Triple Crown Pawsitivity

Triple Crown Kennel and Stable, Inc.

TCP Therapy Dog Team Evaluator Guide

Becoming a Therapy Dog Team Evaluator

● Evaluators must have a minimum of 1-year experience as a therapy dog team with a minimum of 12 hours in that 1-year period logged in Track it Forward.

o Waivers may be obtained on a case-by-case basis due to dog handlers experience. Proof of experience outside of TCP may be requested.

● Those interested in becoming an evaluator should contact TCP through triplecrownpawsitivity@gmail.com. Please provide a summary of experience and proof of experience outside of TCP, if the above requirement is not met.

● Evaluators must be volunteers. Evaluators cannot charge for testing, beyond collecting new member dues.

● Evaluators may not evaluate their own canines (whether with themselves or as a part of another team) or dogs that they have trained. Exceptions must be approved by TCP.

● All evaluators must be approved by a Lead Evaluator and maintain their membership in good standing in order to conduct evaluations. The process to obtain this approval is as follows:

o Evaluators must volunteer during at least one team evaluation event, where they will shadow an approved evaluator and others to understand the full evaluation process.

o Evaluators must be observed conducting a team evaluation by a Lead Evaluator that is in good standing.

o The Lead Evaluator must document their approval or denial using the TCP Therapy Dog Team Evaluator Approval form.

● Lead Evaluators are designated by the TCP Board of Directors and may also be board members that are experienced IPP evaluators.

Preparing for an Evaluation

Preparation is key to conducting a successful evaluation. This is intended to be a guide to assist in the preparation of a team evaluation event. Team evaluation events will be regularly scheduled throughout the year by a Lead Evaluator but may also be conducted by evaluators on an as-needed basis. All team evaluation events must be approved by a Lead Evaluator.

1. Refresh yourself on the membership guidelines
2. Find an appropriate time/date and location for the event
   a. We have a very diverse membership base that includes working professionals and retired individuals, so keep this in mind when selecting event times
   b. Evaluation locations must be commensurate with simulating a therapy dog visit and allow for control of external distractions and interruptions.
   c. Evaluation locations should never allow for a team that has not had an initial assessment to come into contact with patients/residents at facilities.
   d. Obtain approval for testing dates and locations from a Lead Evaluator.
   i. The Lead Evaluator will ensure the testing dates/locations are included on the application form for new applicants to register.

3. Communicate with applicants and volunteers
  a. Once an evaluation schedule has been created, communicate the dates and locations to applicants and member-volunteers using social media and other channels to increase the number of applicants. Request the contact information for applicants and volunteers from a Lead Evaluator or board member.
  b. Remind applicants that they must complete the following prior to an evaluation:
    i. Submit an electronic application
    ii. Review the membership guidelines
    iii. Complete the open book quiz
    iv. Submit proof of current vaccinations
    v. Submit a team photo for the certificate and headshots for the badges (photos may also be taken during the evaluation and sent to triplecrownpawsitivity@gmail.com)
    vi. Plan to bring membership payment to the evaluation (cash or check).
  c. If evaluating multiple applicants, request applicants sign up for a specific time slot to avoid too many teams arriving prior to an evaluator being ready.
  d. Items to bring to the evaluation:
    i. Multiple copies of the TCP Therapy Dog Team Evaluation form and the Waiver of Liability
    ii. If available, demo vests to help new members size their vest appropriately
    iii. Clipboards and pens for evaluators and volunteers
    iv. Folder for forms and payment collection
    v. An TCP canine, if there will not be multiple applicant teams close in time
    1. If the canine is the evaluator's therapy dog, arrange for a crate, side room, or other location to secure the canine during the evaluation. The evaluator may not handle their canine during the evaluation, other than for the specific portion evaluating the applicant team's response to another dog.
    vi. A walker or wheelchair and cane

Conducting a Team Evaluation

To ensure an efficient means of testing our future therapy dog teams, all TCP examiners shall use the following guidelines to assist with the testing process.

1. Hold a brief review of the process and roles with all of the evaluators and volunteers immediately prior to the start of the event to explain the roles below.

2. Set-up an area to greet teams as they arrive. If possible, set this up to resemble a receptionist area.
  a. For larger events where several teams or more will be evaluated, ensure a volunteer is staged in this area to greet prospective members.
  b. The receptionist should review the information submitted in the application to ensure the contact information (name, address, e-mail) are correct. Ensure any changes are annotated on the team evaluation form and provided to the evaluator. Advise the applicant that this is where the new member materials will be sent, and once they pass the evaluation they will receive a welcome e-mail with information for how to get started.
  c. The receptionist should assemble clipboards with the evaluation form and waiver of liability for each team.
  d. The evaluation starts as the team walks through the door. The receptionist or any other volunteer should report any undesired behavior to the evaluator.

