

Imagine this....

You are a child who has been removed from your home because of abuse or neglect.



Imagine feeling scared, overwhelmed and wishing you could just leave

What's the process like?

- Go to a huge office building
- Meet a lot of new people
- Don't understand everything that's happening
- Talk to a Judge

Now imagine seeing this!



Courthouse Therapy Dogs

Animal-Assisted Services in the Courts

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize the human-animal bond.
2. Distinguish between therapy and service dogs
3. Know the role of the volunteer team
4. Assess the benefits of animal therapy to all parties involved in a dependency court setting
5. Resolve facility manager issues
6. Devise additional animal team requirements unique to a court setting



Animal Therapy

Animal therapy uses trained companion animals to promote optimal health for mind, body and spirit for people experiencing a wide range of physical and mental challenges

What is Animal Therapy?

History



The human-animal bond has existed for thousands of years and is an essential component to the success of programs utilizing animals.

In 1859, Florence Nightingale wrote that a small pet "is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially."



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York Retreat in England, an establishment that was founded by the Quakers for the treatment of mental illness, was the first to document the use of animals as an adjunct to therapy. However, there is mention of animals being used therapeutically as early as the 9th century in Belgium.

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Sigmund Freud believed that dogs had a "special sense" that allowed them to judge a person's character accurately. His favorite chow chow, Jo-Fi, attended all of his therapy sessions.



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How it helps

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In 1982, the AMA officially recognized the human-animal bond due in part to hundreds of clinical trials that confirmed what people have known for thousands of years...

Petting an animal significantly reduces stress and anxiety.

Animal therapy emphasizes psychological support and physical healing



Much has been written about the correlation between touch and health. This "Low-Tech/High-Touch" therapy may be just what the Dogtor ordered!



Just a little extra

When people are with animals, some feel a spiritual fulfillment or a sense of oneness with nature and life.



Research shows....

Research has shown a dramatic, measurable decrease in heart rate and blood pressure when interacting with a therapy animal. It works by reducing the amount of cortisol, a stress-inducing hormone, in the blood system. Animals can have a calming effect on people, help reduce anxiety and can encourage socialization.



A retrospective study showed a strong supportive role of pets in the childhood of sexual abuse survivors. The animal was in some cases, the only reported supportive character in the survivor's childhood.

Barker et al (1997)



Researchers have found that children owning pets show higher measures of self-concept, self-esteem and empathy than those who do not.



Poresky and Hendrix (1990),
Van Houtte and Jarvis (1995)

More recent studies have found sexual abuse survivors with a strong human-animal bond in childhood report less abusive behavior as adults and lower anger levels than those lacking a strong bond.

Nebbe (1998)



Another amazing discovery is that petting a dog or cat for as little as a minute stimulates the production of oxytocin (Odendaal and Meintjes, 2003). Oxytocin is the hormone that enhances trust, cooperation and love between a parent and their child.



Petting a therapy animal also releases endorphins making people feel better, diminishing feelings of pain, depression and loneliness.

In September 2010, the medical journal, Psychoneuroendocrinology, published a study that compared levels of cortisol in 42 children with Autism before and during the introduction of a dog into their families and after they were removed for a short period.



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The results showed a significantly diminished Cortisol Awakening Response upon introduction of the dogs which lends support to the behavioral benefit of dogs for children with autism.



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Benefits of animal therapy for children who have been abused



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Aids in building rapport and promotes engagement with the child, who may be nervous or withdrawn (Parish-Plass, 2008).



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Provides a healing touch to a child and removes feelings of social alienation (Parish-Plass, 2008)



Acts as comfort or support for the child and reduces anxiety and stress (Serpell, 1996).



An animal's acceptance is non-judgmental, forgiving, uncomplicated and unconditional.

Interactions with animals can help individuals focus more on their environment rather than themselves.



When is the use of therapy dogs not beneficial?

Fear
Allergies
Group Conflict
Zoonotic Diseases/Parasites
Sudden reaction may cause injury to person/animal



Presenting an inappropriate animal that has not been properly trained and evaluated for its skill and aptitude for therapy work can be unsafe for the child as well as inhumane to the animal

An untrained or inexperienced handler may not be able to properly serve in his/her role as the animal's advocate

Who we are



**Tallahassee Memorial
Animal Therapy**

TMH Animal Therapy Volunteer Teams

Initial Screening

Full day handler workshop followed by 5 weeks of training classes attended by the handler and the animal

Evaluation by licensed evaluators every two years

Each team is covered by \$1 million of liability insurance

Teams receive supplemental screening/training for specialized program areas

Some of our teams



Who we visit



Seniors

Adults



Children

Where we visit



- * **Long-Term Care Facilities**
- * **Assisted Living Facilities**
- * **Well-Senior Programs**
- * **Adult Day Cares**



Runaway Shelters

Facilities for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

Behavioral Health Facilities

Facilities for Homeless Families

Schools

Courts

What makes a team appropriate for animal therapy?

