



# **PET THERAPY DOG TEAMS**

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# **CERTIFICATION**

# **PROCESS**

Therapeutic Dog Services

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction.....	3
<b>"Professional Care Delivered with     Compassion"</b> .....	3
1. What makes us so unique .....	4
2. Therapy dog certification process.....	6
3. Human Criteria: .....	9
<b>Human Criteria Requirements</b> .....	9
<b>Police Clearance</b> .....	10
4. Community programs .....	11



## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **The Pet Therapy Dog Program**



**"Professional Care Delivered with Compassion"**

**Since the year 2001,**  
we have been delivering.

Dog Assisted Interventions  
**Activities (AAA), Education (AAE), Therapy (AAT)**

Our Therapy Dog Program proves that positive human-animal interactions improve the physical, emotional, and psychological lives of those we help. Our small group of volunteers share their time and the unconditional love of their dog with others.

Animal-assisted activities provide social interactions for those recuperating in the hospital, the elderly in retirement homes or even students trying to cope with the stress of exams on college campuses.

Our animals create opportunities for motivational, educational, and recreational benefits to enhance the quality of life of many people in need. Dog therapy is also when a dog and handler team is overseen by a professional health provider and incorporated as part of a goal-oriented and structured therapeutic intervention. This may mean working with a physiotherapist where the client practices brushing a dog for strength building exercises or partnering with an occupational therapist where the task of attaching a secondary leash to an animal is an activity to work on improving fine motor skills.

The benefits of therapy dog activities to recipients of visits are indisputable and the body of supporting research grows daily. These animal-assisted interactions have been shown to decrease the perception of pain, lower blood pressure and even cholesterol, promote care compliance, and minimize anxiety.

*We collaborate with Community Inclusion Groups to help connect their members to the unconditional love of a (Pet) therapy dog.*

# 1. WHAT MAKES US SO UNIQUE

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## **Learn about what makes us so unique.**

Our (Pet) Therapy Dog Program sets the benchmark for safe and enriching therapy dog visits through an ongoing commitment to rigor, education, and advocacy.

- We have the ONLY therapy dog training program in South Australia.
- Our program is so rigorous that our therapy dogs are re-tested annually.
- We certify dogs to work with professionals such as counsellors, psychologists, physio, and rehabilitation therapists.
- Handlers complete comprehensive education on safety, infection control, client confidentiality, and dog handling.
- We are the ONLY national program that renews their teams based on updated screenings for health & team skills.
- We base our organisational values, policies, and education on the belief that we must advocate for our animals first.
- All our therapy dogs and handlers bring substantive professionalism to the settings they visit.
- Our dogs and handlers are covered by Therapeutic Dog Services comprehensive liability insurance coverage of 20 million dollars.
- Teams must achieve a level of competence before commencing Pet Therapy within community work and must maintain continuing professional development as well as regular and ongoing supervision.