3. Once checked-in, the evaluator greets the team.

a. This is the first opportunity to see how the canine greets strangers and how the handler responds. Greet the handler first prior to asking to greet their dog. Ask to greet their dog by name and gently pet the dog to gauge this first interaction with a stranger.

b. Pay particular attention to the canine. Any excessive barking, jumping, growling, aggression with another dog is grounds for terminating the testing immediately, even if you have not started the handler's test. Simply advise client of the problem and ask them to contact a trainer to alleviate the negative behavior and/or get additional basic obedience training.

c. Document the results in the Evaluator Approaching Canine section

4. The handler must show that he or she can handle their dog in all situations to include praise and discipline. A handler who is obviously overbearing or not responsive in correcting undesired behaviors is grounds for stopping the testing.

5. Any time another canine is present in the same room as the team being evaluated, this may be used to evaluate the reaction to other dogs present. This can be other teams being evaluated. Remember to always keep dogs five feet apart per TCP policy.

6. Move to an area free of distractions for the beginning of the evaluation.

a. Provide a quick overview of the evaluation process to the applicant

b. Ask a few questions from the open book exam to spot-check their understanding of the guidelines. Ask if there are any other questions from the guideline we can help with.

i. If it is clear the applicant does not have an understanding of the guidelines, advise them that they will not be able to pass the evaluation today, but can return to a future evaluation date. If desired, you may proceed with the evaluation to be able to advise the applicant of any other gaps that need to be closed.

7. Commence with the Handler/Canine Evaluation section and step through each line item with the applicant team. Ensure sufficient space is available.

8. During the Canine Approaching Stranger section of the evaluation, perform the following.

a. Discuss with the applicant the proper way to greet strangers by asking "would you like a therapy dog visit?" and introducing yourself and your canine to the individual.

b. Brief the applicant on how to properly approach a stranger

i. Large dogs should sit or lay down when greeting small children

ii. Dogs may sit or stand in front of an individual that is standing, provided that individual does not have mobility issues. The dog should not pull excessively to that individual.

iii. Individuals with mobility issues should be seated or lying down to greet the dog.

iv. Dogs should be brought beside chairs or wheelchairs whenever possible, to avoid people leaning forward to pet the dog, that may cause a fall. Small dogs (<14lbs) may be placed in the individual's lap.

c. Set up at least one volunteer to be staged as the stranger. Volunteer(s) should:

i. Walk near the canine with a walker to sit in a chair or roll by in a wheelchair prior to the canine approaching

ii. Have the individual accidently drop a cane at some point. This should not be near or directed towards the canine. Any dog will react to get out of the way of an object falling at them.

iii. Have the volunteer excitedly call to the canine to gauge the reaction of the handler. If the dog pulls to get to the volunteer, the handler should redirect and calm the canine down prior to allowing an excited canine to approach.

iv Once approached, the handler should help position the canine beside the chair or wheelchair to greet.

v. The volunteer should pet the dog calmly and talk to the handler.

vi. The volunteer should get up and walk with a cane using an erratic or unsteady gate away from the applicant team.

vii. The handler should ensure the canine does not impede the path of the volunteer

viii. The handler should be friendly and courteous at all times, but their main focus should always remain on the dog. This may mean excusing themselves from the area to calm or correct the dog and that must be the priority over the visit. Doing so does not mean they have failed the evaluation, as they are demonstrating good control and judgement, as long as the behavior demonstrated by the canine is not excessive or aggressive.

9. Ensure all items on the evaluation form have been covered and make any notes in the comments section for areas of improvement or reason for failure. Anything written here must be briefed with the applicant, it is not enough to simply document on the form.

10 . For applicants that pass, Checks or cash will be accepted at the event and should be collected together and sent to Lynn Teague 5005 Pine Knoll Road Wilmington, NC 28411.
   a. Applicants that do not pass do not need to pay for the evaluation.

11. Discuss the Track it Forward app and that it is a requirement to log hours. Let them know we also have a page to help connect members. They will be provided information to login to both after payment is received.

12. Let the team know they will also be provided information on how to order their vest. If demo vests are available, the evaluator or volunteer may help to appropriately size the vest for the team.

13. Take a good photo of the therapy dog team, if photos not sent ahead of time. If large dog, have handler kneel with dog next to them. If small dog, have handler hold dog in arms. This photo will be used in their TCP certificate. Also, take separate headshots of both the handler and canine for the ID badges. Send photos to TCP and be sure to label them clearly so that they are used for the correct certificate and badges.

14. Evaluator will review all documents to ensure accuracy and completion before sending to TCP main office. Send all paper documents and payments collected to Lynn Teague 5005 Pine Knoll Road Wilmington, NC 28411.