

## AGREEMENT

### PET THERAPY IN THE COURTS SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT - LEON COUNTY

The undersign approve the attached procedures, which provides for pet therapy teams to be used while the victim/witness waits to testify, and to the extent possible, at the conclusion of the testimony. Specifically, the attached documents are approved:

Pet Therapy for Victims of Violent Offenses as Witnesses, Second Judicial Circuit - Leon County, Procedures

Informational Sheet for ComFort Volunteers Participating in the Pet Therapy in the Courts Program for the Second Judicial Circuit, Leon County

Application, Pet Therapy in the Courts, Second Judicial Circuit of Florida

Oath of Confidentiality

Janice D Wise, Executive Director of AAA of N Fl 5/17/2007  
Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc/Companions for Therapy (ComForT) Designee Date

Kim Dressel, Management Services Director 5/21/2007  
Leon County Board of County Commissioners Designee Date

Willie Meggs, State Attorney 5/14/2007  
State Attorney or Designee Date

Marcia Hilty Reinshuttle GAL Director 5/9/2007  
Guardian Ad Litem Director or Designee Date

Charles A Francis, Chief Judge 5/21/2007  
Chief Judge or Designee Date

**PET THERAPY FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENT OFFENSES AS WITNESSES  
SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT - LEON COUNTY  
PROCEDURES**

**Participants:** Second Judicial Circuit, State Attorney, Companions for Therapy (ComForT), and Leon County.

**Overview/Purpose:** Victims as witness are sometimes required to wait for an extended period of time before they testify in court. This wait produces high level of anxiety for some victims, particularly children and others in vulnerable situations. Many studies show that the interaction with friendly animals provides both emotional and physical benefits. Pet handler teams will be available to interact with victims as witnesses while they wait to testify. The goal is to have the victim/witness be more comfortable and able to provide more accurate testimony. For purposes of this proposal pets used will be dogs. Pet teams will be used while the victim/witness is waiting to testify, and to the extent possible, be available for the victim/witness at the conclusion of the testimony.

**Target Population and Events:** The target population for this program is victims of violent crime, age five and over, providing testimony in court (primarily trials) and possible depositions, who the state attorney victim advocate feels would benefit from the presence of a pet therapy team. Specific victims will be identified by the state attorney victim advocate. It is estimated that pet handler teams will be needed approximately two - six times per month. (This estimate is provided for planning purposes and is non-binding.) Depending on the success of the program, the target population may be expanded with the approval of the participating parties and chief judge.

**Scope:** The referring party will make a request of the ComForT program to have a pet team available for a victim/witness. Pet teams will be with the victim/witness while the victim/witness waits to testify, and to the extent possible, be available for the victim/witness at the conclusion of the testimony. Third parties will be present while the pet team interacts with the victim/witness. In general the pet team will be present with the victim/witness, however, pets are not allowed in courtrooms or judicial chambers without the approval of the chief judge and the presiding judge. Pets will be leashed at all times with the handler in control of the pet and leash.

**ComForT:** ComForT is an animal visitation and activity program comprised of volunteers. Owners and their pets visit long-term care facilities, day treatment programs, assisted living residences, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, public libraries, schools and domestic violence shelters to promote motivational, recreational, and therapeutic benefits. All animals and handlers in the program have passed nationally recognized skills and aptitude tests by the Delta Society. The animals have been examined by a veterinarian to ensure good health. Additionally, each pet therapy team has liability insurance policy in the amount of \$1,000,000. Delta Society and ComForT rules require that the handler be in control of the pet at all times, and that the dog must always be on a leash with the owner holding the lease at all times. Additionally, pet handlers are responsible for the clean-up of animal eliminations. Pet teams must adhere to all ComForT and Delta Society policies.

**Application Form:** Each pet handler will be required to complete an application form prepared by the Office of Court Administration with the approval of the Office of the State Attorney. The application form will contain information sufficient to conduct a background check.

**Background Checks:** Each dog handler will be required to undergo a background check performed by the Office of Court Administration. The specific findings of the check are confidential, however, the Office of Court Administration can advise ComForT as to whether the applicant was approved or not approved.

