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Animal-Assisted Interventions in Health Care Settings: A Best Practices Manual for Establishing New Programs: Volunteer Manual Template

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Animal-Assisted Interventions in Health Care Settings

A Best Practices Manual for Establishing New Programs

Volunteer Manual Template

Sandra B. Barker, Ph.D., Rebecca A. Vokes, Randolph T. Barker, Ph.D.

This document accompanies *Animal-Assisted Interventions in Health Care Settings: A Best Practices Manual for Establishing New Programs* and serves as a template for you to personalize for your facility. The generic terms “ABC Health Care Facility” and “AAI Program” are intended to be replaced by the names of your facility and AAI program.

Approved on: mm/dd/yyyy

By: xxxxxxxxxxxx

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Introduction

AAI is a program of ABC Health Care Facility. The AAI Program's purpose is to provide a formal structure for AAI to take place in ABC Health Care Facility. Its mission is to aid in patient and staff health and well-being by providing animal-assisted interventions.

As a volunteer in the AAI Program, you support our mission by providing safe and effective AAI for individuals you encounter in ABC Health Care Facility. This manual will provide you with an introduction to the AAI Program, requirements for membership, visitation procedures, references and resources, and additional information you may require as a member of the AAI Program. Policies and procedures for therapy dogs in the ABC Health Care Facility are provided in Appendix 1.

The AAI Program staff offices are physically located on the 2nd floor of Main Hospital at ABC Health Care Facility.

For more information on the AAI Program, please visit www.xxxxxxxxxxxx.org.

The introduction section of your manual should orient the volunteer with the AAI program, and to the health care facility. A strong introduction will clearly communicate the mission of the AAI program and explain to the volunteer his or her role in achieving this mission. Information that a volunteer may wish to access quickly and easily (such as the website and location) should also be included in this section.

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Welcome to the AAI Program!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new AAI Program teams at ABC Health Care Facility. Volunteers are vital to the success of the AAI Program. Volunteering as a therapy dog team is incredibly rewarding, but being a handler also demands the motivation and desire to fulfill the requirements and training necessary to safely navigate as a therapy dog team. While no formal time obligation is required to participate, we recommend that volunteers demonstrate a high level of commitment with regular visitation, given the amount of time it takes to become an official member.

The AAI Program facilitates AAI for ABC Health Care Facility. Primary clients served by the AAI Program include hospitalized children and adults, their families, and ABC Health Care Facility staff. Visits by AAI teams provide a complementary therapy to traditional medical treatment to enhance healing and quality of life while in the ABC Health Care Facility and associated sites.

AAI teams may also help educate others on the benefits of human–animal interaction by accompanying AAI Program staff to presentations, seminars, lectures, and so forth both on and off the ABC Health Care Facility campus. With permission from AAI Program staff, visitors may shadow AAI teams to experience AAI and gain an understanding of this important work.

This manual has been prepared to familiarize you with policies and procedures, guidelines for visits and patient interaction, and other practical information related to the AAI experience.

Again, we thank you for your valuable service and congratulate you on becoming a member of the AAI Program! We look forward to your positive contribution as ambassadors to our health care facility.

Sincerely,

AAI Program Staff

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The welcome letter in your manual gives staff an opportunity to welcome and congratulate new members, establish areas of service, outline opportunities, and further explain expectations of participation. Depending on the facility and time commitments, educational opportunities and other modes of volunteer participation may be highlighted in this section.

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Contact Information

AAI Program

ABC Health Care Facility

Main Hospital, 2nd Floor, West Wing

xxxx Any Street

PO Box xxxx

Anywhere, PA xxxxx

- Center Volunteer Specialist: John Smith, xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx@ABC.org
- Center Director: Jane Doe, xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx@ABC.org
- ABC Health Care Facility Volunteer Services Director—for questions regarding ABC Health Care Facility volunteer requirements: James Johnston, xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx@ABC.org

Additional Links and Materials

- AAI Program website: www.xxxxxx.org
- AAI Program social media accounts:
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/xxxxxx
 - Twitter: www.Twitter.com/xxxxxx or @xxxxxx
- Approved therapy dog organizations: www.xxxxxxxxxx.org
- ABC Health Care Facility Policies and Procedures for Therapy Dogs in the Hospital (see Appendix 1)

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This section should include contact information for all program staff, as well as any other staff members at the health care facility who may be involved with the AAI program. Additional links may include a website, social media accounts, and other websites accessed by AAI teams on a regular basis. This section should also include the physical location of the program, phone number, and mailing address.

