

Pet Partners Handler Guide

Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program



Pet Partners™
Sharing the love of therapy animals

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Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program

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Foreword

It is a great privilege to be asked to write the foreword for this Pet Partners Handler Guide. As an individual who is passionate about the value of human-animal interactions and specifically animal-assisted interventions, I feel that the manual you are about to review will be tremendously helpful in your role as a Pet Partner. It is incumbent on you to not only demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment to AAI, but also to the quality of interactions you will be providing with your therapy animal to those you serve.

The Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program is based on what many of us intuitively know and that science is now demonstrating more clearly: *that animals are good for our well-being and those interactions can positively influence our physical, emotional, and psychological lives*. As the field of animal-assisted interventions grows and more and more pet owners become interested in sharing their animal with those that can benefit from the interactions, it's critical that we do not lose sight of the fact that the positive outcomes of therapy animal interactions should not come at a cost to our animals. Engaging in therapy work is hard for both the humans and the animals that provide the service. Since we are asking the animal to do this work with us, we must accept responsibility for their welfare, well-being, and safety, so they are properly trained and looked after while working with their clients. The focus this manual has on best practices and safety addresses this essential requirement of preparing to become a dynamic therapy animal team.

I have had the good fortune to have incorporated animals as part of my work with children since 1973. At that time there was very little in the way of resources to guide animal-assisted interventions. However, I learned very quickly that it was my moral responsibility to assure the well-being of my animals. I became aware of my responsibility to provide my animals with the support they needed to best prepare them for their roles. Over the years I have realized that my animals have looked to me to help guide them effectively as they worked with children. As such, I have taken the necessary time to develop our skills so we can work seamlessly and safely with each other. Today, thanks to Pet Partners and their commitment to keeping the highest standards for therapy animal teams, handlers have access to materials such as this publication that set up everyone—the animal, the client, and the handler—for success.

Wishing you all the best in your new work as a Pet Partners handler.

Aubrey H. Fine
Licensed Psychologist
Professor, Department of Education, CA Poly State University, Pomona, CA

UNIT 1

Discovering Therapy Animal Work



LESSON 1.1

The Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program

An Unforgettable Journey...

While visiting in the transitional care unit of a large hospital, a therapy animal handler entered a three-bed room with her therapy dog Shana, a golden retriever. She noticed that one of the three patients occupying the room had the privacy curtain completely drawn around the bed. The handler had been told that this patient didn't want a visit, so she finished chatting with the other two women in the room and prepared to leave.

From behind the curtain, a dry voice feebly called, "Could you come here, please?"

The handler moved closer to the curtained area and said, "Can I help you?"

"Would you mind visiting me too?" the woman asked, hesitating between each word.

The handler gingerly pulled the curtain back, not quite sure what to expect. She gasped internally and drew back a little when she saw the woman; her face was disfigured and covered with red sores. Shana, however, without hesitation, trotted right up to the woman, who then sat up in bed and reached out to the dog. They needed no introduction.

The patient stroked Shana for several minutes, gazing into her eyes. No words were exchanged. Finally, she turned to the handler and, with tears cascading down her face, said, "Thank you for stopping by. This dog has made my day."

Shana and her handler were the only visitors that this woman allowed during her hospital stay, because she was worried that people would be repelled by her appearance. Shana didn't care what the patient looked like, though: she just wanted to share her unconditional love.

This is just one of many documented experiences from a therapy animal team that belongs to the large Pet Partners family. You too can make a difference in someone's day by sharing your animal. That's what the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program is all about. The Pet Partners Handler Course is just the beginning of a journey that's limited only by the amount that you're willing to invest in it. There's much to learn, and it takes hard work, discipline, dedication, and an ongoing commitment to making yourself and your animal the best team that you can be.

Compassion is to suffer with, to have empathy with, and this includes joy and celebration as well as sorrow. It works from a strength born out of a shared weakness and an awareness of the mutuality of us all. It's the bond between us and also with our animals, and it includes grieving and tasting salt with our fellow men and women.

It's a way of life, the basis of community.

(Յիտօ) հսկողական աշխատանքով, ցածր ծախսով, դաժնիքի փոխարեն՝ Բեթ Սուսուդի կողմից ազդեցություն ունեցող համայնական համայնական ծրագրի միջոցով, որի նպատակն է «Եղև և Կաթնմանկությանը բժշկական առևտրի առ օգնությունը միջոցառել օգնությունը առ ցածր ծախսով, որի նպատակն է 536-ը առ ցածր փողով հսկողական»

Who Is Pet Partners?

Pet Partners is the most prestigious nonprofit organization registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams providing animal-assisted interventions.

Pet Partners' curriculum for handlers, volunteer instructors, and team evaluators is the gold standard in the field training volunteers to the highest professional standards. Additionally, Pet Partners offers superior risk management and industry safety standards, continuing education, assessment, and re-registration for teams.

Pet Partners was founded in 1977 under the name Delta Society. Delta Society's stated mission was to improve human health through service and therapy animals.

In February 2012, Delta Society changed its name to Pet Partners. After conducting extensive market research, the Board of Directors concluded that we could more successfully raise awareness and generate support under a name that better conveys who we are, what we do and how we help people.

Previously, "Pet Partners" had been used as the name of Delta Society's therapy animal program. However, the elevation of the program name to the organization name doesn't mean that we have narrowed our focus. Rather, the name Pet Partners reflects a new evolution in the role that pets—and animals in general—play in our lives.

Pet Partners' Mission

To improve human health and well-being through the human-animal bond

Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our species are diverse; our volunteers should be also. At Pet Partners, our volunteers serve diverse populations of people with any of the nine types of animals we register. We are committed to creating a volunteer force that is more representative of the populations we serve. We welcome unique perspectives and experiences in terms of national origin, culture, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, race, color, sex, gender identity and expression, education, age, languages spoken, veteran status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and beliefs, which help us strengthen our impact.

¹ L. M. Hines and L. K. Bustad, "Historical Perspectives on Human-Animal Interactions," *National Forum* 66 (1986): 4–6.

The Therapy Animal Program

The Therapy Animal Program is a service program of Pet Partners. Registered therapy animal teams bring the physical and emotional benefits of human-animal interaction to people in a variety of settings. The requirements that are set by this program assure health and human service providers that the volunteers who enter their facilities are well-prepared, and that the animals have been carefully screened.

Requirements for Pet Partners Registration

1. Create a Volunteer Center account.
2. Complete the Pet Partners handler course.
3. Do the animal health screening.
4. Pass the team evaluation.
5. Submit materials and payment.

1. Create a Volunteer Center Account

The Pet Partners Volunteer Center is the hub for Therapy Animal Program. By creating an account, you will have access to the online registration process, as well as the Resource Library where you will find supporting materials as you prepare for your team evaluation.

2. Complete the Pet Partners Handler Course

The Pet Partners Handler Course can be completed either online or through an in-person workshop that's taught by a Pet Partners licensed instructor. Completion of the course fulfills the first of the training requirements for becoming a Therapy Animal Program volunteer.

The goal of this course is to reinforce the standards of professionalism for the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI), helping them become widely recognized as valuable forms of treatment.

3. Do the Animal Health Screening

All animals that participate in AAI must be healthy. Your veterinarian must complete the Animal Health Screening Form, which is part of the team registration application. This form is considered valid within 12 months of the veterinarian's exam.

4. Pass the Team Evaluation

All handler-animal teams must pass the team evaluation, which consists of the Pet Partners Skills Test (PPST) and the Pet Partners Aptitude Test (PPAT). These must be administered by a Pet Partners licensed team evaluator. (See Lesson 4.5 for a detailed description of these tests.) For details on the exercises for each species, search for “evaluation overview” in the Resource Library within the Volunteer Center. Evaluation scores are valid for 90 days.

5. Submit Materials and Payment

Applications to become a therapy animal team are submitted online through the Volunteer Center. Once your materials have been reviewed and approved, you will be invited to make your registration payment. The registration fee is for your two-year registration period.

Registration vs. Certification

There is a distinction between registration and certification. Therapy animal teams are *registered*, not certified. Certification implies that an independent third party has assessed an individual's mastery of knowledge and skills. For example, a doctor is certified by a Board of Medicine, not the medical school where they completed their education. At this time, no independent certifying bodies for therapy animals exist.

Benefits of Registration

After you and your animal register as a team, you will receive the following benefits:

- ▶ Coverage, as a volunteer, under Pet Partners' commercial general liability insurance (CGLI) policy.
- ▶ Access to resources and continuing education that help support you in your therapy animal team visits.
- ▶ Access to the Volunteer Opportunities database, which you can search based on your ZIP code.
- ▶ The possibility of being a contact for local or national media.
- ▶ Possible opportunities to take part in research studies.

We give dogs time we can spare, space we can spare, and love we can spare. And in return, dogs give us their all. It's the best deal Man has ever made.

— M. FACKLAM

LESSON 1.2

Animal-Assisted Interventions

AAI Defined

When you and your animal visit as a therapy animal team, you are participating in the larger field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI). Animal-assisted interventions are goal oriented and structured interventions that intentionally incorporate animals in health, education, and human service for the purpose of therapeutic gains and improved health and wellness.

Animal-assisted therapy (AAT), animal-assisted education (AAE), and animal-assisted activities (AAA) are all forms of animal-assisted interventions. In all these interventions, the animal may be part of a volunteer therapy animal team working under the direction of a professional or an animal that belongs to the professional.

Although AAI, AAA, AAT, and AAE are the preferred terms, you might also hear the terms “pet-facilitated therapy” and “animal-facilitated therapy.” The term “pet therapy” should be avoided, however, because it’s inaccurate and misleading. This term was widely used several decades ago to refer to animal training programs. By contrast, the currently preferred terms suggest that the animal acts as a motivating force to enhance the treatment that’s provided by a well-trained person.

*Until one has loved
an animal a part of
one’s soul remains
unawakened.*

— ANATOLE FRANCE

What Is AAA?

Animal-assisted activities provide opportunities for motivational, educational and/or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life. These activities are delivered in a variety of environments by a specially trained professional, paraprofessional and/or volunteer, in association with animals that meet specific criteria for suitability.

Key Features of AAA

- ▶ Specific treatment goals aren't planned for each visit.
- ▶ Volunteers and treatment providers aren't required to take detailed notes or record the results of a visit.
- ▶ The visit content is spontaneous and might last only a few minutes.

Examples of AAA

- ▶ Volunteers and their animals visit residents in a nursing home once a month. The meet-and-greet session occurs as a large group activity, with facility staff providing some direction and assistance. The volunteer group facilitator keeps an informal log about which residents were visited.
- ▶ A woman brings her dog to a children's long-term care facility to play with residents. Although the staff is involved in the visits, they don't set treatment goals for the interactions. Aside from signing the team in and out, the staff keeps no formal records.
- ▶ A Community Partner group has a booth at a dog show in order to promote AAI and educate the public about the human-animal bond.

What Is AAE?

Animal-assisted education is a goal oriented, planned, and structured intervention directed by a general education or special education professional. The focus of the activities is on academic goals, prosocial skills, and cognitive functioning, with student progress being both measured and documented.

Key Features of AAE

- ▶ AAE is overseen by a credentialed general or special education teacher.
- ▶ AAE is planned and goal-directed. While any visit with an animal might be beneficial for a student, unless the goals are identified and defined before the session, the session is not considered AAE.
- ▶ AAE is documented. In an educational setting this may mean it is part of a specific lesson plan or has an associated assessment which documents student progress. In special education, it may be part of an Individualized Education Plan.

Examples of AAE

- ▶ A Pet Partners team is invited to a local classroom to make a presentation as part of a unit on responsible pet ownership.
- ▶ An elementary school coordinates a reading program for youth with speech impediments to practice reading aloud to animals. The session is supervised by the speech therapist who records student progress.

What Is ARE?

In animal-related engagement (ARE), is an engagement opportunity that allows participants to experience the benefits of the human-animal bond by encouraging the remembrance of feelings that are commonly associated with interaction with an animal.

Key Features of ARE

- ▶ Fills gaps when face-to-face interactions with therapy animals aren't available.
- ▶ Activities may include looking at tokens of remembrance of an animal, participating in animal-related crafts/puzzles/games, or virtual therapy animal visits

Examples of ARE

- ▶ A children's oncology unit at the hospital coordinates virtual therapy animal visits for patients with delicate immune systems who cannot receive in-person visits.
- ▶ A counselor is meeting a new client with a history of poor impulse control. They incorporate a robotic animal to simulate a therapy animal session with the client to determine their readiness for an in-person therapy animal interaction.

What Is AAT?

Animal-assisted therapy is a goal oriented, planned, structured, and documented therapeutic intervention directed by health and human service providers as part of their profession. A wide variety of disciplines may incorporate AAT. Possible practitioners could include physicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, certified therapeutic recreation specialists, nurses, social workers, speech therapists, or mental health professionals.

Key Features of AAT

- ▶ AAT is overseen by a health and human service provider as part of his or her profession. The animal may be part of a volunteer therapy animal team working under the direction of a professional or an animal that belongs to the professional.

- ▶ The professional must incorporate the animal as part of their own specialty. For example, a social worker must incorporate the animal in the context of social work. If the same social worker takes the animal to visit a group of children on an informal basis, the visit would be considered AAA, not AAT.
- ▶ AAT is planned and goal-directed. Interactions with animals have an end in mind, such as improvement in range of motion or fine motor skills. The goals must be identified and defined before the session or the session can't be considered AAT.
- ▶ AAT is documented. Each session is documented in the client's record, with the activity and progress noted. The following are some of the recording documents that are used:
 - Care Plan (used in nursing homes).
 - Habilitation Plan (used in facilities for people with developmental disabilities).

Examples of AAT

- ▶ A volunteer brings her cat to a rehabilitation center to work with an occupational therapist and a child who has difficulty controlling fine motor skills. To improve the client's fine motor skills, the therapist has the child manipulate buckles and clasps on leashes, collars, and animal carriers. The child also opens containers of treats for the cat and feeds the cat small pieces of food.
- ▶ In an AAT session that's designed to improve a client's ability to sequence events, a therapist teaches the client the steps for brushing a dog—for example:
 - Get the brush out of the bag.
 - Tell the dog, "Stay."
 - Brush the dog.
 - Tell the dog, "Good dog!"

Motivated by the opportunity to brush the dog himself, the client remembers the steps, and the therapist has him recite each step aloud as he goes through the sequence.

- ▶ A woman who is recovering from a stroke has limited standing and walking tolerance, and a physical therapist uses the presence of a dog to motivate her. The therapist places the dog on a raised table (the dog remains on leash, with the handler by their side) and asks the client to stand while she is stroking or brushing the animal's back and head. To increase the client's ambulation skills, the therapist has her walk the dog for short distances around the facility grounds. (During the walk, the handler uses a double lead and walks alongside the dog and client.)

For Professionals Providing AAI

The Therapy Animal Program is designed for those seeking to volunteer in their community, rather than incorporate their animal as part of a paid professional vocation. The Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals (www.aaaionline.org) is the professional

membership association dedicated to supporting professionals in AAI. However, practitioners may still find Pet Partners to be an important resource.

Partner with Volunteer Teams

Not every practitioner will have an animal suited for animal assisted therapy, and even if they do, the logistical challenges of using their own animal in their practice may be prohibitive. Pet Partners has well-qualified teams across the country interested in a wide variety of volunteer opportunities, including partnering with a professional for AAT sessions. If you are a practitioner interested in utilizing AAT, consider inviting a therapy animal team to assist you. The handler will focus on the needs of the animal, and you can focus on your client and designing interventions that will help address the therapeutic goals you have set.

Gain Experience as a Handler

Many professionals choose to register with Pet Partners as their first step in moving towards incorporating AAT into their job. Handler training gives them a good basis in key concepts such as being their animal's best advocate; evaluating gives them an objective third party's assessment on the strengths and areas for growth as a team; volunteering outside their profession allows them to refine their handling skills. Pet Partners welcomes professionals exploring AAT. Although the Therapy Animal Program is not designed to train professionals how to incorporate AAI, it is a solid basis on which to build.

Regarding Insurance

Registration with the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program includes insurance for volunteer activities only. The appropriate professional liability coverage should be sought for any paid activity, even if your animal is registered with Pet Partners. Insurance providers may require evidence of registration with an organization like Pet Partners for professionals to obtain the necessary insurance.

Goals of AAI Programs

Animals can be incorporated into a variety of programs. The following are some possible goals of AAI.

Physical

- ▶ Improve fine and gross motor skills.
- ▶ Improve wheelchair skills.
- ▶ Improve standing balance.

Mental

- ▶ Increase verbal interaction among group members.
- ▶ Increase attention skills.
- ▶ Develop recreation skills.
- ▶ Increase self-esteem.
- ▶ Reduce anxiety.
- ▶ Reduce loneliness.

Educational

- ▶ Increase vocabulary.
- ▶ Aid in improving long- or short-term memory.
- ▶ Improve knowledge of concepts such as size and color.

Motivational

- ▶ Improve willingness to be involved in a group activity.
- ▶ Improve interactions with others.
- ▶ Improve interactions with staff.
- ▶ Increase exercise.

Benefits of AAI

The human-animal bond (HAB) is a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and animals. Animal-assisted interventions exist because of the power of the bond which has beneficial psychological and physiological outcomes for participants. While we often focus on the benefit to humans receiving AAI, it's important to remember that animals also experience benefit from their relationship with humans. It has been found that companionship and social support helps pets and animals live longer, healthier lives. By committing to practice concepts as a handler such as PETS™ and YAYABA™ (which will be discussed later in this guide), you are reciprocating the benefits you receive as an animal owner.

Let's discuss some of the benefits animal-assisted interventions might provide to adults and children in a variety of facilities.

Empathy

Empathy is identifying with and understanding the feelings and motives of others. Studies report that children who live in homes where a pet is considered a member of the family are more empathetic than children who live in homes without pets. Children might see animals as peers. It's easier to teach children to be empathetic with animals than with humans, because most animals have such straightforward body language. As children age, their ability to empathize with animals generally carries over into their experiences with people.

*There is no psychiatrist
in the world like a
puppy licking your
face.*

— BEN WILLIAMS

Outward Focus

Outward focus involves bringing individuals out of themselves. Interactions with animals can help people who tend to focus on themselves pay more attention to their environment. Instead of thinking and talking about themselves and their problems, they can watch and talk about the animals.

Nurturing

Nurturing is promoting the growth and development of another living thing. Nurturing skills are learned. By being taught to take care of an animal, children who haven't learned nurturing skills through other channels can develop them. Furthermore, a person who is engaged in nurturing activities is also, to some extent, fulfilling his or her own need to be nurtured.

Rapport

Rapport is building a relationship of mutual trust or a feeling of connection or bonding. In therapy settings, the presence of an animal in the therapist's office can help clear a path through the client's initial resistance and open a channel of emotionally safe, nonthreatening communication between the client and the therapist. Children are especially likely to project their feelings and experiences onto an animal.

Acceptance

Acceptance offers favorable reception or approval. Animals have a way of accepting without qualification. They don't care how a person looks or what the person says. An animal's acceptance is non-judgmental, forgiving, uncomplicated and unconditional.

Entertainment

Entertainment offers an escape from issues and conditions in the real world. At a minimum, the presence of an animal can be entertaining. Even people who don't like animals often enjoy watching their antics and reactions. Especially in long-term care facilities, many residents and staff seem to be entertained by animal visits in some way.

Socialization

Socialization is seeking out or enjoying the company of others. Studies have shown that when dogs and cats come to visit a care facility, there's more laughter and interaction among residents than during any other entertainment or therapy time. In an inpatient setting, the presence of animals encourages three types of socialization:

1. Among clients.
2. Between clients and staff.
3. Among clients, staff, and family members or other visitors.

Staff members have reported that it's easier to talk to residents during and after animal visits. Some family members report that it's especially comfortable and pleasant to be at a facility during animal visits.

Mental Stimulation

Increased mental stimulation occurs because of the opportunities that animals provide for communicating with other people, recalling memories and entertainment. In situations that are depressing, the presence of animals serves to brighten the atmosphere, increasing amusement, laughter, and play. These positive distractions might help decrease people's feelings of isolation.

Physical Contact and Touch

Much has been written about the correlation between touch and health. Infants who are touched very little might have difficulty developing healthy relationships with other people and might fail to thrive and grow physically. For some people, the touch of another person

isn't acceptable, but the warm, furry touch of a dog or cat is. In hospitals, where most touch tends to be painful or invasive, the touch of an animal is safe, nonthreatening, and pleasant. In many programs for people who have been physically or sexually abused, staff members and volunteers aren't allowed to touch the clients. In these places, having an animal to touch, hold and hug can make a world of difference to people who would otherwise have no positive, appropriate physical contact.

Physiological Benefits

Physiological benefits are positive effects on the basic functioning of the body. Many people are able to relax more easily when animals are present. Tests have shown that the decrease in heart rate and blood pressure can be dramatic. Even watching fish in an aquarium can be calming.

Something More

When people are with animals, some feel spiritual fulfillment or a sense of oneness with life and nature. This is hard to define or explain. Some well-known authors have described their relationships with animals and nature as part of their sustaining life energy and/or part of their communion and relationship with the divine.

When Is AAI Not Beneficial?

As beneficial as AAI can be, it isn't appropriate for every situation. Remember, "Good intention isn't an adequate substitute for common sense." Always consider the whole picture, for everyone who is involved. The following guidelines will help you identify situations when AAI might not be beneficial.

For the People That You Visit

- ▶ Animals might become a source of rivalry and competition in the group.
- ▶ Some people might become possessive and attempt to claim a visiting animal for themselves.
- ▶ Injury could result from inappropriate handling, animal selection, or lack of supervision.
- ▶ People with brain injury, developmental disabilities, mental illness, or other conditions might inadvertently provoke an animal.
- ▶ People with unrealistic expectations might think an animal is rejecting them. This might deepen their feelings of low self-esteem.
- ▶ Some people might dislike or fear animals.
- ▶ People might view animals differently because of their cultural background.
- ▶ Allergies might create breathing problems, such as asthma, for some people.
- ▶ Zoonotic diseases (diseases that can be passed between people and animals) might be transmitted, particularly if precautions aren't taken.

- ▶ People with open wounds or low resistance to disease must be carefully monitored. Their participation might need to be restricted.

For the Caregiver

- ▶ Staff and other caregivers might not be allowed to participate in the decision-making process about AAI or might not receive proper orientation.
- ▶ Some might view the presence of animals in a facility as inappropriate.
- ▶ Some might dislike or fear animals.
- ▶ Some might be allergic to animals.

For the Facility

- ▶ Legal liability for an accident or injury that involves a resident or staff member might be a concern.
- ▶ Legal obstacles might have to be overcome.
- ▶ Noise, sanitation, disease, or other environmental concerns might exist.
- ▶ Cost factors, after being carefully weighed, might be prohibitive.

For the Animal

- ▶ Injuries from rough handling or from other animals might occur.
- ▶ It might not be possible to ensure basic animal welfare and well-being. This includes routine access to water and exercise areas, and easy transportation to veterinary care in the event of an emergency.
- ▶ The animal might not enjoy visiting.

