



Paws for People®

(011) 768 3643/082 901 8267

P.O. Box 6356, Westgate, 1734

www.pawsforpeople.co.za

Revised Working Parameters 2012

(Reference: Delta Society)

Animal assisted activity/therapy provides opportunities for motivational, educational, recreational and/or therapeutic benefits to enhance quality of life. AAA /AAT are delivered in a variety of environments by specially trained professionals, paraprofessionals, and/or volunteers in association with animals that meet specific criteria.

AAA/AAT is **inappropriate** for the dogs if or when:

- Dogs have been trained to aggressively protect and/or encouraged to actively bite, even as a component of a dog sport – i.e. – bite work that is part of Schutzhund work. Such dogs shall not be evaluated, nor can they ever be used as therapy dogs.
- If the dog is in any way people or dog aggressive.
- If the dog has been trained to be obsessive over a toy or article as a reward in training and or if the dog is obsessive over a toy or article.
- Injuries from rough handling or from other animals/people may occur.
- Basic canine welfare cannot be assured.
- The dog does not enjoy the work.
- The "session" or time of visit continues for too long – 45 minutes to an hour is acceptable.
- The dog exhibits signs of stress (details listed later in this document)
- The dog is, or has very recently been ill.
- The weather is simply too hot. Transporting dogs in cars on very hot days is dangerous!
- If any of the following symptoms exist: skin rashes, lameness, extreme hair shedding, runny nose, change in eating and/or elimination habits, odd smelling ears or breath, vomiting, eye infections, diarrhoea and/or bloody stools, sutures (stitches) medications for infections or illness, chronic illness, female in season.

Canine Health regulations:

(Must be in place before any supervised visit is allowed):

- Compulsory veterinary certification that the dog is in good health - must be repeated and renewed on an annual basis.

- Vaccinations must be up to date and proof of vaccination is necessary.
- Proof of de-worming (minimum) every **2** months (every month is preferable) & faecal flotation test twice annually. **Please have your vet invoice in your file as proof of faecal test! Use Vet approved de-wormers only!**
- Proof of Frontline* use every 4 weeks. *other **Vet approved** Tick and flea control treatment only!
- *NOT SUITABLE** – tick and flea shampoo, dip of any kind, diatomaceous earth, herbal/holistic remedies for ticks, fleas and worms. Dogs fed **RAW MEAT diets** are not suitable for therapy work!
- All of the above documentation must be available for scrutiny at every visit.
- Clean teeth, ears and eyes.
- Dog to be groomed and coat clean.
- Toenails trimmed if necessary and any rough edges filed.
- All breeds of dogs over the age of 8 years, require an additional veterinary certification every 6 months, which clearly states that in the vet's opinion the dog is capable of coping with the therapy/activity visits and that the dog currently has NO major health issues/problems.
- Dogs may "do" visits at the age of 12 months, but due to behavioural changes that occur during the "social change" period, the dog will be carefully observed and only permanently certified at the age of 18 months.
- Puppy visits are encouraged provided the puppy exhibits no signs of stress during the visits. Puppies should be removed from 'puppy visits' at the age of 5 months.
- In addition to the above requirements, therapy dogs in the hospital program shall be sprayed with 'Purl' Antibacterial deodorant spray.
- Bitches and seasons – stop visits immediately when the female comes into season or as soon as males show interest even prior to the season. Only commence visits one month after the season is finished. Be aware that the hormone highs and lows (fluctuations) can cause serious behaviour changes.

Signs of Canine stress may include:

- Excessive panting
- Whining/barking
- Tail tucked under
- Ears back
- Disinterest
- Excessive water drinking
- Excessive licking/licking lips
- Wilful disobedience
- Sweaty paws
- Clinging to handler.
- Avoiding the task at hand
- Diarrhoea
- Dilated pupils
- Erection
- Excessive dandruff
- Excessive shedding
- Hackles all the way up the back
- Inappropriate urination/defecation
- Increased or decreased activity
- Loss of appetite
- Shaking (as if cold)
- Shaking (as if the animal is shaking off water)

- Sneezing
- Tight face
- Trembling

Dogs displaying signs of stress should be quietly removed from the situation and allowed to relax. The handler shall report this as an incident to the unit leader present.