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Definitions

Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI)

“AAI” is an encompassing term used to describe the use of an animal in a capacity beneficial to humans (Griffin, McCune, Maholmes, & Hurley, 2011). This term can relate to any species of therapy animal that works with trained handlers to provide animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted activities.

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

AAT is the purposeful incorporation of a therapy dog into a patient’s treatment plan (Delta Society, 1996). With the presence of the therapy dog team, health care professionals develop strategies to assist a patient in achieving treatment goals (such as brushing a dog to improve eye-hand coordination). Patient responses to AAT are typically documented in the medical record by health care professionals.

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)

AAA are less structured than AAT, but just as important and beneficial for patients, families, and staff. The purpose of these activities is to provide relaxation, fun, and distraction, but they are typically not goal-directed or a formal part of the treatment plan and thus do not require documentation in the medical record by the professionals caring for the patient (Delta Society, 1996).

Note: Most AAI program visits are AAA.

Service Dogs

Service dogs are defined and protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). Service dogs are animals individually trained to perform specific tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind,

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alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, or reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications.

- Service animals are working animals, not pets.
- The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.
- A person with a disability has a legal right to enter public places with his or her service dog, including banks, restaurants, stores, and other public venues.
- Service dogs typically perform specific tasks for their handler and are not to engage with those around them.
- Service dogs must be under control and leashed unless the leash interferes with the animal's tasks.

For more information about service dogs, please visit the Americans with Disabilities Act 2010 document at http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm.

Therapy Dogs

Therapy dogs are trained animals that meet behavior and temperament criteria for appropriateness to participate in AAI (McConnell & Fine, 2015). Published studies show that therapy dogs provide comfort, relaxation, and enjoyment (as in AAA) and assist in directed therapies (as in AAT) for individuals they visit. Therapy dogs may also provide distraction from medical conditions and treatment and improve the quality of life of patients they visit.

Please note: Therapy dogs do not have the same legal standing as service dogs and are not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. They do not have legal access to public areas and must receive administrative permission to visit in any facility.

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Emotional Support Animals

An emotional support animal is a companion animal that provides therapeutic benefit to an individual with a mental health–related disability (Disability Rights California, 2014). These support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but they do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities.

Please note: Emotional support animals do not have the same legal standing as service dogs and are not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Emotional support animals are provided legal protection under the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013), which states that individuals with a disability may request reasonable accommodation for their emotional support animal. Emotional support animals are also provided legal protection by the Department of Transportation, which requires U.S. airlines to provide transport for emotional support animals when persons with mental health–related disabilities require their emotional support animal be present in order to travel.

- For more information regarding the legal standing of emotional support animals under the U.S. Department of Transportation, please visit <https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/service-animal-guidance>.
- For more information regarding the legal standing of emotional support animals under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, please visit https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/ReasonableAccommodations15.

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These definitions will help familiarize volunteers with the field of human–animal interaction and help to provide a basic understanding of the laws regarding the presence of animals in different service capacities. Each volunteer should fully understand the differences between therapy animals, service animals, and emotional support animals in order to act according to federal and state law and to avoid misconceptions about their work as an AAI team.

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Requirements for AAI Program Teams

I. Initial Requirements

ABC Health Care Facility requires completion of the following tasks in order for teams to qualify for the AAI Program:

- a. Current therapy dog registration with either
 - Approved Therapy Dog Organization 1 *or*
 - Approved Therapy Dog Organization 2
- b. Documentation of current (within the last 12 months) veterinary records, including each of the following:
 - Rabies vaccination
 - Negative fecal screen
 - Annual wellness exam
- c. All ABC Health Care Facility Volunteer Services requirements (includes background check and current vaccinations)
- d. AAI Program shadowing (handler-only and full-team) at ABC Health Care Facility:
 - *Handler-only shadowing*—The handler of the new team must shadow an existing AAI Program team on a visit to ABC Health Care Facility (minimum time of 30 minutes).
 - *Full-team shadowing*—The new handler and new dog are shadowed by an AAI Program staff member on their first visit to ABC Health Care Facility (minimum of 30 minutes).
 - *Additional shadowing*—While a minimum of the handler-only and full-team shadowing must be met to join AAI Program, it is not uncommon for additional shadowing to be requested by a new AAI Program volunteer in order to better familiarize themselves with serving as an AAI Program team at ABC Health Care Facility. These shadowings will be provided by AAI Program staff.

