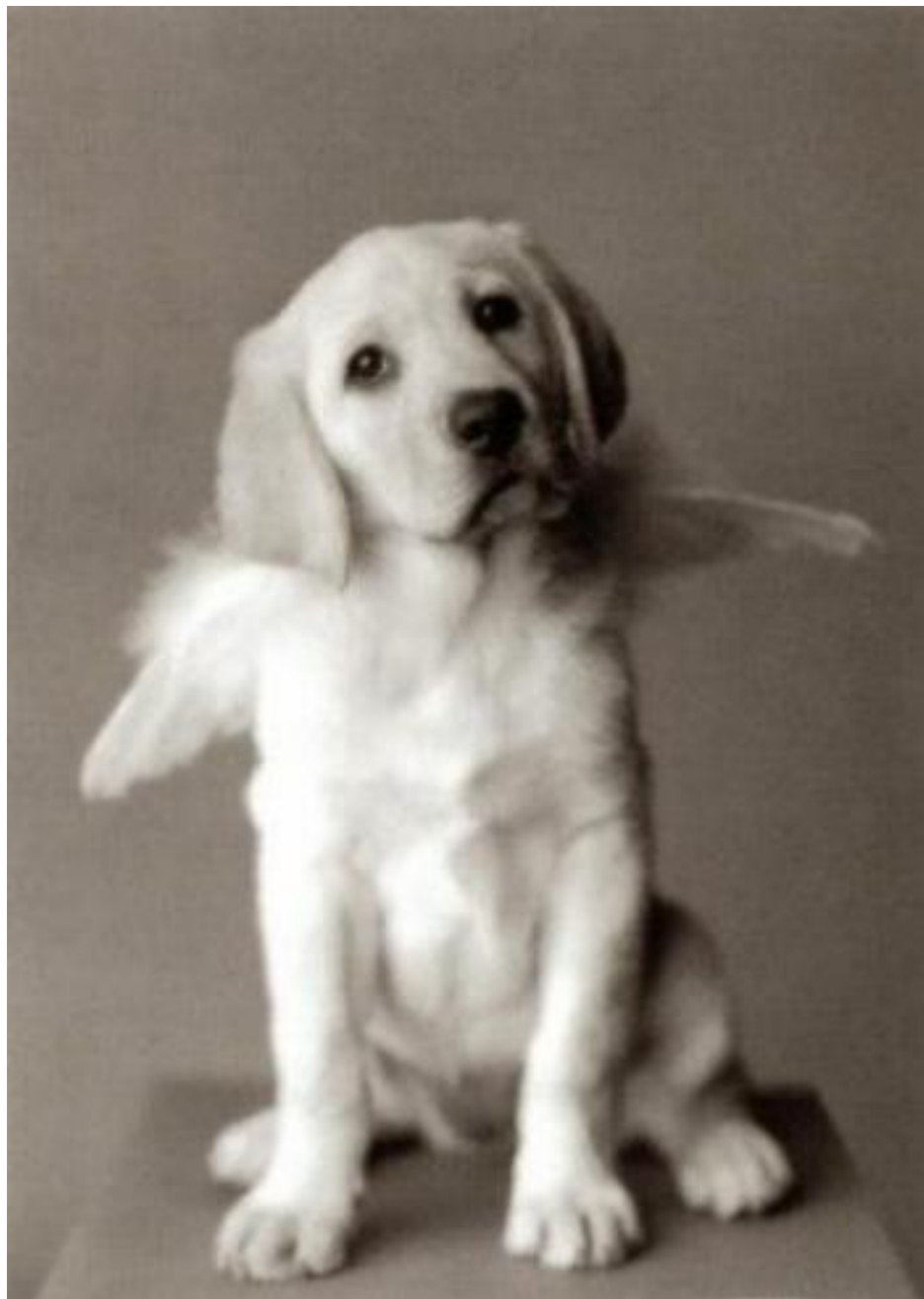




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## Therapy Dog Program



# **Policies and Procedures Manual**

**Effective date**

**08/01/2023**

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# Table of Contents

What are Therapy Dogs?	1
Difference between Therapy and Service Animals	2
Guidelines for Pawsibilities Unleashed therapy dogs	3
Supervised visits	4
Insurance	5
Certifications	6
Renewing your certification	6
Health	7
Grooming	7
Dress code for therapy visits	8
Policy for therapy visits	9
Procedures for attending therapy visits	10
Taking your dog on a visit	11
Unacceptable behavior	13
What to do after supervised visits	14
Setting up your own visits	15
AKC Therapy Title	16
Animal Assisted Therapy Program	17
What to take on a visit	18

# What are therapy dogs?

A therapy dog is a dog that is well trained to provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, with people with learning difficulties and stressful situations such as disaster areas.

Therapy dogs come in all sizes and breeds. The most important characteristic of a therapy dog is its temperament. A good therapy dog must be friendly, patient, confident, at ease in all situations, and gentle. They must have good obedience and manners.

Therapy dogs must enjoy human contact and be content to be petted and handled, sometimes clumsily.

A therapy dog's primary job is to allow unfamiliar people to make physical contact with it and to enjoy that contact.

Children in particular enjoy hugging animals; adults usually enjoy simply petting the animal. The animal might need to be lifted onto, or climb onto, an individual's lap or bed and sit or lie comfortably there.

Many dogs contribute to the visiting experience by performing small tricks for their audiences or by playing carefully structured games.

**A Therapy Dog is NOT a service dog**, and must be trained, certified and insured to do its job. It must be invited to a facility. It has no public access rights to go anywhere uninvited.

## **The Difference between Therapy Animals and Service Animals**

**Therapy animals** are companion animals that are trained to offer comfort and support to people. These animals go into nursing homes, hospitals, schools, and other places to help bring happiness and joy to those they work with.

Therapy animals must be invited to visit these locations. They should be insured, very obedient and have great manners.

**Service Animals** are specifically trained animals that perform certain tasks to help their handler with a disability become more independent.

Service animals are trained to help people with disabilities such as: blindness, deafness, diabetes, seizures, autism, mobility issues, medical alert, peanut allergies, and many more.

