

# General Program Guidelines:

## Animal Welfare:

**The primary responsibility of every volunteer is to ensure the safety and well being of your animal partner.** If your animal is safe, the people around it are safe; it is as simple as that. Safety and well being include providing adequate training and socialization for your animal, protecting him from stress and giving him access to water and a toileting area. It also includes closely supervising his interactions with patients, visitors and staff to ensure that he is handled gently and kindly. Your animal should never be placed in a situation that he cannot handle—it is up to you to recognize the signs that he is becoming overly stressed and remove him from the situation before a crisis occurs. Your dog cannot tell you when he is getting overtired or is not feeling well—it is up to you to be alert, aware and sensitive to what your animal is trying to tell you.

**It is essential that you know how to recognize the signs of stress in your dog during a therapy visit.** Even if you are willing to work yourself to exhaustion and stay late to see as many patients as possible, you CANNOT work your dog to exhaustion, or you will be sorry. He will eventually lose his enthusiasm for therapy work, and will lose his sparkle and shine. He may come to hate therapy work, and may show signs of shutting down completely when you walk into the hospital.

### Signs of fatigue and stress in dogs include:

- Slower responses
- Balking
- Reluctance to perform commands that are normally automatic
- Withdrawal from interactions with patients / staff
- Sweaty paw pads
- Panting
- Yawning
- Reduced eye contact
- Laying down
- Licking lips / tongue flicking
- Whining / barking
- Restlessness / agitation
- Hiding behind handler
- Shaking
- Refusing treats
- Looking away

When you any of these signs, it is time to give your dog a break. Find a cooler place, go outside for a potty break, and play for a few minutes. Then resume your rounds. If he seems refreshed, you have been observant and have acted properly. If he is still showing signs of fatigue, cut your visit short and head for home. Let him relax and play—he has earned it.

## Behavioral Expectations of a Therapy Dog:

You and your dog will not be a successful team if all you do together is make a therapy visit once a month. You are a TEAM. Make sure you have several varied activities to do with you dog—it will help strengthen

the bond between you in so many ways. Some recommended activities include obedience training, agility training, flyball—all of which can be used in demonstrations in your therapy work as well. Formal competition in dog sports also builds confidence and teamwork. Besides, all of these activities are FUN!! Even if you never enter a competition, continuing with regularly scheduled training periods will help to strengthen the bond between you.

**Your dog needs to know the following:**

He needs to have impeccable manners. He must be quiet but alert and responsive while in the hospital, nursing home or school. He must respond to your commands briskly and enthusiastically. He must at a minimum know “sit”, “down”, “come”, “heel” and “stay”. Tricks are always popular, so teach him as many tricks as possible.

He needs to really enjoy meeting new people. If he is hesitant or shy, patients may think that he doesn't like them. He needs to be an ambassador for the unconditional love that therapy dogs bring to their work.

You must work as a team. There should be no jerking on the leash to get your dog to sit, no loud commands, no endless repetitions of commands, and no exasperation. It should be a pleasure to see the two of you walking down the hall, meeting and greeting everyone easily.

**General Rules Regarding Your Animal:**

Your dog is to be bathed and groomed within 24 hours of a therapy visit. Grooming includes trimming and filing nails, brushing teeth to reduce odor, and cleaning ears and eyes.

Make sure your dog has had adequate time to eliminate before you leave home. Give him the chance to eliminate again when you arrive at the your therapy visit site. You may use any of the grassy areas surrounding the facility—just make sure that you pick up and dispose of your dogs' waste in an appropriate container.

Bring a water bowl to make sure that your dog has enough to drink. Many units are quite warm, even in the winter, and dogs get quite hot and thirsty.

Dogs should visit on a buckle collar and 4-6 foot leather or fabric leash only. No prong or choke collars are permitted, nor are chain or flexi leashes. Gentle Leaders are permitted for safety reasons with larger dogs. They may be used while you are working on keeping your dog's attention in a strange new place and reminding him to walk politely beside you.

Your dog must wear his Delta ID tag and vest for every therapy visit. . The Hines volunteer ID, Good Samaritan ID or Loyola ID must be displayed either on the dog's vest or on the Troupe bandana. The vest may be removed during the visit for tricks or to facilitate petting, but dogs must be wearing their vest when entering and exiting the facility. For holidays such as Halloween or Christmas, a costume may be worn instead of the vest during the visit. You must wear the appropriate facility ID tag, as well. Note that Fairview Baptist Home does not require an ID tag.

Dogs with stitches from surgery, with open wounds, sores or rashes, or who appear to be ill are not permitted to visit. Dogs who have vomited or had diarrhea within 24 hours of a visit are also excluded. If your dog just isn't acting right to you, DON'T BRING HIM!

