

**ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS RULES AND REGULATIONS**  
**Part I**  
**GOVERNING MEMBER GUIDELINES**

**Failure to adhere to the ATD Governing Member Guidelines, Code of Ethics, or Policies will jeopardize your membership.**

**I. The organization:**

1. **ATD** is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization. We do not accept monetary reimbursement for any of the services our members provide. Donations are welcome. All requests to use the registered ATD name or logo and slogan must be submitted in writing to the president. The requestor will be notified in writing whether or not permission is granted.
2. **Membership is a privilege**, not a right, granted by the ATD Board of Directors through the various committees appointed to represent and protect the interests and safety of the organization.
3. **Annual review:** Members must pass an annual member review which shows their familiarity with the ATD rules. Renewals will not be finalized until 100% accuracy is achieved.

**II. Description of therapy work; requirements for members and dogs:**

4. **Members:** Any person aged 18 or older may be tested with a dog and apply for membership. Anyone aged 12 through 17 may be tested with a dog to become a junior member.
5. **Dogs:** Any breed or mixed breed of dog, aged one year or older, may be tested with a handler to become a certified therapy dog. For insurance reasons, ATD cannot certify wolves or wolf-hybrids or coyotes or coyote-hybrids because the rabies vaccination has not been proven to be effective with these animals.
6. **Handler/Dog teams only:** ATD certifies only handler/dog teams. A prospective member or current member testing with a new dog must own or have had a close relationship with the dog for a minimum of six months before testing. ATD does not certify, register, or train dogs to be guide dogs, hearing dogs, or any other type of service dogs.
7. **Therapy dog functions, insurance, and red heart tag:** ATD provides liability insurance that protects you from claims of others for injury, illness, and property damage resulting from therapeutic visitation with your dog. This coverage does not protect you or your dog from injury or illness as a result of participation in this program. Coverage applies to the ATD certified handler/dog team functioning as a therapy dog team at a visit or event such as described below. Members are covered only when ATD is the primary insurance and there is no other insurance (whether from the facility or another organization) in effect while they are visiting.

If you do not renew by your renewal date on time, either January 1 or July 1, there is no insurance grace period. You will not be covered by insurance on visits until you receive your new membership card.

If a claim is filed on your behalf by ATD and it is determined that you were not following the ATD rules at the time of the incident, you may be required to reimburse ATD for any monies paid out on the claim.

A therapy dog function may include, but is not limited to, making visits at a facility such as a hospital, nursing home, library, school, detention center, hospice care center, etc. Therapy visits can also be for community events such as a parade, educational seminar, dog breed showcase, public educational event, or event promoting or describing ATD. At such an event, if the dog is displaying the red heart ATD tag, the team is representing ATD. Dogs may not wear ATD identification, including the red heart-shaped tag, at any other time. Identification from other independently insured pet therapy organizations is prohibited when representing ATD, including during the ATD testing and registration process.

- Members who take their dogs to work with them and/or use them in their jobs, including, but not limited to, teachers, therapists, doctors, or psychologists, are not covered by ATD insurance when functioning as employees. Members who use their dogs in their work can now apply to purchase separate insurance to cover them in their workplace. Go to the ATD website, [therapydogs.com](http://therapydogs.com); click on the “Members” tab; scroll down to “Download Helpful Documents”; and click on “Insurance for Using Your Dog at Work.” During such times, the dog must not display any official ATD identification.

#### **8. Service dogs and two dogs on visits:**

If a member has a therapy dog that is also the member’s service dog, official ATD therapy dog identification should not be displayed while the service dog is assisting the member in restaurants, stores, flights etc., and is not acting as a therapy dog. ATD is not liable for damages caused by the handler’s use of medical equipment during visits including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, electric chairs, scooters, walkers, canes or crutches.

Handlers who want to take their therapy dogs into places that normally allow only service dogs MUST explain that their dogs are therapy dogs, not service dogs, AND that they do not have legal access rights like service dogs.

ATD does not allow members to handle two dogs at the same time on any visit, including a service dog and a therapy dog. For safety and liability reasons, ATD will no longer grant exceptions for two dogs with one handler for any visits and/or events.

- 9. Junior handler requirements:** The minimum age requirement for regular ATD membership is 18. When permitted by the facility, a prospective junior member/handler, aged 12 through 17, may accompany a T/O on one visit before being tested. Prospective junior members are not required to do the background check.

The junior member/handler must be accompanied at all times by a registered ATD handler, with or without a dog, **and** a parent/guardian during testing and on all visits. If the

parent/guardian is also an ATD registered handler, s/he may not bring an additional dog but may handle the junior's dog if also certified with that dog. The parent/guardian and ATD member supervising a junior team may supervise only one team at a time. Upon reaching the age of 18, the handler is required to contact the office and sign a release of claims for the ATD member files.

