

Why Have ATD Registered Therapy Dogs at Your Facility

You are making a good decision in considering a pet therapy program at your facility Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD) registered therapy dogs have passed extensive testing to make sure that they have good manners and do not mind being touched by strangers. The dogs must be clean, up to date on rabies vaccines, other inoculations recommended by their personal veterinarians, and must show proof of a negative fecal exam every 12 months. Once the dog and handler pass the handling/good manners part of the test, they are required to complete three successful visits in a facility, school or other public venue where they will interact with strangers in therapy-like settings. Two of these visits must be in a medically related facility. In these observations, the tester can evaluate, assist and assess how well the team works together, and how safely and effectively the team interacts with people.

Research has shown that dogs can help people in many ways. Researchers and experts agree that pets excel as therapeutic agents, that dogs are an antidote to depression, and that life in a long term care facility can be lonely and boring. A visit from a therapy dog can break the daily routine, increase happiness, calmness, and overall emotional well-being, and stimulate the mind in dramatic ways. Studies have shown a decrease in both blood pressure and stress levels during therapy dog visits. The most serious problem for older adults is loneliness. Therapy dogs and their handlers can make a resident feel alive and engage them in the world outside the facility.

Dogs can help people by:

- Bringing joy and laughter, even if for a short time
- Taking a person's mind off of personal problems, aches, pains and worries
- Providing soft comforting fur to be petted and stroked
- Acting as an ice breaker in getting people to share their emotions and stories
- Giving a chance for people to communicate with others
- Lowering stress levels and blood pressure
- Rekindling warm memories of their pets

ATD provides insurance for its volunteer teams in the event someone is injured as a result of interacting with the therapy dog. The ATD office will provide insurance certificates upon request.

We hope you will welcome ATD registered therapy teams into your facility. You will see many happy residents as a result!

For more information, go to www.therapydogs.com