’s far more information in the *Handler Guide* than we can cover today. I’ll point out key passages and page numbers throughout the day, but we won’t go through the manual page by page. However, I do recommend that you read through your *Handler Guide* after you’ve completed this workshop.
Pet Partners Website

Various resources outside the *Handler Guide* are also available to you. The Pet Partners website has public pages, such as those that cover the benefits of the human-animal bond (HAB) and correct terminology.

Volunteers, both prospective and current, will find the most information after they’ve logged in to the Volunteer Center. This is where you’ll complete your registration to become a team, but we also recommend that you spend time in the Resource Library, where there is a wealth of supporting materials.

**Note:** If you haven’t yet created your Volunteer Center account and started your registration, you’ll need to do that before you can sign up for a team evaluation. There’s a handout about that process.

---

**Activity: “Yes Sir! That’s My Baby”**

*Display slide 6 in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Thank everyone who brought in a photo of their animal today. Explain that you’ll use these images, now posted on the wall, for a game that will go on throughout the day. The goal is to match each photo with the name of the animal’s owner.

- Explain that, during class and breaks, students should listen for details that other students reveal about their animal. They may even want to be careful not to reveal too much about their own animal in turn. In the spirit of the game, they shouldn’t just point to a photo and ask, “Is this your animal?” Instead, encourage the students to focus on listening, and to use the opportunity to introduce themselves to new people and start a conversation with them.

- Tell the students that they will have the entire day to make guesses by putting a sticky note with the name of each person next to the picture that they think shows his or her animal.

In order to complete the game by the end of the day, you can either periodically check the photos and remove incorrect guesses until they’re all correct, or tally the names that are guessed for each picture at the end of the day, and see whether the name that was guessed most often is correct.

It is possible to have a group that is either unprepared or unwilling to participate in this kind of activity. It is acceptable to treat this as an optional activity, if your students don’t wish to play.
Pet Partners Overview

Goals

1. Convey basic knowledge about the Pet Partners organization.
2. Generate enthusiasm for Pet Partners as the gold standard among therapy animal organizations.

Who Is Pet Partners?

Instructor Notes

A group of pioneers and visionaries — including two brothers, Drs. Bill and Michael McCulloch, and Dr. Leo Bustad — recognized that animals were having a positive impact on their human clients’ health and happiness. They also recognized that anecdotal stories weren’t enough to capture the attention of the medical community: scientific research was needed.

In 1977, the Delta Society was formed with a focus on accumulating research to demonstrate the impact of the HAB. And in 1990, the Pet Partners program was created as the first comprehensive, standardized training in animal-assisted interventions (AAI) for volunteers.

As members of Pet Partners and the Therapy Animal Program, we have the mission to improve human health and well-being through the HAB. With tens of thousands of volunteer teams spread across the U.S., Pet Partners is widely recognized as the gold standard among therapy animal programs, for its level of rigor and professionalism. Pet Partners continues to garner name recognition through national level media coverage and dedicated PBS specials. We’re working to make Pet Partners a household name and are already the preferred therapy animal program for many facilities.
LEARN the Pet Partners Difference

Instructor Notes
Display slide 8, “LEARN the Pet Partners Difference,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

If you’re wondering what sets Pet Partners apart from other organizations, the acronym LEARN will help you understand the differences and make you a better ambassador for us.

L = Limiting Risk
Interactions with therapy animals should have positive outcomes for clients, but precautions must be taken to reduce the potential for the spread of zoonosis. Pet Partners has thorough infection control protocols as well as requirements for the health of both animals and handlers. These protocols and requirements align with the guidelines that the Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) has set forth for animals in hospitals. In fact, our online course about infection prevention and control is the only comprehensive coursework that SHEA has endorsed as meeting its stringent requirements.

E = Education
Pet Partners was the first organization to require training for handlers as part of registration. In recent years, Pet Partners has continued to create materials for current handlers, so that they can continue their education. From webinars to online courses, Pet Partners provides comprehensive, high-quality education to our volunteers and the general public. If you consider yourself a lifelong learner, Pet Partners is the choice for you!

A = Animal Welfare
You love and cherish your animal. It’s an important member of your family, and you want what’s best for it. Pet Partners agrees. Taking part in this work is a lot to ask of your animal. We also recognize that safe visits occur when animals are enjoying visits, not just tolerating them. By re-evaluating teams every 2 years, we ensure that animals that participate in the Therapy Animal Program continue to be both healthy and happy to do it.

R = Rigor
We’ve already mentioned training and re-evaluation as differentiators in the program, but it’s true that many facilities choose Pet Partners volunteers because of the level of rigor in the program. This includes one-on-one evaluations rather than group evaluations, extensive support materials that are
available in the Resource Library and a comprehensive support process in the event of an incident. Pet Partners even participated in the creation of the first set of AAI competencies that spans volunteers, paraprofessionals and professional practitioners.

**N = Nine Species**
We recognize that different people find different animals therapeutic. We’re proud to register dogs, cats, equines, rabbits, guinea pigs, llamas/alpacas, pigs, birds and rats for AAI.

So, Limiting risk, Education, Animal welfare, Rigor, Nine species: LEARN. Becoming a Pet Partners volunteer means that you’re becoming part of the organization that has been a leader in the field of AAI since its inception.

**Volunteer Structure**

**Instructor Notes**

Pet Partners has always been a volunteer-based organization. In addition to the therapy animal teams themselves, all instructors and team evaluators are volunteers. Although Pet Partners has a small staff that is available to you electronically and by phone, the lives that are changed on a daily basis through therapy animal visits are the result of an impressive commitment by thousands and thousands of volunteers.

**Instructor Notes**
If you have a brief favorite story about your volunteerism, such as a memorable visit, you can share it with your class to excite them about the difference that they can make.
Terminology

Goals

1. Differentiate the types of AAI.
2. Distinguish between therapy animals, assistance animals and emotional support animals

Defining AAI

Instructor Notes

Pet Partners is committed to helping create and support a professional and respected volunteer force. In order to be taken seriously by facility staff, policy makers and researchers, it’s critical that we use the most accurate language to describe our work.

Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) is the umbrella term for the different kinds of therapy animal visits that you might participate in after you’re registered with Pet Partners. These include animal-assisted activities (AAA), animal-assisted education (AAE) and animal-assisted therapy (AAT).

Instructor Notes

Animal-Assisted Activities
Animal-assisted activities (AAA) provide motivational, educational and recreational benefits to enhance quality of life.

Key Features of AAA
- Visit notes aren’t required.
- Visits might be spontaneous and might last only a few minutes.
- AAA consists of casual activities that involve animals and people.
- There are no specific treatment goals.
Animal-Assisted Education
Animal-assisted education (AAE) is part of a general or special education curriculum. It’s planned and structured and might address academic as well as non-academic goals.

Key Features of AAE
- AAE is directed by a credentialed general education or special education professional.
- AAE is goal-oriented. Although any visit with an animal might be beneficial for a student, a particular visit is considered AAE only if goals have been defined before it takes place.
- Student progress is measured and documented. Outcomes such as test scores must be recorded.

Animal-Assisted Therapy
In animal-assisted therapy (AAT), the animal is an integral part of the treatment process. The interaction is intended to promote improvement in the physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning of the participant.

Key Features of AAT
- AAT is overseen by a health or human service provider.
- The service provider must incorporate the use of therapy animals as part of his or her specialty. For example, a social worker must incorporate the animal in the context of social work.
- AAT is goal-directed. There’s a specific end in mind, such as improvement in social skills or range of motion.
- AAT is documented. Each session is documented in the client’s record, with the activity and progress noted.

These terms are all explained on the Pet Partners website, at www.petpartners.org/terminology. That page includes a printable chart that shows how AAI is part of the HAB.

This information is also covered in Lesson 1.2 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 10.
Activity: Identifying Types of AAI

Display slide 12 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Read the examples below in any order.

After each, either invite one student to say whether it qualifies as AAA, AAE or AAT, or have the students vote about the kind of visit that it was.

When reviewing the answer, restate how we know the type of visit, based on the criteria that are given above.

Visit Examples

1. Elias and his dog Mina visit a local nursing home on the first Monday of every month. Mina enjoys interacting with the residents in the facility’s large group room, and one of the nurses notes the date and time of each visit in the volunteer activity log. (This is an example of AAA.)

2. Barbara is a long-time Pet Partners volunteer along with her cat Jo-Jo. One of Barbara’s favorite stops is a children’s long-term care facility, where the kids get to pet and hold Jo-Jo. Although there are no set treatment goals for the children, they all brighten-up when Jo-Jo arrives. (This is an example of AAA.)

3. Lisa and her dog Chance are invited to a second grade classroom as part of a unit on community safety. Lisa talks about how to interact with dogs that you don’t know, and the lesson ends with everyone practicing how to pet a dog. (This is an example of AAE.)

4. Doug and his parrot Feathers regularly partner with an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, working with specific students on sight reading new vocabulary terms by using flashcards. Students are tested every other week. (This is an example of AAE.)

5. Marcus brings his cat Tiger to the local children’s hospital to work with Josh, an occupational therapist, and Zeke, a 6-year-old boy who has difficulty controlling his fine motor skills. Josh encourages Zeke to buckle/unbuckle and open/close the clasps on Tiger’s leash, collar and animal carrier to build his fine motor skills. (This is an example of AAT.)

6. Bryan and his poodle Rusty are visiting Olivia, who’s recovering from a stroke that left her with limited ability to stand and walk. Olivia’s physical therapist asked Bryan to bring Rusty to help motivate Olivia to stand and walk. Bryan uses a double leash, so that Olivia can hold one and feel as though she’s taking Rusty for a walk. Bryan holds the second leash at all times to remain in control of Rusty. (This is an example of AAT.)
Defining Therapy Animals

Instructor Notes

One of the most common areas of confusion for the public is the difference between therapy animals and assistance animals. You might regularly find that people who see you and your animal out together as a therapy animal team assume that your animal is an assistance animal, or they might even ask you whether it’s an assistance animal.

You’ll find a lot more detail in Lesson 1.2 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 21, but here are some of the basic differences between therapy animals, assistance animals and also emotional support animals (ESAs).

Therapy Animals
Therapy animals provide affection and comfort to people in facility settings such as hospitals, retirement homes and schools.

► They have no special rights of access, except in those facilities where they’re welcomed.
► They may not enter businesses that have a “no pets” policy and may not accompany their handler on an airplane, despite the therapy animal designation.

Assistance Animals
Assistance animals, which includes service, hearing and guide dogs, are considered working animals, not pets. They’re defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as “dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.”

► They use specific skills that alleviate an individual’s disability — for example, by providing mobility assistance, supporting individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or communicating seizure alerts.
► They’re permitted to accompany a person with a disability in most places where the general public is allowed, including restaurants, businesses and airplane cabins.
Emotional Support Animals

Emotional support animals (ESAs) are pets that provide therapeutic support to a person with mental illness. They must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional.

- They don’t have the same rights of public access as assistance animals, such as service, hearing and guide dogs.
- They may accompany their owners in public areas, but only with the express permission of the management at each venue or facility.
- They may travel with their owner on an airplane and live with their owner in locations that are covered by the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA), regardless of any “no pets” policy.

Misrepresenting your therapy animal as an assistance animal or ESA is a violation of Pet Partners Standards of Professional Conduct and can result in dismissal from the program. Professional conduct, including policies and procedures, is covered in Lesson 2.2 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 32. We’ll discuss these more throughout the day, but this is an important section of your Handler Guide to review.

Instructor Notes

Questions about ESAs and assistance animals are very common. Although it’s important to clarify that these aren’t therapy animals, don’t spend too much time discussing what it takes to become an ESA or assistance animal, because that isn’t the focus of Pet Partners or the Therapy Animal Program.
Qualifications of a Therapy Animal

Goals

1. Review the basic eligibility requirements for registration.
2. Describe the core animal characteristics of therapy animals: reliable, predictable and controllable.
3. Explain the connection between reliable, predictable and controllable animal behavior.

Instructor Notes

Pet Partners is proud to have a diverse group of volunteers who are committed to promoting AAI through therapy animal team visits. We welcome handlers of many ages and abilities, as well as individuals who don’t have animals of their own or who share an animal with another handler. In some circumstances, we also allow animals with physical disabilities. If any of these describe you, there’s additional information in the Handler Guide that you’ll want to review. For questions that are specific to your personal situation, it’s a good idea to contact Pet Partners.

▶ For minors, handlers with a disability, handlers who don’t own their animal, handlers with multiple animals or for registering the same animal with multiple people, See Lesson 2.4 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 40.
▶ If your animal is also an assistance (service, hearing or guide) animal, see Lesson 4.3, starting on page 65.
▶ If you have an animal with a physical disability, see Lesson 4.3, starting on page 66.

Eligibility

Instructor Notes
Display slide 15, “Eligibility,” in the PowerPoint presentation.
In this section, we’ll review the basic eligibility requirements that animals must meet to register with Pet Partners. You’ll also find this information in Unit 3 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 45.

**Acceptable Species**

Pet Partners registers nine species:

- Dogs of any breed or mix of breeds, provided that its presence doesn’t violate local law
- Cats
- Equines, including horses, mini horses, ponies, donkeys and mini donkeys
- Rabbits
- Guinea pigs
- Llamas and alpacas
- Pigs
- Birds, as long as they weren’t caught in the wild and aren’t considered farm animals (as, for example, chickens or ducks are)
- Rats

We don’t register wild or exotic animals, such as lizards, snakes and ferrets. We also don’t register farm livestock such as goats, cows and sheep.