### III. Visits:

10. **Starting a visit:** The visit or event begins as soon as you reach the facility property, including the parking lot. The visit does not end until you leave the facility property.
11. **Items required on visits:** Handlers must carry a current membership card, and dogs must wear the official red heart-shaped ATD identification tag on the collar, harness, vest, or leash when representing ATD on visits or at events. Members must have written proof of their dog's vaccinations readily available at each visit, either carried with them, or in the car and available upon request.
12. **Behavior of dogs:** Dogs must remain under control at all times. Any inappropriate behaviors must be quickly and quietly corrected: barks should be quieted; and jumping/pawing dogs should be quickly moved away while apologizing and checking to see if the person is OK. If not quickly corrected, the team must leave the property.
13. **Ask before entering:** Always ask before bringing your dog up to a person for visiting. If you are entering a room, make sure everyone in the room wishes to have the dog visit. If one person does **not** want a visit, ask that person if it is OK to visit with others in the room. If not, do not enter the room.
14. **Frequency of visits:** ATD requires a minimum of one visit every three months per handler/dog team. If a team fails to make the required visits, refer to Member Guideline 19.
15. **Guests on visits:** Anyone accompanying an ATD-certified team on a visit (e.g., family member, spouse, friend) must not require assistance from the handler and must be at least 18 years old. Facilities must give permission for all visitors.
16. **Facility or sponsoring organization regulations:** Therapy dog teams must strictly adhere to all rules and regulations of each facility or sponsoring organization. If these rules are unclear, ask a staff member or activities director to explain them. ATD members will not provide chemical substances or apply them to their dog unless authorized or provided by the facility. Substances include, but are not limited to, hand sanitizers, hand wipes or lotions.  
  
**Do not give food, water, or assistance to a patient or resident, even if asked.** Notify a staff member if help is needed.  
  
**Read and obey all warning signs on room doors,** such as "ISOLATION" or "INFECTIOUS, DO NOT ENTER." Handlers must stay alert to their surroundings at all times. If any facility rules conflict directly with ATD, please contact the ATD office.
17. **Walking the dog in a facility:** Dogs may not precede handlers down halls, around corners,

at doorways, or at stairways. Stand back while waiting for an elevator door to open. When the door opens, wait to assure safe exit of passengers. If the elevator is occupied, the handler must ask permission to enter with the dog.

- 18. Cellphones:** Member/handlers must not make or receive calls or text messages using a cellphone inside a facility. Pagers and cellphones must be set on silent or vibrate while inside a facility. If the use of a phone becomes necessary, handlers must excuse themselves temporarily and complete the call outside the facility.

#### **IV. Member Handler/Dog Team Re-Evaluation**

- 19.** If ATD has been alerted to a possible high-risk or behavior issue with a member or a member's dog, ATD may request that the team be re-evaluated. When there is no T/O in the general area who can give an unbiased report or evaluate the handler/dog team fairly, ATD may choose to send one of the directors to the area to re-evaluate the handler/dog team at the expense of ATD.

If a team fails to make one visit every three months, they must be re-observed at least one time by an ATD T/O. If a team fails to make a visit within six months of a previous visit, a full retest is required to reinstate membership.

In the event a retest and/or re-observation is required or requested for any reason, the T/O shall:

- Use the current test/observation paperwork
- Follow the current guidelines for testing/observing

If the team passes, the handler shall submit the paperwork to the office within 7 days (standard mail, fax, or email).

If the team fails, the team shall refrain from visiting until they hear from the office. The T/O will send the paperwork to the office within 7 days

#### **V. Health Requirements:**

- 20. Dog health requirements:** Dogs must have an annual wellness examination, including a fecal check, by a veterinarian. They must be current on their rabies vaccination and any other vaccines as advised by their veterinarian. Veterinary reports of rabies titer levels of 0.5 IU or greater are acceptable and must be measured every two years to ensure levels are acceptable. Maternity leave is required for pregnant bitches from 30 days prior to whelping date to 60 days after whelping. Bitches in season will not participate in therapy visits. Dogs who have any fresh wounds, recent surgery, injuries, or infections may not do pet therapy visits until recovered and healed. Dogs must also be free of any drugs or substances that might affect performance.

- 21. Certified dog developing disabilities and/or stress:** The member/handler must notify the ATD office if the dog has developed any disability since the initial testing, or shows signs of physical and/or mental distress during visits. The handler/dog team will need to be retested

with one observation before continuing any visits.