Service Animals are permitted to accompany their owner where ever they go. The Americans with Disabilities Act gives the handlers with disabilities the right to have the dog go with them.

Service Animals should be well trained in obedience, manners and the tasks to which they need to perform for their handler.

\*It is a violation of the ADA federal law to imply that your pet is your service animal and is punishable by law.

If you are caught implying your Therapy Dog is a Service Dog, we will pull your certification immediately!

If you have a therapy dog for your professional business, then you can certify it through our program and insure it on your business insurance, your home owner insurance or Commercial Liability Insurance.



Comparison	Service Dogs	Therapy Dogs	Emotional Support Dogs
ADA Covered: Rights to bring animal into public establishments.			
Needs to tolerate a wide variety of experiences environments & people.			
May live with their disabled owners, even if "No Pets" policy in place.			
Primary function is to provide emotional support, through companionship.			
Specifically trained to assist just one person.			
Provide emotional support and comfort to many people.			

## Guidelines for Pawsibilities Therapy Dogs

All Pawsibilities Unleashed Certified Therapy Dogs **MUST** meet the following guidelines:

- **ALL** dogs must complete a temperament test with us and go through a 6 week class before being approved to begin the process for therapy work.
- Must be spayed / neutered
- Must keep four on the floor (no jumping, except for tricks)
- Must be properly obedience trained through our program
- Must have good manners
- Must perform reliable sit-wait and down-wait
- No head shyness or hand shyness
- Must not show any signs of food or toy aggression
- Must possess ability to accept strangers touching them
- Must be able to adapt to strange odors of rooms of patients
- Must be able to adapt to strange noises or loud unusual noises
- Must be able to walk across different textures of flooring
- Must adapt to sudden “jerky” movements
- Must be current on vaccinations and a copy be given to Pawsibilities Unleashed each year. (Rabies, DHPP, and Bordatella)
- Must be on leash while on therapy visit and on facility property. Handler must keep leash in hand at all times unless performing tricks

**Therapy Pets must not show any signs of aggression. Aggression will not be tolerated in this program.**

Therapy Pets must be trained to walk on loose leash on a flat buckle collar, body harness or head harness. **Cannot wear choke chains, prong collars, pinch collars, shock collars or slip collars. Spiked or studded collars are also not permitted.**

No retractable leashes or chain leashes allowed.

