



Therapy Animals and Children

Have you considered bringing therapy animal visitation to your school, library or pediatric medical setting? Pet Partners is the premier therapy animal program providing qualified volunteers in settings just like yours.

What are the benefits?

- Interactions with therapy animals improves social skills among peers.
- Children experience better focus and confidence while learning with therapy animals present.
- Therapy animals have been found to have a positive effect on pain level, particularly with children.
- Children are more motivated to participate in treatment and maintain their motivation over time with therapy animals.

Examples of Interactions

- Simple social visits by a therapy animal team in a pediatric hospital unit bring a sense of normalcy to young patients, as well as their family and friends.
- Therapy animals are great listeners, and never correct pronunciation, making them a wonderful option for reading programs.
- Therapy animals with can be special guests for lessons about empathy and compassion.

How to Select Teams

In addition to meeting the basic standards for all therapy animal teams, look for other key characteristics for your particular setting.

- Animals of any size can be effective with children, as long as they are not easily distracted and respond promptly to their handler's cues.
- It's about more than just the animal. Handlers should be comfortable appropriately directing interactions between children and their animal in order to set everyone up for success.
- Whether a medical setting or local library, allergies and germs are important considerations. Thorough grooming and good hand hygiene help to mitigate potential problems.

Learn More

- For details about our programs including Read With Me™ and Walk With Me™ as well as our policies that help ensure safe and effective visits, visit www.petpartners.org/facilities

Why Choose a Pet Partners Team?

Handler Training

- All Pet Partners handlers complete training prior to registration and have access to continuing education opportunities.
- Pet Partners offers the only handler training on infection prevention publicly endorsed by the Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA).
- Pet Partners offers a canine body language course consistent with SHEA guidelines.
- Pet Partners' education underscores the importance of healthy handlers and animals.

Handler and Animal Assessment

- All Pet Partners handlers must pass a written assessment at the time of registration demonstrating knowledge of best practices for safe and effective visits.
- Pet Partners teams are required to pass an in-person, role play based evaluation every two years, more frequently than recommended guidelines, to continue visiting.

Animal Welfare

- The core tenet of Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program is “you are your animal’s best advocate,” also known as YAYABA™. This requires handlers to modify or end interactions animals no longer enjoy, consistent with animal welfare guidelines.
- Pet Partners limits all visits to no longer than two hours, consistent with recommendations to limit overwork and fatigue.
- To register and renew, Pet Partners teams submit animal health screening forms signed by a veterinarian to ensure the overall health of the participating animal.
- Pet Partners ascribes to a relationship based handler-animal support model to be used during visits, a skill on which handlers are assessed during the evaluation process, known to Pet Partners handlers as PETS™.

Safety Standards

- To ensure that policies reflect current scientific information, Pet Partners relies on veterinary advisors, including those with specialization in epidemiology.
- Based on their guidance, requirements for rabies vaccination and grooming are purposefully stringent.
- Policies prohibit raw protein diets, animals with compromised health, and protection dogs.
- Pet Partners has an easily accessible system for incident reporting and a thorough resolution process to determine if a team can resume visiting. When combined with training, Pet Partners has a very low incidence of serious accidents.

