

Pet Partners brief information

- The Pet Partners mission is to improve human health and well-being through the human–animal bond. The human–animal bond is a mutually beneficial relationship that improves the physical, social, and emotional lives of those we serve, and should benefit the animals as well.
- One of the ways we do this is through our Therapy Animal Program. Our volunteer therapy animal teams make more than three million visits each year in support of our mission. A therapy animal team is one human handler and one animal working together to make visits in the community.
- Therapy animals are different from service animals or emotional support animals. Service animals and emotional support animals help the people they live with. Therapy animals help people out in the community.
- Pet Partners therapy animal teams are screened and registered to confirm they meet the high standards of our Therapy Animal Program and can visit safely and with minimal risk. Our Therapy Animal Program has the highest standards in the field and is supported by peer-reviewed research.
- Pet Partners was founded as Delta Society in 1977. Our Therapy Animal Program was launched in 1991. We changed our name to Pet Partners in 2012 to reflect our focus on therapy animal visitation and registration.
- Our domestic Therapy Animal Program is available in all 50 U.S. states and in Canada. Our international program is available in more than a dozen countries across four continents.
- Most Pet Partners therapy animals are dogs (92% of total registrations), but we also register cats, equines (horses & donkeys), rabbits, guinea pigs, domestic rats, birds (mostly in the parrot family), miniature pigs, and llamas & alpacas as therapy animals.
- A good therapy animal will have an affinity for interacting with people, a calm temperament, and reliable behaviors. A therapy animal handler will have a strong bond with their therapy animal, and be able to read and interpret their animal's body language and advocate for the animal's welfare.
 - Therapy animals don't need specific training other than basic obedience and leash skills. The animal's personality and the bond with the handler are the most important elements.
- Pet Partners teams visit at a wide variety of facilities, including hospitals and other healthcare, senior living, schools and libraries, veterans' health facilities, court systems, airport and transit facilities, university campuses, and many more. Therapy animal teams are welcomed at many places where interactions with an animal can benefit human health and well-being.
- Our Therapy Animal Program includes some specific program initiatives:
 - Animal-Assisted Crisis Response (AACR), which trains teams to support people affected by crisis.
 - Animal-Assisted Workplace Well-being (AAWW), which supports employee workplace health and morale.
 - Read With Me, which promotes children's literacy.
 - Walk With Me, which promotes movement for health and well-being.
 - We Are All Ears, a worldwide read with pets program to encourage at-home and community reading.
- Pet Partners also promotes Animal-Related Engagement (ARE), which is any engagement opportunity that allows participants the benefits of the human-animal bond by encouraging feelings that are commonly associated with interaction with an animal. This can include things such as animal-related videos, crafts, and toys.
- For more information please visit our website at petpartners.org.

Benefits of the Human-Animal Bond

The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that positively influences the health and well-being of both. While many of us intuitively understand the benefits of positive interactions with animals in our lives, an emerging body of research is recognizing the impact the human-animal bond can have on individual and community health.



Examples of therapy animals improving the physical, social, and emotional health of clients:

- A therapy dog has a positive effect on patients' pain level and satisfaction with their hospital stay following total joint arthroplasty (Harper, 2014) ^[1].
- Fibromyalgia patients spending time with a therapy dog instead of in an outpatient waiting area at a pain management facility showed significant improvements in pain, mood and other measures of distress (Marcus, 2013) ^[2].
- A walking program that matched sedentary adults with therapy animals resulted in an increase in walking over a 52-week graduated intervention with the participants stating their motivation for adherence was "the dogs need us to walk them" (Johnson, 2010) ^[3].
- The presence of an animal can significantly increase positive social behaviors among children with autism spectrum disorder (O'Haire, 2013) ^[4].
- Children made fewer errors in match-to-sample categorization task in the presence of a dog relative to a stuffed dog or human (Gee, 2010) ^[5]. Similar studies may indicate presence of a dog serves as both a source of motivation and a highly salient stimulus for children, allowing them to better restrict their attention to the demands of the task (Gee, 2012) ^[6].
- Therapy animals in pediatric cancer studies improved patient motivation to participate in treatment protocol, to maintain their motivation over time, and to want to "get better" or stay optimistic (Sobo, 2006) ^[13], (Barker, 2008) ^[14].



