



## **POLICIES GOVERNING ALL MEMBER ACTIVITIES AND THERAPY DOG VISITS**

*(These apply to the certification phase and to all therapy dog visits once the team is certified)*

### **Membership**

- TDV dogs are insured via Sportsman's Insurance while 1) The handler is on volunteer duty at a location previously reported to TDV by the handler thus becoming a TDV sponsored event. —or—2) The handler is on paid working status duty at a location previously reported to TDV by the handler, a TDV sponsored event, and where the dog is bringing comfort to others in the same facility without any financial compensation being rendered.
- Members may not use TDV's logo on communications or publications of any kind without express permission from TDV. TDV's full policy regarding communications is in "Communications Policy and Guidelines" (see website).
- Handlers must be 14 years of age or older. Facilities may have different age requirements.
- All dogs must be currently listed with Therapy Dogs of Vermont, wear a TDV identification tag and bandanna, and have a photo identification card bearing the current year. Dogs must have been tested and evaluated by an individual who is registered as a TDV tester who certified that the requirements of the organization were met. To get a list of certified TDV tester/evaluators, please E-mail [admin@therapydogs.org](mailto:admin@therapydogs.org).
- Annual Renewals: Members receive an annual membership renewal form each January, requiring the dog's rabies record (if due) and membership fees. Each year that you renew your membership, you will receive an updated sticker to attach to your dog's photo ID. If you do not renew, you may be required to be re-tested and re-evaluated (at the rate of a first-time membership) before membership is re-established.
- A dog may wear the logo or identification of only one organization at a time. The wearing of more than one will void TDV insurance liability.
- All certified teams are expected to become active volunteers (i.e., TDV does not certify dogs solely for community/school projects or short-term community service requirements). 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, facilities, officers, etc.

### **Safety During Visits**

- Handlers must have control over their dogs at all times.
- Handlers must ensure patient safety and cause no injuries.
- Never enter Intensive Care or a room that has an isolation sign on the door without the permission of the staff. Each facility marks such rooms in a different way—get to know how your facility does so.
- Handlers are responsible for understanding the facility's regulations and following them.
- Generally, patients who are critically ill (ICU patients) or immunocompromised (AIDS, cancer) should not be visited. Use caution in patients just out of surgery. Consult with the facility on what types of patients may or may not be able to receive visits.
- Always wash hands before and after a visit. The individual rooms of many facilities are equipped with antiseptic sprays or wipes which are used by the staff. They are for your use also. This prevents bringing germs into a facility (and passing them from patient to patient) and for the volunteer carrying germs out.
- Never give food or beverage to patients, even if they ask. Likewise, never move or reposition a patient or their medical equipment. Find a nurse.
- Handlers should avoid wearing perfumes/colognes. Patients can be very sensitive to smell and some may have serious allergies.
- Be mindful that some people are afraid of, or allergic to, dogs. Keep your dog close so that you do not surprise such people in hallways or rooms.
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- Always ask the patient's permission before you visit with them or bring the dog into his or her room. Make sure the door is open at all times during your visit. Some facilities may have their own procedures for making visits, such as providing a list of acceptable patients.
- Do not interfere with normal or emergency activity of the facility. Should medical staff need to work with a patient, excuse yourself politely and quickly. Likewise, avoid making a visit if medical staff are working with a patient.
- Whether or not to let your dog accept treats when visiting is a personal choice. However, please be VERY aware of how gentle your dog is when doing so. If your dog has ANY chance of catching a finger with his teeth or grabbing at the food in earnest, consider taking the treat from the patient to give to the dog yourself. Feeding a dog treats may be prohibited by some facilities for infection control and hygiene reasons.
- Be prepared with proper material to quickly clean up after your dog if it vomits, urinates or defecates within the facility or the grounds.
- Dogs should never get on a bed, lap etc. unless invited by the patient and permitted by the facility.
- Never let your dog lick any wound. Licking a patient's face should be avoided.
- The use of spraying collars (such as citronella) or electric collars, spray bottles or spraying devices of any kind, and clickers and other such noise-making devices are prohibited as these pose safety concerns (spraying a patient accidentally, creating wet spots on floors or facility property, infection and allergy issues, etc.) and/or cause disturbance to others in the facility (noise).
- When making visits, please turn off the cell phones! It's a distraction to being able to work with your dog safely and it's a common courtesy to the people we visit.