Animals Providing Service and Support

Now that we have covered the distinctions between the types of AAI, it is important to clarify the differences between animals that provide therapeutic services and support.

Assistance Animal

Assistance animals, which include service dogs, guide dogs, and hearing dogs, are defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work include guiding those who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, providing mobility assistance, and communicating medical alerts. Assistance dogs are considered working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.

Assistance animals are permitted, in accordance with the ADA, to accompany a person with a disability almost anywhere the general public is allowed. This includes restaurants, businesses, and on airplanes.

Individuals with disabilities have responsibilities under ADA Title III as well as rights. Assistance dogs must be in good health, well trained and well groomed, and may not disrupt the normal course of business while accompanying the individual they serve.

Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An emotional support animal, sometimes also referred to as a comfort animal, is a pet that provides therapeutic support to a person with a mental illness.

To be designated as an emotional support animal, the pet must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional for a person with a mental illness. The prescription must state that the individual has an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, and that the presence of the animal is necessary for the individual's mental health.

Per the ADA, individuals with emotional support animals do not have the same rights to public access as individuals with an assistance dog. ESAs may only accompany their owners in public areas with the express permission of each individual venue and/or facility management. Unlike assistance dogs, ESAs may not travel with their owner on an airplane. However, they may live with their owner in locations covered by the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) regardless of a 'no pets' policy. Although most frequently dogs, other species may be prescribed as emotional support animals.

Therapy Animal

Therapy animals, like those who participate in the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program, provide affection and comfort to various members of the public, typically in facility settings such as hospitals, retirement homes, and schools. A therapy animal has no special rights of access, except in those facilities where they are welcomed. They may not enter businesses with "no pets" policies or accompany their handler in the cabin of airplanes regardless of their therapy animal designation.

As a Pet Partners handler, you may be asked about your animal while out in public. This is a great opportunity to provide accurate information about the differences between these types of animals. It is important that, as a handler, you are careful not to misrepresent the role of your animal as doing so could inadvertently impact those legitimately using service and emotional support animals in public.

Misrepresenting a therapy animal as an assistance animal or emotional support animal is a violation of the Pet Partners Standards of Professional Conduct and is grounds for dismissal from the Therapy Animal Program.

Facility Animal

A facility animal is an animal who is regularly present in a residential or clinical setting. These animals may be a variety of species from dogs and cats to birds and fish. They might live with a handler who is an employee of the facility and come to work each day, or they may live at the facility full time under the care of a primary staff person. Facility animals should be specially trained for extended interactions with clients or residents of the facility which

may include AAA, AAE or AAT. These animals do not have special rights of access in public unless they are accompanying and directly supporting a client with a disability.

As a Pet Partners team, you may volunteer in environments where facility animals are present. It is your responsibility to understand where facility animals will be when you visit and plan accordingly. For example, if a cat lives in the nursing home where you visit and your therapy dog has been known to bark at cats, make sure you plan your route to avoid unnecessary interactions.

UNIT 2

The Handler

LESSON 2.1

Your Responsibility to Your Animal

As a handler, you have a significant responsibility to the other member of your team: your animal. A close and trusting relationship is crucial for successful therapy animal visits. These key concepts will help you build and maintain a trusting partnership and ensure safe and successful visits.

1. PETS™
2. YAYABA™
3. Position, Approach, and Distance
4. Be a Proactive Handler

1. PETS™

PETS™ was developed as a way for handlers to effectively communicate with and actively support their therapy animals. Successful handlers implement PETS™ on a day-to-day basis and while visiting with clients.

PETS™ stands for:

- ▶ Presence
- ▶ Eye contact
- ▶ Touch
- ▶ Speech

What does PETS™ looks like?

Presence can have two different meanings, and both apply to therapy animal visits. Physical closeness is the first way to interpret presence. You should be near your animal at all times. This is more than just being close enough to intervene should you need to. Your animal trusts you to make good decisions on their behalf. If you are near, it may give them the confidence to meet strangers and enter new environments. Presence also means mental presence, or paying attention to your animal while visiting. You should constantly be aware of your animal's physical and emotional condition so you can respond supportively.

Eye contact is a subtle way of supporting your animal and checking in on how they are experiencing your visit. Frequent eye contact with your animal facilitates two-way communication and sends them a signal that you are there to support them. As you begin visiting, you will notice your animal seeking to make eye contact whether it's to say, "This is fun!", "May I do this?", or "I'm feeling uncomfortable." By occasionally looking from your client to your animal and smiling encouragingly, you can boost your teammate's confidence that you are fully present for them.

Touch can be in the form of praise, encouragement, or reassurance. You should always be close enough to touch your animal. While others are petting your animal, you can support your animal by petting them at the same time. This allows you to feel if your animal is tense and uncomfortable or relaxed and enjoying the interaction, particularly if your animal is fluffy and it is hard to 'see' their body tension. Touch helps model 'gentle petting' to others so clients can see as well as hear how your animal likes to be touched.

Touch can also be a way to help your animal recover from a startling noise or surprising occurrence. It's important to realize that touch can offer your animal information about your intent and mindset. A good touch while on visits is slow, deliberate, and confident. Erratic or rapid touches may actually create anxiety in your animal, rather than comfort.

Most of us speak to our animals regularly, whether it's to praise them or give them a cue, but keep in mind that your voice can communicate more than words. For example, if you are nervous, that may be reflected in your tone of voice. Your animal may interpret your anxious tone as an indication that they should be nervous too. If you are frustrated or angry, you may speak too loudly which could make your animal uncertain, confused, or even fearful. When speaking to your animal while visiting, be sure your tone is positive, friendly, and reassuring. This will help reinforce that this is a safe environment for you and your animal.

You can practice PETS any time, not just while you're on visits. Once you understand the power of PETS as a relationship building communication tool, you'll find it makes sense to incorporate it on a daily basis. By spending time every day interacting positively with your animal, you create a baseline for your shared experiences and a deeper relationship that authentically increases your team confidence. If practiced daily, PETS™ will become reflexive to you. Then, if a visiting situation becomes stressful, or if the environment becomes more dynamic, a simple look, touch, or word can reassure your animal.

2. YAYABA™

YAYABA™ stands for "You Are Your Animal's Best Advocate." This is your most important job as a handler.

Because you have **asked** your animal to do this work with you, you have an **obligation** to understand what this type of work means for your animal and what your animal needs in order to enjoy it. When you are your animal's best advocate, you thoughtfully prevent situations that could cause an incident; it's your responsibility to take care of your animal before taking care of clients.

This means being attuned to your animal's needs for bathroom breaks, food, and water. It also means you must be knowledgeable regarding your animal's unique signals of stress. If your animal is indicating they no longer want to visit only halfway through your scheduled session, your responsibility is to end the visit graciously rather than insist your animal keep visiting. Sometimes, a short break is all that is needed before your animal is ready to continue. Other times, your animal is signaling that visiting is over for the day. Your ability to successfully interpret what your animal is communicating is an uncompromising safety feature in responsible therapy animal visiting practice.

Being your animal's advocate also means you make decisions based on the preference of your animal, rather than your own preference. For example, you may envision volunteering in an elementary school, but if your animal isn't comfortable around children the best choice as your animal's advocate would be to work with a different population, such as seniors.

When you are your animal's best advocate, your animal learns from experience that they can trust you; therefore, they will be more willing to explore new situations and able to thoroughly enjoy interacting effectively with clients.

When you support your animal, you are promoting safety, which is in the best interests of all parties.

3. Position, Approach, and Distance

As the handler it is your responsibility to pay attention to and manage spatial gaps between you, your animal, and your clients. In this way, you can help set everyone up for a successful and safe interaction.

Position

Your animal should be beside, not behind, you. If they are beside you, you can make eye contact and see what obstacles or distractions may be present. If your animal is behind you or out of your line of sight while visiting, they are not safe; someone could approach them without your knowledge, or equipment could be moved up the hallway and you would not be aware your animal was in its path. By keeping your animal in your field of vision, you are well positioned to proactively set them up for success.

The position of your animal should also not restrict or block their movement. This extends to using a tight leash or holding your animal tightly by the collar. Stress or anxiety can elevate in an animal who feels trapped.

Approach

People don't like it when we are startled from behind or approached aggressively head on, and our animals don't appreciate it either. When possible, help invite clients to approach your animal from the side where they can clearly be seen. Different species will have slightly different preferred approaches based on their field of vision, but generally speaking contact that can't be seen before it happens can feel threatening to your animal.

Also keep in mind that when you approach a new situation, such as entering a new room, your animal will appreciate having the opportunity to see what is happening and where they are going, as well as having the choice to make contact or not when you approach to make a visit. Have your animal by your side, whenever possible, so they have the opportunity to see what you're seeing and you can see their reaction.

Distance

Your animal has a concept of “personal space” just like you do. As your animal's advocate, you can help watch for signals that your animal needs a greater distance from those you are visiting, such as in group situations or with someone leaning or hovering over them.

Distance from you is also an important factor. PETS reminds us that physical presence is an important way of supporting our animals. Keep your animal near you so you can proactively support them and be their advocate at all times.

4. Be a Proactive Handler

Proactive handlers anticipate the animal's response and set the animal up to succeed. This means you are aware of possible animal responses, behaviors, and positions, and you reassure the animal with cues (as needed) to help your animal be successful.

Reactive handlers respond to the animal's behavior only after the fact. This may be because they don't know their animal well enough to predict their reaction or because they aren't paying close attention to the interaction to anticipate what might happen.

Inactive handlers don't anticipate the animal's behavior, nor do they do very much after the animal has responded. During exercises, the inactive handler doesn't give the animal any direction or support. Handlers who are consistently inactive during the evaluation will be scored “Not Ready.” As a result, no matter how well the animal scores, the team as a whole will be scored “Not Ready.”

Let's look at one situation with three different handlers.

The scenario: A team is walking down a facility hallway. The handler notices the crust of a sandwich on the floor next to a garbage can they need to pass on the way their visit.

Proactive: As the team approaches the handler reminds her dog to “leave it” in a friendly tone before the dog has become distracted by the food. She then praises her dog with a pat and a kind word as they continue down the hallway. To observers, the dog appears well-behaved, and the handler appears clearly in control the entire time.

Reactive: As they near the crust, the dog spots the food and starts to move towards it, clearly interested. The handler has to tighten the leash and say “No, leave it.” Although the dog does follow her cue, to observers it was clear the dog really wanted the food and would have taken it, if the handler hadn't stopped them.

Inactive: The handler sees the crust on the floor and ignores when her dog takes it. Observers wonder what else that dog would pick up if they had the chance.

LESSON 2.2

Your Responsibility as a Pet Partner

The growth of animal-assisted interventions (AAI) relies on your credibility and professionalism as a volunteer. Pet Partners requires all volunteers to consistently abide by the code of ethics, the standards of professional conduct, and the Pet Partners policies and procedures that follow. Handlers who fail to do so risk their registration status with Pet Partners.

Pet Partners Policies and Procedures

1. I will abide by all Pet Partners policies and procedures, and I will adhere to the guidelines that are set forth in this Pet Partners Handler Guide and in associated updates at www.petpartners.org.
2. I will represent the program in a professional manner: for example, by observing rules of privacy and confidentiality, being on time for visits, not being under the influence of drugs/alcohol, and being well-groomed and professionally dressed in accordance with facility dress codes.
3. I will uphold the code of ethics.
4. I will visit only with animals that are registered with Pet Partners and with only one animal at a time. I understand that, for safety and liability reasons, visiting may not exceed 2 hours per team per day.
5. I will make sure that each facility that I visit has access to these Pet Partners policies and procedures, so they understand what guidelines I already follow as a visiting team.
6. I will abide by all policies, procedures and precautions of Pet Partners and each facility I visit. If Pet Partners and my facility have two different policies on the same topic, the more conservative of the two will apply.
7. I will be responsible for my animal at all times, considering their needs and humane care first.
8. I will always stay with my animal and remain in control of the situation with the lead in my hand. I will never tie animals to people, equipment, or furniture while visiting.
9. I will clean up after my animal both inside and outside the facility, and I will abide by any facility-required cleanup rules.

10. For safety reasons, **all** animals must wear a collar or harness and be on lead, and the handler must hold the lead **at all times**, including during breaks.
 - Animals which are carried in a basket, towel, or in their handler's arms must also wear a collar or harness and be on lead at all times.
11. Before each visit, I will abide by the Pet Partners grooming guidelines. (See Lesson 3.2.)
12. I will visit only in accordance with the Pet Partners health requirements; for example, both my animal and I must be healthy, and my animal must not wear a waste collection device. (See Lessons 3.3 and 5.3.)
13. I understand that animals must not be on a raw protein diet at any time during their role as a therapy animal, and that animals from a household where a raw protein diet is fed are precluded from participating in the Therapy Animal Program.
14. I will not borrow money or personal items or receive any personal gratuity or gift, such as money or jewelry, from the people that I visit. Likewise, I understand that it isn't routinely acceptable to give gifts to the people that I visit, even small gifts such as candy and cookies.
15. I will not charge a fee for services that I perform in my role as a therapy animal handler.
16. In the event of an accident or unusual occurrence, I will stop visiting immediately. I will report, without reservation, all details of the incident to Pet Partners and follow Pet Partners' direction, with the understanding that all information will be treated sensitively and with complete confidentiality.
17. I will not take photographs or video of the people that I visit without first obtaining the signed consent of the client, or a legal guardian or custodian of the client. I will use the Pet Partners photo and video release waiver provided on Pet Partners' website to obtain the client's consent unless a facility provides its own photograph and video release form.
18. I understand that I must obtain approved written permission from Pet Partners for each proposed use of Pet Partners' logo or name in conjunction with the logo or name of any other organization.
19. I understand that, as a handler, I am not authorized to administer the Pet Partners Skills Test or the Pet Partners Aptitude Test unless I am currently a licensed team evaluator. In addition, I am not authorized to teach the Pet Partners Handler Course unless I am currently a licensed instructor.
20. When approaching a facility for the first time, I will find out whether any other teams are already visiting there or if there are facility animals present. If there are, I will respect those existing relationships while also making responsible choices for myself and my animal.
21. I understand that my animal must visit in the same type of equipment they were evaluated in, and that a change in equipment requires a re-evaluation.
22. I understand that any time I am re-evaluated, the team qualification rating from the new evaluation will supersede the rating from the previous evaluation. The new rating applies immediately, even if the team's registration period hasn't yet expired. For example, if a renewing team is scored "Not Ready," the team's registration period expires early.

23. I understand that I must receive formal notification from Pet Partners about my registration status and qualifications (for example, an acceptance or renewal letter) before I may visit as a registered therapy animal team.
24. I understand that therapy animals can wear a seasonal or holiday scarf when making visits; however, for the safety of the clients and the animals, animals and handlers may not be dressed in costumes when making visits.

Code of Ethics

1. Perform duties that are consistent with your position and training.
2. Abide by the professional ethics of your profession and organizations.
3. Demonstrate a belief in and attitude of reverence for all life.
4. At all times, treat all animals, all people, and the environment with respect, dignity, and sensitivity, maintaining the quality of life and experience for all who are involved.
5. Be informed and educated about the aspects and issues related to AAI.
6. Demonstrate commitment, responsibility, and honesty in all phases of your activities.
7. Comply with all local, state, and federal laws and Pet Partners policies that govern AAI.

Standards of Professional Conduct

Pet Partners has a deep regard and respect for its therapy animal teams and the important role that they play in meeting the needs of the people that they interact with. Pet Partners also has high expectations regarding conduct of its teams. Handlers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times and to treat our clients and other teams with respect and consideration.

If concerns about unprofessional conduct arise, Pet Partners will make every effort to promptly obtain an incident report from all parties that are involved, as appropriate. Pet Partners will investigate and determine a course of action.

Note: The team's activities, including visits, might be put on hold until the investigation is completed.

The following types of unsatisfactory conduct are serious enough that violations might result in termination from the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program:

1. Breach of client confidentiality.
2. Abuse of any client or animal, or conduct that is detrimental to the Therapy Animal Program or Pet Partners.
3. Theft or removal from the premises, without proper authorization, of any property that belongs to a facility, a client, staff, or another team.
4. Unauthorized use or possession of intoxicants, narcotics, or other drugs while volunteering as a handler.
5. Being unfit to volunteer because of the influence of alcohol or drugs.

6. Using the Pet Partners vest to gain public access or otherwise misrepresenting your animal as an assistance animal.
7. Displaying acts of discrimination, acts of anger, acts of hate, acts of violence, bullying, sexual harassment, coercion, intimidation, or any act of that impedes or interferes with anyone's civil rights.

Standards of Online Behavior

In today's digital world there are many opportunities to share the great work you do as a volunteer through social media. That said, it is critical that statements and images online and in the media about your work as a Pet Partner are consistent with the Pet Partners program as well as federal law, such as HIPAA (for details on HIPAA, see Lesson 2.3).

If you are active on social media, we hope you will share about the power of the human-animal bond and the benefits of AAI, but ask that you follow these guidelines.

Remember

You're an ambassador of Pet Partners. As a registered therapy animal team, you represent Pet Partners to every person that you encounter.

DO:

- ▶ Follow, like, share, and comment on Pet Partners social media posts.
- ▶ Assume anyone can see anything that you post or that is posted about you to social media.
- ▶ Speak from your own experience, and if you choose to share about Pet Partners, ensure the information is accurate.
- ▶ Link to the official Pet Partners profiles such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

DON'T:

- ▶ Share personally identifying information about any client you visit.
- ▶ Create or share images without appropriate permissions from the client and facility.
- ▶ Create or share images or allow yourself to be photographed doing activities that are contrary to Pet Partners policy and procedures while in a setting that could be perceived as a visit.
- ▶ Follow, like, comment on, or share any content from an account that directly identifies Pet Partners such as petpartnerskitty@gmail.com or [@PetPartnersYorkies](https://www.instagram.com/PetPartnersYorkies) as these are not official accounts of Pet Partners.
- ▶ Curse or argue. Even when speaking personally, your actions reflect on the professionalism of the Therapy Animal Program.

LESSON 2.3

Your Responsibility as a Volunteer

Confidentiality

Patient rights are a very important consideration. Rights that specifically concern issues such as privacy and confidentiality are particularly important. The very fact that you're interacting with someone who is staying in a facility for any amount of time is, in itself, privileged information.

Confidentiality is an ethical necessity. Clients in healthcare and human service programs need and expect an emotionally safe environment that will protect their privacy. Every facility that you visit will have a basic confidentiality policy. Most require that you read and sign an agreement to follow their policies.

HIPAA

HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, is a federal law that mandates the protection of confidentiality and the security of health data through established and enforced standards.

Protected patient information includes anything that can identify a patient, including the following items:

- ▶ Name;
- ▶ Specific dates, such as date of birth, admission, discharge, and death;
- ▶ Telephone number;
- ▶ Social Security number and medical record number;
- ▶ Photographs;
- ▶ City, ZIP code, and other geographic identifiers.

The following guidelines will help you comply with HIPAA:

1. Don't discuss a client or their condition with anyone, not even the client, unless the discussion is initiated by the client.
2. Never use a client's name or other protected information when discussing your visit with anyone other than an involved healthcare provider.
3. Occasionally, you might see and recognize a client in public. If this happens, don't approach the client and speak about the facility or setting, or about your visits.
4. Don't take photos or video without permission and signed release forms.
5. Don't submit stories or photos to the media without written permission from the facility's public relations department or your facility contact person.
6. Ask your facility contact person whether the facility has specific guidelines about HIPAA and confidentiality.

Best Practices

Live up to Your Commitment

The lives of many people that you will visit have little variety and few distractions; therefore, each outside contact assumes greater-than-usual importance for them. What might be a minor part of your week might be the single event that someone has been eagerly awaiting for days. Remember: If you don't come, the people who were expecting you will be disappointed.

Volunteering isn't something that can be done in a few odd hours when there's nothing more exciting to do. It's a job, with responsibilities that require a definite commitment of time, energy, intelligence, preparation, and follow-through. If you can't meet an obligation for any reason, 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.

*We are what we
repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is
not an act but a habit.*

— ARISTOTLE

Be Responsible for Your Animal at All Times

A facility or staff person should not feel as though visits by a therapy animal team are ever a burden if you are consistently and fully responsible for your animal. Always stay with your animal and remain in control of the situation. Never ask others to hold the leash or make exceptions for your animal. Recognize where the presence of your animal may negatively impact others and do what you can to minimize that; for example cleaning up after your animal and ensuring only well groomed, healthy animals visit.

Be Ethical and Maintain Confidentiality

If a helping relationship is formed, a client might want to tell you secrets. These discussions are to be shared only with the person's treatment team, if necessary. Never promise that you "won't tell anyone"; this is a promise that you might not be able to keep.

Be Respectful

Treat others as you would like to be treated. People appreciate being treated sincerely. The world is made up of individuals who have their own distinctive way of doing things.

Be Part of the Team

The importance of clear communication and professional conduct can't be overemphasized. If problems occur with a particular visit or placement, you're expected to discuss them with your facility contact person as they arise. Turn challenges into learning experiences. Maintain up-to-date communication with staff, clients, and Pet Partners. Be open-minded about learning from everyone around you, and accept supervision from professional staff. Avoid showing partiality to one staff member or client over another.

Provide a Supportive, Encouraging Emotional Climate

When you visit, always remember that you're there to meet the needs of the person that you're visiting, not your own. In many instances, this means listening more than talking. Respect a person's need for privacy and withdrawal. Don't force yourself on the person. Be a sincere listener. Sometimes, silence truly is the best response. Don't think that you need to fill every silence with words. Also, remember that you aren't there to diagnose or treat the client: you're there to listen and to facilitate the visit with your animal.

As a Pet Partners volunteer, you have a unique opportunity to help other people. If you can be a responsible volunteer in all the ways that have been mentioned here, you will make an important contribution to the lives of others.

LESSON 2.4

Eligibility

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, and also individuals who don't have animals of their own or who share an animal with another handler.

Minors

Handlers must be at least 10 years old to be registered with Pet Partners.

For all handlers 10 to 15 years of age:

- ▶ A parent or guardian must be present with the handler at the team evaluation
- ▶ A parent or guardian, or another adult who is appointed by the parent or guardian, must accompany handlers on all visits

Note: Unless the accompanying adult is also a registered handler with that animal, they may not handle the animal.

For all handlers 10-17 years of age:

- ▶ A parent or guardian must give their consent for the team to register.
- ▶ Minor handlers aged 16-17 do not need to have a parent or guardian accompany them on visits, but consent is still required until the handler's 18th birthday.

Handlers With Disabilities

If you have a disability and will require accommodations during the evaluation, discuss your needs with Pet Partners before the day of the evaluation. Accommodation requests require 4-6 weeks' notice, so that Pet Partners has time to approve any modifications to the evaluation exercises. Accommodations must be reviewed and approved prior to each registration or renewal.

When discussing your accommodation needs, the team evaluator will respect your right to privacy. You won't be expected to discuss your disability with the team evaluator.

Handlers Who Aren't Animal Owners

A person other than the animal's owner may register as a handler with the animal, provided that they have the written permission of the owner, have known the animal for at least six months, and successfully complete the evaluation with the animal.