**Age**

- “Pocket pets” (rabbits, guinea pigs and rats) must be at least 6 months old.
- All other animals must be at least 1 year old.

**Length of Ownership**

- Birds must have lived in the owner’s home for at least 1 year.
- All other animals must have lived with the owner for at least 6 months.

**Note:** Handlers who are registering with an animal they don’t own must have known and been working with the animal for at least the same amount of time.

**Neutering/Spaying**

Pet Partners recommends neutering or spaying for most pet animals, but this isn’t a requirement. Animals may not visit while they’re in heat.

**Housebreaking**

Animals must be reliably house-trained. For infection control purposes, waste collection devices worn by the animal aren’t considered acceptable equipment,
regardless of whether visits occur indoors or outdoors. These devices include bun bags for equines. The only exception to this policy is that birds may wear flight suits.

Grooming

Instructor Notes
Display slide 16, “Grooming,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

The details of animal grooming are covered in Lesson 3.2 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 52. Pet Partners policy is that the animal should be bathed within 24 hours of a visit and kept clean until then. For guinea pigs, rabbits, birds and rats, it’s acceptable to give a sponge bath immediately before the visit, using water, cleaning wipe or dry shampoo that’s specially designed for your animal’s species.

In particular, pay attention to:

- **Breath:** If your animal’s breath is disagreeable, use animal-safe toothpaste or oral rinse.
- **Ears:** Ears should be clean of dirt or waxy build-up, and free of odor.
- **Eyes:** Eyes must be clean, with normal drainage wiped away.
- **Nails:** Nails and claws must be clipped to a safe length, so that they aren’t sharp or hooked. Nails shouldn’t pose a danger to people, catch on clothing or interfere with your animal’s ability to walk on various surfaces, such as tile or carpet.
- **Coat:** Your animal must be clean and groomed; knots, snags and debris must be combed out of the coat. Horses, llamas and alpacas should have their coats clipped or shaved (if necessary). If your animal has a long tail, pay extra attention to ensure that it’s clean.
- **Feet:** Make sure that your animal’s paws, hooves or feet are clean. Clip away any hair that might collect mud or feces.
- **Mouth:** Some breeds of dog are prone to drooling or slobbering. If you’re visiting with an animal that drools excessively, carry a hand towel, so that you can occasionally wipe your animal’s mouth to prevent clients from being drooled on. Practice excellent infection control by using hand sanitizer after wiping your animal’s mouth.
- **Diet:** Pet Partners doesn’t register animals who eat a raw protein diet. Although we respect those handlers who believe that a raw protein diet is best for their animal’s health, there’s concern among medical professionals...
that humans, especially those with compromised immune systems, might be placed at a higher risk of infection if they interact with animals that eat raw proteins. 

For more information about the Raw Diet Policy, see the Resource Library for a detailed explanation.

**Personal Action Plan: Grooming**

*Display slide 17 in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Invite your students to take a moment to think about their particular animal partner and how it responds to grooming.

- How often is your animal groomed now? (For some species, such as rabbits, this might not be done very often.)
- Does your animal enjoy it?
- Are there areas that you and your animal might need to work on?

As part of their Personal Action Plan, encourage the students to jot down specific things that they intend to do to make sure that their animal will be comfortable with the grooming that is required of a therapy animal.

**Health Requirements**

**Instructor Notes**

*Display slide 18, “Health Requirements,” in the PowerPoint presentation.*

In order to be evaluated or visit:

- Animals must be free of any signs of ill health, such as open sores, skin rashes or a runny nose.
- Animals must be free of internal and external parasites, such as fleas, mites and ticks.
- Animals that are taking antibiotic, antifungal or immunosuppressive medication may not be evaluated or visit until the course of treatment has been successfully completed. (For questions about specific medications, have the student contact Pet Partners directly.)
- Dogs, cats, equines, llamas/alpacas and pigs must be vaccinated against rabies. Titers (serologic testing for rabies antibodies in the blood) aren’t accepted.
For more information, see Lesson 3.3 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 53.

**Equipment**

**Instructor Notes**


So far, we’ve mostly discussed requirements for the animal itself. However, you also need to be aware of equipment requirements. All animals must wear a collar or harness and be leashed during the team evaluation and all visits. In addition, the equipment that your animal wears during the team evaluation must be the same equipment that it will wear during visits.

The expectation is that you’ll always be in full control of your animal and able to respond if the visiting environment changes. This means that you must hold the leash in your hand at all times. Never tie your animal’s leash to furniture or pass the leash to someone who isn’t a registered handler of the animal.

The equipment must be safe and humane for the animal, safe for you and safe for the people that you visit.

**Acceptable Equipment**

- Harnesses: front clip, back clip, step in, vest or slip harness. A harness may have multiple connection points, but only one connection point may be used during the team evaluation and visits. The harness should fit the animal properly, and the animal should feel comfortable wearing it.
- Buckle, snap or quick-release collars in leather, fabric or other breathable synthetic materials.
- Limited-slip collars (such as Martingales), provided that they don’t include metal links.
- Halter/hood collars.
- Leashes or leads, no more than 6 feet in length, made of leather, fabric or synthetic material, with only one connection point.
- Metal hardware, such as buckles, slip rings and D-rings, is acceptable as part of any of the preceding equipment.

**Unacceptable Equipment**

- Prong, electric or spray collars
- Metal collars and harnesses
Full-slip collars
Leashes with a metal chain
Retractable leashes
Leashes longer than 6 feet
Hands-free leashes, such as those worn at the waste or shoulder

Instructor Notes

If you have samples of acceptable and unacceptable equipment on display, consider pointing them out now. Depending on the size of the class, you can even pass the equipment around if you want. If you’re asked whether a very specific type of equipment is appropriate and don’t know the answer, direct the student to contact Pet Partners.

Additional information about what to bring on a visit can be found in the Lesson 7.1 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 151. A backpack or shoulder bag that you can wear comfortably without setting down will be a helpful tool, and will help ensure that you’re always prepared.

Reliable, Predictable and Controllable

Instructor Notes

Display slide 20, “Reliable, Predictable, Controllable,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Therapy animals must inspire confidence in the people that they meet; therefore, they should consistently demonstrate that they’re well-behaved and have good manners. Three terms are used to describe this desired behavior: reliable, predictable and controllable. These are considered core animal characteristics.

Reliable
The animal has a solid temperament and training, and can be expected to behave well in all situations.
Brainstorm: Examples of Reliable Behavior

Display slide 21 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Lead a brief brainstorming session in which your students come up with examples of reliable behavior in their own animals.

Examples might include:
- Walking on a loose leash.
- Obeying “Leave it” cues.
- Not becoming fearful or aggressive when an unknown dog enters the room.

Predictable

The animal has reactions that are anticipated and within an acceptable range.

Brainstorm: Examples of Predictable Behavior

Display slide 22 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Lead a brief brainstorming session in which your students come up with examples of predictable behavior in their own animals.

Examples might include:
- Becoming fearful during thunderstorms.
- Getting excited about car rides.
- Vocalizing when the doorbell rings.
- Nosing hands when they want to be petted.

Controllable

The animal remains responsive to its handler in an unusual situation or an emergency. Note that, in this context, “controllable” doesn’t refer to physical control by the handler (for example, being strong enough to restrain a lunging dog at the end of a leash).
Brainstorm: Examples of Controllable Behavior

*Display slide 23 in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Lead a brief brainstorming session in which your students come up with examples of controllable behavior in their own animals.

Examples might include:

- A dog quiets down after being told “No barks” when the doorbell rings.
- A mini horse is willing to enter a room after seeing something unknown when the handler says “Good boy” in an encouraging tone.

Reliable, predictable and controllable are closely related concepts. When you can predict your animal’s reactions, you can take action to ensure a reliable response and maintain control of your animal in any situation. When clients and facility staff perceive that you’re in control of your animal, they’ll have confidence in you and your animal when you come for visits.

For more details about the core characteristics of reliable, predictable and controllable, see Lesson 3.1 of your *Handler Guide*, starting on page 47.

**Obedience**

**Instructor Notes**


All animals should have a basic level of training that is appropriate to their species, so that they’re reliable and under control even in crowded situations and when there are distractions.

If your animal doesn’t have mastery of basic obedience and good manners, work on these skills before attempting your team evaluation.

Examples of these skills include:

- Walking on a loose leash.

  **Note:** For cats, birds and other pocket pets that are often carried, mention the need to wear a harness comfortably.
Reliably responding to common commands that are appropriate for the species (for example, dogs should respond to “Sit,” “Down,” “Stay,” “Come” and “Leave it” commands).

Note: If you have equine, llama or alpaca handlers in the workshop, be sure to mention the “Back up” cue.

Refraining from jumping on or pawing people or furniture.

Note: You might want to mention that the largest source of incidents is accidental scratches when an animal puts a paw out to gain the client’s attention.

Vocalizing infrequently (if at all) and stopping promptly when cued by the handler.

Being reliably housebroken.

Taking treats nicely.

Note: Mention that treats are optional during visits, and that they shouldn’t be used if the handler isn’t confident that the animal can take a treat consistently.

Refraining from mouthing or licking people.

Calmly allowing petting.

Walking past other animals without displaying aggression or excessive fear.

Refraining from begging, putting its nose into bags or wastebaskets, or demonstrating other intrusive behavior.

---

**Personal Action Plan: Obedience Goals**

*Display slide 25 in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Invite your students to take a moment to think about their particular animal partner.

- Are there any skills that your animal might need to brush up on before the team evaluation?
- Have you and your animal been practicing obedience skills in novel settings that involve distractions, rather than just at home?
- If your animal has great obedience skills now, are there any commands that that you could add to its repertoire that would be useful for visits?

As part of their ongoing Personal Action Plan, encourage students to jot down specific things that they intend to do to make sure that their animal has the good manners that are expected of a therapy animal.
Handling Skills and Best Practices

Goals

1. Explain the differences between proactive, reactive and inactive handler behaviors.
2. Give examples of how to apply PETS™ (Presence, Eye contact, Touch, Speech) during visits.

Instructor Notes

Display slide 26, “Handling Skills and Best Practices,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

It’s important to note that becoming a therapy animal team with Pet Partners requires more than just an animal that meets all these requirements. Your team evaluation, which we’ll be discussing and helping you prepare for, also evaluates your skill as a handler. So, although it’s important to brush up on animal obedience skills, don’t forget that there might be skills that you need to practice too! We’ll be talking about these skills next.

Brainstorm: What Makes a Successful Team?

Display slide 27 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Lead a brief brainstorming session in which your students come up with ideas about what makes a successful team — whether it’s a sports team, a business team or even a family.

Afterward, make sure that they’ve hit on the following key concepts. If they haven’t, introduce the concepts.

Characteristics of Successful Teams

▶ The relationship is built on mutual trust.
▶ There’s clear, honest communication, not fear and intimidation.
▶ Members of the team respect one another and the choices that they make.
▶ Teammates collaborate, working independently and cooperatively.
Pet Partners very intentionally uses the words “therapy animal team” to describe our volunteers. To be successful, you need to be a team with your animal.

The next part of our time together will focus on the steps that you, as a handler, need to take to make sure that you and your animal are a team. These are all skills that you’ll be required to demonstrate in your team evaluation. The good news is that all of these skills also apply to general pet ownership. They’re things that you can do every day and will only strengthen the already positive relationship that you have with your animal.

Proactive Handling

One of the most critical skills for any therapy animal handler is the ability to be proactive. During the team evaluation, you’ll be scored on your ability to be proactive. Let’s take a look at a short video that contrasts proactive handling with the other two forms of handling: reactive and inactive.

**Video: Proactive, Reactive and Inactive**

Display slide 28 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Play this short video that demonstrates the differences between proactive, reactive and inactive handling. Invite comments about how different forms of handling and how they may be perceived by others.

**Instructor Notes**

Display slide 29 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Proactive handlers are attentive to each situation, anticipating what could happen and then making adjustments to ensure positive outcomes for both their animal and clients who interact with their animal.

Examples of proactive handler behavior include:

- Anticipating your animal’s response and setting it up to succeed through direction, encouragement or support.
- Helping direct a client in the best way to pet your animal.
- Ending a visit if you feel that your animal is becoming too stressed or overstimulated.
Instructor Notes
Display slide 30, “Reactive Handling,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Reactive handlers fail to anticipate. They see an issue and work to correct it, but it would have been preferable to prevent the situation from occurring in the first place. Although the animal might have strong obedience skills and be responsive to its handler, the handler doesn’t think ahead to set everyone up for success.

Examples of reactive handler behavior include:

- Telling your animal to sit after it has already pulled away on its leash to greet someone.
- Correcting your animal after it has already put its paws on a client’s bed, rather than giving it direction to stay in the first place.

Instructor Notes

Inactive handlers aren’t aware of what’s happening around them or how they and their animal are perceived as a therapy animal team. Outwardly, they might appear indifferent or lazy. A team that has an inactive handler doesn’t inspire confidence in others.

Examples of inactive handler behavior include:

- Not correcting your animal if it puts its head into someone’s bag, so that the bag’s owner has to take the bag away instead.
- Not moving your animal if it jumps up on someone in greeting, so that the individual has to move instead.
- Remaining motionless during interactions between your animal and other people, and not giving your animal any feedback.