It is critical that only credentialed and experienced handler-animal teams be considered for working in the judicial system.

If a therapy animal is registered through a national therapy animal registry, the team is insured through that organization when acting in a volunteer capacity.

Look for a highly credible, standards-based program that provides comprehensive handler training and evaluation of the team to ensure that they possess the appropriate skills and aptitude and handler knowledge to interact safely and effectively.

[What Types of Animals Can Be Used?]



dogs

Therapy Dogs versus Service Dogs

People often confuse “therapy dogs” with “service dogs,” but these are two distinct terms.



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A therapy dog is specially trained to offer comfort, companionship, and affection to those in need.



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To qualify as a therapy dog, the animal must be evaluated & registered with a national organization such as Therapy Dogs International (TDI) or Pet Partners



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Both TDI and Pet Partners offer training & volunteer opportunities for both the dog and the dog handler.



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The therapy dog is only half of the therapy team. The handler, most frequently the dog owner, is the other half.

Therapy animals, in general, are not legally recognized by the ADA (only service/assistance animals), but the phrase "therapy animal" (not just limited to dogs) has been widely used in research studies and literature dating back to the 1960's.

Service Dogs

The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that the individual with a disability cannot perform for him or herself.

Some examples include:

- _ Alerting persons with hearing impairments to sounds.
- _ Pulling wheelchairs or carrying and picking up things for persons with mobility impairments.
- _ Assisting persons with mobility impairments with balance.

A service animal is not a pet.

What makes a great therapy dog?

Clean and Healthy



Affiliative

Good therapy dogs need to be the kind of dogs who ADORE people, all people, and want nothing more than to connect with them. It is the emotional connection that is often the most therapeutic.

Physically Calm

Leaping, licking, pawing and body slamming just don't work in courthouses, senior centers and hospitals...often these energetic, friendly dogs are better candidates when they are older.

Psychologically Sound and Non-reactive

These dogs need to be "emotionally" mature, able to handle frustration and deal with the world in a calm way...context matters. Not all dogs are "bombproof" in all situations. It's important to know your dog!



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Some dogs more than happily sit with strangers or participate in structured therapy plans. They seem to sense why they are there, seek out people who are especially needy and make an emotional connection with them that changes their life.



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What makes a great handler?



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Demonstrates appropriate treatment of people and animals



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Has the social skills needed for interacting with people (eye contact, smiles, confident posture, ability to converse)



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Is pleasant, calm and friendly toward animal when interacting



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Protects and respects the animal's needs while simultaneously interacting appropriately with client

Acts as their animal's advocate at ALL times!



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What do you want in a team?



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Inspire confidence

A team should work in harmony



Interactions between handler and animal should be pleasant and not distract others

Courthouse Therapy Dogs

2 Areas of concentration

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Criminal Division Second Judicial Circuit

Franklin



Gadsden



Jefferson



Leon



Liberty



Wakulla



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Participating Organizations

- Second Judicial Circuit
- Office of the State Attorney
- TMH Animal Therapy
- Various boards of county commissioners or clerks of courts (facility managers for counties in circuit)

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Criminal Division Target Population

- Victims as witnesses
- Children five and older
- Vulnerable adults
- Primary offenses sexual assault and domestic violence



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Dependency Courts

Support for children and families involved in Dependency Court

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Participating Organizations

- Second Judicial Circuit
- TMH Animal Therapy
- Clerk of the Courts acting as facility manager

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Participating Counties - Wakulla

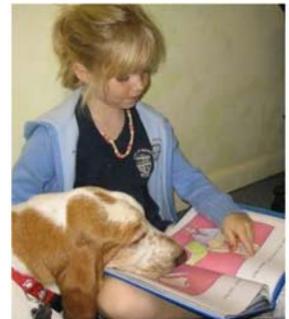


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Program's Original Purpose

- Provide a positive court experience for the children.
- Have children look forward to coming to court.
- Reduce apprehension about talking to a judge.
- Assists Court in ensuring child's well being.



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Program's Additional Purposes

- Assists in complying with Rule 8.225 Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure: child has a right to be present at all hearings.
- Bonus effect is parents and other parties are less stressed.