The person who will handle the animal on visits must be the one who handles the animal during the evaluation.

Pet Partners is unable to provide a matching service for handlers seeking an animal with which to volunteer.

Multiple Handlers With One Animal

If more than one person (for example, a pair of family members or friends) wants to register with the same animal, each of the handlers must be evaluated with the animal separately. These evaluations may not be conducted back-to-back; the animal must be allowed to rest for at least 30 minutes between evaluations.

Handlers With Multiple Animals

Handlers registering with more than one animal must complete a separate evaluation with each animal.

If a handler is currently registered as a Pet Partners therapy animal team with one animal, that handler may add additional animals to their membership at a reduced fee. One primary membership must be current for the additional animal discount to apply.

UNIT 3

The Animal

LESSON 3.1

Suitability

Behavior

Pet Partners therapy animals should have a basic level of training, so that they remain reliable and under control even in dynamic situations. In addition, they should be consistently responsive to the cues of and support from their handler.

It's also important that animals that participate in animal-assisted interventions (AAI) have the desire to participate in this work. Therapy animals should genuinely enjoy participating in visits, accepting interactions in a pleasant or welcoming manner. If an animal endures interactions with strangers, AAI may not be the best fit for that animal.

The behavior of a therapy animal should consistently inspire confidence in others. The following describes the desirable behavior during the team evaluation and while visiting.

- ▶ Species-appropriate body language that indicates a relaxed, content, and confident state; for example, in the case of a dog, friendly tail wagging, soft body, and relaxed face.
- ▶ Interest in and enjoyment of interactions with clients.
- ▶ Maintaining a connection with their handler; for example, looking for guidance, even amid distraction.
- ▶ Responding consistently to cues from the handler whether a request (such as 'sit' or 'leave it') or support and encouragement in a novel situation.

Vocalization

Animals are expected not to vocalize during the evaluation. If vocalization occurs, both the frequency and the reason (contentment, excitement, stress, or aggression) are taken into consideration.

If your animal vocalizes once or twice out of stress or excitement, you should take steps to manage the vocalization by supporting your animal. However, excessive vocalization, such as continual barking, whining, or howling, is an indicator of stress and will result in a Not Ready

A Great Therapy Animal...

- Wants to visit.
- Is friendly and confident.
- Knows how to respect personal boundaries.
- Is completely non-aggressive.
- Is reliable, predictable, and directable.
- Will initiate contact, stay engaged, make eye contact, and allow their behaviors to be redirected.

score. Any vocalization that is aggressive in nature will end the evaluation immediately and indicates that your animal is not appropriate for therapy animal work.

Jumping Up

Therapy animals must be under control at all times. An animal that jumps up on a person or a piece of equipment will result in a Not Ready score.

Licking and Mouthing

If we consider that on visits some individuals may not be familiar with animals, licking and mouthing can appear threatening to others. Frequent or excessive licking of the evaluator, assistants, or the handler throughout the evaluation will result in a Not Ready score. Similarly, any mouthing of equipment will result in a Not Ready score.

Additionally, an animal that gently or playfully mouths the hand of the evaluator or assistant will be considered Not Ready. Aggressive mouthing, nipping, snapping, or biting of people is never considered appropriate and the evaluation will be ended immediately.

For more information on evaluation scoring, including what Not Ready and Not Appropriate for Visiting mean, see Unit 4.

House Training

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

Core Animal Characteristics

In the Therapy Animal Program, it's critical that your animal have the following characteristics.

- ▶ **Reliable:** This term describes an animal that has a solid temperament and training, and that can be relied on to behave well. For example:
 - A dog trots down a facility hallway close to their handler, walking on a loose lead.
 - A cat contentedly sits on a stranger's lap and accepts petting.
 - ▶ **Predictable:** This term describes an animal whose reactions are predictable and within an acceptable range. For example:
 - Although a handler is aware that the dog might jump back when an automatic door opens suddenly into the hallway, the handler also knows that the dog won't bark or be unable to shake off the surprise.
 - A miniature horse might startle when approached from behind, but the handler knows the horse won't kick as a result.
- Note:** This term is also used (together with Complex) for Team Qualification Ratings (see Lesson 6.2). Don't confuse the two uses.

- **Directable:** This term describes an animal that remains responsive to their handler's cues even in an odd situation or an emergency. For example:
 - If people tumble through the door yelling or pushing noisy carts, the dog will continue to respond to the handler's cues, in spite of the stress and distractions of the moment.
 - If a parrot starts to investigate the button of a client's shirt, the handler is able to redirect the bird and stop the behavior easily.

It is the strength of the team's relationship that allows the handler to predict how their animal might respond in a given situation. When a handler can predict their animal's reaction, they can also take steps to ensure a reliable response which keeps the animal in control. An animal who is clearly responsive to their handler inspires confidence among those with whom they interact.

For example, a handler knows their dog can be tempted by food scraps while visiting, so when they see a sandwich crust has fallen under a chair, they use the "leave it" cue as they approach. Because the dog is reliable, the handler knows the dog will walk past the treat. When facility staff see this, they are impressed with how well behaved the animal is and are confident that the handler is in control of their animal.

Or consider a handler of a rabbit who knows their animal is not comfortable being held if their back legs are not well supported. Because the rabbit predictably wiggles and struggles when held this way, the handler proactively directs the client on how to best interact with the rabbit by having them sit in their lap on a towel and be stroked gently. When the rabbit feels secure, they reliably welcome and enjoy petting which makes the visit enjoyable for everyone.

Challenge yourself to predict your animal's behavior in different situations and influence outcomes before they occur. When you can consistently do this, you'll be prepared to be a successful therapy animal team.

Ability, Desire, and Affiliative Behavior

Be sure to ask yourself whether, in addition to having the skills or ability, your animal also has the **desire** to be a therapy animal. Handlers must consider if their animal genuinely enjoys interactions with a wide variety of people in dynamic situations. When an animal has a desire to create social connections with others, we say the animal has an **affiliative nature**. To determine if an animal has an affiliative nature, we look for patterns in approaching and avoidant behaviors in the animal. Approaching behavior shows a desire for proximity, interest, and curiosity. Avoidant behavior shows a desire for separation and seclusion. All animals will show avoidant behavior at certain times or in specific environments, but an overall approaching nature is critical because we want therapy animals to genuinely enjoy participating in visits, accepting interactions in a pleasant or welcoming manner. If your animal merely endures interactions with strangers, ask yourself if this is the best fit for your animal.

As your animal's best advocate, you need to be open to the idea that what *you* think would be fun and rewarding for you may not be fun and rewarding for your animal. While ability is critical, do not overlook desire. Both are necessary for safe and effective therapy animal teams.

LESSON 3.2

Eligibility

Accepted Species

A great many species make wonderful visiting animals and can form a strong human-animal bond. Pet Partners allows the following species to be registered as part of the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program:

- ▶ Dogs
- ▶ Cats
- ▶ Horses and donkeys (equines)
- ▶ Rabbits
- ▶ Guinea pigs
- ▶ Domestic rats
- ▶ Birds
- ▶ Miniature pigs
- ▶ Llamas and alpacas (camelids)

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 breeds can participate, provided that the dog's presence doesn't violate local animal control laws.

Puppies and Kittens Policy

Pet Partners' decision to set a minimum age requirement of one year for visiting dogs and cats is based on the following considerations:

- Puppies and kittens are actually very fragile. Animals that are less than 12 weeks old don't have fully developed immune systems. Prolonged stress can lead to an immune system crash and subsequent illness.
- Puppies and kittens are prone to soiling or possibly vomiting in their carriers. This tendency not only makes the animal unhappy and unsuitable for the day's visit but also might condition the animal to become anxious when traveling.
- Puppies and kittens often play "bite and scratch." Because they aren't fully reliable, predictable, and directable, their behavior can put clients at risk and lead to liability for the facility.

Age

All animals except “pocket pets” must be at least one year old. Rabbits, guinea pigs, and rats must be at least six months old.

Length of Ownership

Therapy animal work relies on a strong relationship built on trust and communication between animal and handler, which takes time to develop. Birds must have lived in the owner’s home for at least one year. All other animals must have lived with the owner for at least six months.

Spay and Neuter

Pet Partners recommends spaying or neutering for most pet animals, but this isn’t a requirement. If your animal is in season, pregnant, or nursing young, postpone your evaluation and any therapy animal visits.

Animals With Disabilities

Animals with physical disabilities can become therapy animals. The animal’s regular veterinarian, in consultation with the handler during the required health screening, will determine whether the animal is physically able to participate in the evaluation and in AAI. If the animal will require accommodations during the evaluation, discuss their needs with Pet Partners well in advance of the evaluation. Accommodation requests require 4-6 weeks’ notice, so that Pet Partners has time to approve any modifications to the tests. Accommodations must be reviewed and approved prior to each registration or renewal.

Aggression

Animals that have a history of aggression toward people or other animals aren’t eligible to participate. Examples of aggression include growling, lunging, biting, and causing serious injury. This includes animals who have ever seriously injured or killed another companion animal.

Animals that have been encouraged or trained to bite—even as part of dog sports such as Schutzhund—aren’t eligible for registration. Although many dogs that have been trained for bite work are under very good control, they present a risk that the Therapy Animal Program simply can’t afford to take. The concern is the dog’s reaction if their handler is approached in a threatening manner during a visit. Even if the handler is able to bring the dog under control immediately, the dog might already have reacted.

Diet

Some people believe that a diet of raw proteins is best for their animal's health. Pet Partners respects this belief, and we appreciate that it's motivated by a regard for the animal's well-being. At the same time, however, Pet Partners recognizes that there is concern among medical professionals that humans, especially those with compromised immune systems, might be placed at a higher risk of infection by interacting with animals that eat raw proteins.

Therefore, after carefully considering known scientific facts, and acting on the unanimous advice of the Pet Partners Medical Advisory Board (which reviewed and took under advisement the recommendations of experts in the fields of animal-assisted interventions, infection control, public health, and veterinary medicine from Canada and the United States), Pet Partners has determined that animals that eat raw protein foods may not participate in the Therapy Animal Program. This policy was put in place June 30, 2010, and it affects all animals, regardless of species or breed. Although Pet Partners understands that there are risks of contamination, such as salmonella, from cooked and commercial animal foods, it's a lesser risk.

Animals that have been fed a raw protein diet must abstain from raw proteins for a minimum of four weeks before proceeding with the Pet Partners registration process. In addition, animals from a household where other animals are fed a raw protein diet may not participate, unless all the animals abstain from raw proteins.

Unacceptable foods include the following:

- ▶ Any raw protein from an animal source, such as beef, chicken, pork, fish, other domesticated or wild animal meat, or raw eggs.
- ▶ Raw proteins that are dehydrated, pasteurized, freeze-dried, frozen or fresh.
- ▶ Treats such as pigs' ears, raw bones, and marrow bones.

Additional information about the raw protein diet policy is available in the Pet Partners Resource Library.

Acceptable Dairy Products and Foods

The following foods are acceptable for therapy animals to eat. We update the list periodically, so contact us for most current information.

- Canned, fresh, or frozen fish that has been cooked (sardines, mackerel, tuna, and so on)
- Canned, fresh, or frozen beef, chicken, pork, or other domesticated meat that has been cooked.
- Cooked eggs.
- Soy and other plant proteins.
- Raw, washed vegetables, grains, legumes, or other plants
- Commercial sterilized rawhide.
- Commercial stuffed cooked dog bones.
- Pasteurized commercial yogurt.
- Pasteurized commercial cottage cheese.
- Pasteurized commercial cheese.

Grooming Basics

Before your Team Evaluation and each visit, your animal needs to be clean and ready to visit.

- ▶ **Bathing:** Pet Partners' policy is that the animal should be bathed within 24 hours before the visit and kept clean until then. For cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, and birds, a sponge bath using water, cleaning wipe, or dry shampoo designed for your animal immediately prior to the visit is acceptable.
Note: If you visit frequently, it might be impractical or harmful for the animal to be bathed before each visit. Animals should always be clean smelling with a clean coat that is free of debris for any visit.
- ▶ **Coat:** The animal must be clean and groomed. Knots, snags, and debris must be combed out of the coat. For animals such as horses or alpacas, the coat should be clipped or shaved, if necessary, to be debris free. For rats, extra attention should be paid to the tail to ensure it is clean.
- ▶ **Nails and Hooves:** Your animal's nails must be clipped to a safe length, and so that they aren't sharp or hooked. They should not pose a danger to the people that you visit, catch on clothing, or interfere with the animal's ability to walk on various surfaces, such as tile or carpet. File rough edges. Hoofed animals should receive proper foot care, even if they wear shoes while visiting.
- ▶ **Breath:** If your animal's breath isn't agreeable, use only toothpaste or oral rinse that's specifically made for that species of animal. If your animal's bad breath is a result of eating strong-smelling pet food, consider switching to a premium pet food. Premium pet foods usually have a more agreeable odor, which will make a significant difference in your animal's breath.
- ▶ **Drooling:** Some breeds of dog are prone to drooling or slobbering. If you are visiting with an animal that drools excessively, carry a hand towel so that you can occasionally wipe your animal's mouth to prevent the client from being drooled on. Practice excellent infection control by using hand sanitizer after wiping your animal's mouth.
- ▶ **Eyes:** Normal drainage from the eyes must be cleaned.
- ▶ **Ears:** Ears should be clean and free of odor.
- ▶ **Feet:** Make sure that the animal's paws/hooves/feet are clean. Clip back any excess hair that mud or feces might adhere to.

LESSON 3.3

Health Requirements

An animal must meet the following health requirements in order to participate in the Therapy Animal Program:

1. The animal must be current on vaccinations. Pet Partners believes that your animal's veterinarian is in the best position to decide what diagnostic tests and immunizations are appropriate, based on your animal's health history and status. Rabies immunizations are required for dogs, cats, equines, pigs, and camelids that participate in the Therapy Animal Program. Rabies tags should be worn by the animal and documentation should be carried by the handler. All vaccinations must be documented by a licensed veterinarian.

Note: Pet Partners does not accept evidence of a protective titer in lieu of current rabies vaccinations.

2. The animal should be free of any signs of ill health. The animal should not attend an evaluation or visit if any of the following conditions are present:
 - Open wounds or sores;
 - Skin rashes;
 - Vomiting;
 - Lameness;
 - Eye infections;
 - Extreme hair shedding;
 - Diarrhea and/or bloody stools;
 - Runny nose;
 - Sutures (stitches);
 - Change in eating and/or elimination habits (for example, frequent urination);
 - Odd-smelling ears or breath;
 - Chronic illness.

Animal Health Screening

The animal health screening must be conducted by a veterinarian. We want to make sure that all animals that participate in the Therapy Animal Program are healthy and free of parasites, disease, infections, and illness. A veterinarian must complete the Animal Health Screening Form, which is part of the team registration application. Be sure to give the veterinarian the "Letter to Animal's Veterinarian" that accompanies the form.

3. Animals must be free of internal and external parasites, including but not limited to the following:
- Fleas;
 - Ear mites;
 - Lice;
 - Skin mites and diseases such as mange;
 - Ticks;
 - Intestinal parasites.

In addition, the animal should not evaluate or visit in the following situations:

- The animal is taking medications for infections or illness. This excludes preventative medications such as those for heartworm but includes antibiotics and antifungals.
- The animal is taking medications that are immunosuppressive. This includes chemotherapy drugs and steroidal medications.
- Within one week of a dog receiving the Bordetella (kennel cough) vaccine nasally, as this presents some elevated risk of infection for your dog.
- Another animal in same household is sick (if the cause isn't known).

Note: Some facilities that you visit might require veterinary examinations every six months, or they might require additional types of health screening. Be sure to ask what expectations the facility has in advance of any visits.

UNIT 4

The Team Evaluation

LESSON 4.1

General Information

You're Part of a Team

Pet Partners evaluates teams, not just animals. During your evaluation, your handling skills are equally as important as your animal's demonstrated skills and behaviors. Be sure you are prepared to demonstrate YAYABA™, PETS™ and proactive handling.

Role-Playing

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess how the team will do on a visit. In order for the team evaluator to assess this, the handler must be willing to do some role-playing in their interactions with the team evaluator and evaluation assistants. The team evaluator and the team evaluator's assistants will be acting as though they are clients in a facility. The handler should also act as though they are on a real visit, including facilitating interactions, advocating for their animal, supporting and encouraging their animal, and making polite conversation when appropriate. Some clients might prefer to visit with the animal, but most also want to talk with another person.

Safety and Animal Welfare is Our Priority

As your animal's advocate, it's your responsibility to ensure your animal's safety and comfort. As you would on a real visit, you may help direct others in the best way to interact with your animal; for example, kneeling down next to your dog instead of leaning over them, or petting on the back rather than head. If you're uncomfortable with or unsure what's going on during the evaluation, let the team evaluator know.

At no time will your animal be put in a situation that's dangerous to their welfare. If you feel that your animal is becoming too stressed or fearful, you can ask to stop the evaluation and try again another day. If your evaluator believes your animal is becoming too stressed, they will stop the evaluation.

What to Bring to the Team Evaluation

The checklist below covers the items that the handler must bring to the team evaluation. If you do not bring these items, you won't be evaluated that day. Remember that the evaluation is like a simulated visit.

Evaluation Checklist

	P
Your completed Handler's Questionnaire form for team evaluator review This form can be found at www.petpartners.org/handlersquestionnaire .	
Proof of current rabies vaccination, such as a certificate or vaccination records from the veterinarian or a completed Animal Health Screening Form.	
If the animal will be carried, bring a towel, small blanket, or basket.	
An acceptable collar or harness and an acceptable leash.	
Course completion certificate for either the in-person or online Pet Partners Handler Course for new teams; a previous Pet Partners badge or digital/physical registration card or registration letter for renewing teams.	
A brush that the animal is accustomed to, and that would be appropriate to take on a visit.	
Treats to use for one specific evaluation exercise.	
Note: Food rewards may not otherwise be given during the evaluation.	
If you're between the ages of 10 and 16: A parent or guardian to accompany you at the evaluation.	
If you are requesting modifications to evaluation exercises or permission to use equipment not listed as acceptable, a letter of accommodation provided to you by Pet Partners.	

Equipment

All animals must wear a collar or harness and be leashed while they are on the testing grounds. The expectation is that you will always be in full control of your animal and able to respond proactively, should the visiting environment change. This means you should hold the leash in your hand at all times. Never tie your animal's leash to furniture or equipment or pass the leash to someone who is not also a registered handler of the animal.

The type of equipment that your animal wears during the evaluation is the same type that they must wear when visiting. Animals evaluating for the first time with Pet Partners should wear only their collar or harness and a leash. Vests and bandannas are not permitted. Small animal handlers should refer to species-specific information in the Resource Library or contact us.

When choosing your animal's equipment, select an item that is easily sanitized, allows sufficient space for petting the animal's body, and allows no means by which the animal or the client may be harmed.

The following is the list of acceptable equipment for the Therapy Animal Program. Additional species-specific resources are available in the Resource Library as well.

- ▶ Harnesses: front clip, back clip, step-in, vest, or slip harness (limited slip only). A harness may have multiple connection points, but only one connection point is acceptable to be used for the evaluation or while visiting. The harness should be species-appropriate and fit the animal properly, and the animal should feel comfortable wearing it. Room for petting must be available.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Halters/head collars.
- ▶ Leashes or leads, no more than six 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 above equipment.

The following are examples of equipment that's considered inappropriate for both evaluations and visits:

- ▶ Special training collars, such as prong, electric, or spray collars.
- ▶ Metal collars and harnesses, including Martingales that have metal links.
- ▶ Full-slip collars or harnesses of any type.
- ▶ Leashes that have any amount of metal chain.
- ▶ Retractable or bungee leashes.
- ▶ Leashes that are longer than six feet.
- ▶ Hands-free leashes, such as those secured around the handler's waist or shoulder.
- ▶ Pouches, purses, or bags designed to carry an animal.
- ▶ Novelty items.

Special Equipment Considerations

Service Animal Equipment with or without the service animal designation: Anyone wishing to use a specially designed harness for service animals must request and receive an accommodation from Pet Partners for the use of the equipment while on a therapy animal visit. It will be up to the team evaluator to determine if the equipment is acceptable to Pet Partners standards.

Strollers, Carts, and Wagons: To use a stroller or a cart you must request an accommodation for the use of the equipment. Accommodations of this type are typically limited to situations where the handler or animal has a disability; only strollers and carts that are pushed (not pulled) are allowed. The team evaluator will be responsible for approving the stroller chosen

at the time of the evaluation. All strollers and carts should be clean and safe for both the client and the animal.

Pet Partners does not currently allow the use of wagons or any other device that is pulled versus being pushed.

Brushes: Brushes are useful tools to have while you're visiting, because they offer a way for people to interact with your animal. The brush that you bring to the evaluation doesn't need to be the same one that you use to routinely groom your animal.

The brush that you use as your "visiting brush" should minimize the possibility of unintentional injury to both your animal and the clients. Soft bristles and plastic handles are best. Wire bristle brushes and combs with metallic teeth aren't considered acceptable.

Costumes: Dressing up animals in costumes introduces an unnecessary element of risk into visits and is not allowed. For example, if you were to dress your dog up in devil horns for Halloween and visit a person with dementia, the costume could trigger a severe adverse reaction despite your good intentions. In addition, costumes can get caught on healthcare equipment and can be a safety hazard. Note that seasonal or holiday scarves are permitted. Please refer to the Costumes FAQ in the Resource Library for additional detail.

Rabies Tags: You are not required to present rabies tags to your evaluator but must have proof of a current rabies vaccination in order to evaluate. Pet Partners recommends that dogs wear their rabies tags while evaluating and visiting. This is often a local ordinance or requirement of facilities where you may visit as well.

For specific inquiries about appropriate equipment, contact Pet Partners.

Definitions

The Test Premises, Grounds, or Site

The test premises start at the point where you and your animal get out of your car in the facility's parking lot and extend throughout the area where the evaluation occurs. Your team's interactions and behavior while on the test premises can impact your evaluation outcome, even if the test has not yet started or you have completed the last exercise.

Multiple Cues

The evaluation isn't an obedience competition; therefore, the handler is allowed to give the animal multiple cues in order to obtain the desired behavior. When a handler gives two or more cues at the same time, they are considered a single cue. For example, many handlers give simultaneous verbal and hand cues for "sit." If the animal doesn't respond to a cue, the handler may wait a moment to see whether the animal will respond before giving an additional cue.

Multiple cues do impact scoring, which could make the difference between a Predictable and Complex team qualification rating.

Team Qualification Rating

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

Upon successful completion of your team evaluation, you will receive a qualification rating of Predictable or Complex. A team's rating is noted on the ID badge/registration card and registration letter that Pet Partners issues to the team. This rating helps you determine what settings are most appropriate for you to visit.

Your team's rating can change each time that you're re-evaluated, which occurs a minimum of every two years for your renewal with Pet Partners.

- ▶ Over time, as you and your animal become more experienced as a team, you might progress from a Predictable rating to a Complex rating.
- ▶ As your animal ages, their temperament might change, and a Predictable rating might become more appropriate than a previously held Complex rating.