# Pet Therapy Dog Certification Process

## Community Therapy Dog Teams (Volunteers)

### Therapy Dog Certification Overview Quick List

Screening Suitability	<p><b>STEP 1 - Interview (1-2 hours)</b></p> <p>Humans and their well-mannered dog are assessed for potential community work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dog is assessed for grooming and obedience (must obey commands Sit, Stay, Heel, Down and Come)</li> <li>The handler is assessed for suitability for therapy work in the community.</li> </ul>
Dog	<p><b>STEP 2 - Screening Evaluation/Exam (for dog and handler)</b></p> <p>Assessment of therapy animal health and behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dog temperament assessment - 13 steps evaluation.</li> <li>Veterinary Health Clearance: completed by qualified veterinarian. (Required annually)</li> <li>Vaccination (C5) required annually</li> </ul>
Human	<p><b>DHS Police Clearance Screening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with children</li> <li>Vulnerable</li> <li>Aged Care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must have recent police clearance or happy to have DHS clearance conducted.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>STEP 3 – (Pet) Therapy Dog Training (for handler only)</b></p> <p>Education program for all volunteers after the animal is assessed for suitability. Includes the following and more.</p> <p>Online training, Classroom training, Mentorship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working effectively with staff</li> <li>Following infection control procedures</li> <li>Maintaining therapy animal grooming for facility environments</li> <li>Assessing therapy animal health and behaviour prior to making a visit</li> <li>Sharing the therapy animal appropriately with specific populations</li> </ul>
	<p><b>STEP 4 – (Pet) Therapy Dog placement (Joint Venture partners only)</b></p> <p>Induction and Facility Placement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Induction and Placement at joint venture facility sign in/out, facility supervisor, OHS, policies and procedures.</li> <li>Service delivery of dog assisted activities, to provide emotional and physical benefits to many people in the community</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Step 5 Final Certification</b></p> <p>Competency shown in standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Interventions: Activities, Education &amp; Therapy</p> <p><b>Official badges + (Pet) Therapy Dog harness awarded</b></p>	<p>Comply with regulated: AAI policies and procedures, animals on site policies, animal welfare, infection control and animal removal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handler Test on (Pet) Therapy Dog Manual Review Infection Control and Safety Procedures</li> <li>Review AAA/AAT Code of Ethics</li> <li>Review Therapeutic Dog Services Policies and Procedures</li> </ul>



## **2. THERAPY DOG CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

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### **Therapy Dog Certification**

Our Screening and Testing for (Pet) Therapy Dogs has been established with the goal of setting rigorous standards for both dogs and their human handlers, to ensure safe and effective therapy animal visits within the community.

Our Therapy Dog Evaluation is based on the testing process which has the highest standard of therapy dog testing. Our test assesses dogs to determine whether they have the temperament and personality required of a good pet therapy visitor. In our testing, dogs are evaluated to display temperament that shows confidence, good manners, and sociability with other dogs and people. They must also be always well-groomed and gentle.

In addition, all our Therapy Dogs are required to meet strict health requirements such as annual vet check-ups and up-to-date vaccines C5, Flea/Heartworm prevention before being registered. It is essential they must not have any bite history and be at least 1 year in age to participate. Our complex 13 [-step-screening evaluation](#) tests dogs for adverse reactions to children, adults, and seniors with the use of wheelchairs, crutches, canes, food, toys, and even unusual noises common in hospitals and care homes. ***Our testing is so rigorous that our dogs are re-tested annually to make sure they keep meeting our high standards.***



# **Pet Therapy Dog Certification Process**

## **Community Therapy Dog Teams (Volunteers)**

Here are the **5 steps** to achieving a (Pet) **Therapy Dog Certification** with Therapeutic Dog Services Incorporated:

### **STEP 1 - Interview (1-2 hours)**

- The dog is assessed for grooming and obedience (must obey commands Sit, Stay, Heel, Down and Come)
- The handler is assessed for suitability for pet therapy work in the community.

### **STEP 2 - Screening Evaluation/ Exam (for dog and handler) -**

1. Controlled Walk
2. Accepting a Friendly Stranger and Sitting Politely for Petting
3. Held by a Stranger with Owner Out of Sight
4. Leaving an Item
5. Taking Food Gently
6. Releasing Dog and Recalling from a Minimum of 5 meters

### **REACTION TESTING**

7. Reaction to Another Dog
8. Exuberant and Clumsy Petting
9. Staggering and Gesturing Individual
10. Angry Yelling
11. Walking Through a Crowd and Reaction to Distractions
12. Crowded or Patted in a Group
13. Being Bumped from Behind

### **STEP 3 – (Pet) Therapy Dog Training (for handler only)**

- Identifies the responsibilities of a volunteer.
- Teaches infection control and safety procedures.
- Discusses important client's rights and considerations.
- Explains the Code of Ethics for AAA (Animal-Assisted Activities) and AAT (Animal-Assisted Therapy)
- Demonstrates what is required during visitations.
- Explains Therapeutic Dog Services policies and procedures.