Benefits extend to our companion animals and the presence of pets in our lives:

- Pet ownership, perhaps by providing social support, lowers blood pressure response to mental stress (Allen, 2001) ^[7].
- Pet owners have higher one-year survival rates following heart attacks (Friedmann, 1980, 1995) ^[8,9].
- Recognizing and nurturing the connection between animals and humans has potential implications for individual stability and health, improved economic outputs and healthcare cost savings (Takashima, 2014) ^[10]. This conclusion was based on a number of studies.
- Pet ownership, particularly dog ownership, may be reasonable for reduction in cardiovascular disease risk (Levine, 2013) ^[11].
- Pet ownership was associated with a reduced risk for Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and diffuse large cell lymphoma (Trahan, 2008) ^[12].
- Human health savings of \$3.86 billion over 10 years have been linked to pet ownership as related to a decrease in doctor visits in studies in Austria and Germany (Heady, 2002) ^[15].



Whether it is pet ownership that gives us cause to exercise, offers an antidote for loneliness, and gives us loving companions to care for; or animal-assisted interventions that improve motivation to participate in treatment and lessen worry, anxiety, and pain, we recognize that animals can influence not just our happiness but also our health.

Citations:

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Terminology

Industry Terms

Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI)

Animal-assisted interventions are goal-oriented and structured interventions that intentionally incorporate animals in health, education, and human service for the purpose of therapeutic gains and improved health and wellness. Animal-assisted therapy (AAT), animal-assisted education (AAE), and animal-assisted activities (AAA) are all forms of animal-assisted interventions. In all these interventions, the animal may be part of a volunteer therapy animal team working under the direction of a professional or an animal that belongs to the professional.



Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

Animal-assisted therapy is a goal-oriented, planned, structured, and documented therapeutic intervention directed by health and human service providers as part of their profession. A wide variety of disciplines may incorporate AAT. Possible practitioners could include physicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, certified therapeutic recreation specialists, nurses, social workers, speech therapists, or mental health professionals.

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE)

Animal-assisted education is a goal-oriented, planned, and structured intervention directed by a general education or special education professional. The focus of the activities is on academic goals, prosocial skills, and cognitive functioning with student progress being both measured and documented.

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)



Animal-assisted activities provide opportunities for motivational, educational, and/or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life. While more informal in nature, these activities are delivered by a specially trained professional, paraprofessional, and/or volunteer, in partnership with an animal that meets specific criteria for suitability.

***The terms AAI, AAT, AAE, and AAA are the preferred industry terms.** The term “pet therapy” should be avoided because it is inaccurate and misleading. The term was widely used several decades ago to refer to animal training programs. By contrast, the currently preferred terms imply that the animal is acting as a motivating force to enhance the treatment provided by a well-trained person.

Animal-Assisted Crisis Response (AACR)

Animal-assisted crisis response is a form of animal-assisted activities which provides comfort to those who have been affected by natural, human-caused, or technological disasters. AACR is effective because the safety, familiarity, novelty, and interest in the animal have been found to be impactful when building rapport with a person affected by crisis.

Animal-Assisted Workplace Well-being (AAWW)

Animal-assisted workplace well-being brings animals to the workplace to help boost employee morale and satisfaction, and increase productivity. Numerous studies have shown that when people take just a few moments to pet an animal, their stress is reduced. Research also shows that animals in the workplace often lead to more productive coworker interaction, increased trust levels between colleagues, and more effective collaboration.

Animal-Related Engagement (ARE)

Animal-related engagement is any engagement opportunity that allows participants the benefits of the human-animal bond by encouraging the remembrance of feelings that are commonly associated with interaction with an animal.

Therapy Animal

Therapy animals can provide physical, psychological, and emotional benefits to those they interact with, typically in facility settings such as healthcare, assisted living, and schools. While most frequently dogs, therapy animals can include other domesticated species such as cats, equines, and rabbits, to name a few. These pets are evaluated on their ability to safely interact with a wide range of populations, and their handlers are trained in best practices to ensure effective interactions that support animal welfare. Therapy animal handlers may volunteer their time to visit with their animals in the community, or they may be practitioners who utilize the power of the human-animal bond in professional settings.

A therapy animal has no special rights of access, except in those facilities where they are welcomed. They may not enter businesses with “no pets” policies or accompany their handler in the cabin of an airplane regardless of their therapy animal designation.

Assistance Animal (also commonly called Service Animal)

Assistance animals are defined as dogs and in some cases miniature horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples include guide dogs for people who are blind, hearing dogs for people who are deaf, or dogs trained to provide mobility assistance or communicate medical alerts.

Assistance dogs are considered working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. In the United States, guide, hearing, and service dogs are permitted, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to accompany a person with a disability almost anywhere the general public is allowed. This includes restaurants, businesses, and on airplanes.

Emotional Support Animal

An emotional support animal, sometimes also referred to as a comfort animal, is a pet that provides therapeutic support to a person with a mental illness. To be designated as an emotional support animal, the pet must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional for a person with a mental illness. The prescription must state that the individual has an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, and that the presence of the animal is necessary for the individual’s mental health.