Profile of an appropriate Therapy Dog:

- Not breed specific – temperament is the key issue.
- Should be at least 1 year of age. (18 months old to be permanently certified). Puppies may attend visits **with written permission** up to 5 months of age.
- Dogs of all sizes and shapes have a place in therapy work.
- A Therapy Dog must have a stable, tolerant temperament, **free of any signs of aggression/excessive fear towards people or other dogs.** Dog should be interested in people, able to handle a reasonable amount of stress and able to accept loud noises, sudden movements and yelling/shouting.
- Dogs should not vocalise or posture; people or patients may be frightened by this behaviour and this can ruin a visit or event!

Canine Education requirements:

- The handler and dog team has to pass the AKC Canine Good Citizen test, together with the PFP skills and aptitude test. These tests ensure the dog is obedient, can handle stress, can walk in a controlled manner on the right or left next to the following: walker, crutches, cane, manual or electric wheelchair and stretcher. These tests also assess the handler. The dog should be able to pace him/herself should his handler accompany a person who has difficulty walking. The dog should also be capable of a lengthy down/sit stay. The dog should be at ease, and be able to work with another handler if necessary.
- Handler & Dog team must successfully complete six supervised visits before they may be certified. The team will be assessed after each visit. The overall assessment will be discussed upon completion of the supervised visits. The handler can request a copy of this assessment.
- It is advisable that the dog can retrieve objects of various sizes, textures and weights, in a controlled manner.
- The dog must be able to stand, sit or lie quietly on the floor to allow a person to brush, pat or generally interact with him/her. The dog must tolerate general handling that includes feet and ears.
- THE DOGS MUST NOT JUMP UP ONTO ANYONE.**
- Dogs must take food gently and come when called.
- Dogs should not exhibit obsessive behaviour over toys or articles.
- Dogs must respond to both verbal and hand signal commands.
- Dogs must not lick patients excessively.
- Dogs must not bark inside a facility.**
- Dogs must ALWAYS be on leash, and wear a flat blue collar (no steel collars whatsoever) whilst functioning as a Therapy Dog.
- Dogs that have either not commenced with supervised visits within 3 months of being assessed, or dogs that have a 3-month gap from the program (s) will be required to be re-assessed. Supervised visits must be completed within 6 months of being assessed. This is in keeping with new international standards.
- NO AGGRESSION AMONG THE DOGS WILL BE TOLERATED.**

After a visit:

- Allow your dog to relax. Praise him/her for the hard work that has just been done. When you are sure your dog is rested – schedule play time or just a nice walk.
- Obviously visits should not interfere with your dog's normal feeding times. Make sure he/she shows no signs of stress and feed your dog (obviously he/she must have water available at all times).
- Review the visit; jot down anything important that you think requires discussion with the handlers and unit leader in the group.

Paws for People Therapy Dog HANDLER responsibilities:

- Arrive on time – if you are delayed or cannot make the visit, be sure to notify the other handlers and the facility. This can be done easily by sms!
- Always have a cleaning kit with you, together with proof of vaccinations, tick and flea treatment and de-worming schedules (your file). Cleaning kit should consist of: Disinfectant, paper towel or cloths, air freshener and plastic bags. Ensure dogs on supervised visits have their sign-off sheets signed by a unit leader on each visit.
- Always have drinking water available for your dog.
- Allow the dogs in the group to "greet" each other, and the other handlers, before entering the facility.
- Show concern for the physical and mental well being of other handlers' dogs. It is vital not to let your dogs rush up to every other dog they see. This thoughtless act can cause dogs unnecessary stress and may result in dogs getting injured physically or mentally. (Mental scars often take far longer to heal than the physical ones.)
- Dogs should be given time to relieve themselves before entering a facility. This should minimise the chance of an "accident."
- Should the dog become "un-focused" whilst inside the facility, due to some distraction, i.e. a cat, remove the dog and work through with focus work. Only re-enter the facility once the dog is focused again.
- Be aware of the patient's rights, and privacy. Some people do not like dogs; some people of different cultures see dogs in a different light.
- Knock before entering a patient's room. Ask if you may enter. ALWAYS!
- Bed-ridden/paralysed patients often feel vulnerable. Sit quietly next to the bed with your dog. Ask if they would like the dog closer, before allowing the dog very near to the bed. If the dog puts a paw on the bed, or gives a "paw" to a patient, it must be able to do so slowly and gently and only if the patient wishes it. If the person is paralysed on one side, obviously take the dog to the person's unaffected/good side.
- You and your dog should be able to move slowly and carefully; this will ensure that no patient gets accidentally bumped.
- Your attitude should be positive, respectful, and non-judgmental and you should maintain a good sense of humour. In other words leave any "bad mood" that you might have been in, outside.
- It is the handler's responsibility to make sure that the dog does not beg for food, or eat anything off the floor; it could be a pill that may make your dog ill. Your dog should know the "leave it" exercise. Dogs may not be allowed in dining rooms or food preparation areas.
- You may not help a patient get out of bed or help him go to the bathroom. If you are asked to do this, explain that you are not allowed to do this, and immediately call a staff member. You may not move a patient's walker, cane or wheelchair out of their reach in order for you to get closer with your dog, and not return it to exactly its original position. If you are visiting with a person who is paralysed, make sure they can reach their call button, etc, before you leave.