- 22. Handler health requirements and developing medical issues:** Handlers who have any fresh wounds, recent surgery, other injuries, infections, or any condition which may inhibit their ability to handle the dog safely may not do pet therapy visits until recovered and healed. Any member/handler who has had any change in medical condition since initial testing, even if temporary, that may impede his/her ability to safely handle his/her dog, including but not limited to: stroke, broken limb, weakened strength, change in disability, change in mental or emotional condition, etc., must notify the ATD office and may need to be retested and/or observed before continuing any visits.

## VI. Grooming Requirements

- 23. Dog grooming requirements:** Participating dogs must be clean and well groomed, have trimmed/filed nails, clean teeth, be free of internal and external parasites, and in good general health. If used, topical flea and tick preventative must be applied a minimum of three days prior to any pet therapy visits. Flea and tick prevention collars shall not be worn during ATD visits.
- 24. Handler grooming requirements:** While participating in therapy visits, handlers must be clean, well groomed, and without influence of alcohol and/or drugs that would impair safety or judgment. Handlers must be able to act quickly enough to remove themselves and their dogs without assistance from a facility in the event of an emergency. All visited facilities must be informed of any medical conditions that would affect the team's ability to perform volunteer duties.

## VII. Attire and Equipment

- 25. Handler attire:** Skimpy or tight-fitting attire including short shorts, tank tops, and bare midriffs are not allowed. Wear sensible, safe walking shoes with backs or at least a strap around the heel (no flip-flops, high heels, spike heels or shoes without backs).
- 26. Dog equipment: Equipment that is not allowed includes clickers, retractable, elastic/bungee or chain leashes, pinch, prong, spiked or electronic collars.** Collars, including slip, buckle, quick release, martingale, limited slip or any other smooth collars made of chain, nylon or leather, are acceptable. Leashes must be 4 feet in length or shorter and made of material strong enough for the size/strength of the dog. The use of a traffic leash is recommended for large dogs. Leashes may not be tied or folded to make them 4 feet in length or shorter after the handling test and first observation are completed. The collar should fit snugly enough so the dog cannot easily back out of the collar or slip it off of his/her head. A slip collar should be correctly worn so it releases properly as designed. Head halters and body halters/harnesses made of fabric webbing or leather with metal or plastic buckles are acceptable. Body halters/harnesses fastened with Velcro® or metal clothing snaps are not allowed. Dogs wearing a body halter/harness or a head halter must also wear an approved collar. The leash may be attached to the collar, halter, or harness.
- 27. Dog strollers:** All strollers must be made specifically for dogs. ATD members who wish to use a stroller for an already certified dog must have a T/O perform the handling portion of

the test and observe them one time with their dog in the stroller. All handlers, including existing ATD members, must submit the test and observation forms to the office along with a picture showing that the dog is wearing an approved collar and on a 4-foot or shorter leash held by the handler while secured in the stroller.

### VIII. Safety precautions:

- 28. Two-foot rule:** Two-foot rule: Dogs must be kept at least 2 feet from other dogs and animals at all times while representing ATD on a visit or event to discourage play, to ensure that dogs have enough personal space for focusing on the person being visited, and to prevent any interaction between dogs that could possibly lead to an injury to a third party, the handlers or their dogs. If a dog prefers more than 2 feet, the handler should be sure to provide for the dog's needs. If members choose to take group photos with dogs posed less than two feet apart, they will be done at the members' own risk, and the facility must be notified that ATD insurance is not in effect.
- 29. Your dog is your first priority:** While participating on an official ATD visit, handlers must have their attention on their dogs for the safety and welfare of their therapy dogs as well as those whom they visit. Do not become so comfortable that you become careless. Excuse yourself and your dog from any situation you do not believe will be a positive experience for all involved. Never put yourself or your dog in a questionable or threatening situation.
- 30. Stay alert:** ATD handlers must be alert to their surroundings at all times. Handlers may not participate in activities that take their attention from their dogs, including, but not limited to, reading to a group, directing bingo, or playing a piano.
- 31. Face-to-face:** Do not allow your dog's face near a human's face. Facial kisses are not allowed.
- 32. Only handlers may handle their dogs:** Handlers must never leave their dogs alone with staff, patients, or visitors. Dogs must be kept on a 4-foot or shorter leash held only by the member/handler. The leash must be held by the member's hand and may not be hooked or attached to the member's body, belt, any chair, wall, purse, or other person, etc.
- 33. Dogs off leash/others leash walking handler's dog:** If safe conditions exist, a dog may be taken off leash when performing tricks, demonstrations, and when assisting with therapy such as retrieving. Only one dog at a time may be off leash. Dogs may no longer be off leash when posing for photos while on a visit. If one additional person wants to walk the dog, the handler may use two leashes or a two-loop leash with the handler always holding the shorter leash or loop so that the handler always maintains control of the dog.
- 34. Dogs on laps/furniture:** The ATD member/handler must know and strictly adhere to the facility policy concerning dogs on any laps/furniture. This is for all furniture, including, but not limited to, chairs, couches, wheelchairs, beds, or physical therapy beds/pads. The handler must be in control of the dog's head at all times.
- **Laps** - If the facility policy allows, and permission from the patient/guardian is