Keep in mind that a team with a Complex rating isn't more valuable than one with a Predictable rating. Everyone benefits from animal-assisted interventions when a team is well-suited to its visiting environment.

LESSON 4.2

Evaluation Scoring

The handler is scored on each of the following elements:

- ▶ Proactive handling by anticipating possible reactions by their animal during the exercise and setting them up for success consistently.
- ▶ Consistently uses PETS™ to support their animal as demonstrated by the following:
 - Regularly praising, encouraging, or reassuring their animal throughout the evaluation.
 - A deep knowledge of their animal's body language cues indicating stress, fear, and anxiety, and is able to help the animal recover.
- ▶ Consistently acts as their animal's best advocate (YAYABA™) by adeptly guiding interactions between the animal and clients through words and positioning without any prompting by the evaluator.
- ▶ Exemplary interactions with the evaluator and assistants throughout the role-play as well as with their animal. The team works together smoothly and communicates with each other so only the necessary cues are given to the animal.

The animal is scored on each of the following elements:

- ▶ Reliably responds to verbal or hand cues from their handler.
- ▶ Maintains connection with their handler as appropriate for their species; for example, looking for guidance, even amid distraction.
- ▶ Displays body language communicating a relaxed, content, and confident state.
- ▶ Enjoys and seeks out interactions with clients as appropriate for their species.

Scores

For each team evaluation exercise both the handler and the animal receive one of four possible scores: 2, 1, Not Ready, Not Appropriate for Visiting. The score for the team for the individual exercise is the lower of the two scores. The overall score for the entire evaluation, also known as the team qualification rating, is calculated based on the individual exercise scores.

Score of 2

This score indicates that the handler, animal, or team has demonstrated a high level of skill or aptitude on an individual team evaluation exercise that ensures a safe and effective therapy animal interaction.

Score of 1

This score indicates that the handler, animal, or team has demonstrated an adequate level of skill or aptitude on an individual team evaluation exercise that will still ensure a safe and effective therapy animal interaction.

Score of Not Ready

Scores of Not Ready indicates that the handler, animal, or team's skills can be improved, or aptitude strengthened, but that they are not ready to pass the evaluation at this time. A team receiving a Not Ready will be eligible to try the evaluation again in the future, after further training and practice.

Examples of behaviors resulting in Not Ready:

- ▶ The animal demonstrates excessive stress.
- ▶ The animal isn't clean or appropriately groomed.
- ▶ The animal mouths the team evaluator or equipment.
- ▶ The animal urinates or defecates during testing.
- ▶ The animal vocalizes excessively, such as uncontrolled barking, whining, or howling.
- ▶ The animal jumps up on people or equipment.
- ▶ The handler is dressed inappropriately.
- ▶ The handler demonstrates excessive stress.
- ▶ The handler uses firm handling, such as rough leash tugging or physically forcing their animal into position.

Score of Not Appropriate for Visiting

A handler, animal, or team that's scored Not Appropriate for Visiting may not be re-evaluated for the Therapy Animal Program. However, if the handler alone received this score, the animal can still register if they have a different handler. Similarly, if the animal alone scored Not Appropriate, the handler may register with a different animal who successfully completes the process.

Examples of behaviors resulting in Not Appropriate for Visiting:

- ▶ The handler displays inappropriate conduct or is seen to kick, strike, or otherwise roughly handle an animal at any time while on the testing grounds.
- ▶ The handler treats people inappropriately at any time while on the testing grounds.
- ▶ The handler is under the influence or smells of drugs or alcohol.
- ▶ The animal growls, threatens, snaps, bites, attacks, or attempts to attack any person or another animal while on the testing grounds.
- ▶ The animal vocalizes as part of aggressive behavior; for example, growling.

LESSON 4.3

Special Evaluation Circumstances

Assistance Dogs

Pet Partners does allow assistance dogs to be registered as therapy animals as well. If you would like to register your service, guide, or hearing dog with Pet Partners, do consider how your animal will handle this dual role and what considerations you may need to keep in mind to ensure your dog does not become fatigued or stressed.

If you're being evaluated as a team with your own assistance dog, you can use the dog's usual equipment, provided that it isn't included in the list of unacceptable equipment in Lesson 4.1. Even though metal components aren't accepted under standard equipment requirements, an assistance dog's harness may include them in the structure or the handle, provided that the harness appears safe to the team evaluator. Some handlers prefer to remove their assistance dog equipment and use more standard collars and leashes while performing AAI as a way to cue the dogs to perform activities that accompany the specific equipment. Whatever you choose, remember that the equipment you evaluate in is the equipment that must be worn during visits.

The safety of the populations that therapy animal teams visit must be the top priority. In some cases, an assistance dog's response during an exercise might be appropriate for its role as an assistance dog but undesirable for AAI. Be sure to inform the team evaluator of such potential responses before the evaluation begins, so that they can note them on the evaluation form.

For example, a service dog might be trained to help the handler reposition their arm if it falls off the armrest of a wheelchair. If the dog does this during the evaluation, that would technically violate the requirement that the dog not mouth the handler. In this instance, however, the team evaluator can waive the requirement. But if the same dog mouths the team evaluator's hand when the evaluator picks up the dog's foot, the animal would be scored Not Appropriate for Visiting or Not Ready.

Very Small Dogs

In a visiting situation, it may be safer for very small dogs to be carried under some circumstances, rather than walking on the ground. A very small dog is one that can be easily picked up and carried with one hand by an average person. As the handler, you get to decide whether the dog will be evaluated as a very small dog. Most dogs in this category are about 10 inches tall at the shoulder and 10 to 15 pounds in weight, regardless of the breed or mix of breeds. However, the team evaluator won't weigh or measure the dog.

If you are registering with a very small dog, you will have slightly different evaluation procedure options during some of the exercises where you will be permitted to carry your dog. All dogs, regardless of size, must walk for Exercise 5 of the PPST, Out for a Walk; Exercise 11 of the PPST, Come When Called; and Exercise H of the PPAT, Leave It. These exceptions are noted in the descriptions of individual exercises as well.

During other exercises, the handler may choose to have the dog walk or stand, at his or her discretion. If the dog is carried during the evaluation, they must be carried during visits under similar circumstances.

Animals with Physical Disabilities

Pet Partners does register animals with physical disabilities, if the animal's veterinarian indicates on the Animal Health Screening Form that they feel participation in the Therapy Animal Program will not compromise the animal's health or aggravate the existing medical condition. If an animal that has a physical disability cannot perform the evaluation exercises as written, you may request accommodations for the evaluation by discussing your specific needs with your evaluator at least 4-6 weeks in advance of your desired evaluation date. With your input, your evaluator will then submit a suggested accommodation plan to Pet Partners on your behalf, and once this accommodation is approved, you will receive a letter of accommodation which you must bring to your evaluation.

Animals Using Strollers

Under limited circumstances, Pet Partners will approve animal strollers. These special equipment requests are primarily for the following circumstances:

- ▶ Dogs with disabilities.
- ▶ Handlers with disabilities.
- ▶ Cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs who are transported in a stroller, rather than hand carried.

Strollers are special equipment that must be pre-approved by Pet Partners prior to your evaluation date. Pet Partners may initially explore alternative options rather than approving a stroller. However, if your request for special equipment is approved, you will receive a letter

of accommodation which you must bring to your evaluation. Accommodations must be reviewed and approved prior to each registration or renewal.

For more information on special accommodations including stroller requests, please log into the Volunteer Center and review materials in the Resource Library.

Familiarity

An important purpose of the evaluation is to determine how the team will respond when it enters a new setting, visiting people that the handler and animal have never encountered before. If the team is evaluated in a familiar setting or by a familiar person, this response can't be measured accurately.

Therefore, whenever possible, the evaluation should be conducted in a facility or setting that differs from the place where the team has trained or practiced. In addition, the team evaluator should not have a past relationship with the team that could influence the animal's performance either positively or negatively. For example, the team evaluator should not be your animal's veterinarian or the person who conducted your animal's obedience class.

If a different evaluation setting or a different team evaluator can't be found, the evaluation can still proceed; however, the team will be eligible for placement only in predictable environments. (In the case of a familiar evaluation setting, this restriction applies only to teams that are registering for the first time.)

In both cases, the team's familiarity with the evaluation setting or the team evaluator will be noted on the evaluation score sheet.

LESSON 4.4

The Team Evaluation Overview

This section describes the two parts of the team evaluation and their components in greater detail:

1. The Pet Partners Skills Test
2. The Pet Partners Aptitude Test

1. The Pet Partners Skills Test

The PPST is an opportunity for you and your animal to demonstrate basic “good behavior” skills that are needed on visits. Although much of this looks like basic obedience skills, don’t forget that as the handler you are also being scored on your ability to advocate for you animal, support your animal, and facilitate the interaction. Your evaluator will be looking at you as a team.

The exercises are modified on a species appropriate basis, as follows.

DOGS

1. Review the Handler’s Questionnaire Form
 2. Accepting a Friendly Stranger
 3. Accepting Petting
 4. Appearance and Grooming
 5. Out for a Walk
 6. Walk Through a Crowd
 7. Reaction to Distractions
 8. Sit on Cue
 9. Down on Cue
 10. Stay in Place
 11. Come When Called
 12. Reaction to a Neutral Dog
- Or Passed Between Three Strangers for carried dogs

CATS, RABBITS, GUINEA PIGS, and RATS

- ▶ Review the Handler's Questionnaire Form
- ▶ Accepting a Friendly Stranger
- ▶ Accepting Petting
- ▶ Appearance and Grooming
- ▶ Out for a Walk
- ▶ Walk Through a Crowd
- ▶ Reaction to Distractions
- ▶ Passed Between Three Strangers
- ▶ Stay in Place
- ▶ Reaction to a Neutral Dog

EQUINES and LLAMAS/ALPACAS

- ▶ Review the Handler's Questionnaire Form
- ▶ Accepting a Friendly Stranger
- ▶ Accepting Petting
- ▶ Appearance and Grooming
- ▶ Out for a Walk
- ▶ Walk Through a Crowd
- ▶ Reaction to Distractions
- ▶ Back Between Furniture
- ▶ Stay in Place
- ▶ Reaction to a Neutral Dog

BIRDS

- ▶ Review the Handler's Questionnaire Form
- ▶ Accepting a Friendly Stranger
- ▶ Accepting Petting
- ▶ Appearance and Grooming
- ▶ Out for a Walk
- ▶ Reaction to Distractions
- ▶ Step Up and Stay
- ▶ Passed Between Three Strangers
- ▶ Reaction to a Neutral Dog

PIGS

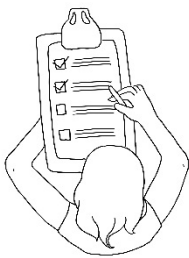
- ▶ Review the Handler's Questionnaire Form
- ▶ Accepting a Friendly Stranger
- ▶ Accepting Petting
- ▶ Appearance and Grooming
- ▶ Out for a Walk
- ▶ Reaction to Distractions
- ▶ Stay in Place
- ▶ Come When Called
- ▶ Reaction to a Neutral Dog

Team Evaluation: Part 1 — Skills Exercises

The following are high level descriptions of the skills exercises.

For detailed descriptions of each exercise specific to your animal's species, visit the Resource Library online and search for Evaluation Overviews.

Exercises that are marked with a diamond (◆) are used to evaluate placement in complex environments. You must receive a 2 on all diamond exercises and at least a 1 on all other exercises in order to receive a complex qualification rating.



Review the Handler's Questionnaire Form

You will bring a completed Handler's Questionnaire with you to your team evaluation that covers eligibility requirements as well as information about how well you know your animal. While the team evaluator reviews your responses, you and your animal have the opportunity to walk around the room and view the testing environment.



Accepting a Friendly Stranger

The team evaluator will approach to greet you and shake your hand. They will look at, but not touch, your animal. Your animal should allow the team evaluator to approach, remaining calm and not initiating contact. This demonstrates the team can greet strangers appropriately.



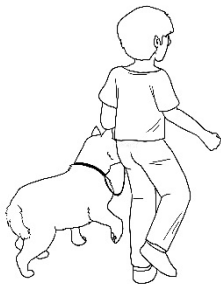
Accepting Petting

The team evaluator will ask to pet your animal. As your animal's advocate, you may instruct on the best way to pet your animal and support your animal as needed. After the team evaluator pets your animal, they will circle behind you. Your animal should remain calm during the interactions.



Appearance and Grooming

This exercise demonstrates that the team's appearance is suitable for visits, and that the animal welcomes being groomed and handled, even by a stranger. The team evaluator will feel your animal's coat, brush them lightly, look at the eyes and ears and gently pick up each front foot to feel the smoothness of the nails. You should support your animal as needed.



◆ Out for a Walk

You and your animal walk a short course that includes turns with one stop along the way. All dogs, regardless of size, walk the course; other animals walk or are carried as they would be when visiting. Walking animals should be on a loose leash near you. Carried animals should remain calm. You should support your animal as needed.



◆ Walk Through a Crowd

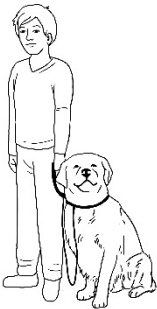
This exercise simulates a crowded corridor and demonstrates that your team can move about politely in pedestrian traffic. As you walk through the “crowd” your animal may show some interest in the strangers.

Walking animals should be on a loose leash near you. Carried animals should remain calm. You should be aware of your animal and proactively set them up for success.



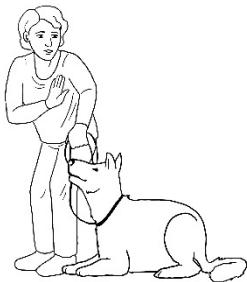
Reaction to Distractions

While walking across the room, your team will experience one visual and one auditory distraction. The goal is that your animal remains confident when faced with common distractions. You should support your animal as needed.



Sit on Cue

For dogs, basic obedience skills help inspire confidence while in public. You’ll be asked to cue your dog to sit and then wait for the team evaluator’s signal to release your dog after approximately three seconds.



Down on Cue

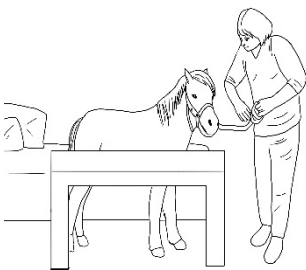
There are times when you may want to cue your dog to lie down during visits; for example, in order to make them less intimidating to clients. You’ll be asked to cue your dog to down and then wait for the team evaluator’s signal to release the dog after approximately three seconds.



Passed Between Three Strangers

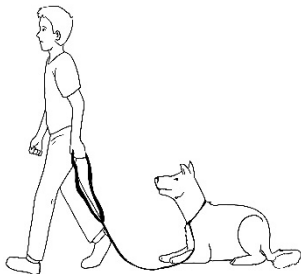
For small carried animals, this a common way to make visits. This exercise demonstrates that they will accept being passed to others and that they will remain where they're placed.

Each person will hold and pet your animal for about five seconds before they are passed back to you and you give them to the next person. As your animal's best advocate, you'll facilitate the interactions to keep your animal and the clients safe.



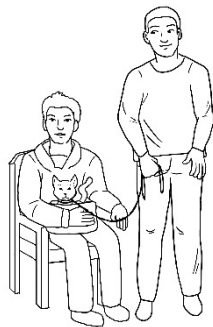
Back Between Furniture

For equines and camelids, it may be necessary to back out of rooms where there isn't enough space to turn around to leave. For this exercise, the team evaluator will arrange furniture to make a path to back through, approximately six feet in length and the same width as a standard door. You'll walk forward along the path and then back up along the same path.



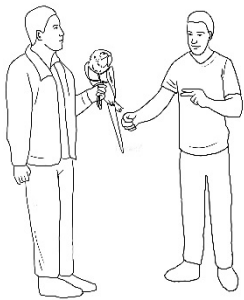
◆ Stay in Place

There will be times when you will want to ask your animal to stay; for example, so you can sign in at the volunteer desk or place a barrier on a client's bed. Your team evaluator will supply you with a 10-foot leash. You'll then be asked to place your animal into a stay and walk to the end of the line. You'll pause for approximately three seconds before returning to your animal.



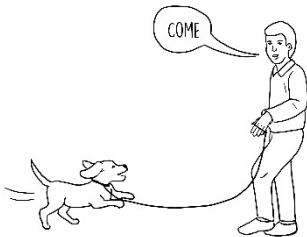
◆ Stay in Place on a Lap or Table

For carried therapy animals, there is also an expectation they will stay where placed. You'll be invited to place your animal on a person's lap or a table (your choice) where they will wait for 30 seconds. You'll stand next to your animal, continuing to hold their lead, and may reassure but not pet them.



◆ Step Up and Stay in Place for Birds

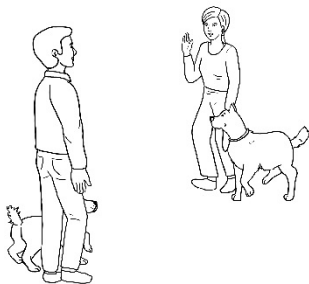
For avian teams, clients you visit may wish to hold your bird. In this exercise the team evaluator will ask to hold your bird and you will proactively instruct them how to receive your bird. Your bird will step up and stay with the team evaluator for 30 seconds before returning to you.



Come When Called

While your animal will never be off leash while visiting, it's important that if something were to happen, your animal would return to you promptly. Using the 10-foot leash, you'll cue your animal to stay and then walk to the end of the line. The team evaluator will pleasantly distract your animal by petting it. When asked, you will call your animal to you.

Very small dogs that have been carried during other parts of the evaluation must still complete this exercise on the ground.



◆ Reaction to a Neutral Dog

During visits, you may meet other therapy dogs. It's important that your animal can remain calm and behave politely around another dog and that you, as a proactive handler, are aware of your animal's potential response and can help them succeed.

As your team is standing with a client, a neutral dog will enter the room. After they visit with another person, the teams will pass each other within an arm's length, verbally greeting each other. As the neutral dog leaves the room, your team will make a visit with a client.

2. The Pet Partners Aptitude Test

The Pet Partners Aptitude Test determines whether you and your animal have the capacity and desire to participate in AAI. This portion of the evaluation involves role-playing common visiting situations. It evaluates the aptitude of the handler-animal team as a whole. So, in addition to your animal's response, your team evaluator will be watching for your ability to proactively set up and guide interactions with the safety of your animal and clients in mind.

DOGS, CATS, EQUINES, LLAMAS/ALPACAS and PIGS

- ▶ Overall Handling
- ▶ Exuberant and Clumsy Petting
- ▶ Restraining Hug
- ▶ Staggering, Gesturing Individual
- ▶ Angry Yelling
- ▶ Two-Fingered Tap
- ▶ Crowded and Petted by Several People
- ▶ Leave It
- ▶ Offered a Treat

RABBITS, GUINEA PIGS, RATS and BIRDS

- ▶ Overall Handling
- ▶ Exuberant and Clumsy Petting
- ▶ Restraining Hug
- ▶ Staggering, Gesturing Individual
- ▶ Angry Yelling
- ▶ Bumped from Behind
- ▶ Crowded and Petted by Several People
- ▶ Leave It
- ▶ Offered a Treat

Team Evaluation: Part 2 — Aptitude Exercises

The following are high level descriptions of the aptitude exercises.

For detailed descriptions of each exercise specific to your animal's species, visit the Resource Library online and search for Evaluation Overviews.

Exercises that are marked with a diamond (◆) are used to evaluate placement in complex environments. You must receive a 2 on all diamond exercises and at least a 1 on all other exercises in order to receive a Complex qualification rating.



◆ Overall Handling

This exercise demonstrates that your animal will accept being physically handled by a stranger and that you, as the handler, know how to present your animal for a visit and can help your animal accept and welcome being touched all over.

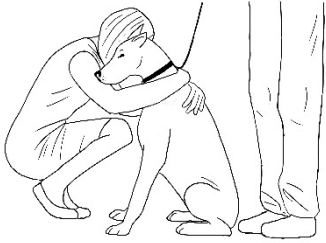
This will vary slightly by species, but handling includes touching ears, tail, legs, and feet.



◆ Exuberant and Clumsy Petting

Some of the people you visit as a therapy animal team will have differing physical abilities or limited familiarity with your species. This exercise demonstrates that your animal will maintain self-control during awkward or clumsy petting and that you can support your animal and be their advocate.

The team evaluator will gently use elbows and a clenched hand to pet your animal. They will also speak vowel sounds in a monotone, simulating speech differences. Interactions will become slightly more exuberant, as an excited child might be.



◆ Restraining Hug

In this exercise, the team evaluator gives the animal a full-body hug that restricts their movement for 15 seconds. For small, carried animals, the team evaluator restrains the animal's movement with both hands.

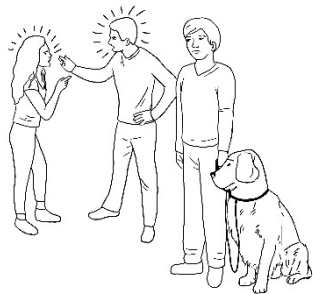
As your animal's best advocate, support your animal as needed.



Staggering, Gesturing Individual

Someone wearing a robe or shawl with an unsteady gait and using an assistive device such as a walker approaches the animal, gesturing and/or wailing. The person stops staggering and then calls the team to approach. If the animal is comfortable, the person then pets the animal.

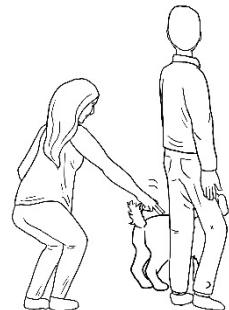
Your team evaluator is looking to see if your animal will exhibit confidence when a person who is acting in an unusual manner approaches, as well as your ability to interact with the stranger while attending to your animal.



Angry Yelling

In this exercise, two people begin to shout angrily at each other and wave their arms. As they end their argument they begin to act "neutral." One of the people then calls the animal to see whether they will approach.

This exercise demonstrates that the animal won't become over stressed when someone exhibits strong emotions. It also demonstrates that the handler can support their animal through such a situation.



Two-Fingered Tap

For dogs, cats, equines, camelids, and pigs, this exercise looks to see how an animal responds to an unexpected touch and how the handler supports their animal to recover, as needed.

As your team walks across the room, the team evaluator will walk past you and tap your animal on their side or back.



Bumped From Behind

While visiting with your small, carried animal you can anticipate being accidentally jostled at some time. Here the team evaluator lightly bumps your body on the side opposite of where you are carrying your animal.

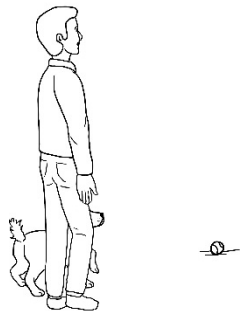
This exercise demonstrates that the animal is able to recover when a person bumps into them and that the handler can help the animal recover from any surprise.



◆ Crowded and Petted by Several People

When you enter a facility, your therapy animal will be an attraction. As your animal's best advocate, you'll facilitate the interactions and support your animal to prevent against overstimulation or stress.