**General Handler Guidelines:**

Confidentiality is essential. A volunteer who breaks confidentiality will be dismissed from the program.

Do not take photos of patients with your dog unless you have a written photo release form signed by the patient.

The patient's name, medical condition and diagnosis are privileged information—do not discuss this information with anyone.

You will receive you and your dog's volunteer badges during your Hines orientation. They are to be worn at all times during therapy visits. **You will need to schedule an appointment with the program secretary to have your Loyola ID photo taken. Call Joan Czjaka at 708-216-9179 to make arrangements. Your Loyola ID must be worn for all Loyola therapy visits.** Temporary ID's must be obtained from Maplebrook, Scheiser, Hodgkins and Tate Woods schools at the school office for the READ program visits. You must wear your Troupe nametag for all therapy visits, as well as your Troupe polo shirt, apron or vest, nice jeans or casual slacks, and closed-toed shoes.

Dress in loose, casual clothing for therapy visits. Remember that many patient care units can be quite warm. Appearance should be neat and professional at all times.

You may only bring your dog for regularly scheduled therapy visits, as listed on the Pets for Vets / PAWSitive Therapy Troupe calendar. Unscheduled visits are not permitted.

You may only visit on the units that are listed on the calendar. Do not visit outside these areas, even if requested by family members. Troupe therapy dogs have authorization ONLY for the units that are listed in our policy.

If you are feeling ill, DO NOT visit. Call the program coordinator and let her know that you will not be coming. These are healthcare facilities, and we do not want to transmit illness to someone who is already compromised.

If you cannot make your scheduled therapy visit, it is your responsibility to call either the site leader for that site or the program coordinator and let her know you will not be coming. You may also call Recreation Therapist or other designated facility pet therapy supervisor and leave a message there. You will find these contact numbers in your PAWSitive Therapy Troupe Directory. Unless you notify the coordinator and / or the site leader, she and other volunteers who are expecting you will wait at the designated waiting area for you, so you need to let them know.

Arrive on time for your visits. Encourage all interested visitors and staff to greet your dog. Explain the program to them. Before and after you make your therapy visits, give staff the opportunity to pet and cuddle your dog.

Be aware that you and your dog are "on stage" from the moment get out of the car in the parking lot. You are official representatives of the therapy program wherever you go. Maintain a pleasant, approachable attitude and provide courteous answers to questions. Respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be near your dog.

Practice elevator etiquette. Always ask people on the elevator if it is all right for you to join them with your dog. Give them time to respond—don't just rush on. If anyone is uncertain about having you join him or her, wait for the next elevator.

You should offer the patient antiseptic hand cleaner before and after petting your dog, unless other staff members will be doing this for you. At Hines, you MUST insist that all inpatients that want to pet your dog use hand sanitizer first. At all other institutions and schools, hand sanitizer is strongly encouraged, but it is optional.

If you have specific questions or concerns about something that happened during a visit, please ask questions. You can ask a staff member before you leave, or you may call the coordinator to discuss your concerns. When in doubt, ASK!

If something occurs during a visit, which indicates that your dog is unwell, end the visit immediately and remove your dog from the facility. Let the Charge Nurse know that you are leaving, and why.

If your dog has an “accident” while you are visiting, immediately notify the charge nurse so that she can alert Housekeeping. You may try to clean up the mess yourself, but Housekeeping must be notified so that they can follow disinfection procedures.

If your dog causes an injury to a patient, visitor or staff member (no matter how minor):

- 1) Make sure your dog is secure.
- 2) Obtain help for the injured person from a staff member.
- 3) Give a verbal report to staff about what happened.
- 4) End the visit.
- 5) Notify the program coordinator, if she was not present
- 6) Take your dog to a veterinarian. Tell the vet what happened so that he can determine what measures, if any, need to be taken.
- 7) The program coordinator will notify the Clinical Nurse Manager, the staff physician, Infection Control, the Safety Office and, if the injury was a bite wound, the County Health Department.
- 8) Notify Delta Society the next day.

The program coordinator will maintain visit records for each volunteer team. No further sign-in is required, except for volunteers who are part of the Hospice program.

Always replace any equipment that you have moved in order to bring your dog closer to the patient’s bedside. This includes putting side rails back up, moving over bed table, wheelchairs, commodes, telephones—all back to their former positions before you leave the room.

Offer NO physical assistance to any patient. Tell him instead that you will get a nurse for him. This includes giving the patient food or water—there may be a reason why he is not allowed to eat or drink.