**Confidentiality Agreement:** Pet handlers will agree to maintain the confidentiality of all information including, but not limited to, information pertaining to victims/witnesses and their families, whether written or verbal, received through the scope of your interaction with the victims/witnesses.

**Informational Sheet for Handlers** - The Office of Court Administration will prepare an informational sheet for pet handlers. The informational sheet will include issues related to parking, courthouse access, background checks and oath of confidentiality. Additionally, the informational sheet will include information regarding frequent changes in court schedules and court delays.

**Scheduling:** The requesting party (state attorney) will request a pet team via email to the ComForT program. The requesting party will provide the tentative date and time the team is needed and will timely advise ComForT of any changes in the schedule. The ComForT coordinator will confirm by email that a team is available and will provide the name of the handler. ComForT will timely advise the requesting party of any changes in the availability of the pet team, including substitutions. Once a pet team is secured, the requesting party will notify the bailiffs' unit, court administration and facilities management of the planned visits, and also keep these parties abreast of changes in the schedule.

**Identification of Pet Handler:** All ComForT pet teams have ComForT/Delta Society identification cards and will produce the cards upon entry into the courthouse or upon request of any court official. Pet teams will also make attempts to distinguish themselves as pet therapy teams through some mechanisms such as wearing ComForT or Delta Society logo apparel.

**Presence of Third Party:** The Office of the State Attorney will be required to have a third party present at all times when the pet handler teams are involved with a child victim/witness. A third party will be available for at all times the pet team is with an adult victim/witness. The third party will typically be the victim advocate for state attorney clients.

**Animal Teams and Animal Fatigue:** The ComForT program cannot guarantee that a specific team will be available for the scheduled event. If a specific gender for the handler is requested, attempts will be made to accommodate that request, however, the vast majority of the volunteer pet handlers are female. Additionally, pets are subject to fatigue, particularly in stressful situations. Delta Society recommends that dogs "work" for a maximum of two hours, though many dogs can "work" for much longer periods of time. Therefore, if a team is needed for an

extended period of time, ComForT may provide teams on a rotational basis or the team may take rest breaks.

**Courthouse Access:** Pet teams will be required to enter the courthouse through the Monroe Street public entrance. Pet teams will be escorted by the state attorney victim advocate to the victim/witness assistance office using the employee elevators. To the extent possible (exceptions being entering/exiting the building, or on route to rest breaks) the pet team will be present in the victim/witness assistance office with the victim/witness, however, pet teams are prohibited from entering the courtrooms or judicial chambers without the approval of the chief judge and the presiding judge. Additionally, pet teams may not enter the snack bar. Attempts will be made by the victim assistance personnel and pet handler to minimize contact with the public and other courthouse employees. Depending on the success of the program, courthouse access may be expanded with the approval of the participating parties and chief judge.

**Clean-up:** Pet handlers are trained to arrive early to exercise dogs so dogs can take care of any elimination issues. Dogs are trained not to eliminate indoors. Outdoor eliminations are cleaned-up by handlers using proper disposal methods to control odors, etc. Referring parties agree to vacuum rooms (not corridors) occupied by pet teams.

**Allergens/Parasites** - As required by Delta Society, pet handlers will adhere to policies regarding grooming and parasite control in attempts to reduce allergens and/or parasites in the courthouse. These procedures include bathing pet within 24 hours of a visit and use, if not exempt, of parasite prevention medication. Exempted animals are required to undergo additional grooming procedures to eliminate parasites.

**Liability** - Each ComForT team has a \$1,000,000 liability policy through Delta Society.

**Workers' Compensation** - If any workers' compensation issues arise, participants agree to reconvene to address the issue.

**Reporting Incidents** - The state attorney is responsible for reporting incidents to Karen Harrell with the Leon County's Risk Management Office, Susan Wilson with Court Administration and Stephanie Perkins with ComForT. Reportable incidents include injuries to a person or animal; situations with a high potential that an injury could have occurred either to a person or an animal, even though no one was hurt at the time; situations with a perception of an accident or injury, and damages to property. If any incidents arise, participants agree to reconvene to address the issue.