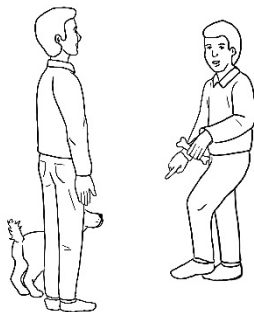
Here three people, arriving one at a time, will gather closely around your animal. All of them will talk and want to pet your animal.



◆ Leave It

While visiting, you'll pass objects your animal should not come in contact with, from a tissue or pill on the ground to a client's belongings. Having the ability to cue your animal to 'leave it' is not just good manners, it's important for safety.

Your team will be asked to walk forward, past an interesting object which will be positioned so that it's on the same side as the animal. You'll proactively set your animal up for success.



Offered a Treat

In this exercise, the team evaluator will ask if your animal can have a treat. You can choose to allow your animal to receive treats or politely decline them. Even if you decline treats, your animal needs to remain calm and under control. If you do decide to allow treats on visits, as a proactive handler you'll describe how to give the treat and your animal will take it gently.

UNIT 5

Visit Best Practices

LESSON 5.1

The Parts of a Visit

A visit with a client can be broken down into three main parts. By thoughtfully structuring every visit, you demonstrate your professionalism and commitment to improving health through the human-animal bond.

1. Approach

The approach is the beginning of your team's relationship with a client. As with any relationship, you want to start off on the right foot—or paw! At the beginning, you and your animal are still learning about the client and vice versa; therefore, the client might initially display some resistance. However, as time goes on, the number of visits increases and your relationship develops, you might notice that the client's resistance decreases.

Your goal is to be respectful of the client and your animal and to develop a safe environment for visiting. You must be respectful of the circumstances that might have caused a client to be in their current situation. Always be conscious of the client's reality (pain, emotions, and limitations).

Introducing yourself and your animal to the client and asking permission to visit will lead in one of three directions, as shown in the following table.

Client Acceptance	Client Neutral	Client Resistant
If there's open, active acceptance, you might still need to encourage appropriate actions. For example, you might need to tell the client, "She likes to be scratched here" or "Why don't we let her sit like this?"	If there's no acceptance but also no resistance, continue to move toward having as much contact as possible, but pay close attention to the client's comfort level.	If the client refuses closer contact or resists in any way, respect that, and stop. Pay attention both to the person's actions and to their words, which might not always agree. The very client who verbally resists you might be the one who would benefit most from a visit.

There are two basic steps for approaching the client during your visit:

1. **Announce your presence:** Before you enter a room, identify who you are, and state that your animal is a therapy animal. This will put the client more at ease and make them more likely to accept a visit from you. It's also a way to show that you respect the client's privacy. All you have to say is something like, "Hello, my name is Becky, and this is my therapy dog Milagro. Would you like a visit today?"
2. **Ask permission:** Never assume that a client wants a visit, even if they were listed on the visit request sheet. Always ask. Clients have the right to refuse visits with animals. Doing so might even be therapeutic for them if they otherwise have little control over their daily activities in the facility.

Approach Techniques

- ▶ **Approach from the front:** Always approach from the front, unless the client has only peripheral vision. This type of approach helps a person know what to expect and allows you to observe his or her reaction to your approach. If you, your animal, or the person is uncomfortable, there's an opportunity to react and choose not to visit.
- ▶ **Make visual contact:** When you enter the room, make eye contact with the client. Get into a position where you're at eye level with the client, regardless of whether they are sitting in a wheelchair or lying in a bed. For example, you might want to kneel next to your animal. This is a very safe and proactive position because it puts you closer to the animal in the event that you need to take quick action for any reason. It also puts you in a position that's comfortable for a person who is sitting or lying down.
- ▶ **Move slowly:** Don't let your animal get too close to the client right away. Wait until the client is aware that the animal is in the room. Sudden awareness of the animal could be very frightening for the client.
- ▶ **Present the animal:** Present your animal at the client's waist level or below, not from above or at face level. Also, if your animal is a large dog, it's less intimidating for the client if you have the dog lie down. Protect the animal by presenting them to the client in such a way that the client is discouraged from poking the animal's face. If it's a small animal, turn them sideways or backward. Instruct and demonstrate how your animal prefers to be touched. If necessary, place your hand discreetly around the animal's head to protect their eyes or ears.
- ▶ **Invite contact:** Encourage as much contact with your animal as possible. If the client doesn't reach out, encourage them to pet the animal by asking, "Would you like to pet [animal's name]?" Contact doesn't always have to be physical. Some people will enjoy just looking at your animal and admiring it. Watch your animal's signals to make sure that the animal is comfortable interacting with the person that you're visiting. If a client handles your animal too roughly, intervene and tactfully demonstrate the proper way to touch the animal. If the client doesn't follow your lead, remove the animal from the client right away.

2. Interaction

During this part of the visit, you and your animal are interacting with the client and building your relationship with them. As you conduct your visit activities, watch both your animal and the client for signs of fatigue or loss of interest. If you see any, that's a good indication that it's time to end the visit.

There are a wide variety of activities that can be incorporated into visits. Review this list of options and the corresponding best practices to ensure a safe and effective interaction.

Petting Your Animal

In healthcare settings, most touch is painful or invasive. In programs treating physical or sexual abuse, staff and volunteers might not be allowed to touch the clients at all. Having an animal to touch can make a big difference. Tests have shown dramatic decreases in heart rate and blood pressure when people are petting an animal.

Sometimes, a client might want to pet your animal but can move his or her hand only a limited amount. In this case, offer to help the client gently place a hand on the animal. However, you should first find out the facility's policies about helping clients in this manner. You might be required to have a staff member assist you.

Holding Your Animal

Sometimes actions and words aren't always necessary. Simply allowing a client to sit quietly and hold your animal can have a significant impact.

If the client wants to hold your animal, always place the animal on the client's lap, never in his or her hands or arms. Towel-lined baskets under guinea pigs, rabbits, and rats protect the client from claws, and also from urine and feces in the event of an accident. In addition, they give the animal a familiar, comfortable surface to sit on. Cats and small dogs should always sit on a towel on the client's lap. Always use a barrier between your animal and where they are sitting, whether it is a person's lap, bedding, or a chair.

Walks

Taking an animal on a walk is a great activity for improving socialization and communication, and for reducing isolation, boredom, and loneliness. Finally, it can provide a self-esteem boost or serve as a motivator when offered as a reward for reaching a desired therapeutic goal. Review Lesson 5.2 for best practices on clients taking your animal for a walk.

Therapeutic Riding

The Therapy Animal Program is not inclusive of hippotherapy or therapeutic horseback riding activities. Pet Partners insurance will not cover equines, llamas and alpacas ridden by adults or children during Pet Partners visits.

Grooming

You may consider bringing a brush and allowing clients to groom your animal. If you partner with an AAT practitioner in a therapeutic setting, grooming an animal can address the following goals:

- ▶ Physical goals, such as working to increase strength or endurance, improving posture, or increasing coordination and balance.
- ▶ Cognitive goals, such as attention to tasks.
- ▶ Psychosocial goals, such as decreasing depression or providing affection.

Remember, the brush you provide is not necessarily what you use to groom your animal at home. It should be safe for your animal and the client, without metal bristles or sharp corners or edges, and easily sanitized.

Giving Treats

Giving an animal a treat can address a therapeutic goal in the cognitive domain, such as attention to tasks or problem-solving. In addition, it can be gratifying for clients to see an animal accept a treat that they have offered. Treats also give clients a tangible way to show their appreciation for a visit. Review Lesson 5.2 for best practices on clients giving your animal a treat.

Letting the Client “Help”

Helping others can be therapeutic, and clients might benefit from the opportunity to help you care for your animal. For example, some people with low self-esteem find it easier to offer help to an animal than to a person. Helping your animal might make these people feel better about themselves. Alternately, some people that you visit might feel as though the facility has total control over their lives and activities. Helping your animal might help these people feel more in control.

Activities such as taking walks, giving treats, grooming, or even helping you teach your therapy animal a new trick can give the client the feeling of doing something that helped your animal.

Observation

Many people will enjoy just seeing your animal, but you may also have a few tricks you can use to show off. If your tricks involve any toys or props, be sure they can be easily sanitized.

Mental stimulation is a significant benefit in a long-term care setting or a depressing environment. Animals can brighten the atmosphere and encourage laughter and play, thus decreasing feelings of isolation, sadness, or fear.

article



What Do I Do With My Animal?

By Christi W. Dudzik, M.C., L.M.H.C., president, Healing Paws, Inc.

Your first visits after becoming registered as a therapy animal team and finding a facility to work with will go most smoothly if you have a clear idea of what to expect. You've probably got a clear vision of yourself entering the building and greeting your contact person there. But your ideas about the actual room visit may be a bit blurry. You may wonder, "What do I do with my animal?"

The following tips address visiting with a dog since dogs make up the majority of therapy animals. (If you are visiting with another type of animal, you should be able to adapt this information to your use.)

- ▶ At your first visit, you will most likely find that you knew more than you thought you did about what to do. Remember, you will never have a first visit again. All your future visits should be easier, even when going into another facility for the first time.
- ▶ Treat the client's room as if it were their home. Ask for permission before entering.
- ▶ Don't begin by asking, "Do you like dogs?"—a question that may confuse some clients. Some have thought I was hoping to give them my dog. Instead, I clearly say my name and point to my dog while telling them, "I have my therapy dog with me and we are here to visit you. May we come in?"
- ▶ Once the client says "yes," we proceed to where they are resting, with my dog at my side and slightly behind me. I never allow my dog to lead me to a client during a first meeting. I place myself between the client and my dog and ask if the client would like for my dog to get closer. I then wait for their response.
- ▶ I ask if they would like to pat my dog or to receive a kiss from him (know the facility's policy on this). Your dog may need to climb onto a sturdy chair or the bed to be accessible to some clients. Before his feet leave the floor, you must first clear this with your facility's contact person. Some facilities are fine with an animal being on a client's bed, and some are absolutely not. First, put a clean towel (borrowed from the facility) on the chair or the bed. After that visit, remove the towel and place it in the dirty linen hamper before moving on. Don't use the same towel from room to room for infection control reasons.
- ▶ Over time, you may find that you are seeing some of the same clients each visit. Your visits may evolve into the client greeting your dog, and then wanting to visit primarily with you. This is fine, since our animals often serve as a bridge connecting people to people. Have your dog lie quietly while the two of you visit.

Sharing Your Animal's Photo Album

Consider bringing photos to show clients during visits. These may be of your animal at work or play. This can be a great conversation starter. In a therapeutic setting, sharing a photo album addresses psychosocial goals by improving socialization and communication. Looking at pictures of your animal in a photo album can encourage the client to reminisce about his or her own past, remember and repeat information about your animal, or even verbally introduce others to your animal after learning more about it. Other benefits can include a brightening of mood and some relief from depression.

Just Being Present

For some clients, it can be therapeutic just to be near an animal, even if they don't interact with the animal. Having your animal lie down at the client's feet and sleep while you visit with the client may be the right level of interaction for some people.

Regardless of the interactions with your client, remember that your first job is YAYABA™, or to be your animal's best advocate.

- ▶ Support your animal throughout the visit by practicing PETS™.
- ▶ If your animal starts demonstrating signs of stress, anxiety, or fatigue, or exhibits any unusual behavior, remove them from the situation. It is always better to end a visit and try another day than to push your animal.
- ▶ Never leave your animal unattended with a client or staff member, regardless of the circumstances.

3. Closure

Closure is a very important part of the visit. You should say "goodbye," let the client know that you and your animal enjoyed the visit and indicate when you expect to visit next. Be sure also to thank clients for their time. For example, you might close a visit by saying, "Polly says 'goodbye.' Thank you! We'll be back to visit you again next week."

Here are some closing procedures and situations that you should consider.

Hygiene Between Clients

Explain to clients that you wash your hands between visits because you care about the health and safety of the people that you visit. Recommend that they also wash their hands. You can keep this discussion lighthearted by including your animal in the activity. For example, say to a client, "We have to go now, but before we do, Polly and I have to wash 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 that you're visiting, even though you have other clients to visit or reading time has ended. In these situations, be sure to 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 of clients and want to make sure that you get to everyone, it might seem easiest to move quickly from one client to another. However, it's still important to thank the clients and let them know when you're likely to be back.

Nonresponsive Clients

When a client appears nonresponsive, you might find yourself tempted to simply get up and leave. However, even if the client appears unaware of your presence, end the visit with a goodbye and information about your next visit.

Ending a Visit Early

Always be prepared to end a visit early if you or your animal is having problems. If you notice signs of stress or fatigue in your animal, immediately remove the animal from the setting, and allow them to have a "timeout." Note the cause of the problem, so that you can avoid it in the future. As always, thank the client as you promptly excuse yourself.

Post-Visit Actions

After a visit, it's time to reward your animal, document the visit and assess how it went. The following are some post-visit guidelines.

1. For Your Animal

- ▶ Offer your animal a reward for a job well done; for example, treats, play time, and/or praise.
- ▶ Realize that your animal will be tired after the visit. Before you pack up, allow your animal a relief break and some water. Assess your animal's stress level and let them have some quiet time to unwind.
- ▶ Clean and store your equipment.

2. Document Your Visit

If the facility or program has a documentation process, complete that process. Your Pet Partners Volunteer Center account allows you to log visits from your account homepage. This is both for your own records and for the purpose of Pet Partners to understand and measure impact. For confidentiality purposes, never use a client's full name; instead, use a first name only or initials.

The following examples are taken from actual volunteer documentation:

- ▶ “At first M. didn’t want to meet Roscoe, but he reminded her of the pets she had years ago, which reminded her of her children. This began a conversation about parts of her memory, which seemed to be just coming back. So, she petted Roscoe and cried and talked about her kids’ names, birthday, etc.—details she said she couldn’t remember this morning. Fun visit—we shared this with her nurse.”
- ▶ “K. is still here. She remembered our visit from two weeks ago and described in detail how Roscoe snuggled on the bed. Her behavior with other people was unusual—arms flailing in the air and crying ‘boo’; but with the dog she was calm, focused, and quite articulate.”

3. Assess Your Visit

Take some time to review your visit: What went well? What can be improved upon for the next visit? How did you do? How did your animal do? Get feedback from the facility contact person or your volunteer coordinator. Congratulate yourself on a job well done.

LESSON 5.2

Strategies for Safe and Effective Visits

There's no such thing as a "typical visit." However, although no two visits will ever be alike, you can prepare for a variety of situations by learning key strategies that promote safety and effective interactions.

For Clients Restricted to Bed

If you are visiting a client who is receiving a visit in a bed, you will need to be particularly attentive to equipment such as vital sign monitors and IV tubes.

Make an effort to approach clients from the side that is free of any devices and prevent your animal from having contact with catheter insertion sites, bandage materials, and breaks in client skin.

If it is permitted by the facility, your animal may sit on a bed to visit, but take these steps to ensure a safe interaction:

- ▶ Cue your animal to sit and stay.
- ▶ Ask staff, family, or the client to help reposition tubes or monitor cords as necessary.
- ▶ Place a barrier on the bed.
- ▶ Cue the animal to jump onto the barrier, or for smaller animals lift them to the bed.

If your animal is not permitted on a client's bed, ask if your animal may be placed in closer proximity by having them sit on a chair. Always use a barrier underneath your animal, whether on a chair or bed, and make sure the barrier is not shared among clients.

Wheelchair Etiquette

When you meet people who use wheelchairs, keep in mind these basic good manners:

- ▶ Don't talk down to or over a person who is in a wheelchair. Ideally, you should stand only during your initial greeting when you first enter the room. After that, sit, squat, or kneel to continue conversing with the person.
- ▶ When you're introduced to a person in a wheelchair, it's appropriate to offer to shake hands. Shake left-handed if necessary.

*How wonderful it is,
that no one need to
wait a single moment
before starting to
improve the world.*

— ANNE FRANK

- ▶ Don't move or touch the wheelchair without asking. Remember that, for people who use wheelchairs, the wheelchair can be a part of their body—their sense of where they are and how they move around.
- ▶ Don't lean on a person's wheelchair.
- ▶ For safety reasons, ask the person whether the wheelchair's wheels are locked.

If someone seated in a wheelchair can't easily bend over or reach your animal for petting, you might need to pick your animal up and carry them to the client. For larger animals, and if permitted by facility policy, you might try placing the animal in a chair next to the person—but make sure your animal doesn't tower over the person as a result. Remember always to place a towel or other clean barrier on the person's lap or a chair if your animal will be sitting there.

Treats for Your Animal While Visiting

Decide on a "treat policy" in advance of visiting. Keep in mind you must visit as you evaluate. This means if you choose to decline a treat on behalf of your animal during the team evaluation, you will not be allowing treats on visits.

Check with the facility to make sure that animal treats are permitted. Some facilities may allow clients to offer treats, while others may allow only you to offer treats to your animal due to dietary concerns, allergen exposure, or infection control.

Food sharing can be a special experience. If clients are permitted to give treats, hand a treat to the client, and instruct them how to offer it to your animal. For most animals this will be on a flattened palm. Some smaller animals, such as guinea pigs, rabbits, and birds, may need different instruction.

If food disrupts your animal's focus during visits, you might need to store treats in a sealed bag and then wait until the end of the visit before giving any. If you are not confident your animal can consistently take a treat gently, don't use them on visits.

Going on Walks with a Client

In some settings, having a client help walk your animal is a great interaction opportunity. Always confirm a walk is permitted by the facility for that specific client.

When allowing a client to go on a walk with you and your animal, use two leashes. Have the client hold one while you hold the other as backup. If the client is in a wheelchair, shorter leashes (no more than three feet in length) are best. Have the client hold one while you hold the other; a volunteer or staff member pushes the wheelchair. Under no circumstances should you ever hand off your primary leash to anyone else during a visit.

Visiting with Groups of Clients

When possible, plan ahead and find out the number of people and any special client needs or challenges before you arrive with your animal. This will give you time to think about the best way to present your animal. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance or advice from facility staff. Staff members will have more experience with the people in the group than you do and can be an invaluable resource.

A group setting will impact the success of your visit. Consider the sound level and other possible distractions. How will your animal react? Can your animal remain focused and interested in the visit, or will distractions make your animal reluctant to engage with the group?

Group settings can be stressful for your animal if they aren't accustomed to visiting with many people at once. Keep visits short to start and be aware that your animal will benefit from more frequent breaks when visiting groups than when visiting one person at a time. As always, be vigilant as your animal's best advocate, and guide interactions and manage crowds to keep the experience positive for everyone.

Visiting with a Group of Therapy Animal Teams

In some settings there may be multiple therapy animal teams present. While you may know your animal is reliable, predictable, and directable, you may not know that about other animals present. Best practice is to keep the animals at a safe distance from one another. Remember that even friendly barking can be frightening to some clients and your goal is to constantly inspire confidence in others.

If you will be visiting as a group of therapy animal teams and staying together as a group at the facility or event, consider arriving early to meet before the visit begins. This should not be about play, which sets the wrong context for the visit to follow. Even once everyone has successfully met, allow ample space between animals, keeping approximately three animal lengths apart.

Know your animal. Only you know how your animal really feels when they encounter other animals. If you find your animal has an extreme interest in the other animals present, it is best to leave rather than risk an incident or the perception of an incident. Leaving or not attending an event is not a failure. It is a demonstration of your skill as a proactive handler who is committed to YAYABA™.

Visiting in the Presence of Other Animals

In Lesson 6.3, we'll discuss the importance of visiting a new facility first without your animal to assess the site. One of the many reasons to do this is to determine if there are any resident pets present. Whether a dog, cat, bird, or even a fish tank, you should be aware of other animals who could be present and understand if you might be in proximity during visits with your therapy animal.

If there are other animals who can move independently in the facility, explain to the facility that for the safety of everyone, you would prefer not to visit in areas where other animals are present.

On Practicing YAYABA™

Starting visits with clients is a very exciting time, but it can also be nerve-wracking. With so much variety among facilities, clients, and programs, there's a lot of information for you to absorb and keep straight. However, don't forget that your first job is to be your animal's advocate. The following are some points to consider when you're at a facility with your animal:

- ▶ **Pre-visit elimination breaks:** Allow your animal to eliminate before the visit, in an area away from the entrance of the facility. Be sure to pick up waste and dispose of it properly.
- ▶ **Intent from the beginning:** Act professionally from the moment that you step out of your vehicle. Keep your animal under control at all times.
- ▶ **Safety first:** Never assume that a client knows how to touch your animal appropriately. Sometimes, for the welfare and comfort of the animal during the visit, you will need to instruct or show adults or children how to pet your animal appropriately.
- ▶ **Visit lengths:** Begin with very short visits, and gradually increase the length. However, for safety and liability reasons, a team may visit a maximum of two hours per day.
- ▶ **Timeouts:** Remember that it's okay to leave after a short time, even five minutes, if either you or your animal is becoming stressed. A short, enjoyable visit is better than a prolonged visit that makes you or your animal uncomfortable.
- ▶ **Stress breaks:** During all parts of a visit, watch for signs of stress in your animal, and pay attention to their level of comfort. The demands of visiting might lead your animal to need more frequent breaks. Give your animal a break and a chance to eliminate every 20 or 30 minutes.
- ▶ **Other animals:** If other animals will be in the facility while you and your animal visit, keep at a safe distance. If you plan to allow the animals to greet one another, this is best done outside the facility. This includes resident animals.
- ▶ **Water:** Beware of letting your animal overheat. Provide water periodically.

Tips for Client Interaction With Your Animal

1. Ask the client to wait a moment until you have your animal sitting politely for petting.
2. Tell the client where your animal likes to be petted—for example, on the side of the head instead of the top.
3. Remind children to stay calm and keep their movements slow.
4. If permitted, demonstrate the best way to give your animal a treat—for example, with an open palm instead of the fingers.
5. Brainstorm other instructions that you might give to help the client interact appropriately with the animal so you have them before you need them.

LESSON 5.3

Infection Control and Reducing Risk

Infection Control

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is a general term that applies to hand washing with soap and water, antiseptic hand-wash, alcohol-based hand-rub (hand sanitizer), and surgical hand hygiene/antisepsis. Clean hands are the single most important factor in preventing the spread of pathogens and antibiotic resistance in healthcare settings. Good hand hygiene protects you, your animal, and the clients that you visit from unwanted germs. By modeling excellent infection control standards through consistent and thorough hand hygiene, you will inspire confidence in the facilities that receive your volunteer time and promote the professionalism and high standards of Pet Partners.

Guidelines During Visits

1. You're required to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before visiting each client.
2. You should ask anyone who wants to touch or pet your animal to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer first.
3. You *and* the client should wash your hands or use hand sanitizer at the end of the visit.

Tips for Hand Hygiene

1. Using hand sanitizer: apply the product to the palm of one hand; then rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of both hands and all fingers, until your hands are dry.
2. When washing your hands with soap and water, wet both hands with water, apply the amount of soap that's recommended by the manufacturer, and then rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of both hands and all fingers. Rinse your hands with water, leave the water running while you dry your hands thoroughly with a disposable towel, and then use the towel to turn off the faucet.
3. The key to effective hand hygiene is friction. Rub your hands together vigorously, whether you're using soap and water or hand sanitizer.

