AAA to AAT: Partnering in Professional Contexts

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- Occupational Therapist
- Private Practice: Dogwood Therapy Services
- Assistance Dog Trainer
- President Animal Assisted Intervention International
- Fellow, American Occupational Therapy Association
- Member International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: Specialties Division
- Governors Commission on Disability Task Force
- International Workshops: AAI, Program Development, Disability............
What is Occupational Therapy?

- Occupational Therapy (OT) is a healthcare field that works with people with disabilities resulting from birth, injury, illness or aging. It is a holistic, person centered intervention process that focuses on strategies to improve a person’s ability to participate in any activity that is meaningful to them.

- Occupational Therapists use a knowledge base of neurology, anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, [human] development, psychology, psychosocial development, task [and biomechanical] analysis and [use a variety of] therapeutic techniques to work with people of all ages.
Terminology References
Animal Assisted Activities

• Teams are evaluated and registered to volunteer

• AVERAGE visit is Recreational/Socialization

• Has therapeutic value, but no formal treatment goals

• Enhance quality of life (patients and staff!)

• Role may change if working within AAT or AAE (in conjunction with a licensed/degreed healthcare or human service provider)
Animal Assisted Therapy

- Directed/delivered by licensed or degreed healthcare/human service professional within scope of practice
- Working on pre-established intervention goals such as physical, cognitive, psychosocial.....
- Process is documented and evaluated
- Potential participants are carefully screened
Animal Assisted Education

- Directed/delivered by licensed or degreed educational professional
- Working on pre-established educational goals
- Process is documented and evaluated as part of the educational plan
- Potential student participants are carefully screened
Animal Support

- Advocates for and supports the dog during any type activity (play or work!)
- Evaluates fit of dog, handler, population, environment, activities, etc.
- Teaches/Uses positive reinforcement dog training and handling techniques
- Person ensures that dog is in good health and that dogs needs are met at all times
- Facilitates fair scheduling for dogs range of skills and job duties
Professionals: AAI Implementation Methods

1. Contact registered volunteer visiting human-animal team from a reputable organization.
   Ex: Pet Partners

2. Train your own dog for basic and intermediate skills.
   Ex: Dogwood or Private Trainers

3. Apply for a professionally trained dog from a reputable organization/trainer.
   Ex: Assistance Dogs International Member Organizations also Train Dogs for Therapists/ Facilities
Why Partner with Professionals?

- Handling an animal may be a distraction
- Lack of rest area for breaks
- Managing dogs needs throughout the day
- Therapists’ dog not suited for AAT
- Therapist do not able to multi-task
Why Professionals Need Pet Partner Teams

- $2M comprehensive general liability for VOLUNTEERS
- Handlers have education in confidentiality, infection control, animal handling best practices
- Teams are re-evaluated every two years
- Evaluation includes non-aggression standards
- Standards for grooming, infection control, & hand hygiene
- 9 different species!
What’s the Difference?

• Animals may work in closer proxemics to participants
• Animals may work under the direction of participants
• Animals may be asked to participate in more structured activities
• Interactions may take much longer than a less structured activity
• Challenges of working with people with physical, cognitive or psychiatric disabilities
  • Motor planning/Reflexes
  • Comprehension
  • Self-esteem/self-concept........
What’s the Difference?

- Training MAY be different. AAT and AAE train dogs to work with/for clients rather than maintaining focus on handler
- Work with one team for an entire hour, rather than moving throughout facility
- More likely to encounter allergies (food, latex, etc.)
- More likely to encounter people who may not be appropriate to engage
- More likely to work off leash (proxemics, anxiety, etc. on the part of participant)
- Many professionals incorporate treats/food: care of others
Training Tips

• A “Place”
• Careful Intro to Equipment
• People on Ground
• Children
Make Note!!!

• Emergency/Safety Plans

• Emergency cue’s

• Practice, Practice, Practice & Practice some more!
Screening Clients:

- Dog Diet factors
- Zoophobia
- Allergies/asthma
- Immunodeficiency
- Respiratory disorders
- Open wounds/burns
- Zoonosis
- Cultural/Religious
- History with Animals
  - Abuse
  - Neglect
  - Separation
Support for Pre-Screening

- 8 year old child hung the family dog to see what dead looked like.
- 2 year old and 4 year old sibling were scuffling over who could hold the pet bunny and got in a tug of war situation.
- 9 year old force fed wild lizards fire ants using tweezers (killed numerous lizards this way).
- Children abused by adult using the animal as a pawn.
Screening Recommendations for Professionals

- Regular documentation/general intake
- Asking youth About Their Relationships with Animals (on-line)
- The Pet Bonding Scale (on-line)
- Index of Empathy (on-line)
- Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale
- Cooper-Smith Measure of Self Esteem
The activities presented range from beginner to advanced skill level.

Consult a dog trainer if you are interested in activities beyond your dog’s or your skill level.
What does the activity facilitate?

How do you grade it?

How do you measure it?

PRECAUTIONS......

Client and dog

What does dog need to be trained for?
What does the activity facilitate?

How do you grade it?

How do you measure it?

PRECAUTIONS......

Client and dog

What does dog need to be trained for?
Observe the skills in the:

- Therapist/Handler
- Client (to participate in the activity)
- Dog
Case Studies.....

• What does the activity facilitate?
• How do you grade it?
• How do you measure it?
• PRECAUTIONS...... client & dog
• What does dog need to be trained for?
Questions & Ideas

Thank you for coming!
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