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Target Population

- Ages birth up to 18.
- Children 18 and over involved with Independent Living Dockets
- All Dependency Court Events



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What Courts Need to Know

Inappropriate Animal Therapy Teams: State Court System Employees

- Legal opinion from the OSCA state that it is probably inappropriate for voluntary participation by court employees, even when employees are on leave.
- While not applying directly to court employees several Canons of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct hold staff to the same standard as judges.

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Applicable Canons

- Canon 3C(2): A judge shall require staff, court officials, and others subject to the judge's direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to the judge and to refrain from manifesting bias or prejudice in the performance of their official duties.
- If a judge cannot participate, then a court employee cannot participate.

Applicable Canons Cont.

- Canon 3B(5): A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias ...and shall not permit staff, court officials, and others subject to the judge's direction and control to do so.
- The program is a support mechanism for victims/witnesses, and so, by its very nature, is expressive of a predisposition in favor of, or bias, towards victims/witnesses

Applicable Canons Cont.

- Canon 3B(7): A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding...
- Because a judge may not ordinarily converse with victims/witnesses in pending matters, court employees subject to the judge's direction and control should similarly avoid this sort of conduct.

Applicable Canons Cont.

- Canon 3B(9): A judge shall not, while a proceeding is pending or impending in any court, make any public comment that might reasonably be expected to affect its outcome or impair its fairness or make any nonpublic comment that might substantially interfere with a fair trial or hearing. The judge shall require similar abstention on the part of court personnel subject to the judge's direction and control.

Applicable Canons Cont.

- Canons 4A(1) and 4A(3): A judge shall conduct all of the judge's quasi-judicial activities so that they do not: (1) cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge; (3) demean the judicial office
- Participation by court personnel in court-approved programs presumably falls under this umbrella.

ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER

To be advocate for pet partners and enable them to offer comfort and support, and serve as a distraction to the nervousness children feel before and after they talk about the facts of the case.

NOT to act as the child advocate or counselor regardless of their professional background.

To be in control of dog, observing for signs of stress or fatigue.



Additional Suggested Volunteer Requirements

Register with a therapy animal organization and wear identification badge or logo apparel



Pass background check

Pending Court Cases

Courts can do free in-house background checks



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Sign Oath of Confidentiality



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Presence of a third party

Protects children

Protects handlers

Protects courts

Protects facility managers



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Additional Testing

• Court specific handler training, including emotional impact of volunteering.

• Additional animal skills training – working with children.



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Additional Testing Cont.

- Home study guide and exam on court policies and procedures.
- Annual refresher training.



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Photos for Team Biographies

Cappuccino



I LIKE IT WHEN I GET BRUSHED AND SCRATCHED. I REALLY LIKE TO GIVE LOTS OF KISSES, IF YOU LIKE THEM. YOU CAN READ ABOUT ME AND MY FAMILY ON MY BIOGRAPHY PAGE.

Grendel



I AM VERY BIG, VERY FRIENDLY AND A LITTLE SLOBBERY. I LOVE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE. YOU CAN READ ABOUT ME AND MY FAMILY ON MY BIOGRAPHY PAGE.

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Volunteer Recruitment Obstacles

- Emotional stress of being exposed to explicit details of sexual assault cases with very young victims.
- Scheduling conflicts.
- Trained dogs are available only for a few years due to retirement and life expectancy. Five courthouse therapy pet partners are deceased.

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Animal Fatigue

- Animals are subject to fatigue, particularly in stressful situations.
- Dogs may need breaks or teams may need to be rotated.



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Animal Fatigue Cont.

- Pet Partners recommends that dogs "work" for a maximum of two hours, though many dogs can work much longer.



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Implementation issues

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**Coordinate with Risk Management,
Legal Staff, Facilities Managers and
Security on....**

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Liability

Teams registered with animal therapy groups such as Pet Partners and Therapy Dogs International are covered by insurance.



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Allergens and Parasites

Dogs must be healthy, groomed and free of parasites in order to visit.



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Dog Walk Area



Dogs are walked prior to visits.



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Adequate Space

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Noise

Size of Dogs

Separate area from those afraid, allergic, etc.

Access



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Access and Security

Notify security of animal team visits

Are there any restricted areas, such as snack bars, chambers, courtrooms or nonpublic areas? Note: all restrooms cannot be restricted because handler will need access.

Will teams have freedom of movement or be escorted?

Note: some dogs will not walk on some surfaces, climb stairs or ride in elevators.



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Questions