Per the ADA, individuals with emotional support animals do not have the same rights to public access as individuals with a service dog. Emotional support animals may only accompany their owners in public areas with the express permission of each individual venue and/or facility management. Emotional support animals may live with their owners in locations covered by the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) regardless of a “no pets” policy, and may travel with their owners on airplanes if they meet airline requirements. Although most frequently dogs, other species may be prescribed as emotional support animals.

Facility Animal

A facility animal is an animal who is regularly present in a residential or clinical setting. These animals may be a variety of species from dogs and cats to birds or fish. They might live with a handler who is an employee of the facility and come to work each day, or they might live at the facility full-time under the care of a primary staff person. Facility animals should be specially trained for extended interactions with clients or residents of the facility, which may include AAA, AAE, or AAT. These animals do not have special rights of access in public unless they are accompanying and directly supporting a client with a disability.

Pet Partners Terms

Registration

The process through which a therapy animal team becomes part of the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program. This process confirms that the team meets the requirements of our program and is suitable to participate in AAI. There is a distinction between registration and certification. Therapy animal teams are **registered**, not certified. Certification implies that an independent third party has assessed an individual's mastery of knowledge and skills. For example, a doctor is certified by a Board of Medicine, not by the medical school where they completed their education. At this time, no independent certifying bodies for therapy animals exist.

Therapy Animal Team

A unique combination of one handler and one animal working together that registers through Pet Partners to participate in volunteer AAI in their community. Because Pet Partners believes in the importance of proactive handling for both animal welfare and client safety reasons, we emphasize the importance of balance between a skilled handler, an appropriate animal, and a positive, communicative relationship between the two. Our registration process is designed to assess this through a combination of coursework and evaluation.



Handler

The human end of the leash in a therapy animal team, facilitating interactions between their animal and clients with skill and knowledge acquired through the Pet Partners Handler Course.

Team Evaluator (TE)

A valued member of the Pet Partners family and volunteer leader, who completes required prerequisite volunteer hours, coursework, discussion, and an in-person practicum to verify their suitability to conduct evaluations (in-person assessments) of prospective and renewing Pet Partners therapy animal teams.

Volunteer Instructor (VI)

A valued member of the Pet Partners family and a volunteer leader, who completes required training to lead an in-person workshop version of the Pet Partners Handler Course in their local community.



Pet Partners®

Human-Animal Bond (HAB)

The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that positively influences the health and well-being of both.

Human-Animal Interactions (HAI)

Includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, animals, and the environment.

Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI)

Animal-assisted interventions are goal oriented and structured interventions that intentionally incorporate animals in health, education and human service for the purpose of therapeutic gains and improved health and wellness.

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)

AAA provides opportunities for motivational, educational, or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life.

Includes:

- Hospital Visits
- Nursing Home Visits
- Memory Care
- Stress Reduction Visits at Universities, Airports, Conferences
- Hospice
- At-Risk Youth

Also Includes:

- Animal-Assisted Crisis Response
- Animal-Assisted Workplace Well-being

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

AAT is a goal-oriented therapeutic intervention directed by a health and human service provider.

Includes:

- Animal-Assisted Occupational Therapy
- Animal-Assisted Physical Therapy
- Animal-Assisted Counseling
- Animal-Assisted Social Work
- Animal-Assisted Speech Therapy
- Paraprofessional AAT Service Model

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE)

AAE focuses on academic goals, prosocial skills, and cognitive functioning with student progress being both measured and documented.

Includes:

- Reading/Literacy Program
- Humane Education



Pet Partners
Touching Lives, Improving Health

What makes a therapy animal different?

	Therapy Animal	Assistance Animal	Emotional Support Animal
Primary role is to benefit many people.	✓	✗	✗
Primary role is to support one individual.	✗	✓	✓
Okay to approach and pet in public places.	✓	✗	✗
Has been evaluated to be tolerant of a wide variety of environments.	✓	✓	✗
Able to live in housing with "No Pets" policies.	✗	✓	✓
Special rights of access in public establishments such as stores and restaurants.	✗	✓	✗
May fly in the cabin of an airplane.	✗	✓	✓

* Assistance animals include service, hearing and guide dogs.

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Pet Partners: Professionalizing Therapy Animal Visitation

The Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program meets or exceeds guidelines pertaining to safety, professionalism, and animal welfare. Pet Partners adheres to the highest standards in the field and is concerned that without such standards the future of therapy animal work could be jeopardized, limiting access to those who could benefit most. Thus, Pet Partners is the choice of risk managers and those who are educated about animal-assisted interventions.

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 minimize 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 follows a relationship-based handler/animal support model during visits, a skill on which handlers are assessed during the evaluation process, known to Pet Partners handlers as PETS™: Presence, Eye contact, Touch, Speech.