**INFORMATIONAL SHEET FOR COMFORT VOLUNTEERS  
PARTICIPATING IN THE PET THERAPY IN THE COURTS PROGRAM  
FOR THE SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, LEON COUNTY**

The Second Judicial Circuit, State Attorney, Companions for Therapy (ComForT) and Leon County are participating in a program to provide pet therapy to victims of violence, ages five and older, who are testifying in court. This is a new venture for the participating parties and as such we are certainly striving for a successful program. There is only one other jurisdiction using pet therapy in the courts and that jurisdiction uses service dogs.

Victims as witness are sometimes required to wait for an extended period of time before they testify. This wait produces high level of anxiety for some victims, particularly children and others in vulnerable situations. The intent of the program is to have the victim/witness be more comfortable and able to provide more accurate testimony. Pet teams will be used while the victim/ witness is waiting to testify, and to the extent possible, be available for the victim/witness at the conclusion of the testimony.

The courthouse is an extremely busy public building with around 900 employees and 2,000 members of the public entering the building daily. While the program participants are eager to have the pet teams available, pet handlers need to be mindful that some other occupants of the building and some members of the public may not share this enthusiasm. Additionally, pet handlers should be aware of the concerns of others that their presence raises, including allergic reactions, other health concerns, pet elimination, parasites and fear. As such, pet handlers should minimize contact with the public and other employees and adhere to all Delta Society and ComForT policies regarding grooming, elimination clean-up and parasite control. Also, pet handlers should make attempts to present themselves as "official" pet therapy teams through use of ComForT or Delta Society logos on apparel or identification badges.

**Program Overview** - The target population for this program is victims of violent crime, age five and over, providing testimony in court (primarily trials) and possible depositions, who the state attorney victim advocate feels would benefit from the presence of a pet therapy team. Specific victims will be identified by the state attorney victim advocate. It is estimated that pet handler teams will be needed approximately two - six times per month. Depending on the success of the program, the target population may be expanded with the approval of the participating parties and the chief judge. The referring party will make a request of the ComForT program to have a pet team available for a victim/witness. Pet teams will be with the victim/witness while the victim/witness waits to testify, and to the extent possible, be available for the victim/witness at the conclusion of the testimony. In general the pet team will be present with the victim/witness, however, pets are not allowed in courtrooms or judicial chambers without the approval of the chief judge and the presiding judge.

**Third Parties** - A third party will be present with the pet team at all times the pet team is with a child victim/witness and will be present or available with adult victims/witnesses.

**Application/Background Check** - The pet handler will be required to complete a program participation application. The primary purpose of the application is to secure sufficient information necessary to conduct a background check and to obtain availability information. Background checks will be conducted on all participating pet handlers.

**Confidentiality** - Pet handlers will agree to maintain the confidentiality of all information including, but not limited to, information pertaining to victims/witnesses and their families, whether written or verbal, received through the scope of your interaction with the victims/witnesses.

**Scheduling** - Pet teams will be primarily used for testimony in trials, and trial schedules frequently change. The court generally sets several trials for each trial date available with the anticipation that most of the trials will settle or be continued. Occasionally more than one trial will remain set for a specific date and one will need to be rescheduled to a new date. In Leon County juries for the two of the felony divisions are selected on Mondays, with trials to be held on Tuesday through Friday of the same week, and trials for the third felony division are selected on Fridays with trials to be held one day during the following two weeks. Therefore, a tentative trial date is set prior to jury selection, and a final trial date is set after jury selection. It should be noted that many trials are canceled after the jury is selected. Therefore, you may be scheduled to assist and actually report to the courthouse only to learn that the defendant plead or the trial was otherwise canceled or rescheduled. Once a firm trial date is set it is still impossible to determine at what specific time a witness will be needed, although attempts are made to have children testify in the morning. Therefore, your teams' participation during this wait is extremely beneficial to the victim/witness.