## Other

- All rules of the facility being visited must be followed.
- Handlers must check in with staff or supervision of each facility or hospital unit they visit. Ask if there is any patient/resident you cannot visit.
- Patient confidentiality must be respected at all times. Please do not mention to anyone that you saw a patient in the hospital, do not share any personal or health information you may learn while visiting a facility, and do not take photos of patients. Facilities may have their own confidentiality policies —please check with them for further requirements.
- Although a handler may have TDV multiple certified dogs, every dog on duty must have its own handler.
- Persons not tested and evaluated with the dog may NOT handle the dog on any therapy dog visits; the dog must only be handled by the person who was tested and evaluated with it.
- Only tested and evaluated dogs may make visits; other dogs the handler may own/be associated with may not be substituted for making visits by wearing the certified dog's identification.
- Visits to private residences: Due to liability and personal safety concerns, TDV prohibits therapy dog visits to private residences. For example, TDV is not able to accommodate private, in-home visits requested by an individual or an agency/facility. Some exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- In order to honor and respect the diversity, values, and belief systems of the people we visit, TDV teams must not initiate/engage in conversations which could become potentially controversial subjects involving politics, religion, moral, or spiritual beliefs while on therapy dog duty and while representing TDV.

## POLICIES Related to DOGS

- TDV does not discriminate against specific breeds of dogs. However, TDV's experience and expertise in the assessment, certification, and handling of therapy animals is focused on and restricted to domestic canines—thus, TDV does not certify other species such as cats, horses, ferrets, and wild canine hybrid crosses.
- A Therapy Dog must be at least one year old.
- The dog must have been owned by the handler for at least 6 months (i.e., if a dog has been adopted)



- Dogs must be current with the rabies vaccination. If your pet has any signs of infection or illness, do not make visits. (this includes diarrhea but also if your dog is not acting like his/her normal self, sleeping more, reluctance to undertake normal behaviors, has a runny nose, or crusting or weeping eyes). Should you have any questions regarding your dog's ability to participate in visits, please E-mail [admin@therapydogs.org](mailto:admin@therapydogs.org) or talk with your veterinarian.
- Dogs must not be on a raw meat diet.
- Female dogs must not be "in season" when doing Therapy Dog work.
- Dogs must be on a leash (4' or less) unless participating in exercises that necessitate being off lead (such as obedience demonstrations), at which time they must be closely supervised. Please note that "flexi leads" and chain leashes (or ones that are partial chain link) are not acceptable.
- Dogs must be clean, well groomed and free of fleas; toenails should be short and not ragged or sharp.
- Dogs must not be treated with oily flea treatment (e.g. Top Spot etc.) within one week of a visit. The residue could be transferred to a patient while petting.
- Keep your dog's nose off the floor and be aware of what your dog may ingest or step on (there may be items such as needles, pills, rubber gloves, tissues, bodily fluids, or other waste products on the floor or in garbage cans).
- Therapy dog teams working together should greet outside the facility before going in for visits.
- Observe the needs of your dog. If dog appears hot, tired or otherwise uninterested, end the visit and revisit another time. Any dog has the potential for becoming aggressive or exhibiting aggressive behaviors if stressed, ill, injured, or fearful. The handler is the dog's protector—and must be aware of the dog's reactions at all times. The handler's job is to ensure a safe and happy experience for both dog and patient. Handlers must observe the dog's reactions and intervene before it gets to that.