Your goal as a handler, and even as a pet owner, is to be proactive. By anticipating what could happen and making adjustments to look after your animal’s best interests, you’re being a good teammate. When your animal learns to trust that you’ll do what you can to make interactions positive for it, it’s more confident as a therapy animal.
PETS™

Discussion: How Do You Support Your Animal?
Display slide 32 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Lead a discussion about the various methods that your students have for supporting, encouraging or comforting their animal both at home and when they’re out in public. Try to keep the conversation going until you have an example that aligns with each letter in PETS™.

These ideas are all good things to do to let your animal know that you’re there to support and protect it! Pet Partners uses the acronym PETS™ to refer to ways that handlers can subtly reassure and encourage their animal while visiting. You’ll notice lots of overlap from our conversation.

Instructor Notes
Display slide 33, “PETS™,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

P = Presence
This means physical closeness as well as mental presence. You should be constantly aware of your animal’s physical and emotional condition.

For example, have you ever noticed how your animal sometimes just feels better if it knows where you are? Maybe that’s why animals sometimes follow us around the house.

E = Eye Contact
Make frequent eye contact with your animal throughout a visit. If you’re looking at your animal in the eye, you know how it’s responding to you, and your animal recognizes that you’re available to it.

You can probably think of a time when your animal gave you a look when it was uncertain or anxious. When you look your animal in the eye, that’s a form of silent communication that says “I hear you.”

T = Touch
Keep your animal close enough that you can use touch as a form of praise, reassurance or encouragement.

I’m sure that every one of you, regardless of the species or breed of your animal, pets it as a way to reassure or praise it. During visits, the clients that
you meet aren’t the only people who should be petting your animal: you should be too.

**S = Speech**

Talk to your animal in a conversational and reassuring tone of voice.

Animals are sensitive to the tone that we use. We all know this. You can say your animal’s name as an excited greeting or in a warning voice that tells it, “Don’t even think about it.” And during visits, the tone that you use with your animal also sends a message to clients and facility staff.

Much of what we’ve talked about might come naturally to you, but when you’re interacting with strangers and your attention might be pulled in other directions, you’ll need to dedicate some energy to being proactive and applying PETS™. Not only is it the right thing to do for your animal, but you’ll be expected to demonstrate these skills during your team evaluation.

PETS™ is covered in Lesson 2.1 of your *Handler Guide*, starting on page 27.

---

**Introduction to Visit Scenarios**

**Instructor Notes**

Display slide 34, “Introductions to Visit Scenarios,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

We’re going to switch direction for a while and do some role-playing as though you’re on a therapy animal visit. We’ll do these visit scenarios periodically throughout the day, as a way to practice some of the skills that you’ll need to be a good handler.

These visit scenarios will take you through common visit situations and will emphasize some of the key handling skills that you’ll be scored on during your team evaluation.
Each visit scenario will have these parts:

- I’ll describe the scenario to everyone and explain what skill or skills we’ll be focusing on.
- I’ll ask one of you to role-play the handler during the scenario, using one of our stuffed animals as your therapy animal.

**Why Do We Use Stuffed Animals?**

When you have control of a live animal, there are lots of things that you have to keep track of. By practicing first with a stuffed animal, you can get your essential skills down, making it easier to repeat them later with your own animal.

- One or more other volunteers will be our skill spotters. Their job is to use a clicker to help us identify the skills that we’re looking for.

**Why Make a Noise?**

This provides immediate audible feedback, to both the volunteer who’s role-playing the handler and the rest of the class that what the handler did was a helpful skill to have during visits. Skill spotters, don’t be shy. Click away. Role-players, when you hear a click, don’t stop your visit, just know that you’re on the right track!

- After each visit scenario, we’ll debrief, and I’ll answer any questions that come up.

Let’s go through a quick example to show how skill spotting will work and practice a little. Do I have two brave people who are willing to help me with a really easy example?

In our example scenario, someone is going to walk up to our handler, greet him or her, and ask whether he or she knows the time.

The skill that we’re going to be looking for is smiling. We’re watching to see when our handler smiles at the other person.

The role-play will start, and our skill spotters will click every time that they see the handler smile.

Let’s give it a try!

---

**Instructor Notes**

After the role-play, make sure that everyone understands when and why they should click.
Visit Scenario 1

Instructor Notes


Because this is the first scenario, the class might need some extra encouragement to begin role-playing. If this is the case, try one of the following setups to get the class comfortable with the idea:

- You and your assistant role-play the scenario. Clearly demonstrate desirable skills and associated clicks for spotting.
- Ask the class to split into groups of three, and have each group do the scenario together.

Describe the Scenario

For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal handler walking with his or her animal from the parking lot and into the facility, and greeting the volunteer coordinator who’s waiting there for them. The volunteer coordinator is looking forward to meeting this therapy animal and will want to pet it.

Handling Tip

Because this is a responsible and professional handler, he or she has already met the volunteer coordinator during an initial visit to the facility, without his or her animal, to determine whether this would be a good place for the team to visit. You’ll do the same thing when you’re starting visits. Always go without your animal first, so that you can see where you’ll be visiting and identify any challenges that your animal might have that you need to proactively address.

Identify the Target Skill

Regardless of whether you’re walking down the street or talking with a client or facility staff, your first responsibility is always to your animal, making sure that it’s comfortable and supported. So the skill that we’re going to be spotting is any instance of PETS™. We’re watching for things such as eye contact, petting, speaking reassuringly to the animal and keeping the animal close. Every time that we see something like that, the handler should get a click.

Identify Your Volunteers

- Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
- Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™?

Conduct the Role-Play
Debrief

- Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This will likely include PETS™ but can also be other things, such as being courteous when speaking to the volunteer coordinator.
- Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
- Ask whether anyone can give an example of proactive handling from the role-play.
- How did the team inspire confidence in others — both people who might have seen the team walking through parking lot and the volunteer coordinator? Is there anything else that the handler could have done to inspire confidence that his or her team is a well-trained therapy animal team?

Your Most Important Job

Goals

1. Explain YAYABA™ as the core tenet of the Therapy Animal Program.
2. Give examples of how to apply YAYABA™ during visits.

Instructor Notes

Display slide 36, “Your Most Important Job,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Note this is approximately half way through the workshop content and might be an appropriate spot to break for lunch.

YAYABA™

Instructor Notes

Display slide 37, “YAYABA™,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Note this is approximately half way through the workshop content and might be an appropriate spot to break for lunch.
Another acronym that Pet Partners uses is YAYABA™, which stands for “You Are Your Animal’s Best Advocate.” This is your most important job as a handler. It’s your responsibility to take care of your animal before taking care of others.

To be your animal’s best advocate, you must be attuned to your animal’s needs for breaks, food and water, and to signs of stress and other emotions. When you demonstrate YAYABA™, your animal knows it and trusts you, and will be more willing and able to enjoy interacting with clients.

The following are some examples of YAYABA™ in action:

► **Pre-visit break**: Allow your animal to relieve itself before a visit, in an area away from the entrance of the facility. Be sure to pick up any waste and dispose of it properly.

► **Stress break**: During all parts of a visit, watch for signs of stress in your animal, and pay attention to its level of comfort. The demands of visiting might cause your animal to need more frequent breaks.

► **Visit lengths**: Begin with very short visits, and gradually increase the length to a maximum of 2 hours per day. Remember that it’s OK to leave if either you or your animal is becoming stressed. A short, enjoyable visit is better than a long visit that makes you or your animal uncomfortable.

► **Ending early**: Sometimes, your animal might give you signs that it just isn’t comfortable during a visit. If a quick break doesn’t help, it’s your responsibility to listen to what your animal is telling you and end your visit early. This is the professional and responsible thing to do.

► **Guiding safe interactions**: Never assume that a client knows how to touch or interact with your animal appropriately. There will be times when you need to instruct clients how to safely handle your animal, by using phrases such as:
  - “Spot likes it best when people pet him on the back.”
  - “If you really want to hear Fluffy purr happily, try scratching her behind the ears.”

YAYABA™ is the single most important guiding principle of therapy animal visits, because it ensures both animal welfare and client safety.

Remember, your animal didn’t ask you to do therapy work: this is something that you’re asking your animal to do. As a handler, it’s always up to you to ensure that your animal is safe, both physically and emotionally, during visits.

If you are your animal’s best advocate, you prevent your animal from being placed in situations where it might respond inappropriately. By putting your animal’s welfare first, you’re actually making safety for everyone a priority.
Discussion: How Do You Guide an Interaction?

*Display slide 38 in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Lead a discussion in which students suggest methods for guiding interactions.

Acknowledge that it can feel awkward or challenging to guide an interaction. Encourage students to suggest polite and professional things that a handler can say to help adjust an interaction so that it’s better for his or her animal. This might include ways to end the visit without causing hurt feelings.

Food During Visits

**Instructor Notes**

*Display slide 39, “Food During Visits,” in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Food and interesting scents are everywhere. Many people are used to giving animals food as a token of affection or appreciation, but it’s acceptable for you, as the handler, to refuse food treats on behalf of your animal. Also, keep in mind that some facilities won’t permit animal treats for a variety of reasons, such as concerns about allergens.

Determine your “treat policy” ahead of time. Keep in mind that you must visit as you were evaluated. This means that, if you declined a treat on behalf of your animal during the team evaluation, you can’t allow treats on visits.

If you do plan to use treats, your animal must take treats nicely, and you should be prepared to actively direct clients in the best way to offer treats. If you aren’t confident that your animal can consistently take a treat gently, don’t use treats during visits.

Even if you don’t plan to use treats, therapy animals must be reliable and controllable when it comes to food. There are various foods that can upset your animal’s stomach, and items that might appear edible to your animal, such as pills, could cause serious harm if your animal ingests them. Make sure that your animal responds to cues about items that it may not have, so that you inspire confidence during visits.
Personal Action Plan: Your Treat Policy

Display slide 40 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Invite your students to take a moment to think about their particular animal partner and how it responds to food.

- Does the animal reliably respond to a command such as “Not yours,” “Not now” or “Leave it” when it sees or smells something interesting?
- Do you have a consistent way of describing how someone should provide treats to your animal, or a consistent way of politely declining?

As part of their ongoing Personal Action Plan, encourage students to jot down specific things that they intend to do to help keep their animal and clients safe when it comes to food.

Visit Scenario 2

Instructor Notes


Describe the Scenario

For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team visiting in a room of clients. One of the clients (played by the instructor or assistant) will be on the phone, talking loudly and being distracting. After getting off the phone, this client will rejoin the group.

Handling Tip

Group visits will be challenging to you as a handler. You’ll be carrying on conversations while also attending to your animal and watching proactively for changes in the environment or unexpected attempts to interact with your animal. To handle group visits, you’ll need to focus on YAYABA™ and be skilled in managing people graciously and professionally.

Identify the Target Skill

For our first scenario, we focused on spotting instances of PETS™ such as eye contact, petting and speaking reassuringly to the animal, and keeping it close. This time, in addition to PETS™, let’s also look for examples of YAYABA™ — that is, any action that the handler takes that’s in the best interests of his or her animal, particularly with regard to managing the crowd and interactions with the animal.
Identify Your Volunteers
- Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
- Who would like to volunteer to be a client? (Depending on the size of the class, you can have 2–3 additional clients. One or more can wear a piece of disability equipment of their choice.)
- Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?
- (You or your assistant should be the client on the phone. When you join the visit, offer the therapy animal food, without asking the handler’s permission first. It should be unexpected.)

Conduct the Role-Play

Debrief
- Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but also solicit feedback about how the handler managed the unexpected treat.
- Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
- If one of the clients was wearing disability equipment, ask how he or she perceived the visit, and what made the interaction easier or more difficult from his or her perspective. Were there things that the handler could have done to make the interaction easier?
- Ask whether anyone would like to share how he or she plans to manage food during visits.
- How did the team inspire confidence?
Recognizing Body Language

Goals

1. Identify body language cues from your animal that indicate stress.
2. Identify stress in yourself and clients that you visit.
3. Describe how to proactively respond to stress.

Instructor Notes


Be aware of the species of animals that are represented in your workshop, and make an effort to use inclusive examples or draw parallels between the body language of different species.

It’s easy to let this topic become all about dogs and leave the non-canine teams feeling left out. Strive for inclusion.

Watching for Body Language Cues

While stress in small doses can be a positive influence, too much stress has negative consequences. As a handler, it’s important that you recognize the body language of your animal, so that you can attend to its needs.

So how do you know when your animal is ready to end a visit? Your animal will use a variety of body language cues, and it’s your responsibility to recognize them. As outward behavioral indicators of the animal's inner stress, they’re equivalent to sweating and nail biting in humans: physical signs of stress. Many body language cues for stress are normal behaviors for the animal; however, when the animal is experiencing conflicting needs or desires, it exhibits these behaviors out of context.

It isn’t a bad thing for your animal to show these body language cues, but what Pet Partners looks for during your team evaluation is that you, as a handler, recognize your animal’s unique cues. This shows that you know your animal well enough to tell when it might be stressed, so that you can proactively take steps to support it.
Brainstorm: Body Language Cues

Display slide 43 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Invite your students to take a moment to visualize their animal doing something that it loves to do. How do they know that the animal loves to do it?

Next, have them think about a time when they saw their animal become stressed, such as during a thunderstorm. What kinds of behaviors show them that their animal might be stressed?

Have the students break into pairs or small groups. If possible, group handlers of similar breeds or species together. Have the groups make a list of body language cues that they know.