**Courthouse Access/Identification Badges** - The Leon County Courthouse is located at 301 S. Monroe Street. In an effort to minimize contact with the public and other courthouse employees, pet teams will be required to enter the courthouse at the **Monroe Street Public Entrance**. **Pet teams will be required to go through a security station and present their Delta Society Identification Badge.** To the extent possible pet handlers should make attempts to present themselves as "official" pet therapy teams through use of ComForT or Delta Society logos on apparel or identification badges. A representative of the state attorney's victim advocate unit will escort the pet team to the victim advocate's office using the employees' elevators, Elevators 3 and 5 or the South Lobby Elevators. Pet teams are prohibited from entering the snack bar, and are not allowed in the courtrooms or judicial chambers without the approval of both the chief judge and presiding judge. The pet team will remain with the victim/ witness in the victim advocate unit and will be permitted to leave the office for breaks. While walking through the courthouse corridors pet teams should attempt to minimize contact with the public or employees, unless contact is "invited" and does not disrupt the daily business of the courthouse.

**Parking** - Parking at the Leon County parking garage is closed to the public for security reasons. The City of Tallahassee operates two paid parking garages: Republic (Eastside) Parking Garage located at the corner of College Avenue and Calhoun Street (entrance on Calhoun Street, across the street from the rear of the courthouse) and Kleman Plaza Parking Garage (entrances on Bronough and Duval Streets). Leon County has a paid parking lot at the Leon County Public

Library. Additionally, metered parking spaces are available throughout the downtown area, and a free grass parking lot is available at the southwest corner of Pensacola Street and Franklin Boulevard. SunTrust Bank also had a paid parking lot, also operated by Republic, adjacent (north side) to the courthouse on Calhoun Street, however, the cost is about \$15 - \$20 per day. A Downtown Public Parking Guide is attached or may be obtained at:

[http://www.tallahasseedowntown.com/pdfmaps/parking\\_map.pdf](http://www.tallahasseedowntown.com/pdfmaps/parking_map.pdf)

**Reporting Incidents** - You are responsible for reporting incidents to the state attorney's Victim/Witness Unit if a representative of that office did not witness the incident. Reportable incidents include injuries to a person (even if it is you) or animal; situations with a high potential that an injury could have occurred either to a person or an animal, even though no one was hurt at the time; situations with a perception of an accident or injury, and damages to property.

**Contact Information** - The following provides contact information for select program participants:

Questions regarding ComForT may be directed to:

Stephanie Perkins Director, ComForT - Companions For Therapy  
c/o Area Agency on Aging of North Florida, Inc.  
2414 Mahan Drive  
Tallahassee, Florida 32308  
Phone: (850) 488-0055  
Fax: (850) 922-2420  
E-mail: [comfortpet@elderaffairs.org](mailto:comfortpet@elderaffairs.org)

Questions regarding the State Attorney Victim Advocate Program may be directed to:

Helene Potlock, Director of Victim/Witness Assistance Program  
Second Judicial Circuit  
Office of the State Attorney  
301 S. Monroe St., Rm 443E  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301  
Phone: 850-606-6113  
Fax: 850-606-6008  
E-mail: [PotlockH@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:PotlockH@leoncountyfl.gov)

Questions regarding the pet therapy program in the courts may be directed to:

Susan Wilson, Senior Deputy Court Administrator  
Second Judicial Circuit  
301 S. Monroe St, Rm 225  
Phone: 850-577-4430  
Fax: 850-487-7947  
E-mail: [susanw@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:susanw@leoncountyfl.gov)