### **STEP 4 – (Pet) Therapy Dog Placement (6 months - 1 year)**

- Members are placed with Therapeutic Dog Services Incorporated, joint venture, industry partners primarily to provide community work in pet therapy visitations, including observe and learn about the industry in which AAI services are located.
- Industry placement, community work should be undertaken voluntarily by participants, and they must not receive any remuneration or reward for this work.

### **STEP 5 - Final Certification (official badges + (Pet) therapy dog harness awarded)**

- Handler Test on Therapy Dog Manual
- Review Infection Control and Safety Procedures
- Review AAA/AAT Code of Ethics
- Review Therapeutic Dog Services Policies and Procedures

## Pet Therapy Dog Certification Process

### Community Therapy Dog Teams (Volunteers)

Moreover, Therapeutic Dog Services focuses on the importance of animal welfare, emphasizing that we are engaging our dogs to participate in these activities, and we must constantly be their advocate, ensuring they are both safe and content during interactions.

We also require successful completion of an education program for all volunteers after the animal is assessed for suitability. Focusing on safety elements such as infection control, patient confidentiality and best practices in handling, our therapy dog handlers will bring a substantial level of professionalism to the settings they visit.

Handlers are also expected to demonstrate best practices in handling, elevating the requirements of a therapy dog team beyond basic obedience skills. Handlers intending to work in hospitals are given training on what to expect and how to handle difficult situations and patients with their dog. For example, dealing with acutely ill patients with Severe Depression, Mental Illness, Mood Disorders, Dementia, Alzheimer's, HIV, Heart-Disease, Organ Failure, and Cancer.

After the teams are successfully registered and have selected a care facility of their choice, we will continue to offer moral support to encourage remaining with the program **long-term**.

### Ongoing evaluations and training.



Therapeutic Dog Services is committed to providing resources, training, and on-going evaluation to our Teams. New Teams take online/handbook training including in classroom training, without their dog and complete an obedience screening process with their dog, a team evaluation, a mentoring process, and a background check prior to their first visit to a facility. Each stage involves different individuals to promote a non-biased evaluation.

Teams are evaluated on the job throughout their working time and re-evaluated every year and in-service programming and professional development provides opportunities to learn new information and skills in addition to building a sense of connectedness and engaging in a process of self-care.



### **3. HUMAN CRITERIA:**

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#### **Participation, Evaluation and Training**



#### **Requirements for participating in training.**

##### **Education:**

Completed year 10, or equivalent.

##### **Minimum Age:**

Need to be at least 16 years of age, if you are under 18 years your enrolment form will need to be signed by a parent or guardian.

##### **English:**

Training involves reading and undertaking a range of written assessments, as well as engaging in online forms and discussions.

##### **Computing:**

Need access to a computer and the internet and have basic computing skills.

##### **Physical requirements:**

To be reasonable physically fit to undertake the work placement as the tasks and activities associated with the work placement involve physical activities.

#### **Human Criteria Requirements**

- reside in Adelaide and or surrounding areas of South Australia
- own a well-mannered dog, with basic obedience and is up to date with vaccinations.
- complete online/handbook training, attend in classroom training and participate in further professional development training.
- available to participate with industry work placement component, volunteering, community work up to 1 hour to 90 mins - weekly, fortnightly, monthly to joint venture establishment providing service delivery in pet therapy dog visitations.
- drive a car.
- to make a difference in someone's life by sharing your dog with others to make someone's day.
- empathetic towards the public or those who live with acute illness, ageing, disability, and mental health population.

## Pet Therapy Dog Certification Process

### Community Therapy Dog Teams (Volunteers)

#### Police Clearance

required to hold a current police clearance certificate or apply for a police clearance screening through our organisation with Department of Human Services.