given, ATD allows dogs weighing 15 pounds or less to be placed in laps. When placing a dog in someone's lap, be sure to face the dog away from the person's face, presenting the back and shoulders to be pet. Do not present the dog face-to-face with the person.

- **Occupied Furniture** - Dogs weighing 50 pounds or less can be placed onto occupied beds. Dogs weighing more than 50 pounds may never be placed onto occupied beds.
- Therapy dogs are not allowed onto any occupied bed, chair, or wheelchair unless that practice is allowed by the facility and the resident/patient has given permission. Only with this permission may the handler lift the dog onto and remove it from the occupied bed, chair, or locked wheelchair without injury to the resident/patient.
- Regarding linens or coverings, refer to facility procedures about placing a dog on a bed, chair, or lap.
- For safety reasons, ATD will allow only one dog at a time on any occupied furniture as described above.
- Be cautious around patients who might have existing or recent injuries or surgery with regard to placement of the dog so as not to cause an injury with the dog's feet or body weight. Always ask if the person has a sore spot or if there is an area that you should avoid when placing the dog.
- Remember to watch for tubes, lines and other medical equipment.
- When space allows, dogs of any size may be lifted and safely placed by the handler onto unoccupied furniture such as a couch or love seat.

## **IX. Special permission:**

**35. Special permission:** It is ATD's policy not to grant exceptions to the rules due to safety and insurance reasons. Please note, two dogs with one handler are never allowed on any visit while representing ATD.

ATD sometimes grants special permission for certain circumstances. Members may apply to the Alternative Review Committee by submitting a cover letter explaining the reason for their request. If the request involves special equipment, such as a dog carrier or cart, a picture of the dog with the equipment is required. Certain requests may also require letters of reference from someone directly involved or those who will need to be aware of these situations (e.g. a facility, hospital, school, etc.) Obtain the appropriate information from the ATD office.

Special permission might be granted for the following:

- Two or more dogs, each with their own handler, participating in a trick,

- demonstration or presentation
- Special equipment or devices, such as carts and dog carriers, etc.

If a handler chooses to engage in a behavior/activity that is outside of these guidelines without permission, the handler must remove the dog's official ATD red-heart shaped tag and notify a facility supervisor that ATD insurance is not in effect for the duration of the behavior/activity.

## **X. Legal issues:**

- 36. Privacy:** Observe all rules of privacy and confidentiality as required by HIPAA. Never discuss a patient's health or personal issues with the patient or anyone else.
- 37. Photos** may not be taken without prior written permission of the subject (or guardian). Members must use an ATD Photo Authorization form for any submission to ATD-owned publications or social media.
- 38. Expenses and taxes:** ATD members may not provide information regarding whether expenses resulting from volunteer activities are tax deductible. Anyone having questions about whether certain expenses are tax deductible should be told to seek the advice of their tax preparer or the Internal Revenue Service, not other ATD members, the board of directors, or the ATD office.
- 39. Incident or Injury:** If an incident or injury to an employee, resident, or visitor in the facility occurs while representing ATD:
- Immediately contact the facility's supervisor on duty.
  - If the incident is a suspected bite, end the visit immediately.
  - Document the incident on all required forms for the facility.
  - Immediately contact the ATD office and report the incident. If after hours or during a weekend please leave a voice message and make contact with the ATD office during the next business day.
- 40. Suspected dog bite:** Regardless of whether they are on an ATD visit or not, if a certified dog is suspected of a dog bite, whether to another dog or to a person, the incident must be reported to the ATD office. The dog shall not participate in any pet therapy work until the bite incident is investigated by ATD.
- 41. Felonies:** If a member has been convicted of a felony that has not been previously reported to the ATD office, s/he must do so.

## **XI. In Conclusion:**

**ATD reserves the right to deny, revoke or not renew membership. At the discretion of the ATD Board of Directors, a handler/dog team may be asked to temporarily or permanently refrain from further visits under the name of ATD if they fail to comply strictly with these Rules and Regulations (or) as provided by Article III Section 4 of the**

**ATD By-Laws. Should this action be necessary, the handler will be requested to return the official red heart-shaped ATD identification tag and membership card to the ATD office.**