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 incidents.
- Pet Partners volunteers undergo background checks to assure facilities that a handler's history does not preclude them from visiting with vulnerable populations.

Key Sources

As the leader in the field, Pet Partners places a high degree of importance on aligning with evidence-based guidelines published by other organizations.

- In 2015, the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) published *Animals in Healthcare Facilities: Recommendations to Minimize Potential Risks*. SHEA is a global professional society whose mission is to prevent and control healthcare-associated infections. In addition to a sweeping set of recommendations to promote safety, including required re-evaluations at least every 3 years, limited visit lengths, one animal per handler, minimum animal age, mandatory leash use, and vaccination requirements, SHEA specifically stated that healthcare facilities should be ensuring a level of formal training that is accompanied by a certificate. No such training existed until it was created by Pet Partners and endorsed by SHEA in 2016.
- The IAHAIO White Paper *Definitions for Animal Assisted Intervention and Guidelines for Wellness of Animals Involved* was published in 2014. It outlines best practices in delivering AAI to ensure the health and well-being of people and animals involved in an AAI setting. Guidelines addressed here include regular evaluations, handler training, prohibition of costumes, and preventing animal overwork, among other welfare considerations.
- The American Journal of Infection Control published *Animal-Assisted Interventions: A national survey of health and safety policies in hospitals, eldercare facilities, and therapy animal organizations* in 2017. This study investigated the AAI program policies in hospitals and eldercare facilities across the United States, as well as policies and procedures of regional and local therapy animal organizations. Their study concluded that “a lack of health care requirements among therapy animal organizations illustrates an important gap in knowledge and the potential for harm. Health care facilities must recognize this wide spectrum of policies amongst animal therapy organizations and become versed in questions for handlers before admittance to the facility.”
- The AVMA maintains *Animal-Assisted Interventions: Guidelines*, a policy standard to which members voluntarily adhere regarding their practice of veterinary medicine. It addresses the importance of routine veterinary care for therapy animals along with requirements for rabies vaccination and consideration for the impact of prescribed medications on zoonotic transmission.

Additional Information

The Pet Partners publication *Empirical Support for Therapy Animal Interventions* outlines the research related to therapy animals in a variety of settings and contexts:

- Medical Settings
- Physical Wellness
- Mental Wellness
- Education
- Senior Adults

Visit petpartners.org/learn/benefits-human-animal-bond/ to download the paper.



Pet Partners®



Standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Interventions.



Pet Partners®

Standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Interventions

The most comprehensive guidelines for AAI which prescribe a rigorous set of criteria that are designed to ensure the safety of therapy animals, handlers, and clients that they interact with.

This book focuses on standards for seven topic areas of AAI practice, each its own section:

- ✓ Handlers
- ✓ Therapy animals
- ✓ Assessment
- ✓ Animal welfare
- ✓ Risk management
- ✓ Facilities
- ✓ Research

Originally published in 1996 as the benchmark for standards of practice in AAI, this revised and updated edition reflects current best thinking in the field.

Designed to be inclusive of volunteers, paraprofessionals, and professional practitioners, Standards of Practice serves as a reference for facilities, individuals, and organizations that are seeking to incorporate best practices in AAI.

Available as an eBook through Kindle, iBooks, Nook, and other platforms for only **\$14.99**

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Pet Partners







More than 40 Years of Improving Lives Through Animal-Assisted Intervention

Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education. With thousands of dedicated volunteers and their pets, our Therapy Animal Program touches a variety of clients in the U.S. and abroad, including veterans with PTSD, seniors living with Alzheimer's, students with literacy challenges, patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, and those approaching end of life. Pet Partners therapy animals provide affection, comfort, and relief to community members who need it most.

Advancing the Field

We are committed to preserving and expanding access to therapy animals through high standards for safety and professionalism. Our program support for standards and access comprises action in several key areas:

-  Collaborating with researchers to advance the field
-  Offering continuing education for handlers to better serve clients
-  Special initiatives including Read with Me™ to promote childhood literacy, Walk with Me™ to encourage walking for physical health, and Workplace Well-being to boost employee morale
-  Creation of nationally celebrated observances such as National Therapy Animal Day and World's Largest Pet Walk to raise awareness of the importance of the program

Giving a Voice to the Animals

Pet Partners is leading the education of local, state, and federal policymakers on the science behind the health benefits of the human-animal bond and appropriate interactions. The idea that animals have a positive impact on human health and well-being is worth defending and promoting. Join us at www.petpartners.org/advocacy

Read more on best practices for Animal-Assisted Interventions in a Pet Partners publication.



Available at any of these digital stores:

