



PAWS
for service

Pets Are Wonderful Support



THERAPY DOG 101 AKA VITAMIN K-9

AGENDA

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Therapy Dog?



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THERAPY DOGS ARE NOT SERVICE DOGS

Texas Health and Safety Code § 437.023 Service Animals:

(a) A food service establishment, retail food store, or other entity regulated under this chapter may not deny a service animal admittance into an area of the establishment or store or of the physical space occupied by the entity that is open to customers and is not used to prepare food if:

- (1) the service animal is accompanied and controlled by a person with a disability; or
- (2) the service animal is in training and is accompanied and controlled by an approved trainer.

(b) If a service animal is accompanied by a person whose disability is not readily apparent, for purposes of admittance to a food service establishment, retail food store, or physical space occupied by another entity regulated under this chapter, a staff member of the establishment, store, or entity may only inquire about:

- (1) whether the service animal is required because the person has a disability;
- (2) what type of work the service animal is trained to perform.

(c) In this section, “service animal” means a canine that is specially trained or equipped to help a person with a disability. An animal that provides only comfort or emotional support to a person is not a service animal under this section.

SERVICE ANIMAL TASKS

The tasks that a service animal may perform in order to help a person with a disability must be directly related to the person's disability and may include:

1. Guiding a person who has a visual impairment
2. Alerting a person who has a hearing impairment or who is deaf
3. Pulling a wheelchair
4. Alerting and protecting a person who has a seizure disorder
5. Reminding a person who has a mental illness to take prescribed medication
6. Calming a person who has post-traumatic stress disorder.



EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

V.T.C.A., Human Resources Code § 121.006 Improper Use of Assistance and Service Animals; Offense Currentness:

(a) A person commits an **offense** if the person intentionally or knowingly represents that an animal is an assistance animal or a service animal when the animal is not specially trained or equipped to help a person with a disability. An offense under this subsection is a misdemeanor punishable by:

(1) a fine of not more than **\$1,000**; and

(2) **30 hours of community service** to be performed for a governmental entity or nonprofit organization that primarily serves persons with visual impairments or other disabilities, or for another entity or organization at the discretion of the court, to be completed in not more than one year.

(b) A person who habitually abuses or neglects to feed or otherwise neglects to properly care for the person's assistance animal or service animal is subject to seizure of the animal under Subchapter B, Chapter 821,1 Health and Safety Code.

WHAT IS A THERAPY DOG?

A therapy dog is a dog that is trained to provide affection, comfort and support to people, often in settings such as hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, libraries, hospices, or disaster areas.

THE SCIENCE

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) has been reported to improve many psychological conditions such as anxiety, depression, social skills, and simply improving the moods of the patient.
- **Benefits** in educational settings include provided **comfort, companionship, and/or a diversion to unpleasant thoughts or situations.**
- A large number of studies show that **animals can offer relief and serenity** to a wide age range of vulnerable people with various different emotional issues.
- Animals can provide **non-judgmental and unrestricted emotional support.** This is true for both children and adults.
- The presence of a dog in a therapy session has indicated **improvements in a patient's outlook,** as well as their **willingness to share** on a deeper level.
- The **petting** of an animal can also put a patient at ease, whereas a therapist must maintain a professional state and thus is unable to provide physical support.
- Public schools and Universities use **therapy dogs during finals week** to help students deal with increased anxiety.

STRESSFUL SITUATIONS



- Therapy Dogs have been used in stressful situations, including mass shootings.
 - PAWS teams were used during Uvalde and have returned as requested a year later.
 - Therapy dogs were also used to offer comfort to faculty, staff and students following the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting in Blacksburg, Virginia.
 - In December 2012, therapy dogs were brought to the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, providing comfort to children and parents.
- Most recently, the Comal County District Attorney has a Therapy Dog in training to comfort crime victims, and child witnesses.

COGNITIVE

- Programs such as the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D) program promote **literacy and communication skills**.
 - The practice uses therapy dogs to encourage children to read aloud by giving them a nonjudgmental listener.
 - It has been proven that the academic performance and **children's enthusiasm for reading has increased** by having a therapeutic dog with them, especially in children with special education.
- An article published by the American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias reported that during visits with dogs, residents with **dementia** were able to be involved in special activities and were more verbal than usual.
- Researchers have identified further cognitive benefits of therapy dogs, which include an **increase in mental stimulation and assistance in the recall of memories** and the sequence of events.

PHYSICAL

- Interaction with therapy dogs **improves cardiovascular health**, and as a result patients may need less medication.
- Personal pet visitation and animal-assisted interventions (AIs) can **benefit patients' pain, blood pressure, stress, depression, and anxiety**, as well as increasing mobility and socialization with staff and families.
- **Petting animals** promotes the release of hormones that can **elevate moods**, specifically serotonin, prolactin and oxytocin.
- Studies have found **decreased cortisol levels** in children with insecure attachment styles, children with autistic spectrum disorder, in hospital patients with heart failure, and in healthcare professionals, after physical contact with a dog.

TRAINING

- Training consists of three essential fundamentals: timing, consistency and reinforcement.
- Handlers must also develop trust and be patient.
- All reinforcement/motivation is positive – so treats are used to focus, motivate and help shape our dog's behavior.
- In addition to the skills required and before certification, the dog must be “interviewed” with the handler for appropriateness as a Therapy Dog. Specifically, the dog must:
 - Not be aggressive towards strangers
 - Be willing to be stroked on the head, body and tail with both hands
 - Allow the touching of his paws
 - Allow the petting of his throat
 - Allow the holding/petting of the ears
- Generally an overall appropriate temperament when introduced to strangers in an unfamiliar setting



SKILLS REQUIRED

DOG	HANDLER
Sit	Recognize & Handle Dog's Stress
Down	Assure the Dog's Good General Health
Settle	Keep Your Dog Safe
Up	Insurance
Let's Go (Loose Leash)	Be Your Dog's Advocate
Wait	# of People Around Dog
Paws On	Be Aware of Surroundings
Back	Educate About Petting (No Hugs)
Leave It	Polite but Firm
Additionally: Elevators, Stairs, Bed Manner	

- As a Therapy Dog Organization, PAWS for service has developed its own 6 week training course, meeting one night per week, requiring practice and the development of timing and consistency with reinforcement.
- At the conclusion, each Team is required to take and pass a Certification exam.
- A Mentor is appointed to the new Team.
- The Mentor and Team visit the Mentor's assigned facility followed by the Mentor attending the Teams facility for final approval.

CERTIFICATION

Once you receive your Certification, maintain it annually.





PRACTICE

Once you have completed the requirements, the team may visit their assigned facility as well as other sanctioned opportunities.



Central Texas ADOPTION DAY

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, SJRC Texas-Belong, Centex Protection Court South, Child Protection Court of Central Texas, and CASA of Central Texas wish to thank the following sponsors for their generous contributions to Central Texas Adoption Day.



Bonnie Barnes
Reading Coordinator



<https://pawsforservice.org>

THANK YOU!