In general, Pet Partners recommends hand sanitizers, because they provide several advantages over hand washing with soap and water in a visiting environment:

- ▶ They are more accessible than sinks. You can take a small bottle of hand sanitizer with you wherever you go.
- ▶ They require less time.
- ▶ Clients with limited mobility can be offered hand sanitizer wherever they are. They don't have to move to a sink to perform proper hand hygiene.

Plan ahead of time how you will ask people who want to interact with your animal to perform proper hand hygiene. By having an easy explanation, you will get your visit off on the right foot. It's often helpful to explain to people that good hand hygiene is important not only for their protection but also for yours and your animal's.



Activity

Write down a few ideas for how you will invite people to wash their hands at the start and close of a visit.

Precautions

Infection can be spread in various ways. Hospitals and other medical facilities will post precautions to indicate the infection control steps that all staff and visitors must take before entering a particular room.

The three types of precautions are as follows:

1. Airborne precautions, when respirators are used to avoid breathing air that might be infected with microorganisms.
2. Droplet precautions, when masks are used to prevent diseases from being transmitted through coughing, sneezing, or talking.
3. Contact precautions, when gloves, gowns, and (possibly) foot coverings are used to prevent diseases from being transmitted by touch.

All three types require everyone who enters the area to wear protective equipment. However, because your animal can't wear a mask or a gown, and because you're responsible for your animal at all times and may not leave them unattended, you won't be able to visit clients in rooms where these precautions are in effect.

Don't enter any room where precautions are posted.

Body Fluids

Never come into contact with a client's blood or other body fluids and prevent your animal from coming into contact with them. You should treat these fluids as if they are infectious. Bloodborne pathogens include viruses, bacteria, and other microorganisms that are carried in a person's bloodstream and cause disease. Some examples are hepatitis B and HIV.

If a client becomes injured or body fluids become present, but the substance doesn't get on you or your animal, follow these steps:

1. Stay calm.
2. Remove your animal from the environment
3. Alert a staff member.

If you or your animal comes into contact with a client's blood or other body fluids, follow these steps:

1. Stay calm.
2. If your animal's coat, feathers, or feet are contaminated, perform hand hygiene, put on protective gloves, and then clean the animal as well as you can on-site. Don't use alcohol-based cleaners, because these might injure your animal; instead, ask your veterinarian in advance what they recommend.
3. Alert a staff member, who will coordinate clean-up of the client and the environment.
4. End your visit, so you can go home and bathe your animal completely.

Infection Control Considerations

Infection Control—The Handler

- ▶ Proactively ask your facility if they have any specific infection control guidelines for visits by therapy animals, such as if animals are allowed on furniture.
- ▶ Be aware of the types of situations that should prevent a visit (see Lesson 5.3). Don't visit in any of those situations.
- ▶ Check with staff to confirm which clients are approved for a visit that day.
- ▶ Cleanse your hands at the start and close of each visit with a client without exception.
- ▶ Use common sense about hygiene and safety. For example:
 - A client has just had chemotherapy, which typically causes nausea. If the client isn't feeling well and might be sick, don't put your animal on that person's lap. Instead, check with the facility to see if you could put the animal on a chair next to the bed.
 - If a client has broken skin lesions, a "kitty head-butt" isn't appropriate.

Infection Control—The Animal

- ▶ Before each visit, make sure that your animal meets the health and cleanliness/grooming requirements.
- ▶ If you take your animal outside for a break, make sure that the animal doesn't bring anything inappropriate into the facility. In inclement weather you may need to wipe down your animal's paws when you re-enter the facility.
- ▶ Make sure that your animal doesn't carry anything from one room to the next (for example, a tissue in their mouth).
- ▶ If the animal is permitted on the client's bed or lap, use a barrier. Check with the facility to see if they prefer a disposable barrier or a barrier which can be laundered by the facility, such as an extra sheet or towel. Barriers in healthcare settings should not be used for multiple clients.
- ▶ If your animal's coat, feathers, or feet are contaminated by body fluids from a client, clean the animal as well as you can, and alert a staff member.
- ▶ Apply sanitary guidelines to objects that multiple people have contact with, such as toys and brushes.
- ▶ If your animal vomits, urinates, or defecates in the facility, contain any fluids or substances, so that they don't spread. This includes preventing people from stepping in the contaminated area. Stay calm and notify staff. Work within the facility's guidelines to clean up. If clothing or bedding was soiled, stay with the person until a staff member arrives to make changes. Such an accident might be a signal that your animal is stressed or doesn't feel well. End the visit early and try to determine the root cause.

Infection Control—The Client

- ▶ Make sure that clients cleanse their hands before and after handling your animal.
- ▶ If your animal is trained to shake hands or give a high five, and this activity is permitted by the facility, ensure clients perform appropriate hand hygiene after touching your animal's paws.
- ▶ While some clients may want a lick or 'kiss' from a visiting animal, this may be discouraged by the facility. To prevent infection your animal should not lick clients, particularly around broken skin or mucous membranes like the mouth or nose.
- ▶ Check with staff to see which clients may receive visits. There may also be a specific order in which people should be visited if a person with a suppressed immune system is on the list for a visit.
- ▶ If the person that you're visiting vomits, urinates, or defecates, stay calm. The person might be feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable. If necessary, clean your animal, and then politely excuse yourself and notify the staff.

Your Facility's Infection Control Policy

Keep in mind that the facilities that you visit might have their own infection control policies. These could require additional or more stringent hygiene steps than those that were described here. When starting visits at a new facility, speak with your facility contact person about infection control and any other policies that are relevant to therapy animal visits. If the facility's policy is more lenient than Pet Partners', you must still follow the Pet Partners guidelines. If the facility's policy is stricter, follow the guidelines of the facility.

Additional Guidelines for Reducing Risk

There are a variety of things you can do as a handler to reduce risk on visits for you, your animal, and your clients. The following guidelines can help you promote safe visits:

Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

— ANONYMOUS

- ▶ Know yourself, your animal, and your animal's limitations. Choose visiting environments that set your team up for success. This means your animal should be comfortable, but also recognize that if you as the handler are uncomfortable in a certain setting, your animal may mirror your unease.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to say "no" to staff or the person that you're visiting as part of being your animal's best advocate. If what they are asking for isn't safe, will place unnecessary stress on your animal, or cause you to break with Pet Partners policy and procedure, saying 'no' can prevent an incident.
- ▶ Respect and abide by the policies, procedures, and precautions of the facility that you're visiting. Facility staff know their clients best. If they ask you not to visit certain clients or floors, assume it is for a good reason. For example, a facility might decide someone with a history of animal abuse should not be included in an AAI visit.
- ▶ Get to know the population that you will be interacting with and adapt your visits to fit that population and its environment. Additionally, recognize that your animal might be able to do a long visit with one population but only enjoys a brief visit with another.
- ▶ Become familiar with the layout of the facility and potential dangers to you, your animal, and the people that you visit. Making a pre-visit to a new facility without your animal is a great way to orient yourself to possible concerns.
- ▶ If other teams are visiting at the same time, be especially diligent about managing the behavior of your animal. Work a safe distance away from other animals and prevent conflicts over items that the animal considers valuable, whether toys, treats, or people.
- ▶ Be familiar with and follow all Pet Partners policies and procedures, such as never handing off your leash and the two-hour visit limit. These are designed to promote safe and effective visits and minimize your risk of being involved in an incident.

Situations That Prevent a Visit

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

If you're unable to meet an obligation for any reason, 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.

The following are some examples of situations in which you and/or your animal should not visit clients.

For Your Animal

Your animal should not go on a visit under the following circumstances:

- ▶ The animal is on medication for infections or illness, or another animal in your household is ill. For more information, see Lesson 3.3.
- ▶ The animal 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.
- ▶ The animal has been injured or ill. In these cases, the animal needs time to heal in the safe environment of your home. Some indicators that your animal might be ill include the following:
 - Unusual odor from the animal's ears, body, or mouth.
 - Lesions, hair loss, atypical urine or stools, swelling or bloating, or an abnormal temperature.
 - A change in appetite or fluid intake.

For You

You should not go on a visit under the following circumstances:

- ▶ You're ill.
- ▶ You aren't emotionally competent to visit.
- ▶ You have recently been exposed to contagious childhood diseases (for example, chickenpox), or you have an ill child or other family member at home.

LESSON 5.4

Conversational Techniques

Sometimes, it can be difficult to know how to start a conversation with the people that you visit. In general, try to avoid “closed-ended” questions, which allow for a limited number of responses and can usually be answered in just one or two words, such as “yes” or “two years.” Instead, try to ask “open-ended” questions, which allow for responses of any length. Remember to tailor the conversation to the age and condition of the person that you’re visiting.

The following are some topics and phrases that you might find helpful when you first start visiting.

Your Animal

By calling attention to your animal, you can provide the person with something specific to talk about. You might try the following:

- ▶ Allow the animal to lead. If the client and your animal make eye contact, the client might call to the animal. You can follow from there, but don’t allow your animal to approach in anything but a controlled manner.
- ▶ “Hi. Would you like to see my dog?” “Hi. Look who I brought to visit you today.”
- ▶ Talk for the animal—for example, “Zoey would like to visit with you today. She wants to know if you’ll pet her.”
- ▶ Interpret the animal’s actions—for example, “He likes you” or “Look, he wants you to do that again.”

The Past

To help a person remember past experiences, try these phrases:

- ▶ “Are you from this area?”
- ▶ “How long have you lived here? Where were you before?”
- ▶ “How has this area changed since then?”
- ▶ “Tell me about your school days. Where did you go to school?”
- ▶ “What types of work have you done?”
- ▶ “Have you ever had any pets? Tell me about them.”
- ▶ “Which was your favorite? Why was that?”

The Present

Conversations about the present could start with these phrases:

- ▶ “What has your day been like today?”
- ▶ “How has the weather been today?”
- ▶ “What do you like to eat?”
- ▶ “Do you watch TV? What’s your favorite show? What do you like about it?”
- ▶ “Tell me about your interests/hobbies.”
- ▶ “Do you enjoy reading? What kinds of books do you like?”
- ▶ “Do you have any pets? Tell me about them.”
- ▶ “Do you like music? What kind?”

Visiting “Outside the Box”

If the person that you’re visiting has a map of the world or a globe in his or her room, it can serve as a great conversation starter. Spin the globe and take turns stopping it with a finger—or paw! Exchange stories about travels or experiences that you have had—or would like to have—in that country.

The Room/Setting

- ▶ “What a beautiful sweater! That must be nice and cozy. What’s it made out of?”
- ▶ If there’s a floral display in the room: “Your flowers look lovely! Are roses your favorite?”

Listening Skills

No matter how much you usually talk, try talking less and listening more when you visit. As a general rule, you should talk for 20 percent of the visit and listen for 80 percent.

By using good listening skills during a visit, you assure the client that they are 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.

Maybe the reason we have two ears and one mouth is because we should be listening more and talking less!

— ANONYMOUS



Activity

Pair up with someone to practice good listening skills, using the following exercise:

1. Have your partner tell you a story about an important animal-related experience from his or her life. As your partner talks, use poor listening skills (for example, poor eye contact, interruptions, or fidgeting). After about one minute, ask your partner how they felt about this experience.
2. Have your partner repeat or continue the story. This time, however, use good listening skills. After about one minute, ask your partner how they felt about this second experience.

Characteristics of Good Listening

- ▶ **Stay in proximity:** Try to stay within three to five feet of the person. If the person is at all hearing-impaired, make sure that they can see your face when you speak.
- ▶ **Make eye contact:** Look the person in the eye. Position yourself so that they 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.
- ▶ **Give appropriate responses:** 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 the person says:** 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.**

The following sample script shows the use of good listening skills.

Good Listening: Sample Script

Client: I have a dog at home. I miss him.

Volunteer: What's your dog like?

Client: I had to give him to my son when I came here. I don't get to see him now.

Volunteer: Not being able to see him anymore must make you feel sad.

Client: I don't think he would remember me now.

Volunteer: You think your dog has forgotten you?

Client: Probably.

Volunteer: That's sad to think about, but dogs do have really good memories, so it's possible that he would remember you. Tell me more about him: What's his name? What kind of dog is he?

Client: His name is Cujo. He's black and white, like that dog.

Volunteer: So my dog reminds you of your dog?

Client: Yes, except Cujo is bigger. He would nuzzle me the same way.

Volunteer: (*Moves dog closer*) Well, it's good that Max can be here to visit you while you have to be away from Cujo.

Avoiding Blocking Responses

When you're talking with clients during a visit, be careful about how you respond to something that the other person says. Sometimes, a person's response to a statement or question can end or block easy conversation and therefore prevent true communication from thriving.

The following table describes some common blocking responses and also shows examples of responses that don't block conversation.

Blocking Response	Example of an Appropriate Interaction
Correcting If a client calls something by the wrong name (for example, because of memory loss or hearing impairment), don't correct the mistake.	Handler: Mrs. Smith, would you like to see the bunny today? Mrs. Smith: <i>(Looks forlorn, sniffles, and then yells)</i> That's a jackrabbit! Handler: That's okay, Mrs. Smith. Would you like to see the jackrabbit today?
Arguing/Lecturing Never argue with a client. Always respect the other person's point of view, and avoid trying to influence the person with facts, logic, or your opinions. Never try to talk the person out of his or her feelings.	Handler: Doesn't my animal Jake have lovely black fur, Mrs. Smith? Mrs. Smith: I don't like the way he looks. He probably sheds all over the place. Handler: You're right. Even with short hair, he still sheds sometimes.
Directing Sometimes people with memory impairments or developmental disabilities might need you to provide direction. Be clear and firm, but also kind.	Handler: Please let go of Marshall's ear; you're hurting him. Mrs. Smith: But I want to feel his ears; they're so soft. Handler: What Marshall really likes is to be petted here. <i>(Redirect by demonstrating petting away from the ear.)</i>
Analyzing Don't tell a client what you think is motivating his or her words or actions. However, you may interpret what your animal is thinking or feeling, based on their response.	Mrs. Smith: Your dog doesn't seem interested in visiting with me. Handler: Yes, he does seem a bit tired right now, but that's because he's already been visiting for almost two hours. Mrs. Smith: Could you see me first when you come next week? Handler: That's a great idea! We'll do that.
Name-Calling Never call a client names that might make him or her feel foolish, even if your intent is to be friendly. Don't stereotype or categorize other people in the facility.	Mrs. Smith: Oops, that's the second time that I accidentally knocked something over today. I feel so clumsy. Handler: I know how you feel. A couple of days ago, when I tried to take all three of my dogs for a walk at once, I got all tangled up in the leashes!
Interrogating There's a difference between having a conversation and interrogating a client. Excessive questioning can make the visit unpleasant and tiring for the other person. If a client is too tired to talk, it's okay; wait and see whether the next visit is better.	Handler: Has your daughter been in to see you today? Mrs. Smith: <i>(No response)</i> Handler: Doesn't she usually come to see you on Fridays? Mrs. Smith: <i>(No response after a prolonged time)</i> Handler: Well, Jake has some other people to visit today, so maybe we'll go now and stop by again next week. Bye for now.

Blocking Response	Example of an Appropriate Interaction
Admonishing Never threaten or allude to use of your power. However, sometimes it will be appropriate to warn someone in advance about your animal's characteristic behaviors— for example, your dog's vigorous tail wagging.	Mrs. Smith: That big dog looks like it could bite somebody. Handler: I understand why some people might think that a big dog can look threatening; however, I've had him since he was a pup, and he's always been very friendly. In fact, I had to train him not to lick so much!



Activity

Conversation Exercise

Explain how you would handle each of the following situations. Compare your responses with the suggested actions at the end of this activity.

Situation

1. A client refuses to let another client interact with your animal.
2. Family or staff members monopolize your animal.
3. A person is fearful of your animal.
4. A parent is with a child in the hospital.
5. A staff member questions your presence.
6. You witness inhumane treatment of an animal or person.
7. Your animal clearly doesn't like a particular person.
8. A person tries to kiss you goodbye.

Suggested Actions

1. **A client refuses to let another client interact with your animal.**
Establish guidelines for sharing, so that the clients understand that everyone gets a turn. Assure people that you will come back to them. (And if you say that you will come back to someone, make sure that you do.) Guidelines will vary according to the population that you're visiting. For example, if you're visiting a group of children, you can ask them to take turns greeting your animal; if you're visiting a group of adults, try telling them that your animal enjoys meeting people one at a time. Check with the facility that you're visiting for visit guidelines. In addition, your facility contact person might be able to provide guidance about the best way to work with the facility's clients.
2. **Family or staff members monopolize your animal.**

Other people will get the message if you and your animal greet them quickly and then turn your full attention to the person that you came to visit. Direct your conversation primarily to the person that you're visiting.

3. A person is fearful of your animal.

Many clients will have some fears about animals; a few will be highly afraid. Always respect a client's right not to be visited by you and your animal. You can offer to go to a "safe distance" or to another room for visits. Assure the client that the animal isn't dangerous and won't hurt anyone. The client might decide that this particular animal is okay and end up participating in the activity. If you note an extreme phobia, you should alert the staff and follow their recommendations.

4. A parent is with a child in the hospital.

Introduce yourself, explain what you're doing, and ask the parent for permission to proceed with the visit. Direct most of your conversation toward the child rather than the parent. However, be sensitive to the fact that the parent might be very worried about the child and therefore might benefit from the diversion of visiting with you and your animal as well.

5. A staff member questions your presence.

Some staff may be unaware of your volunteering. Be prepared with a brief explanation of your program. Know the names of the administrators, so that you can say, "My visit has been authorized by [administrator's name]."

6. You witness inhumane treatment of an animal or person.

If your animal is being mistreated, immediately remove them from the situation. You might need to end the visit. If a person is harming another person, report this to the facility's staff, and allow staff members to handle the situation. Don't attempt to intervene personally.

7. Your animal clearly doesn't like a particular person.

This situation arises occasionally. Sometimes, you can structure the visit so that this fact isn't evident—for example, by asking another team to visit that person. You might say, "Frisco needs to get out for a walk now, but I'll see if [another team] can visit you next."

8. A person tries to kiss you goodbye.

To dodge a kiss politely, try extending a hand in front of you to warmly clasp the person's hand in yours. If the facility isn't a no-touch facility, try a pat on the back or a hug from the side.

How to Address a Client

Pet Partners uses the term “client” to refer to individuals who receive a visit from you and your registered therapy animal. When addressing a client while on a visit, it is up to you to determine how to refer directly to the client.

To avoid offending a client, first determine the pronouns with which the client is most comfortable. Examples are he/him, she/her, and they/them.

When introducing yourself to a client, provide your own pronouns and the pronouns for your pet too.

This way, the client knows how to address you and feels comfortable sharing their own pronouns. Take clues from staff or others who are interacting with client, and when in doubt, ask how the client prefers to be addressed. Correct use of these terms gives you credibility with both clients and staff.

*When we do the best
we can, we never know
what miracle is
wrought in our life, or
in the life of another.*

— HELEN KELLER

Person-First and Identity-First Language

In addition to determining the correct pronouns for the client, there will be times when you may need to refer to the client’s medical condition or disability. In these cases, it is important to determine how the client wishes for their condition or disability to be addressed. The two primary ways to address clients are by using person-first and identity-first language.

Person-First Language

Some clients prefer to have the focus on their personhood, not the condition: they identify as a person with a particular condition. This is called person-first language. Person-first language demonstrates that every person is unique, and their abilities or disabilities are part of who they are, not a definition of who they are. Using person-first language fosters mutual respect and open lines of communication and acceptance, which are important factors for effectively communicating with clients.

Imagine you and your therapy animal plan to visit a local neurology center. The Volunteer Coordinator plans for you to visit with several clients who have experienced traumatic brain injuries and others with seizure disorders. Here are some do’s and don’ts for addressing clients at the center using person-first language:

DO USE: Person/individual with a brain injury

DON’T USE: brain damaged

DO USE: Person/individual with epilepsy

DON'T USE: epileptic, fit, spaz

Identity-First Language

If a client's disability is an aspect of their personhood that they cannot control but that they embrace as part of who they are, the client may prefer identity-first language. Identity first language emphasizes that the disability plays a role in who the person is and reinforces disability as a positive cultural identifier.

For some clients with long-term illnesses or lifelong disabilities, separating them from their disability with person-first language diminishes a central aspect of their identity. For these clients, disability does not merely describe an individual body or mind but membership within a wider cultural group. Just as an individual would say they are an Australian person, they may identify as an epileptic person.

Remember, if you are not comfortable speaking directly to the client about how they wish to be addressed and/or identified, please check with facility staff.

A Note on Ableist Language

In addition to person-first and identity-first language, handlers should be mindful to avoid using ableist language. Ableist language is language that is offensive to people with disabilities and should never be used to describe or address a client. It involves words or phrases that are derogatory, abusive, or negative about disability. Ableist language influences people by internalizing harmful biases about disability and stigmatizing already marginalized people.

Common examples of ableist language are words like "lame," "dumb," "retarded," and phrases like "The news fell on deaf ears."

Euphemisms like "differently abled" should also be avoided.

LESSON 5.5

Watching for Stress

Recognizing Stress

Recognizing signs of stress in people will help you handle difficult situations more effectively. As you visit, you might see signs of stress in clients, staff, or yourself. When a person first begins to experience stress, the signs might be mild, such as temporary grouchiness. For example, a person who is nervous about a deadline at work might act irritable with people who come into the office over a period of several days.

People show stress in different ways. For example, a person who is usually very pleasant might suddenly act irritable and short-tempered as a result of stress at work or at home. Over time, you will develop some sensitivity to the special needs of the people that you visit. However, no matter how skilled and experienced you become, there will still be times when visits are stressful for you, your animal, or the people that you're visiting.

In addition, as a handler, it's your responsibility to adjust or end visits if your animal becomes stressed, or if your presence is creating stress for a client. Managing your own stress will help you continue to be an effective and satisfied volunteer.

Stress Signals in People

The following table shows some of the signs of moderate and extreme stress.

Signs of Moderate Stress	Signs of Extreme Stress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Irritability or lack of patience with routine events (for example, a traffic light) ▶ Moodiness or outbursts of anger ▶ Decreased or increased talking (to an excessive degree) ▶ Nervousness ▶ Yawning ▶ Withdrawal (verbal, physical, or emotional) ▶ Disorganization ▶ Memory problems ▶ Failure to complete tasks on time or at all ▶ Sleep disorders ▶ Mild headaches ▶ Stomach or intestinal problems ▶ Fever blisters, rashes, or blotchy skin ▶ Menstrual irregularities ▶ Physical tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Heart disease or high blood pressure ▶ Severe stomach and digestive disorders (for example, ulcers) ▶ Migraine headaches ▶ Manic (rapid, rambling) speech and behavior ▶ Severe depression

If you see stress signals in a client during a visit, what can you do? The following are some suggestions:

- ▶ 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.

Tips for Reducing Your Own Stress

You will be a more successful and fulfilled volunteer if you can manage your own stress. Here are some ideas to help you minimize your stress as a handler.