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II. Renewal Requirements

The AAI Program requires annual renewal for all teams. Renewal requirements include documentation of the following:

- a. Current registration with an approved therapy dog organization. Refer to your registration documents for dates of expiration. Follow the renewal procedures carefully and submit copies of all renewal documents to AAI Program staff.

Please examine your registration documents carefully and plan to renew before they expire.

- b. A yearly full-team shadowing to ensure that AAI Program teams remains in compliance. These shadowings are arranged and conducted by AAI Program staff for all teams in the months of March, April, and May.
- c. Annual veterinary documentation of your dog's annual wellness check, negative fecal exam, and current rabies vaccination. All AAI Program teams may use the AAI Program Annual Health Verification Form (see Appendix 2).

This section clearly expresses the requirements that must be met to become a member of the AAI program as well as those that must be met to remain an active member of the group.

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Visitation Procedures

This section provides an outline of the process every AAI Program team must follow in order to visit patients and staff in the ABC Health Care Facility. These procedures were developed to maximize safety for our patients as well as for you and your dog. Failure to adhere to program policies will result in dismissal from the AAI Program and revocation of visitation privileges. In addition to the procedures outlined in this section of the manual, please refer to your therapy dog organization regulations for any additional requirements.

If at any time you have a question about a policy or procedure, please contact AAI Program staff for clarification.

I. Schedule Your Visit

AAI Program teams are required to record their planned visits on the AAI Program online calendar and their actual visits by checking in and out at the Volunteer Services Office. The online calendar must be accurate to keep an active record of past, current, and future AAI Program visits and, in the unlikely event of an infection, adverse event, or other safety issue, to quickly notify all parties that may be affected. The visiting AAI team, AAI Program staff, and staff of the facility/unit to be visited coordinate the scheduling of AAI Program visits.

Instructions are provided for the online calendar on how to do the following:

- a. Schedule a visit
- b. Change a visit (time, date, unit)
- c. Cancel a visit
- d. Set up a recurring visitation time

Our online volunteer scheduling calendar for ABC Health Care Facility will show you days that visits are planned by AAI teams and may be found at www.schedule.com/AAIProgram.

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Creating a way to schedule and track AAI team visitation is necessary when working with a large number of volunteers. If your facility has only a few AAI teams (one to four), coordination may be possible through standard communication methods such as emailing or calling to schedule visits. However, if you have many AAI teams visiting in various units, scheduling through a remote access calendar (online, through an intranet system, etc.) may be beneficial to prevent overlap and allow for planned activities. You may choose to schedule visits through the AAI staff, using direct contact between the AAI teams and the unit staff where they will visit. You may also choose a combination of procedures, as direct scheduling may work best for some units but not others.

II. Pre-Visit Requirements

You must adhere to the following requirements before partaking in AAI visitation:

- a. Dogs must be bathed and groomed within 24 hours of the visit.
- b. Dogs must be free of illness and/or infection.
- c. Dogs must have nails trimmed as closely as possible.
- d. Dogs must not consume a raw diet within at least 90 days of visitation.
- e. Dogs must not consume pork hide or pig ear treats within at least 90 days of visitation.
- f. Dogs must be free of wounds/sores and have a healthy coat and skin.
- g. Dogs must be well behaved and firmly under the handler's control at all times. Be aware of your dog's stress and comfort level, and do not visit if you feel your dog will not enjoy the visit.
- h. Dogs may not wear a flea collar.
- i. Dogs may not be treated with flea medication (e.g., Frontline, Advantix) within 3 days of the visit.
- j. Female dogs may not visit while in estrus.