After 3–5 minutes, have the groups share their lists with the rest of the class.

The following lists show common body language cues that indicate stress, anxiety or discontent in the species that Pet Partners registers. Although body language cues that indicate contentment and relaxation are important too, unless you recognize when your animal needs support, you won’t be able to apply PETS™ and be your animal’s best advocate.

Cues vary from animal to animal. Some animals have a large “vocabulary” of body language cues, whereas others have just a few. The lists that follow aren’t exhaustive, and not every member of a species will use all of these cues. Also, cues can change over time. As your animal’s best advocate, learning your animal’s unique body language cues is one of the best things that you can do to ensure everyone’s well-being.

**Dogs:** Ground sniffing, lip licking, yawning, blinking, averted eyes, turning away, ears down and tail held stiff, freezing and backing up

**Cats:** Yawning, lip licking, grooming, retreating, hiding the head under the handler’s arms, freezing, blinking, ear twitching, tail flicking and fluffing up the body hair or tail

**Horses:** Empty chewing, lip licking, head bobbing, shaking the mane, pawing, grazing, yawning, turning away and wide-eyed blinking

**Rabbits:** One ear up and one ear down, both ears up with the insides turned back, digging, yawning, lip licking, tail up and rapid breathing

**Guinea Pigs:** Restlessness, tossing the head when touched, yawning, stamping feet, swaying from side to side and chattering teeth

**Birds:** Looking away, throwing food or treats, chewing or pecking, shaking the feathers and preening
Llamas and Alpacas: Humming, leaning away, foot stomping, raising the nose up in the air, bumping the head against the handler, flaring nostrils and heavy breathing

Pigs: Tail twitching, chomping of the teeth, mane or hackles up, and side-to-side head swiping

Rats: Grinding the teeth, vocalizations and freezing

In Context or out of Context?

Instructor Notes

Display slide 44, “In Context or Out of Context,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Reinforce that all animals, just like all people, experience stress sometimes and this is not a bad thing. Give examples of how you know when your animal is either stressed, tired, anxious or just ready to end a visit.

Most body language cues that are signals of stress are behaviors that your animal does anyway, but it’s important to look at the context.

Look at these examples:

► Yawning and licking the lips or nose
► Scratching and biting at the paws or other body parts
► Sniffing the ground or other objects
► Giving a full-body shake

If it’s time for bed, and your cat stretches and yawns, the yawning wouldn’t be considered a sign of stress, because the behavior is appropriate to the context of bedtime. However, if your dog yawns when a leaf blower starts up right outside the window, it might be a sign of stress.

As a handler, it’s important that you recognize body language cues, because they’re one way that your animal will try to manage its stress. For example, if an animal wants to approach a new person but is afraid or nervous, the stress caused by the conflicting needs and desires might cause the animal to lick its lips, whine or tuck its tail between its legs.
Responding to Your Animal’s Stress

Instructor Notes
Display slide 45, “Responding to Your Animal’s Stress,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

If your animal displays any of the previously mentioned cues, how should you respond? For successful handlers, this means being proactive. Maybe you apply PETS™ to reassure your animal. Or maybe you simply remove it from the stressful situation.

In addition to using PETS™, there might be simple adjustments that you can make during a visit to reduce your animal’s stress.

► Change the position of your animal:
  - Have your animal face you.
  - Try a different placement: on the bed, a chair, the floor or a table; lying down, sitting, or standing; on your lap or on the client’s lap.
  - Move your animal closer to or farther from the client.

► Change the environment, with the client’s permission:
  - Minimize auditory distractions (such as a TV or radio).
  - Close a curtain or door.
  - Ensure sufficient space by moving to another room (for example, a dayroom or courtyard).

Video: Dog’s Eye View
Display slide 46 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Play the video “Dog’s Eye View,” which is available in the Resource Library via a YouTube link.

Ask your students to point out any environmental distractions. Validate points that the students make, and add additional observations as necessary.

If you have any handlers of non-canines in the room, be sure to ask what environmental distractions might be unique to their animal’s species.
Recognizing Your Own Stress

Instructor Notes
Display slide 47, “Recognizing Your Own Stress,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

We’ve just looked at body language cues that might indicate stress in animals. But do you also have them as well? To be a successful handler, you must have a strong relationship with your animal, and that bond means that your stress can impact your animal.

Although volunteering with your animal can be immensely rewarding, you should realize that it can also be a source of stress for you. For example, the health of a client that you’ve been visiting for several weeks or months might suddenly decline, or the client might even pass away. Alternatively, a client might share a personal story that’s difficult for you to handle emotionally.

If your animal begins showing body language cues for stress, but you don’t see a reason for it in the environment, assess yourself: Are you feeling nervous? Anxious? Upset? You might be telegraphing those emotions to your animal.

If you can’t get your emotions in check, and this is impacting your animal, being your animal’s best advocate might require that you take a break or cut the visit short.

Stress in Others

Instructor Notes

Occasionally, you might witness stress in other people during your visits. As for animals, signs of stress in humans vary from individual to individual, but they might include irritability, decreased or excessive talking, nervousness, sweating, stuttering and memory problems.

The following are some things that you can do if you see signs of stress in a client during a visit:

▶ Slow or stop the conversation.
▶ Change the topic of conversation.
▶ Increase the amount of space between yourself and the client, or between your animal and the client.
Change your position to ensure that you aren’t unintentionally being physically intimidating.
Offer to come back another time.
End the visit.

Personal Action Plan: Managing Stress

Display slide 49 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Remind your students that, although therapy animal visits are rewarding and can even be fun, they’re still hard work.

As part of their Personal Action Plan, encourage the students to jot down specific things that they can do to reduce the inevitable stress of visits for both themselves and their animal.

Visit Scenario 3

Instructor Notes

Display slide 50, “Visit Scenario 3,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Describe the Scenario

For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team walking down a narrow hallway and encountering an unknown person who comes around the corner with an unknown dog, stops and greets the team.

Handling Tip

The only thing that you ever have 100% control over during a visit is what you say or do as a handler. The good news is that, if you consistently practice PETS™ and YAYABA™, you can still do a lot to keep visits safe and effective for both clients and your animal. You’re never under any obligation to have your animal meet another animal, even if someone else would like that to happen.

Identify the Target Skill

In this scenario, the handler will have to respond to an unknown team’s presence. As before, we’re going to be spotting instances of PETS™ (such as eye contact, petting and speaking reassuringly to the animal, and keeping it close) as well as examples of YAYABA™ (that is, any action that the handler takes that’s in the best interests of his or her animal). Every time that the
spotters see something that falls into either of these categories, the handler should get a click.

**Identify Your Volunteers**
- Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
- Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?
- (You or your assistant will be the unknown team.)

**Conduct the Role-Play**

**Debrief**
- Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but it can also include other positive comments.
- Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
- Ask whether anyone can give an example of proactive handling from the role-play.
- How did the team inspire confidence? Is there anything else that the team could have done?

**Your Responsibilities as a Pet Partner**

**Instructor Notes**
Display slide 51, Your Responsibility as a Pet Partner,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

**Goals**

1. Recognize the code of ethics, Standards of Professional Conduct and key policies and procedures.
2. Apply the Team Qualification Matrix to different scenarios.

**Instructor Notes**
Display slide 52, “Understanding Expectations,” in the PowerPoint presentation.
There are three sets of expectations that volunteers in the Therapy Animal Program must observe:

- The **code of ethics for AAI** outlines a set of wide-ranging, non-specific principles that govern decision making; it enables you to use independent judgment to determine the most appropriate course of action.

- **Pet Partners’ Standards of Professional Conduct** outline clear expectations about specific actions that are required, acceptable or prohibited.

- **Pet Partners policies and procedures** are rules that govern your behavior and actions when you’re acting as part of a therapy animal team. You’re responsible for following the policies and procedures at all times. Every handler must sign an agreement to adhere to these policies and procedures. This agreement is included in the team registration materials.

These three sets of expectations are explained in detail in Lesson 2.2 of your *Handler Guide*, starting on page 32.

We’ll briefly touch on the Pet Partners policies and procedures that are most often broken or misunderstood. However, make sure that you’re familiar with the entire list of 25 policies and procedures (pages 32–34 of your *Handler Guide*), because you’re responsible for upholding all of them, at all times.

- **My animal must wear a collar or harness and be on a leash, and I must hold the leash at all times, including during breaks.**
  
  **Why?** Safety and the perception of safety.

  First and foremost, you’re the person who must always be responsible for your animal. Never surrender the leash to someone else or tie your animal to furniture. PETS™ tells us to keep our animal close. Also, imagine that someone is fearful of dogs. Having a dog off leash wouldn’t inspire confidence — in fact, it might cause anxiety.

- **My animal and I are required to wear our Pet Partners identification badge while engaged in any activities as a therapy animal team.**
  
  **Why?** Insurance clarity.

  Wearing your badge is the single easiest way to clarify whether you’re acting as a Pet Partners therapy animal team. When you’re doing Pet Partners therapy visits, all policies and procedures apply and you’re covered by insurance.

- **I will not charge a fee for services that I perform in my role as a handler.**
  
  **Why?** You’re a volunteer.

  Pet Partners insurance covers volunteer activity only. Although AAT practitioners might choose to be trained and evaluated with Pet Partners,
Pet Partners insurance doesn’t apply if you’re using your therapy animal in a paid position.

- My animal must visit in the same equipment that it was evaluated in.
  **Why?** Consistency.
  Animals can behave differently in different equipment. Because your Pet Partners registration is based on an evaluation, we ask that you visit in the same way that you were evaluated. If you ever want to change the type of equipment that you use (for example, a harness instead of a flat collar), you can be re-evaluated at any time.

- My animal may wear a seasonal or holiday scarf; however, neither my animal nor I may be dressed in a costume.
  **Why?** Safety and infection prevention.
  Although costumes might be well-tolerated by some animals, they do pose additional risk. They can provide places where animals might be caught or pulled, and they pick up germs during visits. Save your costumes for non-Pet Partners activities.

- Visiting may not exceed 2 hours per team per day.
  **Why?** Animal welfare.
  It’s hard work being a therapy animal. As part of our commitment to putting the animal’s interests first, we limit their “working hours.” Responsible handlers also recognize that it’s hard work being proactive all the time! You might find that the ideal visit length for your team is only 1 hour, or even shorter. Do what’s best for your team.

### Using the Team Qualification Matrix

**Instructor Notes**


There are three factors that help determine your success during a visit: your team qualification rating, the level of staff involvement the facility environment. These factors are combined to create the Team Qualification Matrix. After you and your animal have been evaluated, you’ll refer to the Team Qualification Matrix to determine the kinds of environments that you’re qualified to visit. Use of the matrix helps ensure better matches between therapy animal teams and facilities, and safer, more effective relationships.

Let’s look more closely at the three factors.
Your Team Qualification Rating
When you and your animal successfully complete your team evaluation, you’ll receive a team qualification rating of either Predictable or Complex. This rating helps determine which settings are best for you and your animal to visit in.

Your team qualification rating can change each time that you’re evaluated. For example, the experience that you and your animal gain over time might cause your rating to change from Predictable to Complex; or your animal’s temperament might change as it ages, and this change could affect your rating.

It’s important to remember that a complex team isn’t better than a predictable team. Your qualification rating is just another tool that will help you be your animal’s best advocate.

Staff Involvement
The level of staff involvement will vary widely from one facility to the next. In some facilities, staff members will be closely involved in your visits, whereas in others, staff will let you work independently and won’t be involved at all. In general, the more support that you have from staff members, the safer and more successful your visit will be.

Pet Partners classifies the level of staff involvement as either high or low.

- High staff involvement might involve staying with you during the entire visit to help with client names and activities.
- Low staff involvement might involve letting you visit on your own, or showing you where the group room is and then leaving you alone with the clients.

Facility Environment
By understanding the environment that you’ll be visiting in, you help set your team up for success. There are three basic types of facility environment that you’ll encounter during a visit: quiet, moderate and active.

- Quiet facilities have very few distractions (no loud machines or squeaky carts), and clients generally stay in bed or sit quietly. There probably isn’t a lot of chatter, and what there is will be done in very quiet voices.
- Moderate facilities are somewhat active, with clients moving around, using walkers, wheelchairs or canes. You might hear soft music, laughter or voices, and a variety of noises from machines.
- Active facilities have a high level of activity and many distractions. The clients are more mobile and tend to move around more than in quiet or moderate facilities, although they might lack muscle coordination and make sudden, jerky movements. You can expect to hear client noises,
music, machines and intercom systems, and to notice a higher level of energy.

When you’re trying to decide whether to visit a facility or a specific area within a facility, you must consider the characteristics of the clients and staff at the facility, the overall level of activity there, and the skill level and aptitude of your team. Your personality and preferences are also important considerations. The Team Qualification Matrix will help you assess whether the facility is right for you and your animal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quiet Facility</th>
<th>Moderate Facility</th>
<th>Active Facility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Staff Involvement</td>
<td>Predictable &amp; Complex</td>
<td>Predictable &amp; Complex</td>
<td>Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Staff Involvement</td>
<td>Predictable &amp; Complex</td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Complex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity: Applying the Qualification Matrix**

*Display slide 54 in the PowerPoint presentation.*

Read through the three hypothetical situations below. For each, invite student participation to determine whether the environment that’s described is appropriate for a predictable team or a complex team to visit in.