Learn to Plan

Disorganization can create stress. Having too many projects going on at the same time can lead to confusion, forgetfulness, and the sense that uncompleted projects are hanging over your head. Make sure that you aren't promising to visit too many facilities or see too many people. It's better to do a few things well than to disappoint people because you can't fulfill all your promises.

Recognize and Accept Limits	Many people set unreasonable goals for themselves. Failing to reach these goals then gives them a sense of inadequacy, no matter how well they have performed. Setting reasonable goals as a volunteer will help you enjoy visiting for a long time.
Learn to Play	<p>It's important to escape occasionally from the pressures of life and relax. Find pastimes that are enjoyable regardless of your level of ability. This applies to both you and your animal. When you feel as though you might be experiencing stress, it might be time to take an afternoon to do something different with your animal. For example, go for a hike on a nature trail at a park, or spend time sitting in your favorite chair together. If your animal is a dog, you might want to participate in activities that you can do together, such as agility, flyball, or tracking.</p> <p>You might also find that you need a short break from animal-related activities. Go to a movie, read a book, or spend time doing other activities that don't involve your animal.</p>
Be a Positive Person	<p>Avoid criticizing others. Focus on the good qualities of the people around you, and learn to praise them. Following this advice will help you be happier.</p> <p>Unfortunately, many people who participate in activities with their animals become intensely competitive. Remember that there's plenty of room for excellence in this field. Volunteers need to support each other.</p>
Learn to Tolerate and Forgive	Intolerance of others leads to frustration and anger. Understanding how other people feel can help you be more accepting of individual differences. When you feel yourself getting angry with a person, try to look at the world from their perspective. Maybe this person's way of thinking is the result of training, as in the case of a nurse who believes that animals cause infections. They might never have received correct and adequate information about AAI.
Get Regular Physical Exercise	Check with your physician before beginning any exercise program. Then, to increase the chances that you will stay with it, pick a program that you really enjoy, not one that feels like pure hard work and drudgery. Regular exercise can make a big difference for both you and your animal. Exercise can lower blood pressure and relieve stress.
Talk out Your Troubles	Find a friend, clergy member, or counselor that you can be open with. Expressing your "bottled-up" tension can be incredibly helpful. If you experience stress, you might also find it helpful to talk with other volunteers. Some AAI programs set up support groups for volunteers.
Learn a Systematic, Drug-Free Way of Relaxing	<p>As a Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program volunteer, you're probably a busy person. In addition to the time that you spend volunteering, you might spend time every day training your animal and caring for it. You might also have a regular job.</p> <p>Many relaxation techniques can be done every day in your own home and in just a few minutes. Meditation, yoga, and progressive relaxation can be learned from various accredited teachers and professionals, such as psychologists or psychotherapists.</p>

Visit Reality: Dealing With Loss

As you spend more time visiting, you might eventually have to deal with some difficult issues, such as the serious illness or death of a client that you have grown to care about. While you're a handler, the day might also come when your animal becomes ill, needs to be retired, or dies. This section provides some suggestions for dealing with the pain and grief that come from losing a person or animal that you're close to.

When a Client Becomes Seriously Ill or Dies

When a client has a serious illness, or if the client's condition worsens significantly, an animal visit might provide too much stimulation. In these cases, the client might appreciate a visit from you alone, without your animal.

On the other hand, some clients who are terminally ill enjoy having a quiet animal sit beside them. In these cases, your role might just be to sit quietly in the room.

If the client dies, you might find it helpful to talk with a staff member or another volunteer who knew the client and will understand your feelings.

When Your Animal Dies

Grief and pain also result from the loss of an animal that has been important to us and to others. Many of the same techniques for managing grief over the loss of a client can also be applied to the loss of an animal. You can talk with a friend, another handler, or a pet loss counselor about your feelings.

As a volunteer, you will have to decide for yourself whether you feel comfortable continuing your visits to a facility after the death of an animal teammate. It's okay to take a temporary break from your visits or even discontinue them. In either case, notify the facility of the situation and your decision. If you feel comfortable continuing your visits with another registered animal, handle the situation honestly and gently.

Some handlers who lose an animal choose to participate in a different capacity. You can make presentations to people who might be interested in registering for the first time, staff informational Pet Partners booths at events, or assist team evaluators in your area. If you're not yet ready to register with another animal, this can be a nice way to continue supporting AAI and carry on your relationship with Pet Partners.

article



Hitting Close to Home

By Christi W. Dudzik, M.C., L.M.H.C., president, Healing Paws, Inc.

What happens when you are visiting a facility with your animal, and a person or situation reminds you of some event in your life that brings up a strong emotional response for you? The longer you visit, the more likely this is to happen. The important thing to remember is that this is not an uncommon occurrence. Don't be hard on yourself for having the emotions, and don't try to dismiss them.

If you feel blindsided by the emotions, you may need to call it a day and leave a bit earlier than you normally would. Or you may just need to take your animal out of the building for a bit of a break and to collect yourself. Either way, you will need some support.

Talk with a trusted family member or friend. When doing this, make sure that you don't breach confidentiality by saying the person's name or describing the person in a way that could cause them to be recognized outside of the facility. Take stock of the situation and ask yourself if this was a one-time experience or if going back to this facility is going to be too difficult for you. Be honest with your answers.

If you decide it is too difficult to return, talk with your contact person at the facility. They need to know your plans so that they won't worry about you and can get another team in there as soon as possible. It is okay to do this. You must take care of yourself and you must take care of your animal. If you continue to go to a facility that brings up strong emotions time and time again, your animal is going to associate your reaction with the facility, and won't want to go back either.

Be kind to yourself. You will find the right fit for you and your animal.

UNIT 6

Partnering with Facilities

LESSON 6.1

Factors for a Successful Visit

Staff Involvement

In a given environment, the staff might be highly involved with your visit, or they might barely be involved at all. The more help that you have from staff members, the safer you will be and the less skill you will need in order to have a successful visit.

The following table shows some examples of staff involvement.

Moderate to High Involvement	Low Involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Being with you during the busiest part of the visit and then providing visual supervision from the nursing station during the rest of the visit (moderate).▶ Introducing you to a group of clients and then staying with you to help you with names and activities (high).▶ Working with you along with each client, identifying goals and helping you determine what to do with that client (high).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Giving you a list of everyone who is approved for a visit and then letting you visit on your own.▶ Placing everyone who is approved for a visit into a group room and then leaving you alone for the visit.

Facility Environment

By understanding the environment that you will be visiting in, you help set your team up for success. When considering a facility, carefully assess how active the environment is.

The following table shows some examples of typical settings and experiences. Not all elements that are listed are necessarily present in every facility. The examples are intended to help you picture what these very different settings might be like.

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

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

LESSON 6.2

The Team Qualification Matrix

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

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

How Teams Use the Matrix

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

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

Keep in mind that your coverage under Pet Partners' commercial general liability insurance (CGLI) policy is in effect only if you visit in an environment that's appropriate for your qualification rating.

How Facilities Use the Matrix

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



Activity

Applying the Team Qualification Matrix

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

1. Kathleen loves children! There's an after-school program in her town that has a visiting animal program. She first visits without Snowball to learn about the facility. Children are running around. There are loud noises as children play, sing, and talk animatedly. During visits, there's always at least one staff member in the room, but these staff members are usually helping children.
 - a. What kind of environment is this: predictable or complex?
 - b. Is this a good fit for Kathleen and Snowball?
2. An assisted living facility in the area is looking for therapy animal teams to visit during activity sessions for clients. Kathleen asks about the setting and finds out that there are typically several clients in the room at the same time. Usually, there's music or a television on in the background. Sometimes, family members enter the room to visit a client. A staff member is always present and accompanies the teams, introducing them to clients in the room.
 - c. What kind of environment is this: predictable or complex?
 - d. Is this a good fit for Kathleen and Snowball?

Answers

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



Activity

What Setting Is Best for My Team? (Self-Reflection)

1. Think about the level of activity that you would prefer in facilities that you visit: Is it a quiet place or a beehive of activity?
2. Who do you like to interact with? Do you prefer to engage in conversation, or are you comfortable with silence?
3. Are you comfortable interacting with strangers, or would you like to develop an ongoing relationship with the same clients over time?
4. Where would your animal be most comfortable and effective? How is your animal affected by strange noises and unusual equipment?
5. Who would your animal be most successful around? How will your animal react to people who have strong odors, an unusual appearance or difficulty speaking?
6. How would your animal react to sudden or unpredictable events? Are there settings or situations that frighten you or make you nervous?
7. Are there any specific illnesses or conditions that make you uncomfortable?

LESSON 6.3

Identifying the Right Facility for Your Team

Now that you are familiar with the factors for a successful visit and how your team qualification rating may inform the best place for your team to volunteer, you'll want to consider your preferences as well as the preferences of your animal.

Don't assume that you and your therapy animal must automatically enjoy every possible facility setting or client type. Both you and your animal are individuals with unique interests and preferences. Some teams enjoy working with children, some prefer adults or senior citizens. Some enjoy visiting nursing homes but find cancer clinics emotionally challenging. Keep in mind that your animal's preferences might not always coincide with your own. As your animal's best advocate, you might need to forego some of your own preferences to ensure that you and your animal are successful at the start of your career as a therapy animal team.

If you're unsure where you would like to visit, Pet Partners has compiled two resources that will give you an overview of different facility types as well as different client populations and considerations to take into account for different clients and settings. Go to www.petpartners.org and log in to the Volunteer Center. From there visit the Resource Library and perform a keyword search for "facility types" or "client populations."

Once you're registered with Pet Partners, volunteers also have access to a database of Volunteer Opportunities, where facilities have contacted us looking for therapy animal teams. You can search by ZIP code to see what opportunities might be available in your area.

How to Approach a Facility

When you approach a local facility and offer to volunteer as a therapy animal team, particularly if the facility may be unfamiliar with Pet Partners, here are some recommended steps to follow.

1. Select the Right Facility

Be sure to consider both your interests and your animal's preferences as you consider a place to volunteer. Also remember that the team qualification rating that you and your animal are given as a result of your performance during the Pet Partners Skills Test (PPST) and the Pet Partners Aptitude Test (PPAT) can help determine which setting will be best for you and your animal.

2. Make an Appointment

Call the facility and make an appointment with the volunteer coordinator. If there's no volunteer coordinator, talk with the activity director. If the facility has neither staff position, call the administrator's office, and ask who coordinates the activities of volunteers at the facility. Be prepared to coordinate around their busy schedules.

3. Send Background Material

Before your appointment, it can be helpful to provide the coordinator a few pieces of background material to read. Assume that the person will have limited knowledge of AAI and Pet Partners. Background material is available on the Pet Partners website (www.petpartners.org). You may consider sharing links to the Benefits of the Human Animal Bond, How Our Program is Different, and Pet Partners at Your Facility, as well as Pet Partners policies and procedures.

4. Meet to Explain Your Proposal

Dress professionally for the meeting and go without your animal. During the meeting, briefly determine whether any animals have previously visited or are currently visiting in the facility, what the facility's rules and policies are, and the level of interest in initiating a program.

Be prepared to answer questions about your training, cleanliness of your animal, infection control, and insurance coverage. Provide a copy of the Pet Partners policies and procedures so they know what guidelines you will already plan to follow.

Ask for a tour of the facility at a time that's convenient for the staff. Explain how often you could visit and at what times. Keep the meeting short and friendly. Offer to give an overview of your proposal at a staff meeting and to provide additional materials that might answer some questions. Offer to bring your animal for a brief trial visit with some clients that staff members identify and in an area of their choice.

5. Write a Thank-You Note

Follow your visit with a thank-you note and offer to answer any questions that they have after meeting with you. You may be directed to meet with a nurse or therapist to further explain the program before your trial visit.

6. Initial Visit With Your Animal

Come to the first visit prepared, using the training that you have received. If you or a representative of the facility has additional questions, contact Pet Partners.

Assessing Features

You should always be aware of the challenges that each type of facility or setting presents to the safety and well-being of you and your animal. It's important to become familiar with any facility that you will visit. Therefore, you will need to conduct a site assessment not only for facilities such as hospitals and schools but also for booths and presentation settings.

The best method for assessing a facility is as follows:

1. Set up a site assessment with your facility contact person.
2. Obtain a map or layout of the facility or setting, so that you will be able to move around without getting lost.
If no map or layout is available, take paper and a pencil with you, so that you can sketch your own. Use the map or layout to determine traffic flow, stairwells, and emergency exits.
3. Don't take your animal with you to the site assessment, because one of your reasons for going is to determine how your animal will react.
4. Expect the site assessment to take at least one hour, depending on the size and complexity of the facility or setting. Larger, more complex facilities might take several hours to assess.

Visiting a New Facility

When approaching a facility for the first time, find out whether any Community Partners, teams, or individuals are already visiting there. If they are, be considerate of a program that someone else has already worked hard to establish.

Features of Facilities and Settings

<input type="checkbox"/> Location/ Transportation	Determine how long it will take to travel to the facility or location and plan your route. Make sure that your vehicle has proper temperature control for your animal.
<input type="checkbox"/> Parking	Take the availability and location of parking spaces into account when considering the time that's allotted for your visits. Assess the noise and light levels in parking lots and garages.
<input type="checkbox"/> Size	In smaller facilities, you will become recognized among the staff, but larger facilities might require you to introduce yourself and explain your purpose more regularly. Larger facilities and settings will also require more time if you need to move between appointments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Activity Level	Consider the level of activity in the facility: Are there lots of unexpected interruptions or distractions? This will inform how you use the Team Qualification Matrix (see Lesson 6.2) and will help you determine whether this setting is appropriate for you to visit, based on your team qualification rating.
<input type="checkbox"/> Grounds	Make sure that there's an area for your animal to eliminate and an accessible trash can for you to place waste in. If this area isn't apparent, ask a staff member. Keep the type of ground cover in mind. In hot weather, large areas that are covered in tarmac can be uncomfortable, even dangerous, for your animal. If you and your animal are going to be on the grounds, determine the amount of trash, motor oil, and antifreeze on the ground. These can all be harmful to your animal.
<input type="checkbox"/> Entrance	How will you access the facility for your visits? You might need to obtain a pass or key, or you might need to sign in and out. Find out where the emergency exits are located and whether you should use a specific entrance.
<input type="checkbox"/> Flooring	What surfaces will your animal be walking on? Is there slippery tile that might be a challenge? Will you be using stairwells, elevators, or escalators? Check for any surfaces that might be problematic for you or your animal.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sound Level	Sound levels might interfere with your ability to conduct an effective and safe visit. Be sure to inquire about fire alarms and know how your animal will react if one goes off.
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance	Maintenance should be in good condition in all facilities you visit. There should be little broken furniture, floors should be clean, carpeting should be in good repair, and lighting should be adequate. Stairwells, hallways, and elevators should be well-maintained. Electrical cords should be out of the way.
<input type="checkbox"/> Rooms	Look at the general arrangement of the rooms and how furniture is situated. Find out whether furniture can be moved to facilitate the visit. Identify any healthcare or other equipment that you and your animal will need to navigate around.

-
- ❑ **Staff** A friendly and supportive staff is an asset to any visit. You will need to determine the staff's level of involvement in the visit. Staff involvement will also inform your use of the Team Qualification Matrix. You will also need to know how to contact security or other staff in the event of an emergency.
-

Working With Undesirable Features

Most facilities and settings have some undesirable features. Although you might not be able to fix all of them, you should be able to fix many, such as the following circumstances:

- ▶ Spills or food on the ground—in many cases, you should contact someone at the facility for clean-up.
- ▶ A blaring television or radio that no one appears to be paying attention to.
- ▶ Furniture or equipment that makes it difficult for you and your animal to navigate safely within the facility.

The following guidelines will help you resolve issues that arise in a setting that has undesirable features:

- ▶ Make the staff aware of your needs.
- ▶ Express concerns in a positive manner.
- ▶ Offer positive suggestions.
- ▶ If there's no resolution, reconsider your decision to visit that facility or setting.



Activity

Without your animal, go on a field trip to at least two facilities that you're considering visiting. Follow these steps:

1. Call the activity director and explain that you're training to visit with your animal.
2. Ask whether you can meet the activity director and tour the facility.
3. Make observations at each site and record them in your journal.
4. Observe the features of each site and draw floor plans. Highlight positive features, unacceptable features, and features that you could work around or easily improve.
5. Write a thank-you letter.

LESSON 6.4

The Treatment Team Approach

What Is a Treatment Team?

The trend in healthcare is to use an approach in which a group of professionals from various disciplines and their staff work together toward common goals for a client. This treatment team is often referred to as a multidisciplinary team because it includes people from various disciplines (for example, physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, nurses, teachers, physicians, social workers, and recreational therapists). The members of the team work together to help the client reach specific treatment goals. At a minimum, you should become familiar with specific roles of the team members and your role in the team context. Be sure to find out who your contact person will be on the treatment team (that is, who you can turn to if you need guidance or if you observe behavior during a visit that you think the team needs to be aware of). You will find that team dynamics vary from facility to facility. At some facilities, the team approach might be loosely applied or completely absent.

How a Treatment Team Works

Staff members from each relevant department will evaluate a new client by using tests and assessment tools for their specialty. You and your animal might work with one or more members of a treatment team. The treatment team will explain what's expected of you and what your animal's purpose at the session is. A staff member from the treatment team will be present at the session and will involve the client when appropriate.

Example of How a Treatment Team Works

When Mrs. Jones is admitted to the Comfort Nursing Home, the doctors and nurses all write reports of their initial assessment. The physical therapist performs tests and records Mrs. Jones's physical therapy needs. The recreational therapist assesses her leisure skills. The occupational therapist notes that Mrs. Jones needs a splint for her right hand in order to improve her everyday functioning. The psychologist assesses her mental health status and determines that she has clinical depression.

These staff members then gather for a treatment team meeting. In a formal written document (which in nursing homes is often called the Nursing Care Plan), the team that's working with Mrs. Jones lists specific goals for her treatment. Sample treatment goals for Mrs. Jones might include directions that Mrs. Jones will walk 50 feet a day, or that she will participate in individual and group therapy sessions.

A Part of the Team

Assisting in a client's treatment is a direct way that you can participate in animal-assisted therapy (AAT). As a volunteer, you won't be doing assessments or writing goals for clients. However, after you establish a working relationship with a facility professional, that person might want you to assist in treatment that has been recommended for a particular client. Here are some general guidelines for being part of the treatment team.

Do a little more each day than you think you possibly can.

— LOWELL THOMAS

Wait for an Invitation

As a volunteer, you must be invited by a professional to participate in AAT with a specific client. By modeling professionalism and a commitment to improving the lives of the people that you visit with your animal, you will help you establish a reputation as someone who can be approached for AAT assistance.

Staff Members

Determine which staff member will be your guide or contact person. This will ensure that you understand your focus with each client.

Staff Roles

Understanding the roles of the various staff members will help you understand your purpose and direction with the treatment team.

Terminology

By understanding some of the terminology of the discipline that you're visiting, you will be able to communicate better with staff and understand the purpose of your visit.

Your Animal's Abilities

Occasionally, your animal might be unable to perform a task that's required in order to meet a client's treatment goals. When such a task is requested, always acknowledge that your animal can't perform it. However, try suggesting other tasks that you know your animal *can* perform; the staff members might not be aware that your animal can perform these tasks, and one of them might be an acceptable alternative.

As the field of AAT grows, you can play an important role in promoting AAT to healthcare professionals by providing information, resources, and examples, and by being a responsible member of the treatment team.

Example of How You Might Participate as Part of a Treatment Team

A physical therapist asks you to bring your animal to a therapy session that's designed to improve a client's fine motor (small muscle) skills. As you guide your animal, the professional directs the therapy session by having the client pet and brush the animal or adjust buckles and zippers on the animal's vest. The animal provides motivation for the client, and the client has a chance to work on fine motor skills in a safe environment.

LESSON 6.5

Staff Relationships

Levels of Working Relationships

A good working relationship with all levels of staff at the facility or setting is essential for an effective program. Understanding the roles of staff members and how those staff members interact with clients, administrators, and volunteers provides a strong foundation for developing a relationship.

Most facilities and settings hold staff meetings or in-service training meetings. If you can attend them, these meetings can help you understand the different levels of relationships. In addition, these meetings give staff members an opportunity to express their concerns and expectations.

The three different levels of relationships are as follows:

1. Staff/client relationships
2. Administrator/staff relationships
3. Staff/volunteer relationships

This section describes each of these relationships and how they can help you have a successful program.

1. Staff/Client Relationships

Clients must often depend on staff in order to have their basic needs met. Some staff members consistently work with the same clients. For example, teachers are with their students throughout the year or term, and occupational therapists might see their clients weekly.

To help you prepare for your visit, staff members can do the following:

- ▶ Ensure that the client is ready when you arrive.
- ▶ Help you understand the client.
- ▶ Assist you if you encounter any problems with the client.
- ▶ Share the progress of the client.

2. Administrator/Staff Relationships

Administrators are responsible for supervising staff members. It's often the administrator who oversees the staff or in-service meetings.

Administrators can do the following:

- ▶ Assist you with any staff-related problems that you encounter.
- ▶ Ensure that staff members understand the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program.
- ▶ Help you gain buy-in from the staff.

3. Staff/Volunteer Relationships

Most staff members will welcome you with open arms, help you when you have questions, and give you guidance about particular clients. Volunteers usually have very little trouble developing relationships with these staff members.

However, some staff members might be skeptical, dislike animals, or feel jealous of the relationship that you develop with their clients. Often, these staff members simply lack experience with and knowledge about the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI). Therefore, the best way to develop a relationship with them is to partner with them. Provide them with information about the Therapy Animal Program and describe your past experiences and how the program has helped people. Introduce them to your animal, and work toward a common goal of improving the client's health, education, or quality of life.

Staff members can do the following:

- ▶ Help you be an advocate for the Therapy Animal Program.

Always show appreciation and respect for all staff members. Be sure to thank them for their hard work. By displaying tact and diplomacy, you should be able to develop and grow your relationships with all the people that you come into contact with.

Key Staff Members

The following table lists various types of staff members and describes their main responsibilities as they might relate to an AAI program.

Staff Member	Responsibilities
Nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Care for patients ▶ Might facilitate AAI
Physicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Care for patients ▶ Might prescribe AAI
Administrative staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise funds ▶ Oversee budget ▶ Determine and carry out hospital policy ▶ Approve AAI programs
Maintenance/housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Keep the facility clean and well-maintained
Dietary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Supply clients and visitors with food
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide protection
Volunteer coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assist in the facility's programs ▶ Serve as an interface between the facility and volunteers ▶ Ensure compliance with policies ▶ Might serve as the facility contact person for visiting animal program volunteers
Activity coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Plan activities ▶ Might facilitate AAI
Immunologist/infection control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide in-service training ▶ Might review and approve infection control protocols for visiting animal programs
Occupational therapist (OT) Physical therapist (PT) Recreational therapist (RT) Speech language pathologist (SLP) Psychologist Social worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide therapy ▶ Might facilitate or prescribe AAI

Concerns Regarding AAI

If the facility is new to AAI, staff members might have questions and concerns about having an animal brought in to interact with clients. Even if the facility isn't new to AAI, these questions might arise if there has been turnover in a facility or a setting, so that new staff members are in attendance.