*\*If you are suspected of or it is proven to us that you have violated any of the above guidelines, your Pawsibilities Unleashed therapy dog certification will be voided and you will no longer be covered under our insurance program, regardless if you have paid for coverage or not. These guidelines are mandatory for all Pawsibilities Unleashed therapy teams.*

## **Supervised visits**

If your dog is being trained and certified for your office, professional business or a place where it goes to work every day with the handler the supervised visits do not apply. If you **are not a volunteer** therapy dog team, but a paid therapy dog team, you will be responsible for the safety of your co-workers, clients, etc. (Paid therapy dog teams are usually teams that go to work every day at a professional office, school, police dept, social service, etc.) The dog is handled by the employee of the facility.

If you are using our program as a Volunteer, unpaid therapy dog team, then the following will apply unless Covid restricts this possibility.

Your 10 hours of supervised therapy visits are required to make sure that you and your dog are ready to begin therapy work on your own. During this time, you will be helped by other therapy team members to make sure any questions you have about what to do at therapy visits are answered and you understand your role and the dog's role in each visit. This is also a time to determine if you and your dog are suitable for therapy work.

You must complete your 10 hours of supervised visits within 6 months of being approved to start your hours.

If you do not complete your 10 hours within the 6 month time frame, you will be required to start your 10 hours over and the 6 months will be given again to complete your 10 hours of supervised visits before you become certified as a therapy team. If you have not completed the 10 hours within one year, you may want to rethink your availability to volunteer for therapy work.

During your 10 hours of supervised visits, you have to keep in contact with Pawsibilities Unleashed on the number of hours you have completed and when you think you will have all 10 hours completed.

If you are asked to leave a therapy visit because of your behavior or your dog's behavior, you must come to a class to determine your readiness to continue your 10 hours.

You can find places to visit through email sent to you by Pawsibilities, or by the contact person for each visit location. You can also find places to visit by following our Pawsibilities Unleashed Face Book page. <https://www.facebook.com/pawsibilitiesnews>

## **Insurance**

After successfully completing your 10 hours of supervised therapy visits, you will be required to enroll in our insurance program.

The insurance is \$75 for a year, for one dog, at this time for new therapy teams. Our pricing may change without notice.

Each additional animal that you get certified for therapy will be an additional \$25 per year.



You can have additional handlers for your dog(s) if you wish. Each additional handler per dog is also an additional \$25 per year. Junior handlers will be accepted with an adult to supervise the child during visits. Junior handlers are also an additional \$15 per year. All handlers should attend classes.

You must enroll in our insurance program before you can get your certification for therapy work and become a certified therapy team. The exception is, you are using alternate insurance and only need the certification for that insurance company. Pawsibilities Unleashed will need proof of coverage from that insurance before we can issue the Certification.

Your insurance must be renewed every year at least ***2 weeks prior*** to the expiration date to participate in therapy visits. Your expiration date will be on your badge. If you do not renew, you will no longer be a certified therapy team with Pawsibilities Unleashed and you will no longer be insured through Pawsibilities Unleashed. You are required to stop any therapy visits until you are renewed.

**If your certification has expired and you wish to continue therapy visits, you must contact Pawsibilities Unleashed. If your certificate expires, you will be required to pay a re-instatement fee of \$25 to renew your certificate. Re-instatement fees are in addition to the renewal costs.**

**If you have questions concerning the insurance policy, please contact us.**

[info@pawsibilitiesunleashed.org](mailto:info@pawsibilitiesunleashed.org)

## **Certification Certificates**

Once you have been certified as a working therapy dog team, you will receive a certification, good for one year, with a picture of you and your therapy dog on it.