**Situation 1**

Karla and her dog Peaches received a Predictable team qualification rating at their team evaluation. Karla is conducting a pre-visit at a local preschool, where children are running around and there’s a lot of noise.

If Karla and Peaches visit in the preschool, the staff will be focused on managing the kids and won’t be able to provide supervision for the therapy animal team. Based on the Team Qualification Matrix, is this an appropriate environment for Karla and Peaches?

▶ The facility that’s described is active, and the staff involvement is low. Based on the matrix, this setting would be best for a complex team.

**Situation 2**

The next day, Karla conducts a pre-visit at a rehab center. Several clients and family members will be gathered during visiting sessions, and music will probably be playing. Staff members will be present to introduce the therapy
animal team to clients and supervise the visits. Based on the Team Qualification Matrix, is this environment appropriate for Karla and Peaches?

▶ The environment that’s described is either quiet or moderate, and the staff involvement is high. Based on the matrix, this setting would be appropriate for either a predictable team or a complex team.

**Situation 3**

Tom and his dog Skipper are a prospective team. Tom would really like to volunteer at the local hospital, but he’s worried that this won’t be possible unless he and Skipper get a Complex rating on their team evaluation. However, Tom’s friend Linda, who’s also a Pet Partners volunteer, assures him that there are often options for both predictable teams and complex teams at any facility. She then gives a couple of examples for the hospital that Tom is interested in. Based on the Team Qualification Matrix, is each of Linda’s examples appropriate for a complex team or a predictable?

1. Accompany nursing staff for one-on-one visits with patients who are recovering from joint replacement surgery.
   - High staff involvement and low activity levels make this setting appropriate for predictable teams.

2. Make visits in the waiting room for the ER to ease the stress of those who are waiting.
   - Low staff involvement and a high activity level (people constantly coming and going, doors opening and possible loud noises) make this a better choice for a complex team.

3. Visit the hospital break room to provide some stress relief for the doctors and nurses.
   - Staff involvement is high, and the activity level is probably moderate (multiple people coming in and out at different times), making this appropriate for a predictable team.

**Visit Scenario 4**

**Instructor Notes**


**Describe the Scenario**

For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team walking into a unit of a facility to visit a client who’s recovering from surgery. This client will be
sitting in a chair. During the visit, the handler and animal meet a staff person who doesn’t know about their scheduled visit and asks why they’re there. This staff person thinks that therapy dogs are the same thing as assistance dogs.

Handling Tip
This is a responsible and professional handler, and is therefore clearly wearing his or her Pet Partners badge and any additional identification that the facility requires. The handler uses correct vocabulary, and is courteous and professional in his or her communication.

Identify the Target Skill
In this scenario, our handler will have to converse with multiple people, all while attending to his or her animal. We’re still going to be spotting any instance of PETS™ and YAYABA™. Watch particularly how the handler directs interactions with his or her animal. Any time that the handler directs an interaction, that counts as YAYABA™ and deserves a click.

Identify Your Volunteers
► Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
► Who would like to be the client who’s receiving a visit? (Invite this volunteer to wear a piece of disability equipment of his or her choice.)
► Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?
► (You or your assistant will role-play the staff person.)

Conduct the Role-Play

Debrief
► Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but it can also include other things, such as being courteous when speaking to the staff person and using correct terminology.
► Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
► If the volunteer who role-played the client was wearing disability equipment, ask how he or she perceived the visit, and what made the interaction easier or more difficult from his or her perspective. Were there things that the handler could have done to make the interaction easier?
► Ask what the staff involvement and activity level for this facility were and what qualification ratings would be most appropriate in visits like this.
► How did the team inspire confidence, both in the person who received the visit and in the staff person who approached the team? Is there anything else that the team could have done to inspire confidence?
Professionalism, Respect and Safety

Goals

1. Demonstrate appropriate client confidentiality.
2. Demonstrate respectful language choices.
3. Describe appropriate infection control during visits with a client.
4. Identify what qualifies as an incident, and describe what to do after an incident.

Although Pet Partners therapy animal teams are volunteers, we hold them to very high standards of **professionalism, respect and safety.**

One aspect of professionalism and respect concerns your general treatment of people.

Communicating with Respect

During visits, your interaction with each client will be determined by his or her ability to interact with you. Clients might be disoriented, have limited mobility or have difficulty expressing their thoughts. The important thing is to treat everyone with the dignity and respect that all humans deserve.

The key is to be patient and flexible. This might mean letting clients pet your animal without speaking, or giving them a little extra time to express what they want to say. Be sure not to interrupt, correct or patronize the client, or make light of his or her condition or situation.

Another aspect of professionalism and respect concerns the way that you talk about clients and other people.
People with disabilities are, first and foremost, people who have specific abilities, interests and needs. However, when we refer to people by their medical diagnosis or a colloquial term for their condition, we devalue and disrespect them as individuals. In addition, many of the slang terms that are commonly used to refer to people with disabilities are inaccurate and inappropriate, and also perpetuate negative stereotypes. “Person-first” language eliminates generalizations and stereotypes by focusing on the person, so that the condition is no longer the primary, defining characteristic.

Using person-first language isn’t difficult: just make sure that you literally put the person before the condition when you’re speaking or writing.

► Instead of “disabled person,” say “person with a disability.”
► Instead of “autistic child,” say “child on the autism spectrum.”
► Instead of “stroke victim,” say “person who has had a stroke.”
► Instead of “mental patient,” say “person with a mental-health disorder.”

This topic is covered in more detail, with additional examples, in Lesson 5.4 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 111.

Privacy and HIPAA

Another aspect of professionalism and respect involves protecting the privacy of clients that you visit. Client confidentiality is an ethical necessity for everyone who volunteers with Pet Partners, because clients need and expect an environment that protects their privacy. Client confidentiality is reinforced through the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), which mandates the security and confidentiality of protected health information through established and enforced standards.
The following guidelines will help you comply with HIPAA when you volunteer as part of a therapy animal team:

► Don’t discuss a client’s condition with anyone, not even the client, unless the discussion is initiated by that client.

► Never use a client’s name when discussing your visit with anyone other than the client’s health care provider.

► If you see a client while you’re out in public, don’t approach him or her, and don’t talk about the facility, the setting or your visit, unless the conversation is initiated by the client.

► Don’t take photos or videos of clients unless you first obtain signed photo releases.

Protected client information includes the following:

► Name

► Specific dates (for example, date of birth/death)

► Telephone, Social Security and medical record numbers

► Photographs

► City, ZIP Code and other geographic identifiers

It’s natural to want to talk about your volunteerism and share stories about the work that you and your therapy animal do. It inspires others and educates people about AAI. Just be conscientious not to use names or enough information that, when taken together, could identify a person.

Always make sure that you’re clear on your facility’s policy about images and social media posts. Remember, if your facility and Pet Partners have two different policies about the same topic, the more conservative (that is, the stricter) of the two apply. For example, although Pet Partners permits photos if permission is obtained, your facility might never allow photos to be taken by non-staff.
Visit Scenario 5

Instructor Notes
Display slide 60, “Visit Scenario 5,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Describe the Scenario
For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team entering a client’s room for a visit. The room is somewhat crowded with furniture, and one of the client’s family members is also present. This person is very interested in the team and who the team has already visited today.

Handling Tip
Even if you’ve visited in a facility before, some rooms might hold unexpected equipment or distractions. Be aware of your animal’s reaction, and be its best advocate as needed. Also, keep in mind that, although you’re there to visit clients, the person who’s most in need of a visit is sometimes a family member or staff person. You’ll need to assess the situation and determine how best to spend your time with the people who are present. However, don’t automatically rule out family members.

Identify the Target Skill
In this scenario, the handler will be visiting multiple people in a crowded room. We’ll continue to spot any instance of PETS™ and YAYABA™, such as guiding the interactions. Every time that we see something that reflects either of those skills, the handler should get a click. Let’s also watch how the handler demonstrates his or her ability to be professional and respectful of the privacy of other clients.

Identify Your Volunteers
► Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
► Who would like to volunteer to be the client? (Invite this volunteer to wear a piece of disability equipment of his or her choice.)
► Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?
► (You or your assistant should be the family member and ask questions such as “Who have you seen today?” “Is Mrs. Smith still here in the hospital?” “Hey, what was wrong with that old guy George in the room next door?”)

Conduct the Role-Play
Debrief

- Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but also solicit comments about professionalism, HIPAA and protection of privacy.
- Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
- If the volunteer who role-played the client was wearing disability equipment, ask how he or she perceived the visit, and what made the interaction easier or more difficult from his or her perspective. Were there things that the handler could have done to make the interaction easier?
- How did the team inspire confidence in the client and the family member?

Infection Control

**Instructor Notes**

Display slide 61, “Infection Control,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Now that we’ve discussed professionalism and respect, let’s turn our attention to safety, specifically infection control, hand hygiene and the use of barriers.

Infection can be spread in various ways, so hospitals and other medical facilities post precautions to indicate the infection control steps that all staff and visitors must take.

Three types of precautions that are used to prevent the spread of infection are:

- **Airborne precautions:** Masks are used to avoid breathing air that might be infected with microorganisms.
- **Droplet precautions:** Masks are used to prevent diseases from being transmitted through coughs, sneezes or talking.
- **Contact precautions:** Gloves, gowns and foot coverings are used to prevent diseases from being transmitted by touch.

All three types of precautions require that everyone who enters the area wear protective equipment. However, because your animal can’t wear a mask or a gown, and because you may not leave your animal unattended, you won’t be able to visit clients in rooms where any of these precautions are in effect, even if the facility staff says that it’s OK.

By modeling excellent infection control standards through regular and thorough hand washing, you protect clients, your animal and yourself. This is just another
way that you can inspire confidence in clients and staff members at the facilities that you visit.

**Handwashing Guidelines**

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before visiting each client.
- Ask anyone who wants to touch your animal to first wash his or her hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Anyone who has touched your animal should wash his or her hands or use hand sanitizer at the end of the visit.

In general, Pet Partners recommends the use of hand sanitizer, because it’s more accessible than sinks. You can take a bottle of sanitizer wherever you go, and using it takes less time than washing the hands with soap and water. In addition, clients with limited mobility can be offered hand sanitizer so that they don’t have to move to get to a sink.

Remember, hand hygiene protects not just your client but also your animal. As your animal’s best advocate, be diligent about asking people to cleanse their hands before and after visits.

If you have a small, carried animal, you must use a barrier whenever you place your animal on someone’s lap or on someone’s bed. A barrier is something (often a towel) that can easily be placed between your animal and whatever it’s sitting or lying on.

Barriers shouldn’t be reused for multiple clients, particularly in health care settings, to help prevent the spread of germs.

Under certain conditions, barriers might also be necessary for larger visiting animals. For example, you might visit someone who can’t easily reach your animal. If it’s acceptable to your facility, you may place your animal on furniture (such as a chair) to put it closer to the person that you’re visiting.

For more information about visiting clients who are restricted to their bed, see Lesson 5.2 of your *Handler Guide*, starting on page 91.
Visit Only When Healthy

**Instructor Notes**

Display slide 62, “Visit Only When Healthy,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Inevitably, you or your animal will be ill, stressed or injured at some point. Rather than force the situation and risk making a stressful situation much worse, you should cancel your visit.

Note that, if you’re unable to meet an obligation for any reason, you should notify the person who schedules therapy animal visits at the facility, as far in advance as possible. This gives the coordinator and the facility time to make temporary arrangements that will help maintain consistent levels of service to the clients.

**For the Animal**

Your animal shouldn’t go on a visit if:

- It’s on medication for infection or illness, or another animal in your household is ill.
- It has been emotionally stressed or is behaving unusually. This might happen after a stressful visit to the veterinarian or groomer, or if the animal has had vaccinations or an intrusive procedure.
- It has been injured or ill. In these cases, the animal needs time to heal in the safe environment of your home.

**For the Handler**

You shouldn’t go on a visit if:

- You’re ill.
- You aren’t emotionally competent to visit. For example, you might be grieving over the loss of a loved one.
- You’ve recently been exposed to contagious diseases (for example, chickenpox).
- You have an ill child or other family member at home.
Personal Action Plan: Infection Control

Display slide 63 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Ask your students to think of specific ways that they can hold themselves accountable for applying what they’ve learned about infection control. Remind them that good Personal Action Plans are as specific as possible and describe concrete behavior, such as “I’ll start trimming the hair between my dog’s toes.”

Next, have them share their plan with a person who’s sitting near them. If they like any of their neighbor’s ideas, they should add them to their own plan!

Incidents and Unusual Occurrences

Display slide 64, “Incidents and Unusual Occurrences,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Apart from occasional illness or injury, there might be times when your animal shows signs that it just isn’t enjoying visiting clients. As your animal’s best advocate, you’re responsible for determining when you need to end a visit and go home.

This applies to the team evaluation too: if you sense that your animal is becoming stressed, the best course might be to stop and try again another day. (In the meantime, work with your animal on the area that gave it trouble.)

The alternative is that your animal is pushed too far and does something inappropriate, such as growl at or scratch the team evaluator or a client.

Remember, one growl or scratch dramatically affects how you’re perceived as a therapy animal team and can jeopardize your registration. It also undermines the credibility of the entire Therapy Animal Program.

Whether real or perceived, mishaps can happen to the most experienced and best-trained therapy animal teams, and you need to know how to respond. For example, maybe your animal injures a client during a visit. Or maybe your dog takes a treat from someone’s hand a little too quickly, and the person thinks that he or she has been bitten. Both of these situations would be considered an incident.

An incident is anything that falls into one of these categories:

- Injury to a person (including you) or an animal
High potential that an injury could have occurred either to a person or an animal, even though no one was hurt at the time

The perception of an injury, accident or error

Damage to property

Examples of Incidents

- A dog inadvertently scratches the fragile skin of an older adult.
- A cat hisses after being petted too vigorously by a child.
- A llama knocks over a piece of hospital equipment.
- A client steps on a dog’s tail.
- A miniature horse steps on and breaks a client’s glasses.

When an incident occurs, it’s important that you immediately report it to Pet Partners and the facility. Our goal is to support you if an incident or unusual occurrence happens, and we can’t do that if we don’t know about it. Incidents can be reported quickly and easily online through the Pet Partners website. The “Contact Us” page includes a link to the Incident Report Form.

Insurance

Hopefully, you’ll never be involved in an incident or unusual occurrence during your visits. If you are, though, you don’t need to feel anxious about reporting it, because Pet Partners provides insurance coverage for its registered therapy animal teams.

Coverage under Pet Partners’ policy is in effect only if you visit in an environment that’s appropriate for your team qualification rating and follow all policies and procedures.

Insurance can be a complicated topic. You’ll find more information about insurance in Lesson 6.7 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 143. If you or a facility has additional questions about insurance coverage, contact Pet Partners through our website.
Parts of a Visit

Goals

1. Describe best practices for approaching a client.
2. Describe techniques for beginning a conversation with a client.
3. Demonstrate active listening skills with clients.
4. Give examples of interactions that you might have with a client.
5. Identify appropriate strategies for ending a visit with a client.

Instructor Notes

Display slide 65, “Parts of a Visit,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Let’s get started by reviewing the three main parts of a visit:

1. Approach
2. Interaction
3. Closing

The parts of a visit are something you already do; you just don’t normally break down your actions and think about the details as we’re going to do here.

For example, when you attend a business meeting, you enter the room, approach the table and take a seat. As the meeting progresses, you interact with other people through discussion. Then, when the meeting is over, you close the visit by saying goodbye and leaving the room.

Now let’s turn from business meetings to visits with clients as a therapy animal team and look at each part of a visit in more detail.

Approach

Instructor Notes


During the approach, the goal is to announce your presence. As you enter a room, identify yourself and your animal, explain the reason for your visit, and
ask permission to visit. Never assume that a client wants a visit, even if you’ve visited him or her in the past, and remember that clients always have the right to refuse a therapy animal visit.

**Approach Techniques**

- **Announce yourself:** When entering a room, demonstrate respect for a client’s privacy by knocking and asking permission to enter. Although the room might be just another area in the facility to you, it might be the client’s home.
- **Approach from the front:** This helps the client know what to expect and allows you to observe his or her reaction.
- **Make eye contact:** Get into a position where you’re at eye level with the client, regardless of whether the person is sitting in a wheelchair or lying in a bed. Sitting in an unused chair might be an option for some visits.
- **Move slowly:** Don’t let your animal get too close to the client right away. Wait until the person is aware that the animal is in the room and indicates that he or she is open to a visit.
- **Present your animal:** Present your animal at the client’s waist level or below. If your animal is a large dog, consider having it lie down so that it’s less imposing.
- **Encourage contact:** Although most people will want to pet your animal, contact doesn’t have to be physical. Some people will enjoy just looking at your animal.
- **Let the client hold your animal:** If you have a small animal, place a clean barrier between the client’s lap and your animal, and then set your animal on the client’s lap. Don’t place your animal in the client’s hands or arms.
- **Place your animal on the bed:** If the client is in bed, your animal may lie on the bed beside him or her, or it may sit on a chair next to the bed. Always use a barrier between your animal and the bed or chair.

**Interaction**


After you’ve successfully approached the client, the next part of your visit is the actual **interaction**. During this part of the visit, you and your animal are interacting with the client and building a relationship.
Inviting the client to interact with your animal is a natural extension to a conversation. The interaction could be as simple as having the client pet your animal; or it could be something more active, such as inviting the client to take a short walk with you and your animal — provided that you have the permission or approval of facility staff.

**Interaction Techniques**

- **Holding:** The client sits quietly, petting or holding your animal. Actions and words aren’t always necessary. Holding might take place on the client’s bed or lap, or on a chair.
- **Grooming:** The client grooms your animal with a brush. This is a very relaxing interaction and can be incorporated into a client’s physical therapy.
- **Walks:** The client walks your animal, with the permission or approval of facility staff. Use a double leash for this interaction, so that you’re always in ultimate control of your animal.
- **Treats:** Have the client give your animal some water to drink or a small treat. Be sure to practice good hand hygiene after this interaction.
- **Playing:** The client plays simple games such as hide-and-seek, or practices obedience commands such as “Sit,” “Lie down,” “Speak” and “Roll over.”
- **Sharing photos:** Using your smartphone or a photo album that you’ve brought, show the client photos of you and your animal, and explain a little about each picture. This interaction can help the client gain a deeper understanding of your animal.
- **Observation:** The client watches as you and your animal demonstrate tricks or obedience commands, or as your animal plays by itself. Animals have a great way of encouraging interaction just by being present.

**Closing**

**Instructor Notes**


The closing is a crucial part of every visit. Always thank clients for their time, say goodbye, and let them know that you and your animal enjoyed visiting. However, never make promises about when you’ll visit next: you might not be able to keep your promise. Instead, use non-specific phrases such as “I hope to see you again soon.” For example, you might close a visit by saying, “Thanks for letting Pip and me visit. Bye for now! I’ll look for you next time we’re here.”
Closing Techniques

- **Hygiene between visits:** Make sure that you clean your hands between visits, and ask clients to clean their hands too. Explain to clients that you care about the health and safety of the people that you visit. Keep the discussion light-hearted by including your animal in the activity. For example, say to a client, “We have to go now, but before we do, Flossy and I need to clean our hands. Won’t you join us?”

- **Inability to break away:** Occasionally, you might find that you just can’t seem to break away from a client, even though you have other clients to visit or your visiting time has ended. End the visit in a safe way that doesn’t make the client feel rejected. For example, say, “We have to be going now, because we have other people to visit too” or “Bandit is tired and needs to go now.”

- **Groups:** If you’re visiting a large group, try to thank each client individually, and let him or her know that you and your animal are looking forward to visiting again the next time that you’re there.

- **Nonresponsive clients:** If a client appears nonresponsive, you might find yourself tempted to leave without saying goodbye. However, even if the client seems unaware of your presence, end the visit with a goodbye.

- **Ending a visit early:** Always be prepared to end a visit early if you or your animal isn’t enjoying the visit. If you notice signs of stress or fatigue in your animal, be your animal’s best advocate by immediately removing it from the setting. As always, thank the client as you promptly excuse yourself.

Active Listening

**Instructor Notes**

Display slide 69, “Active Listening,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

So, you’ve started a conversation with the client and encouraged interaction to keep it going. Now what? Another way to extend the conversation and continue building a relationship is to employ active listening skills.

Active listening is where you make a conscious effort to really pay attention to the words that another person is saying and, more importantly, to understand the complete message that’s being sent.

By using active listening during a visit, you assure the client that he or she is being heard. You aren’t passing judgment, making false promises, giving advice...
or in any way hindering the flow of the conversation. It’s satisfying and therapeutic for people to have someone really listen to them.

Two crucial components of active listening are **reflection** and **response**.

**Reflection**

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments and beliefs can distort what we hear. As an active listener, your role is to hear and understand what’s actually being said. This might require that you reflect what you’ve heard by paraphrasing. For example, say, “What I’m hearing is ...” or “It sounds like you’re saying ....”

**Response**

When you’re talking with a client, be careful about how you respond to something that he or she says. You don’t want to respond in such a way that you accidentally end the interaction. Keep the main objective of the visit in mind: to be supportive and positive when interacting with clients. If a client is expressing an opinion or viewpoint, your task is to actively listen and validate the person’s feelings, even if you disagree.

To be a good listener, you can’t allow yourself to become distracted by what’s going on around you or because you’re planning ahead to what you’ll say next. Give clients your undivided attention while they’re speaking.

In addition, recognize that nonverbal communication also “speaks” loudly. Use body language and gestures to show that you’re paying attention, by nodding your head, smiling and encouraging the client to continue.

Eye contact is also important. However, remember that you also have a responsibility to your animal at all times. You need to be able to maintain eye contact with the client while still keeping your animal in your field of vision. It might be necessary to pet, reassure or attend to your animal during a conversation, but you need to do this without appearing distracted to the client.

**Characteristics of Active Listening**

- **Stay in proximity:** Try to stay within 3 to 5 feet of the other person. Also, if the client is hard of hearing, make sure that he or she can see your face and mouth when you speak.
- **Make eye contact:** Look the person in the eye. Position yourself so that he or she can comfortably look at you.
- **Use body language:** Lean forward, reach out, and maintain a soft, relaxed stance: all of these are signals that you’re interested. Try not to fidget, look around or cross your arms.
Respond appropriately: Laugh or smile when the person is using humor; don’t do so when the person is describing his or her misfortune, even if it strikes you as humorous or makes you nervous.

Be patient: You might find yourself wanting to talk to fill any silences, but be patient. It takes some people a while to organize their thoughts or get the words out. You might be surprised how much more people have to say if you wait an extra beat or two before saying something yourself.

Acknowledge what’s said: Try reflecting back what you hear, to demonstrate that you’ve heard what was said and consider it important. For example, say, “It sounds like you have some wonderful memories of your childhood pets. Tell me more about your dog Cinnamon.” Or say, “I hear how hard it is for you to be away from home while you’re recuperating. I’m glad we were able to visit today.”

Don’t interrupt.

Activity: Active Listening Challenge

Display slide 70 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Read through the three hypothetical situations below, and invite the class to discuss possible responses that demonstrate active listening.

For each situation, take multiple suggestions for responses before moving on.

Situation 1
Ashley and her dog Daisy are visiting Ian, a retired Navy officer, at a local retirement home. During the visit, Ian tells Ashley that the decisions made by the government have ruined his life and are destroying the country. How can Ashley respond in a positive way that demonstrates her active listening skills and keeps the interaction going?

Situation 2
Sara and her mini horse Thunder are visiting Mildred in the retirement home where she lives. During the visit, Mildred becomes very emotional as she tells Sara that her children never come to visit her and she feels abandoned. How can Sara respond in a positive way that demonstrates her active listening skills and keeps the interaction going?

Situation 3
Bob and his cat Midnight are visiting Dennis, who’s recovering from back surgery. Dennis tells Bob that he’s very depressed, because he isn’t sure whether he’ll ever be able to go skiing again, and it’s his favorite sport. How can
Bob respond in a positive way that demonstrates his active listening skills and keeps the interaction going?

**Visit Scenario 6**

**Instructor Notes**


**Describe the Scenario**

For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team initiating a visit with a client who has a disability. The client speaks in a way that’s difficult to hear/understand but wants to tell the handler about the dog that he or she had as a child. During this conversation, a staff person interrupts and asks whether the handler can bring his or her animal out to meet another client.

**Handling Tip**

At some point during your visits, you’ll interact with someone that you can’t clearly understand, or someone who has another condition that makes your visit more challenging. By proactively working with facility staff, you can be more informed and better prepared for these visits. Although you don’t need any kind of diagnosis to visit, you can ask whether there’s anything that staff can share with you that might improve the visit for the client. For example, if you know in advance that a client has limited mobility on his or her left side, you can approach in a way that makes it easier for that client to pet your animal.

**Identify the Target Skill**

This role-play will allow us to try out the three parts of a visit: approach, interaction and closing. During this scenario let’s spot and click for every instance of PETS™ and YAYABA™, as we’ve been doing all day.

**Identify Your Volunteers**

- Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
- Who would like to volunteer to be the client with the disability? (Invite this volunteer wear a piece of disability equipment of his or her choice.)
- Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?
- (You or your assistant should be the facility staff person. Interrupt the visit after the handler has had an opportunity to begin the interaction fully.)
Conduct the Role-Play

Debrief

► Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but also solicit feedback about how the handler initiated and closed the visit, and also how he or she used active listening.

► Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.

► If the volunteer who role-played the client was wearing disability equipment, ask how he or she perceived the visit, and what made the interaction easier or more difficult from his or her perspective. Were there things that the handler could have done to make the interaction easier?

► Ask whether anyone can give an example of active listening from the role-play.

► How did the team inspire confidence? Is there anything else that the team could have done?

The Team Evaluation

Goals

1. Understand how handlers are scored during the team evaluation.
2. Understand how animals are scored during the team evaluation.

Instructor Notes

Display slide 72, “The Team Evaluation,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

Preparing for the Team Evaluation

Before arriving at your team evaluation, it’s your responsibility to know what will be required of you and your animal. We’ll review this today, but this information is also available throughout Unit 4 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 57. I strongly urge you to review this unit thoroughly.

The Resource Library in the Volunteer Center also has a variety of materials, including Evaluation Overview sheets for each species. These evaluation
overviews explain, in simple terms, how each exercise will happen and are a great way to help prepare for the team evaluation.

You’ll also have an opportunity to watch a team evaluation demonstrated by a team today. If you like watching this demo and feel that you’d benefit from seeing another as you prepare, prospective handlers are permitted to volunteer at team evaluation events as evaluation assistants. This would allow you to see team evaluations as you also help support other therapy animal teams. You’ll need to contact local team evaluators to ask whether they need an assistant for an upcoming team evaluation event.