The following questions are typical of those asked by facility and setting staff. Before you approach a new facility, you might want to think about how you would answer these questions.

- ▶ How much staff time will this involve?
- ▶ Will the staff be required to change hours in order to be available during visits?
- ▶ How will the staff know that these animals are appropriate for visits?
- ▶ Are the animals current on all vaccinations and health requirements?
- ▶ Are the animals trained?
- ▶ Will the animals bring fleas, ticks, or other insects into the facility?
- ▶ Will the animals be clean?
- ▶ Can people get diseases from the animals?
- ▶ Will the animal urinate/defecate in the facility?
- ▶ What about liability?
- ▶ Will the teams show up at the scheduled time and on the correct day? Will the staff be advised if teams can't come?
- ▶ Will a team come if the handler is ill?
- ▶ Will the teams respect our administrative policies?
- ▶ Will the teams respect the fact that some people might not want to visit with animals?
- ▶ Have the teams been trained in the proper way to interact with our clients?
- ▶ How will the staff communicate with the teams that the visits are going well or need improvement?
- ▶ Will there be a charge for this service?

When answering questions for staff members, remember to show patience, tact, and diplomacy. These qualities will help you a great deal as a volunteer.

If you don't feel comfortable answering a particular question, contact Pet Partners for advice, or refer the person who asked the question to the "Contact Us" section of the Pet Partners website (www.petpartners.org).

Cooperation With Staff

Unfortunately, no matter how hard you try to be friendly and efficient, you will eventually encounter uncooperative staff members. Try to resolve problems early, before they escalate.

Consider these tips for gaining cooperation:

- ▶ Never create or enter into a scene when a client is present. Ask whether you can follow up with the staff member at a later time.
- ▶ Listen to the staff member's concerns without interrupting.
- ▶ Don't become emotional or defensive.
- ▶ Remain calm.
- ▶ Stick to the facts.
- ▶ If you do become emotional, take a deep breath, and calm down before speaking to anyone.

*Those who bring
sunshine to the lives
of others cannot keep
it from themselves.*

— SIR JAMES M. BARRIE

Measure your words and actions against their impact on the desired outcome. This is the best advice for anyone who is trying to develop relationships and gain cooperation.

When all else fails:

- ▶ Put your concerns in writing.
- ▶ Keep the letter short, factual, and professional.
- ▶ Let the staff member know that you want to find a solution that will satisfy both of you.
- ▶ As a last resort, speak to your facility contact person or the staff member's immediate supervisor.

LESSON 6.6

Incidents, Accidents, and Unusual Occurrences

Information That Must Be Reported

Sometimes, something occurs on a therapy animal visit that requires you to report information either to the facility or to both the facility and Pet Partners.

Information That Must Be Reported Only to the Facility

Occasionally, in the course of your visit, you might hear or see something that could be of value to the client's treatment. In these cases, you must report the information only to the facility, not to Pet Partners.

Information that you must report includes the following:

- ▶ Something that could compromise a client's health, safety, or well-being.
- ▶ Something that you discover about a client's medical or emotional condition.
- ▶ Something that a client says, or something in the client's behavior, that you feel the staff should know about.

Information That Must Be Reported to Both the Facility and Pet Partners

You must promptly report certain types of situations both to the facility that you and your animal are visiting and to Pet Partners. The facility might call these situations "unusual incidents" or "unusual occurrences." Pet Partners will investigate and determine a course of action.

Note: Pet Partners activities, including visits, might be put on hold until the investigation is completed.

These situations include the following:

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ The perception of an accident or error.
- ▶ Damage to property.

For example, you're visiting a facility with your dog. In the course of the visit, your dog becomes startled, backs out of their collar and bolts from the room. You catch the dog, calm them, and end the visit. No one was hurt. This incident should be reported to both the facility and Pet Partners.

Many incidents can be avoided by proactive handling.

- ▶ Don't do things you don't feel comfortable with or that could be perceived as a problem.
- ▶ Know your animal. Be fluent in their body language and end interactions before your animal communicates through barking, scratching, or snapping.
- ▶ Know your clients. Be clear on what activities they can participate in safely and where they may need you to guide or facilitate the interaction.

Handling Injuries

It's important to know how to handle occurrences of any type while you're on a visit. Injuries can be sudden and are always unexpected. For the most part, teams that have been well-trained and carefully screened will have successful AAI experiences. Unfortunately, accidents can happen.

In the event of injury to a person (including you) or an animal at the facility, take the following steps.

At the Facility

1. Secure your animal immediately, so that you can manage the situation. Don't tie your animal to furniture or equipment that can shift easily.
2. Get help for the injured person. Volunteers should never give medical aid to an injured client. Facility staff should always be the ones who provide medical aid to clients, even if the treatment is as simple as applying a bandage.
3. End your visit.
4. Before leaving, report the incident in writing to your facility contact person, so that the injury can be documented in the client's medical file. Most facilities have special forms that are used to report accidents and unusual incidents. You will need to fill out all required paperwork.

After Leaving the Facility

1. If applicable, notify the organization that sponsored your visit—for example, your local visiting animal group, if you belong to one.
2. Notify Pet Partners on the same day or on the next business day after the incident. This is very important, because any accident can result in an insurance claim.
3. Complete a Pet Partners Incident Report Form and submit this to Pet Partners. Even if you think that everything will be fine, you must notify Pet Partners if any unusual occurrence takes place during your visit as a team.
4. Evaluate the situation for future prevention, thinking about what went wrong. Pet Partners will also help you troubleshoot and brainstorm preventive measures. We might learn something from your experience that will lead us to add specific information to our volunteer training.

Your Responsibility

Pet Partners volunteers are widely recognized for their professionalism and commitment to safety. While incident reporting is considered a core policy (see Lesson 2.2, #17), as a handler who is invested in the quality of AAI, it is also your duty. It's important that we demonstrate to the community that we take problems seriously and are committed to ongoing improvement.

Reporting incidents allows Pet Partners to identify gaps in training and areas where we can better support all our handlers. If you are involved in or witness an incident, you'll have an opportunity to explain the circumstances of the situation to Pet Partners. We will make every effort to ensure handlers returning to the field are well-prepared and safe; however, sometimes the risk of future incidents is too great to continue a registration. Keep in mind that if your animal demonstrates inappropriate aggressive behavior, even outside a visit, this creates a safety concern for future visits.

LESSON 6.7

Insurance Coverage

This section addresses topics that concern insurance and volunteering for Pet Partners as a handler:

1. General Pet Partners activities
2. Team training instruction and evaluation
3. Other entities, including facilities
4. Community Partners
5. Other Therapy Animal Organizations

1. General Pet Partners Activities

It's important for you to understand the risks that are involved in being a volunteer, whether as a handler or in another volunteer role. As a handler, you're personally and legally responsible for damages or injuries that you or your animal either cause or suffer. Pet Partners assumes no legal responsibility for the actions of you or your animal.

Volunteers can protect themselves against these and other risks through a type of insurance called liability insurance. Whether or not a claim that's submitted to your liability insurance carrier will be covered depends on the particular facts and circumstances of the claim and on the terms and conditions of the insurance policy. Nevertheless, one important step that you can take to protect yourself against future risks is to make sure that you have insurance. The benefits of liability insurance might include payment of the defense costs in lawsuits, payment of damages and, in some circumstances, payment of medical expenses.

We recommend that all handlers carry a homeowner's, tenant homeowner's (renter's), or condominium owner's insurance policy. These policies generally include coverage for personal liability. We also recommend that handlers consult with their insurance agent to discuss the form and amount of insurance that are appropriate for a handler.

Pet Partners carries a primary commercial general liability insurance (CGLI) policy for its employees, officers, directors, and qualified volunteers, for accidents that occur during the policy period. For a team that's registered with Pet Partners, coverage under this policy begins upon receipt of the team's acceptance letter and ends at the expiration of the team's registration period.

Pet Partners' CGLI policy includes the following provisions:

1. Coverage under the CGLI policy isn't guaranteed. Coverage is subject to the facts and circumstances of a loss, and to the terms and conditions of the policy.
2. Claims under the CGLI policy must be submitted promptly and can be rejected if they are submitted late.
3. If applicable, the CGLI policy might apply in circumstances where a handler's homeowner's policy doesn't, or vice versa; or both policies might apply.
4. The CGLI policy has limits, to the amount of \$2,000,000 per occurrence.
5. Coverage for injuries that are suffered by handlers is limited to qualified medical expenses of less than \$5,000. There's no coverage for injuries that are suffered by animals.
6. Handlers that are registered with Pet Partners are individually responsible for monetary awards that aren't paid by the CGLI policy (which is a good reason for all handlers to carry homeowner's or similar coverage).
7. Coverage isn't provided for damages that occur between fellow handlers or any other Pet Partners volunteers.
8. Coverage isn't provided for damages that are caused by intentional acts or by acts on the part of a handler that are outside the scope of, or not in compliance with, Pet Partners' policies and procedures for volunteers.
9. The territory that's covered by the CGLI policy consists of the United States (including its territories and possessions), Puerto Rico, and Canada.
10. Handlers must maintain their volunteer status in order for the CGLI policy to be available. In other words, handlers must receive no compensation for their volunteer services; in addition, they must not incorporate registered therapy animals into duties that they perform for any job for which they receive compensation. However, handlers can receive reimbursement of nominal incidental expenses, such as supplies, without jeopardizing their volunteer status.

A copy of the Certificate of Liability Insurance coverage for our volunteers is available through the Resource Library in the Volunteer Center on the Pet Partners website.

2. Team Training Instruction and Evaluation

Subject to the terms and limitations of Pet Partners' CGLI policy (including those that were discussed in the previous section), licensed instructors, team evaluators, and other individuals who assist licensed instructors and/or team evaluators at a workshop or an evaluation are considered Pet Partners volunteers and are also covered by Pet Partners' CGLI policy. However, people who fall into the following three categories, among others, aren't covered:

1. Persons and/or animals who are working to become handlers through the Pet Partners Handler Course and evaluation, but who haven't yet received their acceptance letter.
2. The general public.
3. Independent contractors or staff of a facility where instruction or evaluation occurs.

Note that the limitation that's set forth in Item 1 doesn't apply to registered handlers who are being re-evaluated, and whose registration remains current. Coverage under the CGLI policy ends at the expiration of a team's registration period. If a handler is re-evaluated before the expiration of the registration period, coverage ends either on the expiration date of the registration period or at such time as the handler fails the evaluation, whichever is earlier.

Even though people in the preceding categories aren't covered, a licensed instructor, team evaluator, or person who volunteers at the request of the licensed instructor or team evaluator might still be covered for injury-related expenses if the injuries are caused by a person in one of those categories (subject to the terms and conditions of the CGLI policy).

*If we did all things we
are capable of doing,
we would literally
astound ourselves.*

— THOMAS EDISON

3. Other Entities, Including Facilities

Periodically, questions arise as to whether Pet Partners' CGLI policy applies to other entities and their facilities. These entities include separate businesses, governmental agencies, and organizations other than Pet Partners. We recognize that handlers often take the initiative to approach an entity and request use of its facility—for example, for instruction or evaluation.

Pet Partners' CGLI policy is limited to qualifying individuals (that is, Pet Partners employees, officers, directors, and volunteers); it doesn't cover entities. Such entities are considered unrelated third parties, just as non-employees and non-volunteers are.

If a facility has questions about insurance coverage, you may direct them to contact Pet Partners through our website (www.petpartners.org).

4. Community Partners

There are several important considerations for Community Partners. As was previously discussed, Pet Partners' CGLI policy covers individuals, not entities. Subject to the facts and the limitations of the policy, handlers are covered by Pet Partners' CGLI policy for damages or injuries that they cause or suffer while performing Pet Partners activities, regardless of whether they volunteer individually or as members of a Community Partner.

However, Pet Partners' CGLI policy doesn't apply to Community Partner activities that are outside the scope of Pet Partners activities as described in this Pet Partners Handler Guide. It also doesn't apply to Community Partner activities that don't comply with Pet Partners' policies and procedures. Handlers who participate in either type of activity in connection with a Community Partner won't be covered for any accidents that occur.

Because Community Partner groups aren't covered by Pet Partners' CGLI policy, they should consider obtaining independent insurance that will cover their activities.

5. Other Therapy Animal Organizations

Pet Partners is the leader in safe and effective therapy animal visitation. As such, we are not willing to assume the liability for teams that volunteer under the name, brand, or programming of a different organization.

In order to be fully covered by Pet Partners' CGLI policy, volunteers must represent Pet Partners and may not affiliate with another organization that registers therapy animal teams or charges a fee to participate in their program when Pet Partners has a similar offering.

Pet Partners does not have any restrictions on its teams visiting a facility while other therapy animal volunteers who are not members of Pet Partners are present.

The preceding discussion is a general overview and is for informational purposes only. For a complete understanding of the insurance that might be available, consult the full terms and conditions of Pet Partners' CGLI policy, and also any homeowner's, condominium owner's or similar policy under which you're named as an insured. Any accident that results in damages or injuries will be evaluated on its own facts and circumstances, subject to the terms and conditions of Pet Partners' CGLI policy. This discussion doesn't create a contract or other legal obligation for Pet Partners and may not be relied on for that purpose. For a full understanding of the extent and limits of Pet Partners' CGLI policy, the details and precise language of the policy itself must be examined.

UNIT 7

Putting It All Together

LESSON 7.1

What to Bring on a Visit

What you bring with you on a visit may vary based on the facility and your animal. This section contains several suggestions for items you may find helpful. Carry a backpack or shoulder bag that's accessible at all times, but that doesn't get in the way of the work that you and your animal are doing.

*The best preparation
for good work
tomorrow is to do
good work today.*

— ELBERT HUBBARD

Identification, Documentation, and Journal

- ▶ **Team identification:** Pack your Pet Partners registration letter (digital or physical) or ID card/badge (digital or physical) in case the facility chooses to review it.
- ▶ **Your animal's health records:** Although these may already be on file at the facility, it's still a good idea to carry a copy of these records, including proof of rabies vaccination.
- ▶ **A journal and contact information:** Use the journal to document your visits if you wish. Put a list of contact names and phone numbers, including emergency phone numbers, in the front of the journal or in another easily accessible location.

Cleaning Supplies

- ▶ **Plastic bags for animal waste removal:** Bring heavy-duty, sealable bags, just in case a place to dispose of the waste isn't readily accessible. Know the facility's policy on the disposal of animal waste.
- ▶ **Hand sanitizer and/or antibacterial towelettes:** Always wash your hands before beginning a visit and ask anyone who wants to meet your animal to wash their hands too. Carrying your own hand sanitizer can make this quick and easy for everyone. Antibacterial towelettes can be useful for cleaning toys or leashes that get dirty.
- ▶ **Cleaning supplies:** In the event of a pet elimination accident, you should be prepared to clean up after your animal. Know the policy of the facility that you're visiting; many will prefer that you use their disinfectant cleaners.
- ▶ **Towels:** A towel can be used to dry the animal and wipe their feet upon arrival if it's raining or snowing outside. If your dog is a breed prone to drool, you may also want a towel to wipe their face as needed. Launder these between visits.
- ▶ **Vinyl or latex gloves:** For cleanup, if desired.
- ▶ **Sticky rolling lint brush:** This is useful for removing hair from fabrics.

Water and Food

- ▶ **A water dish and a bottle of water:** To provide for your pet during breaks.
- ▶ **Food treats for your animal:** Decide on a “treat policy” in advance that aligns with the facility’s policy as well as your animal’s ability to take treats gently.

Grooming Supplies

- ▶ **A brush or grooming tools:** Include a soft brush if you’re planning to let people groom your animal. Be sure to review what makes an appropriate brush in Lesson 4.1

Toys

- ▶ **For breaks:** To keep your animal motivated between visits, you might want to bring a special toy that only you will use during breaks for stress relief. By having a separate toy that’s used only for visiting, you maximize infection prevention and your animal might be more interested because they don’t play with this toy on a regular basis at home.

Leashes, Collars, and Harnesses

- ▶ **Dogs:** In addition to wearing a collar or harness, all dogs must be on a leash at all times during the visit.
- ▶ **Small animals:** Cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and rats that are carried must still wear a collar or harness and be on a leash at all times.
- ▶ **Hoofed animals:** Equines, llamas, and alpacas should use halters and lead ropes, as appropriate for their species.
- ▶ **Birds:** Birds must wear harnesses or flight suits and use a leash. Birds should not be tethered by their leg.
- ▶ **Pigs:** Harnesses and leashes are appropriate for pigs.

Note: Review the information about appropriate collars, harnesses, and leashes in Lesson 4.1.

Conversation Starters

- ▶ **Photos of your animal:** Put together a small photo album that tells a story about your animal. For example, the pictures might show your dog as a puppy, training to be a therapy dog and working as one, playing at home, and so on. These photo albums make you and your animal feel more familiar to the clients that you visit and can also serve as a conversation starter.
- ▶ **Pet Partners trading cards:** Personalized trading cards are available for purchase through Pet Partners. They include a picture and information about your animal. These are a great way to close visits and leave your clients with something to remember you and your animal by. In addition, they help promote public awareness of Pet Partners.
- ▶ **Animal breed or species book:** This type of book can serve as a conversation starter, or as a pleasant distraction or educational tool, especially when you visit children.

Animal Uniforms

- ▶ **Program-specific equipment:** Some programs and facilities require that visiting animals wear a specific type of scarf, collar, leash, or harness, so that people can easily tell which program a particular animal belongs to.
- ▶ **Pet Partners accessories:** Pet Partners encourages teams to wear Pet Partners accessories while participating in Pet Partners activities. This helps present a consistent image of the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program to the public and establishes a national identity for Pet Partners teams. Pet Partners accessories include vests and bandannas for animals as well as clothing for handlers.

Appropriate Attire for Therapy Animal Visits

Appropriate attire might vary, depending on where you live and where you're visiting.

In an assisted living facility or hospital, trousers and a collared shirt or blouse might be more appropriate than jeans and a T-shirt. In a school-based program, where you could be sitting on the floor, jeans might be acceptable.

For safety reasons, Pet Partners requires closed-toe shoes for visits.

Always take your cue from the facility that you're visiting. Ask about the facility's dress code policy for volunteers. Your goal is to dress professionally, but comfortably, for the work that you will be doing.

Visit Preparation Checklist

Use this checklist before every visit to ensure you're ready to visit.

Item	P
Pre-visit Assessment Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ You know where to park, enter, take your animal for breaks, what the facility-specific policies are, and other unique details.	
Health Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Both the handler and animal are well enough to visit today.	
Coat Groomed <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Bathed no more than 24 hours before the day of the visit. (If you visit frequently, see the guidelines in Lesson 3.2.)▶ Clean and brushed.	
Feet and Hooves <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Trimmed and filed.▶ Clean, no fur on pads (if applicable).	
Eyes and Ears <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Clean and odor-free.	
Mouth <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Agreeable-smelling breath.	
Vests, Scarves, Leashes, Collars, Harnesses, and Baskets for Carried Animals <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Clean and disinfected.	
Handler Dress Code <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Closed-toe shoes.▶ Appropriate dress.	
Key Items Packed <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Including vaccination records, hand sanitizer, waste bags, and other desired items.	

LESSON 7.2

Visit Snapshot

Sometimes envisioning a visit from start to finish will help you put all of the pieces together and realize that you really are ready to get started! Read the following story of Kate's first visit to help you imagine what your first visit might be like.

First Visit: Kate and Sebastian, the mini horse

After successfully evaluating and completing her registration as a Pet Partners therapy animal team, Kate and her mini horse Sebastian were ready to get started. Kate searched the Volunteer Opportunity listings in the Volunteer Center and found a local retirement community seeking volunteers.

Kate contacted the activity director and arranged a time to meet, without Sebastian. The facility hadn't had a mini horse visit before, so Kate explained how Sebastian was fully housebroken and would be groomed before every visit. She talked about how Sebastian could back up through doorways when needed and how she could tell when he was getting tired. The activity director was thrilled. Some of her residents would love to meet a horse!

At the meeting, Kate learned about what kinds of clients she would be visiting and facility-specific details such as how she and her mini horse should enter the facility and where Sebastian could relieve himself outside when needed. They agreed clients could give treats to the mini horse, but they would only be carrots that Kate provided.

The day of their first visit Kate made sure Sebastian was thoroughly groomed. She packed a backpack with hand sanitizer, waste bags, carrots, some of Sebastian's new trading cards, and a soft brush for Sebastian's mane.

Upon arriving Kate took Sebastian to the break spot to let him check it out. Then they entered the building and signed in at the front desk. The activity director was waiting, eager to meet Sebastian. They walked together to a small common room where a handful of clients were socializing. Sebastian soon became the most popular individual in the room.

Kate offered hand sanitizer to the clients as they approached and used some herself. One older gentleman talked about how he had grown up with horses, but they were much larger than Sebastian. They chatted about riding and different breeds. Another woman was enamored of Sebastian's beautiful eyes and was stroking his ears. Kate suggested that Sebastian might like if she were to brush his mane, rather than touch his ears. The woman asked if she could make some braids. Kate agreed that would be a nice look for Sebastian.

The group chatted with Kate and the activity director for nearly 40 minutes. At that time Kate said Sebastian had loved meeting them all but should probably go out for a break. Carrots were shared, hands were cleaned, and the activity director assured them that Sebastian would be visiting again as she helped pass out Sebastian's trading cards. Kate took Sebastian outside to relax after his first real visit. It had been a huge success and they were ready for more!



Activity

Congratulations: you've come to the end of the Handler Guide! If you haven't already done so, now it's time to create an account to access the Pet Partners Volunteer Center. The Volunteer Center is an important resource for prospective and current therapy animal teams. This is where you will complete your application to become a team, and also where you'll find the Resource Library with documents and videos that will help you prepare for your evaluation.

Once you are a registered team, you'll return to the Volunteer Center to search for new volunteer opportunities, access continuing education, and renew your registration every two years.

Summary of Changes

Pet Partners periodically updates versions of this guide. These are the changes which have been made most recently.

- ▶ Removal of references to photo ID badges being a requirement during evaluations or visiting; teams now have the choice to carry a digital/paper registration card, a digital/paper registration letter, or a Pet Partners photo ID badge for situations where an evaluator or facility needs to verify registration details.
- ▶ Errors in formatting, wording, grammar, and punctuation have been fixed throughout. Some content has been relocated to improve readability.
- ▶ Lesson 2.3: Expansion of definitions to include any information that might identify a client.
- ▶ Lesson 4.1:
 - Clarification of acceptable rabies vaccination documentation to include AHSF.
 - Mention of availability of species-specific information in the resource library.
 - Clarification that retractable leashes are similar to bungee leashes and neither are allowed.
 - Additional information provided about strollers.
- ▶ Lesson 4.2: Added that excessive or harsh tugging on the leash or forcing of an animal's body into position can result in a Not Ready score.
- ▶ Lesson 5.4: Removed the Appropriate/Inappropriate language chart and replaced with person-first and identity-first language explanations.
- ▶ Lesson 6.3: Clarification that some spills at facility should only be cleaned by a staff member.