Certifications are given each year when you renew your therapy dog certification and insurance.

You must have a current certificate to participate in Pawsibilities therapy events and visits.

If you lose your certificate, or it gets destroyed during the year, you can receive another one for \$10 by filling out the Replacement Certificate Form on our website.

## **Renewing your Certification**

Each year you will have to renew your certification along with your insurance to remain a certified therapy team with Pawsibilities Unleashed. To renew your certification, you will be required to have your dog re- evaluated by attending one of our group obedience classes at no cost to you. You need to plan to attend a class before your current certification expires.

We need to see your dog within the 60 days prior to your certification expiring to assure your dog continues to meet our guidelines for therapy work.

If your dog continues to meet our guidelines, you can renew your certification and insurance. If your dog does not meet our guidelines, you will not be able to renew your certification and insurance and will no longer be covered under our insurance policy as a therapy team.

You can download and fill out the renewal packet from our website. Please make sure to return the entire renewal package along with all the required documentation on the checklist included in the packet. There is a dropdown menu under Therapy dogs. Forms are on the therapy forms page.

## **Health**

You should make sure that your dog is in good health and current on vaccinations before attending therapy visits. We also recommend keeping your dog on monthly Heart worm, flea and tick preventative. This is for the health of your dog as well as those you will be visiting.

If your dog is currently taking antibiotics, anti fungal or immunosuppressive medications such as steroids or chemotherapy, you should not attend therapy visits until treatment has been completed and you have checked with your vet about the safety of continuing therapy visits.

\*Make sure you have your dog's current vaccine records on file with Pawsibilities Unleashed at all times.

## **Grooming**

You must keep your therapy animal properly groomed.

All animals must be clean, have nails trimmed, and be neat in appearance for all therapy visits. You may also have doggie booties, doggie socks, or gel cap glue on nails for dogs that will help keep people safe from sharp toenails

You should take "doggie wipes" to each visit to wipe your animal down before and after visits. Especially its paws.

Remember, you may be taking your therapy animals into situations where patients are. This will help cut down on germs going into the facility as well as protect you after visits.

If you need help with grooming, please contact us.  
We have a groomer on staff.

## **Required Dress Code for Pawsibilities Unleashed therapy visits**

### **Humans:**

Pawsibilities Unleashed members must wear a Pawsibilities Unleashed Shirt\* to all therapy visits. Please ask us how to get these.

You should wear closed toe, rubber soled shoes. (tennis shoes are fine)

You should wear pants or long shorts (jeans or khakis)

Please dress modestly. (No tank tops, shorts that are not knee length, etc.)

### **Pets:**

- Must be leashed at all times
- Should wear doggie booties for paw protection
- Must have on acceptable equipment. (Flat collar, body harness, head harness. No choke chains, prong collars, martingale collars or slip collars allowed. No chain leashes or retractable leashes allowed)

If you have a Service Animal that is also a therapy pet, you should remove the service dog vest during visits. This is to invite the public to approach your animal and know it can be interacted with.

You may change your dog's vest to SD attire after the visit has ended.

Remember, when you are attending therapy visits, the animal should be presented as a therapy animal. Some people will not approach an animal with Service vests for fear of interfering with its job.

\*If you are attending a visit that requires you to wear attire they provide, this is fine, but you should still have your certification available and your dog should still be wearing appropriate equipment.

## **Policy for ALL Volunteer Therapy Team Visits**

All Pawsibilities Unleashed members must be current with Pawsibilities Unleashed insurance and have a current certification to participate in Pawsibilities Unleashed therapy visits. You may be asked to show your certification at therapy visits. If they are not current, you will not be able to continue the visit.