If you have specific questions about the evaluation process or any of these materials, you’re encouraged to contact your team evaluator or Pet Partners for clarification. Our goal is to set you up for success.

Scoring the Exercises

Instructor Notes

Display slide 73, “Scoring the Exercises,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

The Pet Partners team evaluation is broken into two sections, the skills test and the aptitude test. All exercises are conducted as role-plays, like the visit scenarios that we’ve been doing today. You’ll role-play a handler bringing his or her therapy animal into a facility. In other words, you’ll be acting just as you would on a visit.

For each exercise, both you and your animal will receive a score: 2, 1, NR (Not Ready) or NA (Not Appropriate for Visiting). The team’s score for the exercise is the lower of the two individual scores. The overall score for the entire team evaluation, which is also known as the team qualification rating, is calculated based on the individual exercise scores.

If you or your animal receives a score of NR, your team evaluation is finished for the day, but you can try again after you’ve had an opportunity for further training and practice.

Here are some examples of behaviors that will result in a Not Ready score:

- The animal demonstrates excessive stress.
- The animal isn’t clean or appropriately groomed.
- The animal eliminates during testing.
- The animal jumps up on people or equipment.
The handler is dressed inappropriately. Appropriate dress includes closed toe shoes. Ultimately, you want to strive to appear professional yet comfortable for your visits. For more about appropriate attire, see Lesson 7.1 of your Handler Guide, starting on page 153.

The handler demonstrates excessive stress.

A handler, animal or team that receives a score of NA may not be re-evaluated for the Therapy Animal Program. However, if the handler alone received this score, the animal may still register if it successfully completes the team evaluation with a different handler. Similarly, if the animal alone received this score, the handler may still register if he or she successfully completes the team evaluation with a different animal.

Here are some examples of behaviors that will result in a Not Appropriate for Visiting score:

▲ The handler displays inappropriate conduct or is seen to kick, strike or otherwise roughly handle an animal at any time while he or she is on the testing grounds.
▲ The handler is under the influence of or smells of drugs or alcohol.
▲ The animal growls, threatens, snaps, bites, attacks or attempts to attack any person or another animal while it’s on the testing grounds.

As your animal’s best advocate and a proactive handler, if you ever feel as though your animal’s stress level is reaching a point where the animal’s behavior might become inappropriate, stop the team evaluation. Once your animal has demonstrated aggressive behavior, it may not pursue registration with Pet Partners in the future.

Expectations for the Handler

Instructor Notes
Display slide 74, “Expectations for the Handler,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

There are four areas that your team evaluator will be assessing you, the handler, in during your team evaluation.

PETS™ and YAYABA™
Good news! This is what we’ve been practicing all day. Be sure that you’re supporting your animal through touch, voice, presence and eye contact, and
that you’re being its best advocate by guiding interactions and setting boundaries during visits.

**Proactive Handling**  
We’ve talked a lot about this as well. Make sure that you’re thinking ahead to how your animal might respond and set it up for success, whether that means positioning it, supporting it or allowing others to interact with it in a certain way.

**Confident and Natural Interactions**  
This sounds easier than it really is. Remember, it’s a lot of work to manage your animal’s interactions while also interacting socially with clients. Your team evaluator will be looking for your ability to balance these two demands.

**Knowledge of Your Animal’s Body Language**  
To successfully advocate for your animal’s interests and proactively managing it during visit, you’ have to know what your animal is communicating to you. If you see that your animal is showing signs of stress, unease or anxiety, your team evaluator will expect you to respond accordingly. If you don’t respond, your team evaluator will assume that you didn’t notice your animal’s discomfort.

**Expectations for the Animal**

**Instructor Notes**

Display slide 75, “Expectations for the Animal,” in the PowerPoint presentation.

There are also four areas that your team evaluator will be assessing your animal in during your team evaluation.

**Responsiveness to the Handler**  
Based on our previous discussion of reliable, predictable and controllable, it’s expected that your animal will follow your cues, thus demonstrating that it’s controllable.

**Connection With the Handler**  
The team evaluator will be looking to see that your animal isn’t just responsive to your cues, but that it remains aware of you and looks to you for support. A therapy animal shouldn’t be more interested in the environment than it is in the handler or the client that it’s visiting.
Body Language
Your team evaluator will be looking for body language that communicates a relaxed, content and confident state. If your team evaluator is concerned that your animal is becoming stressed, and that your efforts to support your animal aren’t helping it recover, your animal will receive a score of NR, ending the team evaluation for the day.

Interest in Therapy Work
An ideal therapy animal is one that enjoys and seeks out interactions with clients, as appropriate for its species. So although an animal might have amazing obedience skills, it’s important that it also have the desire for therapy animal visits. Your team evaluator will be watching to see how your animal accepts these interactions with strangers.

If you must constantly cajole your animal into a visit, it might not be as interested in therapy work as you are. As our animal’s best advocates, let’s respect our animals’ choices when we can.

The Score Sheet
I have a sample score sheet that you can follow along with during our mock team evaluation. You’ll see each of these core competencies for handlers and animals reflected on it. If you want, you’re welcome to make notes and score the team, based on what you see during the demo. Think of this as another skill spotting exercise.

When you’re actually evaluated, your team evaluator will give you your score sheets, and you’ll submit those as part of your registration materials.

Scores are valid for only 90 days from the date of your team evaluation; therefore, I recommend that you promptly complete the process online, on the Pet Partners website. If too much time passes, you might need to be re-evaluated.
Mock Team Evaluation

Instructor Notes

The goal of this demonstration is to allow prospective handlers to see an entire team evaluation, so that they have a sense of what to expect. We recommend that a licensed team evaluator complete the mock team evaluation to promote consistency.

If you as an instructor aren’t also a team evaluator, consider inviting a local team evaluator to the end of your workshop, along with the necessary volunteers and a team that’s willing to be the demonstration team. We recommend that you use a seasoned team and volunteers to make the demo as quick and efficient as possible. Then, after the mock team evaluation has been completed and the team leaves the room, the students can ask questions or make comments.

All demonstration teams should have dogs that walk during all exercises, because this reflects the vast majority of registered teams. During the discussion period after the demonstration, you can answer questions about carried dogs or other species, as needed.

Plan to allot 30 minutes for the mock team evaluation and another 10–15 minutes afterward for questions and discussion. Out of respect, be sure to thank the demonstration team as a class, and let them leave the room before you begin the discussion session.

Although strongly preferred, if you are unable to conduct a mock evaluation, videos may be used as a substitute. See the Handler Workshop Materials in the Resource Library.

This will be our final activity for the day. While we set up the room for the demo team evaluation, go check out the results of the “Yes Sir, that’s My Baby” activity. In addition, take a few moments to add to your Personal Action Plan, making note of anything that you plan to work on before you’re evaluated.

Demo Team Evaluation Setup, Personal Action Plan and Conclusion of “Yes Sir, That’s My Baby” Game

Display slide 76 in the PowerPoint presentation.

While you’re setting up the furniture as needed to make room for the demo team evaluation:

- Invite students to review their Personal Action Plan and add any new ideas that they have to it.
- Conclude the “Yes Sir, That’s My Baby” activity.
As we begin our demo team evaluation, I’d like to make sure that it will be as similar as possible to a real team evaluation. Let’s not interrupt or comment during the exercises. After we’ve thanked our demonstration team and they’ve left the room, we can discuss the team evaluation and answer any questions that you have.

Wrapping Up

Instructor Notes

After the demo team evaluation has been completed, allow 10–15 minutes for discussion about what the class just witnessed. This can include discussion of how the team evaluator would have scored the team and why. Allow time for questions and answers. Encourage students to go to the Resource Library to access the Evaluation Overview sheets that are specific to their animal (carried dogs and all other species).

This brings our day together to a close. A few reminders before you leave:

► You’ll receive an email reminding you to complete a workshop evaluation form online in the Training Center.
► Printable Course Certificates are available in the Training Center.
► The online assessment for what we covered in class today is available in the Training Center. For workshops that are held starting July 1, 2017, this assessment is mandatory before you can register.
► Be sure to read your Handler Guide. It’s a great resource!
► Don’t forget to take your animal photo home with you.

Thank you all for spending your day with me learning about the Therapy Animal Program and what it takes to become a therapy animal team!

I appreciate everyone’s participation during class and look forward to having you join me as a Pet Partners volunteer.
Additional Visit Scenarios

If you find that you have extra time during a workshop, you can add an additional visit scenario to give your students more role-play practice.

Visit Scenario 7

Describe the Scenario
For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team waiting for an elevator to go up a floor to make some visits. The team will meet someone who’s also waiting for the elevator and who doesn’t think that dogs should be allowed in a hospital.

Handling Tip
Remember, not everyone is comfortable around animals. Maybe they have allergies, maybe they don’t have a lot of experience with a certain species or breed, maybe animals seem out of place in a facility to them, or maybe they’re just having a bad day. Good therapy animal handlers are respectful of other people’s preferences when it comes to interacting with their animal.

Identify the Target Skill
We’re going to be spotting any instance of PETS™ and YAYABA™.

Identify Your Volunteers
➤ Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
➤ Who would like to volunteer to be the other person who’s waiting for the elevator?
➤ Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?

Conduct the Role-Play

Debrief
➤ Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but also solicit feedback about how the therapy animal was positioned and how the handler responded to the person’s comments.
➤ Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
➤ How did the team inspire confidence?
Visit Scenario 8

Describe the Scenario
For this scenario, we’re going to role-play a therapy animal team entering the room of a client with dementia, who likes animals but can sometimes get confused.

Handling Tip
Often, you won’t know anything about the people that you’re going to visit. They might have a condition that impairs their cognitive ability, or they might be taking medications that confuse them. Regardless, you can always go through all three parts of a visit and employ active listening.

Identify the Target Skill
We’re going to be spotting any instance of PETS™ and YAYABA™.

Identify Your Volunteers
► Who would like to volunteer to be the handler?
► Who would like to volunteer to be the client who has some confusion? (Alternatively, you or your assistant can play this role.)
► Who would like to volunteer to skill spot for PETS™ and YAYABA™?

Conduct the Role-Play

Debrief
► Ask the class to give examples of things that the handler did well. This should include PETS™ and YAYABA™, but also solicit feedback about how the handler performed the approach, interaction and closing, and also how he or she used active listening if appropriate.
► Ask the volunteer who role-played the handler what the hardest part was for him or her.
► How did the team inspire confidence?
PART 3

Mini Workshops
Volunteering With Your Pet

About the Format
The following curriculum is written in a narrative form that aligns with specific slides of the supporting PowerPoint presentation. You can treat these notes as a loose script, but there’s no expectation that you’ll read or recite them word for word. Instructors are empowered to use their own word choices and speak in their own style, as long as the content is consistent with the published speaker notes and curriculum.

Remember, if you share stories about visits that you’ve made, your stories must preserve the privacy of clients and facilities.

About the Schedule
All mini workshops are designed to be no longer than 2 hours, including time for questions and answers as well as an optional personalization.

About Personalization
Pet Partners recognizes there can be unique differences and opportunities in specific communities. Instructors are welcome to add up to 30 minutes at the end of this presentation to address unique content that’s relevant to the topic. Examples might include:

➤ A presentation about a community partner and the benefits of belonging to this group.
➤ An introduction to the hosting facility and what it’s like to volunteer there as a Pet Partners team.
➤ A species-specific presentation to support some of our less common species, such as pocket pets.
Supplies

Go to the Resource Library on the Pet Partners website, and use the keyword “workshop materials” to search for all supporting materials.

Required Supplies

- Computer loaded with Pet Partners PowerPoint (PPT) presentation, and a projector

There are no other necessary supplies; however, if you’re adding a 30-minute additional presentation, you can hand out relevant materials, such as a flier for the community partner or facility or the Evaluation Overview sheets for a specific species.

PowerPoint Script

This script can also be found embedded in the speaker notes within the PowerPoint presentation. Instructor notes boxes are used to suggest places where a personal story might augment the presentation.

Slide 1 – Volunteering With Your Pet

Welcome!

This presentation is designed to orient you to the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program as a way of volunteering with your pet in your community. We’ll cover requirements and the process for registering with Pet Partners. If any of you who decide that volunteering with your animal isn’t a good fit for you or your animal, — we’ll also discuss other ways that you can get involved.

Pet Partners is a national volunteer organization with more than 15,000 therapy animal teams throughout all 50 U.S. states as well as Canada. Our mission is to improve human health and well-being through the power of the human-animal bond (HAB).
Instructor Notes
Introduce yourself. Share your role with Pet Partners (handler, instructor or team evaluator), some information about your animal teammate (name and species), how long you and your animal have been visiting as a Pet Partners team, examples of places that you visit or even a favorite story about one of your visits.

Slide 2 – Goals for this Session

Therapy animal teams come in all shapes and sizes, and they visit in many different settings. Today, we'll address what makes a good therapy animal team — not just the animal but you, the handler, as well.

Pet Partners’ reputation as the gold standard among therapy animal organizations is due to the rigorous standards that we have for both our animals and our handlers. You'll learn about these requirements, as well as what you'll need to do to actually complete the registration process and become a Pet Partners therapy animal team.

Not every animal will enjoy therapy work. This session will help you decide whether it’s time to start the process of becoming a Pet Partners therapy animal team or, if it isn’t, how you can support the Therapy Animal Program in other ways.

