

At the Door, a Mental Checklist



—Isa Helfrich, German Shepherd therapy dog (& Deb Helfrich, Vice President)

It can be tough for new teams to remember everything they need to before they enter a room for a visit with a patient or resident. Sometimes it's nerve-wracking enough to make new visits when you're just starting out, let alone trying to remember the many policies in place for safe, happy visits.

So, here's a quick checklist for the most important things you should aware of when you're standing in that doorway about to ask a person if they'd like a visit with your therapy dog.

☑ **C-CHECK PRECAUTIONS** the patient may have—with nurses/staff or look for signs on the door. Are there any isolation, no visitation, caution, or stop/precaution signs anywhere on the door jam, or outside the door near the patient's room? Likewise, is there any other information outside the door about the patient that you may find helpful

to your visit (such as if the person is hard of hearing or unable to communicate?). Do this EVERY time, as the status of a patient's health may change between visits. Also, looking for a person's name can make your introduction a bit more personal.

☑ **H—SCAN** at the room for anything potentially **HARMFUL** to you and your dog. Look for unsafe items that your dog may step on or ingest (pills on the floor, cookies on a table, tubes, wires, etc.). Look for space where you could position your dog comfortably (for example, a tight space between a bed and medical divide, with a curtain on your dog's back, may not be to your dog's comfort). Notice room activity.

☑ **A—ASK** if the person would like a visit. Introduce yourself and your dog. Identity yourselves as therapy dog team from TDV. Always respect the wishes of someone who doesn't want a visit.

☑ **R—RECHECK** resident/patient and the room. Look for bandages, wounds, tubes, medical equipment— anything that your dog could interfere with or get tangled in.

☑ **T—THANK** the person for spending the time with you and your dog.

If you ever have any questions about anything related to making safe visits, please do not hesitate to email Deb or Isa at admin@therapydogs.org or your member support officers at membersupport@therapydogs.org.

Here's to safe and happy visiting!

BEFORE EACH VISIT,
REMEMBER **CHART**:

- **C** heck precautions
- **H** armful?
- **A** sk
- **R** echeck
- **T** hank!