1. All dogs must meet outside the facility in a designated area at least 15 minutes before entering the facility. This allows the dogs to socialize with each other and do a “meet and greet”. When allowed to do this before the visit, there is less of a chance the dogs will want to greet each other during the visit and take time away from the visit.
2. You must keep your dog under control at all times. This means you must keep your dog’s leash in your hands during the entire visit. The only exception is during tricks; however, during tricks you should be located in an isolated area. \*If you want to allow a child or someone else to hold the dog’s leash, you should have another leash also attached to the dog so you can keep control of the dog.
3. You must keep track of **all** your therapy hours. You can do this by using our Therapy Dog Hours log or make your own. **You must obtain a signature while on your visits to verify your hours. This signature can be obtained by another Pawsibilities Therapy Dog Team or by someone who works at the facility. If you do not get signatures, the hours will not count.**
4. When on therapy visits, you are there representing our organization as well as all therapy dogs. Please conduct yourself in a professional manner while on therapy visits.

## **Procedures for attending Pawsibilities therapy visits**

You will be referred to our team leaders and contacts for therapy visit locations to attain your 10 hours of supervised visits.

You will receive emails from team leaders, contacts or Pawsibilities Unleashed regarding upcoming therapy visits available to you to attend.

If you wish to attend one of the therapy visits, you must contact the TL or contact person for the location or Pawsibilities Unleashed and express your desire to attend the visit.

You should get needed information regarding the visit such as location, date and time to be there, and any special requirements from the team leader, contact person or Pawsibilities Unleashed.

Attend the therapy visit on scheduled date/time.

\*Note: If you commit to attending a therapy visit and cannot attend for any reason, please contact the team leader or other contact person as soon as you learn of your inability to attend the visit. We are required at some visits to have a minimum number of teams, so we need to know if we need to replace you at the visit.

\*\*After you complete your 10 hours of supervised visits, you will be able to find available visits through emails sent to all therapy teams for new visit opportunities.

You also need to like our Pawsibilities Unleashed page on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/pawsibilitiesnews>

New opportunities and requests for team visits will also be listed there and all news and updates will also be listed there.

## Taking Your Dog on a Therapy Visit

### Before the Visit:

- Make sure your dog has had exercise
  - Bathed
  - Clean ears
- Brush teeth
- Brush coat for mats and loose hair
- Cut nails and file rough edges (dew claws, too)
- Clean matter out of eyes
- Assess health and attitude of your dog

### Equipment Required:

- Identification Tag/s and Harness bandana or vest (Clean)
- Treats (dry and small)
- Scooper Kit - bag for accident
- Water bowl (collapsible are great)

### Recommended:

- Tote Bag
- Toys and/or retrieving items
- Brush (gentle plastic or baby's brush) or comb
- Small towel
- Polaroid Camera or Photographs to give away (this is so you can take a picture of a person and your dog for the person to have as a souvenir)
- Small pad of paper and pen/pencil

### During the Visit:

- Be cautious of the dog overheating
- Be aware of your dog's need to relieve himself (this may be more frequent due to the stress of the visit and unfamiliar odors)
- Watch for stress symptoms (you should know what your dog's are)
- Provide water periodically
- Keep dog on leash and under control at all times - REQUIRED
- Learn to read your dog's body language (ready to jump? distressed? uncomfortable?)

### **After the Visit:**

- Recognize that most dogs are tired and need some quiet time
- Avoid feeding right away; let stomach recover from treats
- Offer your dog water
- Put away and care for equipment (need cleaning?)
- Assess dog's stress level
- Think of ways to improve the next visit (shorter time? fewer people to visit? more/less treats? more breaks? more praise?)

Always wipe your dog with doggie wipes after a visit to remove any germs from all the petting sessions.

### **Non-Volunteer Therapy Dogs**

If your dog is being certified as a Non-Volunteer Therapy Dog Team, then it will be on the following insurance:

- Your homeowner insurance (Volunteer teams also have this option)
- Your business insurance (Volunteer teams also have this option)
- Commercial Liability Insurance (Volunteer teams also have this option)

This is for any business, facility, etc. That the owner wants to take their dog to daily or an employee has permission to take their dog to daily.