Slide 3 – Places Therapy Animal Teams Visit

Pet Partners teams visit a wide range of client types in a variety of locations.

All of these settings can be extremely rewarding, but the overarching consideration is what setting will be the best match for you and your animal. A central theme at Pet Partners — one that you’ll hear again and again — is “always be your animal’s best advocate.” Your job as a handler is to set everyone up for success. This includes your animal and the clients that you’re interacting with.

Instructor Notes
If you have a personal story to share about where you visit, and why you and your animal like to visit there, share it!
Slide 4 – Types of Therapy Animal Visits

Some visits are social in nature. They could be just a chance to make conversation, cheer someone up, reduce his or her stress, or provide a welcome distraction.

Other visits are more structured. For example, if a team works with a physical therapist, the client might brush the dog as an exercise.

Reading programs that incorporate animals are popular in schools and libraries. Here, kids practice reading aloud to animals, who are generally good listeners and never correct your pronunciation. Pet Partners offers handlers the option to enroll in the Read With Me program, which provides reading-specific support and education.

Additionally, colleges are embracing the idea of stress relief events during finals week, where teams are invited to provide study breaks.

Ultimately, as a registered Pet Partners team, you can choose to participate in any kind of visit, as long as it’s the right fit for both you and your animal.

Slide 5 – Pet Partners Accepted Species

Pet Partners registers nine species of animals for therapy work. The most popularly animals to register are dogs, cats and horses.

Wild or exotic animals, such as snakes, ferrets and lizards, aren’t eligible for registration as therapy animals. In addition, domesticated farm animals, such as chickens, ducks and goats, aren’t currently eligible. Without research to document their behavior over time, we can’t evaluate their predictability and reaction to stress.

A dog of any breed or mix of domesticated breeds can participate, provided that its presence doesn’t violate local animal control laws. However, wolf and coyote hybrids aren’t permitted.

Slide 6 – Is My Animal Eligible?

Let’s review these other eligibility requirements to determine whether your animal can join the Therapy Animal Program!

- Pocket pets (rabbits, guinea pigs and rats) must be at least 6 months old.
  All other animals must be at least 1 year old.
- Birds must have lived in the owner’s home for at least 1 year. All other animals must have lived with the owner for at least 6 months.
Part 3: Mini Workshops
Volunteering With Your Pet

▶ Animals must be reliably house-trained. For infection control purposes, waste collection devices that are worn by the animal aren’t considered acceptable equipment, regardless of whether visits occur indoors or outdoors. The one exception to this policy is that birds may wear flight suits.

▶ All animals must be on a leash at all times. This includes small animals such as birds, rabbits, guinea pigs and rats.

▶ Animals may not be fed a raw protein diet, and animals that have a history of aggression toward people or other animals aren’t eligible to participate. This includes animals that have been trained for bite work, such as Schutzhund.

▶ For the safety of your animal and the people that you visit, your animal should be in good health and free of internal and external parasites. Animals may not be on antibiotics, antifungals or immunosuppressive medications when they’re evaluated or visit; however, after they’ve completed the course of medication, they’re welcome to participate.

If your animal meets these requirements and has basic obedience skills that are appropriate to its species, this might be a good fit for you.

It’s possible to volunteer with an animal that isn’t your own. The requirements for animals remain the same, and you must have the animal owner’s permission.

Slide 7 – Successful Therapy Animals

In addition to enjoying people, good therapy animals accept interactions in a pleasant, forgiving or welcoming manner, as opposed to just tolerating them.

They demonstrate species-appropriate body language that indicates interest and relaxation. For example, for a dog, this body language includes friendly tail wagging, a soft body and a relaxed face.

Additionally, they reliably respond to their handler’s cues, even if there are distractions. If your animal looks to you when it’s unsure or nervous, or when it needs guidance, you have a strong bond that’s an important component of being a therapy animal team.

Regarding obedience, Pet Partners doesn’t provide training classes. Handlers must take a handler workshop or course, which will be discussed a little later, but it’s up to each handler to determine how to develop basic obedience skills, whether that’s on your own at home, at a local animal training facility or in some other way.
Basic obedience and good manners means that the animal:

- Can walk on a loose leash near its handler.
- Responds reliably to common commands that are appropriate to its species, such as, for dogs, “Sit,” “Down,” “Stay,” “Come” and “Leave it.”
- Doesn’t jump up on people or equipment/furniture.
- Doesn’t vocalize inappropriately and can be stopped by the handler. (Aggressive barking is never acceptable.)
- Is reliably housebroken.
- Takes treats nicely.
- Doesn’t mouth or lick people during interactions.
- Doesn’t become overly rambunctious when it’s petted.
- Can walk past other animals without displaying aggression or excessive fear.
- Doesn’t demonstrate “nosey” or intrusive behavior, such as begging for treats, exuberantly sniffing strangers and sticking its nose into bags, purses, wastebaskets, and so on.

Remember that, by definition, a therapy animal needs to enjoy interacting with strangers, which includes being petted, touched and handled — sometimes awkwardly. As the handler, you will do what you can to ensure that people know how best to pet your animal, but therapy animals are often a little forgiving and tolerant of differences.

Safety is always a priority, for both your animal and the clients that you meet. It’s critical that a therapy animal not have a history of aggression toward people or animals.

### Slide 8 – Successful Handlers

It’s easy for people to focus on what the animal needs in order to be a therapy animal, but don’t overlook your requirements as the handler. Pet Partners volunteers are professional in their interactions with clients and facility staff, as well as with fellow volunteers. Remember, you will be interacting with strangers too! You’ll need to be able to respond gracefully to a variety of situations that could arise.
The primary role of the handler is to be the animal’s “guardian.” You are your animal’s best advocate. Part of this is being able to understand what your animal’s strengths and weaknesses are. If your animal is tempted by food, you’ll want to be able to redirect any possible interest before it becomes an issue. We call this proactive handling.

As your animal’s best advocate, you’ll be responsible for making decisions about what is and isn’t appropriate during a visit. When you take the Pet Partners Handler Course, you’ll hear this referred to as YAYABA™, and it will come up a lot. Animal welfare is a priority at Pet Partners, so always make decisions based on what’s best for your animal, not just for yourself or the clients that you’re visiting.

It will be your job to make sure that your animal is in good health and properly groomed, and that your visits are consistent with Pet Partners best practices. In this way, you’ll help ensure a safe and effective visit for everyone.

Slide 9 – Therapy Animal Teams are Volunteers

Pet Partners is a volunteer organization. All therapy animal handlers, licensed instructors and team evaluators are volunteers in their community who are committed to promoting animal-assisted interactions (AAI).

After you’re registered, you’ll be able to approach facilities in your own community and offer to volunteer as a therapy animal team.

In addition to meeting all the requirements for the Therapy Animal Program, you’ll need to follow all the volunteer requirements of the facility where you volunteer. This might include completing a volunteer application and background check, meeting specific health requirements and completing additional training or orientation.
Maybe you already have an idea of where you’d like to visit; but if you don’t, the Pet Partners Volunteer Center has a searchable listing of volunteer opportunities to get you started.

**Slide 10 – The Commitment**

As a Pet Partners volunteer, it’s up to you to decide where and how often you’d like to volunteer. Some teams visit once a week or more, whereas other teams visit less frequently.

Although visits must never exceed 2 hours a day, remember that you’ll spend time preparing for your visit. This includes bathing and grooming your animal before each visit.

Also, you’ll want to reserve some time after each visit to unwind with your animal and thank it for a job well done, whether that involves playing or just cuddling.

**Instructor Notes**

If you’d like to share the process that you go through when you visit with your animal, add it here.

Although therapy animal work takes a real commitment, it’s also unbelievably rewarding.

**Instructor Notes**

If you have a story to share about your most rewarding visit, add it here.

**Slide 11 – How to Become a Pet Partners Therapy Animal Team**

The registration process for Pet Partners takes place online. After you create your free account, you can get started on your registration and also explore resources that are available to help you prepare.

You’ll then get training for the human end of the leash, either online or at a workshop.
Because animals need to be healthy in order to register and visit, you’ll ask your veterinarian to complete a form about your animal’s health, which you’ll then submit to Pet Partners.

The final step is to successfully pass your team evaluation.

After you’ve completed all these steps, you’ll submit your materials to Pet Partners. After your materials are approved, you’ll receive a link to pay your registration fee, and you’ll also receive your acceptance letter.

Slide 12 – Step 1: Get Started Online

The Volunteer Center is your one-stop shop for all materials that support the Therapy Animal Program. If you haven’t already created a free account, you’ll need to do this to begin the registration process.

In addition to submitting your registration through the online system, you can access the Resource Library for a variety of supporting materials, from videos to handouts, that will help you prepare for your team evaluation and register with Pet Partners.

After you’re registered, you’ll be able to search for volunteer opportunities in the Volunteer Center.

Slide 13 – Step 2: Handler Training

There can be something truly magical about the interactions between humans and animals. However, there’s actually a lot that you need to know to successfully achieve that magical moment.

In the Pet Partners handler training, handlers learn the skills that are needed to visit safely, as well as what to expect from their team evaluation, so that they can prepare for success. You’ll also become oriented with policies and procedures that you’ll be responsible for following.

Successful completion of this course, in either an instructor-led or an online format, is required for registration as a therapy animal team. The overview session that you’re attending today is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to learning about how to become a handler.
Slide 14 – Step 3: Animal Health Screening

At Pet Partners, the health and safety of your animal are important to us. Before you can participate in the Therapy Animal Program, your veterinarian must sign the Animal Health Screening Form.

To participate, your animal should be in good health and must not currently be taking any antibiotics, antifungals or immunosuppressive medications. If you’re unsure whether a medication that your animal is taking falls into one of these categories, contact Pet Partners directly for assistance.

The facilities where you’ll be visiting will want to ensure that your animal won’t pose a risk to any of their clients, so your animal should be free of internal and external parasites. Additionally, dogs, cats, horses, llamas/alpacas and pigs must be vaccinated against rabies.

Slide 15 – Step 4: Evaluation

Team evaluations are individual sessions between the prospective team and a licensed Pet Partners team evaluator. They typically last about 45 minutes and resemble a role-play of a visit. As a team, you’ll be tested on your basic skills, such as obedience, and your aptitude for therapy work through simulations of common scenarios that are encountered during visits with clients.

During the team evaluation, we’ll be assessing how well the handler interprets and manages the animal’s behavior, and how well the animal responds to the handler. The primary consideration is whether the animal is under control at all times and the team inspires confidence in the people that it interacts with.

Depending on your team’s performance, you can get one of two passing scores on your team evaluation: Predictable or Complex. This score is also known as your team qualification rating.

Complex teams are better suited to more dynamic situations where there’s a higher level of activity and less staff involvement. Predictable teams visit in environments where the level of activity is appropriate for the team’s ability level. Regardless of their team evaluation rating, all teams benefit the clients that they visit.
At no time during the team evaluation will your animal be put in a situation that’s dangerous. The Pet Partners team evaluators who conduct the team evaluations are trained by Pet Partners and know that the well-being of animals comes first, no matter what. At no point will animals be hurt or intentionally frightened. As your animal’s best advocate, if you’re ever concerned that your animal is being pushed too far, you can always end the team evaluation for the day and try again in the future.

Slide 16 – Complete You Registration

The online registration is designed so that you can come back every time that you complete a step in the process.

After you’ve completed all the steps and provided the necessary information to Pet Partners, you can submit your registration.

After your registration has been submitted, it will be reviewed by Pet Partners. When everything is accepted, you’ll be invited to pay your registration fee online. You’ll then receive a photo ID badge with your ID number and expiration date, as well as an acceptance letter.

Teams must renew with Pet Partners every 2 years. Renewal requires a re-evaluation of your team.

Slide 17 – Benefits of Registration with Pet Partners

The benefits of becoming a registered therapy animal team include:

- $2 million of primary liability insurance when you’re volunteering.
- An ID badge for the handler and a collar tag for the animal.
- Access to continuing education courses that help you be more effective when you visit clients.
- Referral to facilities that are searching for therapy animal teams.
- A subscription to Pet Partners’ *Interactions* magazine.
- Access to licensed team evaluators and instructors as local resources.
- Support from the Pet Partners office.
- The satisfaction that comes from helping people in need in your own community!

The greatest benefit is knowing that you’re part of a highly esteemed program that set the standard for incorporating animals in medical care.
Volunteering without Your Pet

Not all people and animals are a good fit for visiting clients as a therapy animal team. If you’re passionate about this work and want to help in other ways, you might consider volunteering without an animal.

You’ll notice that a few of these options are related to Pet Partners team evaluation events. These events are a cornerstone to growing the Therapy Animal Program. After all, without space to use or volunteers to help at these events, we can’t effectively and efficiently license new teams or re-license existing teams. If your place of work might be willing to host an event, it would be a tangible benefit to your community and those who are pursuing registration.

If there’s a community partner in your area, it can often use additional help. Volunteers without an animal who are with a community partner can register as Pet Partners ambassadors.

Another fun way to support therapy animal work is to participate in a celebration of National Therapy Animal Day. Treats and Sweets is a bake sale–style fundraiser that Pet Partners hosts every spring. If you like to bake, you can compete for prizes and recognition for fundraising on behalf of Pet Partners.

Instructor Notes

This is the final slide. Offer to take questions and thank everyone for attending.

If you’re adding a personalized 30-minute portion, you can start that section now.

More mini workshops will be released in 2017!