

GUIDELINES RELATED TO TDV TESTERS AND EVALUATORS

INTRODUCTION

This document contains guidelines and policies related to how to become a tester and/or evaluator (hereafter, T/E) with Therapy Dogs of Vermont (TDV).

Testers are responsible for the initial assessment of candidate teams for TDV certification and membership. They schedule the initial meeting with the candidate and administer the TDV test. Testers decide whether or not the team passes this initial phase, fails, or must come back at a later date for a re-test (for a complete description of the certification process itself, please see the *Application for Testing* and the *TDV Certification Packet* online at www.therapydogs.org). Testers should have access to an indoor space suitable for testing and may be required to gather certain "props" (such as noisemakers and treats) in order to conduct the test.

Evaluators are responsible for evaluating the tested team (evaluations must not happen unless the team has undergone a successful test) during actual therapy dog visits. Evaluators will make three visits with each team. The evaluator determines: if team meets guidelines for certification; gives advice regarding areas of improvement; ensures a safe visit for patients, visitors, and the dog; and coaches the team through these visits. Evaluators must arrange with a facility (preferably an elder care facility) at which to evaluate potential teams.

It is possible to be a tester only, evaluator only, or both tester/evaluator. It is common practice that people become evaluators first, and then testers later after gaining experience as an evaluator and mentoring under a tester.

HOW TO BECOME A TESTER OR EVALUATOR

This section describes the process for applying to TDV to become a T/E. It assumes that the applicant meets, and agrees to, all guidelines as explained later in this document.

Application

1. Candidate must send a letter of intent that describes why s/he would like to become a T/E and qualifications to do so. Recommendations are also required. A resume is highly desired. Application should specify if the applicant is applying for evaluator or tester status, or both
2. TDV officers will review the application to approve/reject T/E status and inform the candidate of the decision.
3. Upon approval, the new T/E will undergo a training and probationary period—at the end of which the mentor T/E and/or the officers will make final decisions on the status of the new T/E. A T/E can be removed by a majority vote of the TDV officers at any time.

Please note that evaluators already approved as such who want to become TESTERS must apply for tester status as they did for the evaluator position.

Training and Probationary Status

There is a training and probationary period for all new T/Es. This period, and the process of becoming a fully approved T/E, may be dependent on officer recommendations based on the prospective T/E's experience and qualifications. The training and probationary period means working closely with a mentor T/E to learn the certification process, the necessary paperwork, and guidelines—gaining hands on experience by shadowing the T/E and co-testing or co-evaluating as directed by the mentor T/E. The time period of this mentoring process is determined by the mentor T/E and T/E in training; it is meant to be flexible and totally tailored to the new T/E's experience level and training needs.

Role and Responsibilities of the Mentor T/E

T/Es in training must have a designated mentor who is an officer of TDV or an experienced T/E approved by the slate of officers to train and mentor new T/Es. This mentor shall:

- Teach the candidate the certification process, the necessary paperwork, and guidelines.
- Provide the opportunity to observe testing/evaluating and give supervised hands on experience.
- Along with the T/E in training, determine the training needs and time period of this mentoring process.
- At the end of the training and probationary period, the mentor T/E provides written notice to the slate of officers describing the training process and experiences of the new T/E, and recommending that the slate of officers grant this person full T/E status.

GUIDELINES

Guidelines to Become a TDV T/E

- Applicant must be a member in good standing with Therapy Dogs of Vermont
- Applicant must be of lawful age and legally competent to sign documents.
- Applicant must apply to the TDV Board of directors requesting to become a T/E with letter of intent and description of relevant experience; applicant must be approved by the board of directors.
- Applicant must successfully complete the training and probationary period working with an officer or experienced T/E (approved by the slate of officers).
- Applicant must acquire three letters of reference from dog-related sources to be sent to TDV Board of Directors. (Can be waived or partially waived if TDV board member endorses applicant in writing.)
- Applicant must have a background in dogs and have participated in TDV visits for one full year.
- Applicant must have skills to assess dogs and people and be able to judge them individually as well as a team; applicant must uphold all TDV policies and guidelines and test/evaluate dogs according to TDV standards.
- Applicant must sign Tester/Evaluator release form after approval by the board of directors.

Guidelines for Working as a TDV T/E

These are in addition to all TDV guidelines related to dogs, handlers, teams, etc. as stated in the *TDV Certification Packet* online at www.therapydogs.org

- T/E will not charge fees for testing or evaluating. TDV is non-profit; therefore, any activity related to certification will not be used for the personal financial gain of any member.
- T/E will represent TDV in a professional manner.
- T/E will not test or evaluate his/her own dogs.
- T/E will use approved TDV testing forms as found on the Web site. T/E will ensure the dog is current on required vaccinations. This means that the T/E will be provided a copy of the dog's proof of current rabies vaccination prior to testing.
- T/E will review with prospective members all rules, guidelines and procedures of TDV and ensure they are being followed.
- T/E will inform prospective member, upon completion of tests and visits, to register and pay dues to TDV.
- T/E will arrange for a safe location for test and evaluations and acquire the proper permission to use the facility.
- T/E will inform prospective members they are not allowed enter a facility or to interact with patients unless accompanied by T/E.
- T/E will have prospective member sign 'Release of Claims' form and have it in their possession before any testing or evaluating takes place.
- T/E will ensure dogs are on leash at all times and handlers are required to use a 4ft leash or less (traffic leash for larger dogs).
- T/E will ensure proper use of collars and leashes.
- T/E should encourage prospective members to offer lots of praise towards their dog.
- T/E may dismiss a handler for excessive discipline toward the dog or inappropriate behavior by handler or dog.
- T/E should not be apprehensive about failing a team if they are not ready for Therapy Dog visits in a maximum of 5 visits. Suggestions or advice may be given for improving or correcting a situation or refer them to training classes.
- Upon the third successful evaluation, the T/E will send all paperwork and the check for the applicant's membership dues to the TDV Secretary.
- TDV reserves the right to revoke the status of any T/E for not complying with these guidelines.
- If the Tester and Evaluator are two different people certifying the same team, they must communicate any potential issues to each other and work together as a team to certify candidates.
- T/Es are responsible for bringing unacceptable team behavior to the attention of the handler. A certified therapy dog can be removed from active service for just cause by a vote of the TDV officers based on reports from TDV T/Es. (T/Es should report to the TDV officers if they (anytime after certification) observe, are informed, or otherwise learn that a TDV team is conforming to the TDV guidelines and policies.



**RELEASE OF CLAIMS FOR ACCIDENTAL INJURY
FOR TESTERS/EVALUATORS**

I, _____, City of _____,

State of _____, hereby certify I am aware of all the inherent dangers of testing and evaluating dogs for Therapy Dogs of Vermont and of the basic safety rules for activities connected therewith.

I also understand and agree that neither Therapy Dogs of Vermont or its officers, directors, members or agents may be held liable in any way for any occurrence in connection with testing and evaluating activities which may result in injury, death or damages to myself or family.

I further state that I am of lawful age and legally competent to sign this affirmation and release, which I understand. I have fully informed myself of the contents of this affirmation and release by reading it before I signed it. I assume my own responsibility of physical fitness and capability to perform under the normal requirements of this activity.

In Witness whereof, I have executed this affirmation and release on:

Date: _____

Date: _____

Witness:

Newly Approved Tester/Evaluator

Signature

Signature

Print

Print

Newly approved Tester/Evaluator and Witness must sign this document
Please return original document to:

Therapy Dogs of Vermont
P.O. Box 1271
Williston, VT 05495-1271