# DOWNTOWN PUBLIC PARKING

**ON STREET METERS**  
 ONE HOUR OR LESS  
 TWO HOURS  
 FOUR HOURS

**CITY OF TALLAHASSEE  
 PUBLIC PARKING  
 GARAGES**

**P EASTSIDE PARKING  
 GARAGE** (Enter on Calhoun)

**P KLEMAN PLAZA  
 PARKING GARAGE**  
 (Enter on Bronough or Duval)  
 FIRST 30 MINUTES FREE

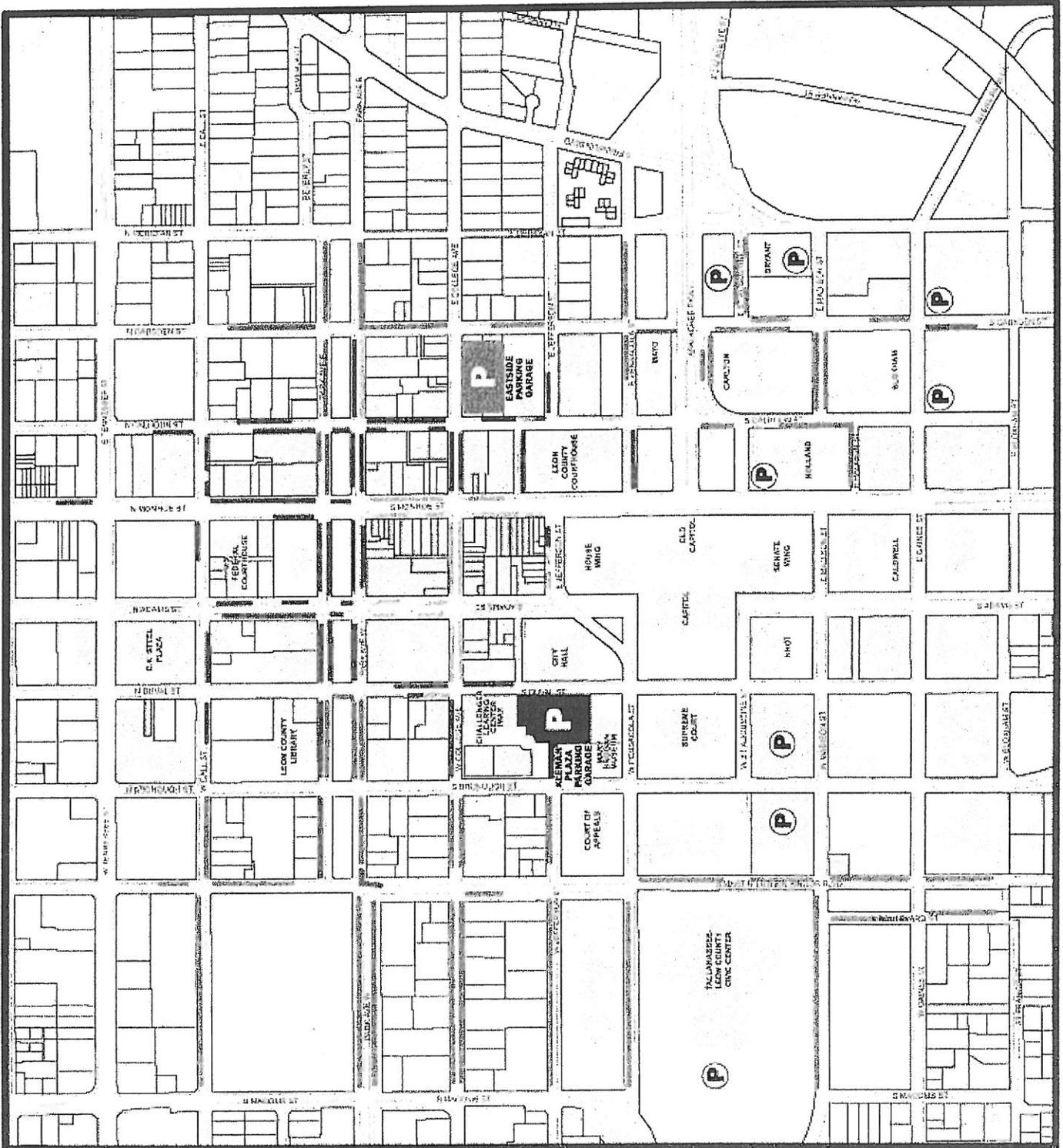
**P PUBLIC LOTS/SPACES**



For More Information  
 Economic Development Department  
 (850) 891-8886



Downtown Improvement Authority  
 (850) 224-3252





## OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name), pursuant to Florida Law and the policies and procedures of the Office of the State Attorney, solemnly swear/affirm that I will maintain the confidentiality of all information, including but not limited to information pertaining to victims/witnesses and their families, whether written or verbal, received through the scope of my service as a pet therapy volunteer.

I acknowledge that I have an obligation to take all reasonable measures to ensure that confidential information is not divulged to anyone not bound to respect this confidentiality, and to ensure that such information is not for personal use or used in any way that might adversely affect the interests of the Office of the State Attorney.

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Volunteer Signature

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Date