

Why Have ATD Registered Therapy Dogs at Your School

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. 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. This, alone, can be particularly beneficial in the classroom setting, because stress and anxiety can contribute to deficits in both formation and retrieval of memories.

Dogs can help children by:

- Bringing joy and laughter, even if for a short time
- Taking a child's mind off personal problems, aches, pains and worries
- Providing soft comforting fur to be petted and stroked
- Acting as an icebreaker in getting children to share their emotions and stories
- Creating an opportunity for children to develop/enhance socialization skills
- Offering an opportunity for children to develop a relationship in which they are simply seen as a friend, and not as a child with a disability
- Providing non-judgmental support and motivation
- Lowering stress levels, thereby optimizing learning capacity
- 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. ATD does not require a contract or memorandum of understanding to be signed for their teams to provide services for a facility.

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

For more information, go to www.therapydogs.com