Example would be:

Police Therapy Dog Team

Ford Car Dealership



## Unacceptable Behaviors at Therapy Visits

If your therapy animal exhibits any of the following behaviors during a therapy visit, you should get the behavior under control immediately using your training to stop the behavior. If the behavior continues, you should leave the therapy visit and come to a class to work on the behavior before returning to therapy visits.

- Aggression – If your dog exhibits any type of aggression (growling, showing teeth, lunging, nipping or biting) you should make sure the dog is “safe” to remain at the visit. If you are not sure if your dog is “safe”, it is best to leave the visit and ask for help from Pawsibilities Unleashed before returning for future visits.
- Jumping up on people – All therapy animals must keep four paws on the floor unless performing tricks.
- “Stealing” – All therapy animals must not steal food or other items from anyone during a visit.
- Inappropriate sniffing – Therapy animals should not sniff others inappropriately during visits.

If a team leader asks you to leave the therapy visit because of any of the above behaviors, you must get permission from the Pawsibilities Unleashed main office to continue visits.

\*\*\*If there is an incident that occurs at a therapy visit, you must fill out an incident report and send it to Pawsibilities Unleashed. Incidents include any behavior that you are asked to leave for as well as any incident in which someone is injured. These incident reports can be found on our website. Please take one with you to all visits so you will be prepared. It is easier to remember the details of the incident if you fill out the form right after it happened. A team leader or Pawsibilities Unleashed team must sign the form also. Others can also fill out incident reports on your dog as well. The incident reports will be kept in your therapy file and if we feel the incident was severe enough or has been a reoccurring behavior, you will be required to take a class with us before returning to therapy work.

## What to do after completing your supervised visits

Once you have completed your 10 hours of supervised visits, you will need to turn in your log of your 10 hours with signatures to Pawsibilities Unleashed with the other required documents. At this time you will pay for your insurance and receive your certification. At this point, you will be a certified therapy dog team. Congratulations! Now what?

You can continue going to therapy visits that are already set up by Pawsibilities Unleashed, or you can begin setting up your own visits to facilities where you want to take your therapy animal.

On the following page, you will learn what to do to set up your own visits.

As long as you get the visits approved by the facility, you can take your therapy animal anywhere you want to do therapy work. Keep track of all therapy visits during the year, you need to turn those in when you renew.

You must turn in the Therapy Visit information form to Pawsibilities Unleashed for all therapy visit locations you are visiting. If you set up a visit on your own, you will need to have the facility or location fill out the Therapy Request form as well. These are on our Therapy Dog page on our website. [www.pawsibilitiesunleashed.org](http://www.pawsibilitiesunleashed.org) If we do not know where you are visiting with your dog and an incident happens, you **will not** be covered under our insurance policy. We have to have record of the visit location and information! Please complete these for all locations you visit PRIOR to the visit. You may email these to us in PDF format, fax them to us, or mail them to us. Please make sure you send them in a way we will receive them BEFORE the visit occurs.

## How to set up your own visits

If you know of a facility that you want to begin doing therapy work in, this is what you need to do. Below is a guide and checklist to help members through their first time contacting a person at the desired facility.

---

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to talk with someone about our therapy dog teams possibly visiting your facility.

Once you are directed to the right contact person, such as the administrator or activities director, repeat your name and reason for calling.

Tell them you are with Pawsibilities Unleashed Pet Therapy organization. Explain the therapy program to the contact person. During the conversation either tell about or ask the following:

- Ask what kinds of pets are permitted to visit (we do have some cats in our program)
- Explain the benefits all parties would gain from the visits
- Ask what the health requirements are for each species of animal
- Tell about the training the members and their pets have
- Ask if there are other visiting animal programs or family members who bring their pets to visit. (You may not want to visit while other animals are there)
- Ask if they have any questions or have any other requirements, if yes, write down needed information and tell them you will contact them with the answers.
- Fill out the Therapy Information Form and mail it to us (on website)
- Have the facility fill out the Therapy Visit Request form and mail to us (on website)

## **AKC Therapy Dog Title**

### **AKC does not Insure/Train/or Certify Therapy Dogs**

**To earn the AKC Therapy dog title, you and your dog must meet the following criteria:**

1. Certified/registered by an AKC recognized therapy dog organization.
2. Perform a minimum of 50 visits\*.
3. The dog must be registered or listed with AKC.