- Visits are restricted to not less than two handlers. It may become necessary to hand your dog over to another handler during the visit. If you are alone, this is impossible. Dogs must NOT be given to anyone but another handler to look after or hold. The only exceptions to this rule are if the patient is working directly with the dog during AAT i.e. an occupational therapist might use the dog to help the patient improve his/her range of motion. Under strict supervision a child may be interacting/working directly with the dog.
- It is the handler's total responsibility to WATCH his/her dog at ALL times.
- Your dog may not "play" with another dog inside a facility.
- It is important to note that a therapy dog should never be a nuisance. The dog's behaviour must set an example. If you are in a room chatting, whether it be therapy work, chatting with staff, or with friends, your dog must be able to, on command, sit or down stay.
- The dog must remain there until his/her handler gives a release command.
- It is the handler's responsibility to clean up after his/her dog. This rule applies inside and outside any facility that you visit. ALWAYS!!
- The handler is responsible for the dog's welfare at all times. Never allow your dog to get "boxed in" so that the dog feels he/she has no escape route. This type of situation can "stress" even the most "solid" animals.
- Gently encourage interaction between the patient and the dog. We are fortunate that our dogs do this for us in most cases.
- It is the handler's responsibility to ensure that the dog is identifiable as a therapy dog, i.e. the dog must wear his/her therapy jacket/bandanna to visits and the jacket or bandanna must be clean and neat. The handler should also be able to produce the necessary documentation as listed above, on request, during any visit. Handler should wear PFP shirt/T-shirt.
- Any handler, who calls on his/her own at a facility with a dog, will NOT be operating under the auspices of Paws for People, and will therefore not be covered by public liability insurance. This means that the handler will be personally liable, should an incident occur.
- If a dog should bite or scratch a patient, the nursing staff should be notified immediately. They will document the incident and tell you what procedures must be followed.
- It is the handler's responsibility to ensure that his/her dog regularly attends the working/social/situational training sessions for the therapy dog group. **This is not negotiable.**
- It is the responsibility of each and every handler to report any incident concerning inappropriate dog or handler behaviour during the therapy dog training sessions, or therapy dog visits.
- It is the handler's responsibility to be prepared for the unexpected, i.e. children in an old age home, cats and dogs and other pets.
- A handler must use common sense. Do not visit patients who are immune-compromised, suffer from allergies or are in a high care situation due to severe ill health. If in doubt – DON'T.
- Handlers may not charge for visits! Paws for People® is an official non-profit organisation. Prescribed basic rules and requirements shall apply to all funds donated.

Suspension of visits:

The above working parameters are clear. If a handler and dog team does not comply with the above conditions, it may become necessary to suspend the team from visits – this suspension may be temporary or permanent.

If a team is suspended from visits because a dog is exhibiting problematic behaviour, the handler can request assistance (from one of our qualified instructors) in resolving the dog's issues. Only

once the problem behaviour has been satisfactorily resolved, may the handler request that the team be re-assessed.

It is mandatory that all suspended handler and dog teams be re-assessed prior to re-commencing visits and the team will be required to complete 6 supervised visits without incident before being re-registered as a Paws for People® visiting handler and dog team.

If a handler and dog team are suspended, PL insurance payments will not be refunded! If the suspension is permanent, or the handler decides to leave, it is the handler's responsibility to ensure that Paws for People® dog jackets are returned to Lesley de Klerk.

These Paws for People® working parameters are copyrighted!

Signed acceptance of Paws for People®
Working Parameters.

I, _____ Confirm

that I will abide by the working parameters and conditions of Paws for People®, as stated herein.

Signed at on this Day of 20....

Signature of handler.....

Witness.....

Witness.....

Can be faxed to 011 766 3728 or e-mailed to lesley.deklerk@pixie.co.za