- DHS screening checks contribute to creating safe environments for children and other vulnerable people. South Australian and Commonwealth policy and legislation mean many employees and volunteers must have checks done as part of their roles.
- In South Australia, the Department of Human Services Screening Unit provides checks to Therapeutic Dog Services organisation, individuals, and volunteer coordinators.
- The Screening Unit does five types of checks. The checks are a risk assessment.
- We require all our employees and volunteers to hold an aged care sector, disability and vulnerable persons related clearance.
- Those volunteers working around children will also hold child related and working with children's clearances.

**Pet Therapy Teams:** We require the successful completion of the education program for all volunteers after the animal is assessed for suitability. Focusing on safety elements such as infection control, patient confidentiality and best practices in handling, our therapy dog handlers will bring a substantial level of professionalism to the setting they visit. Handlers are also expected to demonstrate best practices in handling, elevating the requirements of a (Pet) therapy dog team beyond basic obedience skills. Handlers intending to work in the community are given training on what to expect and how to handle difficult situations, client base and patients with their dogs. After the teams are successfully registered and have selected a care facility of their choice, we will continue to offer moral support to encourage remaining with the program **long-term**.



## **4. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

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### **Where you will find our Pet Therapy Dog Teams Volunteering.**

#### **Dog Assisted Activities, Education and Therapy**



The primary mission of Therapeutic Dog Services remains the provision of dog assisted activities, education, and therapy to persons across South Australia and surrounding states of Australia.

We have therapy teams providing animal services to over 100+ facilities spanning all age groups including persons with social, mental, emotional, legal, and physical vulnerabilities. More than 20 other facilities have requested teams.

Teams provide individual and group visitation and depending on the program, may work with professionals to assist persons in meeting specific therapy goals. We provide thousands of volunteer hours to facilities. The requests for pet therapy Dog team visits exceed our team availability.

#### **Dog Assisted Activities Program**



Meet and Greet: (AAA) Pet Therapy Program is a unique initiative program that allows participants to get up close and personable to dogs through visitations, meet and greet situation, to improve social inclusion, dog safety, and learning skills.

Our dogs come in all sizes and breeds, with exceptional temperaments, (friendly, patient, confident, gentle, and at ease in all situations), providing affection and comfort to people in a variety of settings. (Aged Care, Community Houses, Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Schools & Educational Institutions, Disability Services, Mental Health settings, just to name a few!)

Our dogs' primary job is to enjoy human contact, allowing unfamiliar people to pet them and handle them. Children enjoy hugging or playing with our dogs; adults usually enjoy simply sitting and petting our dogs. Our smaller dogs can be lifted onto, or climb onto, an individual's lap or bed and sit or lie comfortably there. Some of our dogs contribute to the visiting experience by performing small tricks for their audience.



## Pet Therapy Dog Certification Process

### Community Therapy Dog Teams (Volunteers)

#### Literacy Programs for children



Our reading program focuses on increasing the reading skills of younger school age children, supporting literacy through the message that reading can be fun, and promoting overall life-skill development. The process involves the student reading an age-appropriate book to our dog team in settings that include schools and libraries.

The combination of the loving acceptance of the animal, lowered anxiety and blood pressure, and the enjoyment of the animal interaction allows reading to become fun and non-stressful.

#### Presentations and Group Activities



(Pet) Therapy Dog teams, of Therapeutic Dog Services hold a strong community presence through general presentations, special events, and educational programs to groups with specific areas of focus.

This includes attendance at animal events, providing education and information about therapy animals and our organisation, participation in parades, ceremonies, university de-stress days to help students manage finals, and other school or general presentations.

#### Dog Assisted Therapy



- Dog assisted therapy takes place in a variety of settings, including disability services and rehabilitation, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, schools, and mental health facilities.
  - This form of treatment can take place individually or in groups and is led by a qualified therapist or professional with specialized expertise.
- Dog assisted therapy involves specific therapeutic goals, strategies, and outcomes measures. Therapeutic experiences can include walking, brushing, petting, and caring for an animal, as well as processing the experience of trying to achieve a given task.

**Pet Therapy Dog Certification Process  
Community Therapy Dog Teams (Volunteers)**



For Further information

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