All dogs are eligible to earn the AKC Therapy dog title, including purebreds and mixed breeds. To earn the AKC Therapy Dog title, dogs must be registered or listed with AKC and have a number in order to earn a title. This includes any one of these three options:

- AKC registration number – used by purebred dogs.
- Enrolled in AKC's PAL Program.

PAL is Purebred Alternative Listing. PAL (formerly called ILP) is a program that allows unregistered dogs of register able breeds to compete in AKC Performance and Companion Events. PAL s include the many wonderful purebred dogs who may have come from shelters or rescue without AKC registration.

- Enrollment in AKC Canine Partners Program – used by mixed breed dogs.

A special Canine Partners enrollment form is available for mixed breed Therapy dogs — AKC Therapy Dog Enrollment Application. This form must be submitted along with the Therapy Dog title application form.

\*These visits must be documented with time, date, location, and a signature of a staff person at the facility (e.g., school, hospital, etc.). This documentation can be achieved by submitting one of the following –

1. Therapy Dog Record of Visits Form (you may use the AKC form or one of your own), or,
2. Certificate or wallet card from a certifying organization indicating the dog has made 50 or more visits or,
3. Letter from the facility (nursing home, school, hospital, etc.) where the dog served as a therapy dog. Letters must be on facility letterhead.

Contact information for verification purposes should include facility name, address and contact person's name, phone number and/or email address.

## **Animal Assisted Therapy Dog Program**

**Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)** involves an animal with specific characteristics becoming a fundamental part of a person's treatment. Animal-assisted therapy is designed to improve the physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning of the patient, as well as provide educational and motivational effectiveness for participants by using **Animal Assisted Activities (AAA)**. AAT can be provided on an individual or group basis. During AAT visits, professionals document, records and evaluate the participant's progress.

Animal Assisted Therapy Dogs are more than just dogs that offer companionship or comfort to someone in a nursing home. They are more than petting sessions, reading programs and tricks. AAT dogs are trained to interact with patients using Animal Assisted Activities to help them achieve certain goals. They are used in conjunction with counselors, teachers, or therapists.

Once you are a certified therapy dog team with Pawsibilities Unleashed, you must complete at least 30 hours of therapy work (in addition to your initial 10 hours) to apply for AAA/AAT certification. The hours must be documented and turned into Pawsibilities Unleashed using the therapy hours log on our website. To apply for AAA/AAT certification, please fill out the application for AAT certification (found on our website) with the hours log form.

In the future, we may offer classes that will be of interest to you as an AAT therapy team. If classes are offered, they will be listed on our website and an email will be sent to all AAT teams notifying you of classes offered.

## Recommendations of What to take on a Visit

You need to make sure you bring everything your dog will need for his/her visit. Below is a list to give you ideas of what to take for your dog on a visit. Add to the list depending on the type of visit you are doing and take the things necessary to have a successful therapy visit.

- Water bowl or bottle
- Bottled water or drinking water from home
- Anti-bacterial hand wipes or gel
- Plastic baggies
- Lint-hair remover
- Soft animal brush
- Paper towels
- Hand or bath towel
- Disinfectant
- Favorite animal toy
- Extra collar or harness
- Extra leash
- Treats
- Other items \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Thank You**

Pawsibilities Unleashed would like to thank all of the volunteers that take time out of their day and away from their family to share their dog with others who need the comfort or affection of their dog to help them have a better day or make them feel better, even if only for a brief time while they are with your dog.

Your unselfish commitment to training with your dog and helping others is to be commended!

We appreciate all you do!

**--Pawsibilities Unleashed, Inc.**