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- k. Dogs must wear an appropriate collar or harness in good condition. Muzzles, chain collars, prong collars, and “gentle leaders” are prohibited.
- l. Dogs must be on a leash less than four feet in length.
- m. Dogs must not be on retractable leashes.

This list contains items to minimize risk of infection or incident and provide guidance on safety, behavior, and appropriate grooming. These guidelines should be formed with input from infection control specialists, veterinarians, and therapy animal organizations to better ensure that AAI teams are healthy and prepared to visit, all while posing minimal risk to those in the acute health care facility. The guidelines should be expanded and revised regularly as new evidence from infection control specialists, veterinarians, and therapy animal organizations becomes available.

III. Parking at ABC Health Care Facility

You will receive a parking pass from Volunteer Services for complimentary parking in the ABC Health Care Facility Patient and Visitors Parking area during your AAI visits. The area is located at 111 Main Street.

A safe parking area is important for AAI teams so that they may easily transport their animals to and from the health care facility. Some facilities may offer complimentary parking, street parking, or another area where teams may park their vehicles.

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IV. Identification and Security

Team Identification

Whenever you are visiting as an AAI Program team, you must wear your ABC Health Care Facility volunteer ID badge visible above the waist and have your therapy dog registration credentials available to produce upon request. Please wear your official AAI shirt to every visit and have your dog wear his or her AAI bandana or vest. This attire helps to identify you to patients, families, and staff and provides a level of credibility and security for AAI visitation.

Team Access to Areas Within ABC Health Care Facility

Your ID badge has a magnetic strip that can be programmed for access to secure areas. Contact ABC Health Care Facility security at XXX-XXXX for any badge and access-related issues.

Your facility may have areas where restrictions on access will require volunteers to

- a. have an access code for entry, or
- b. be escorted by personnel with access to the area.

Any access-related concerns should be explained to AAI teams to prevent issues with security and safety in the hospital.

V. Signing In and Signing Out

It is required that all AAI Program teams sign in upon arrival and sign out upon departure from any ABC Health Care Facility site for each visit.

ABC Health Care Facility

Sign in at Volunteer Services when you arrive for your AAI visit. Follow instructions for signing in by computer and/or paper. Sign out at Volunteer Services before you leave the facility.

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Off-Site Locations

Check with the facility for its specific volunteer sign in/out procedures.

Signing in before visitation and signing out after visitation are important steps that should be taken by all AAI teams. This allows for identification of anyone present in the health care facility at a given time and provides a record of visitation for reference. These records of signing in and out should be kept by an appropriate department (for example, the AAI program or volunteer services office). Not only is this information valuable for program evaluation purposes (such as visitation frequency within a given period), but it may also be used in an emergency situation such as a contact tracing.

VI. Arriving and Leaving the Facility/Unit

After signing in at Volunteer Services, AAI teams must first check in at the nurses' station in each facility or unit where visits occur. This will alert the staff and make them aware of your presence and allow them to identify which patients are appropriate for AAI visits based on medical status and any allergies or fear of dogs. AAI teams must also check out at the nurses' station so that staff are aware when teams are leaving their unit.

VII. Rules and Guidelines for Dog Handling

The following section is a guide to proper AAI Program team practices at ABC Health Care Facility. Please read this information carefully in order to protect the safety of patients, staff, visitors, your dog, and yourself.

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Length of Visits

The length of time spent with patients and in ABC Health Care Facility will vary depending on the preferences of you and your dog. Experienced teams are defined as those who have been visiting for more than 6 months or have logged more than 24 visits. This length of time is adequate for the dog and/or handler to become familiar with the facility, visitation procedures, and typical visitation experiences. For experienced teams, short visits with individual patients are recommended with total visitation duration of no more than 2 hours, with a break for your dog after 1 hour. The break should be away from patients and staff in a quiet area to give the dog time to relax and to give you time to assess your dog for signs of fatigue and stress.

New teams are defined as those who have been visiting less than 6 months or less than 24 visits. During this time period, the dog and/or the handler may still be in the process of acclimating to the facility and visitation procedures for AAI teams. For new teams, visits of 5–10 minutes with patients are recommended with a total visitation duration of no more than 1 hour. Handlers should also assess their dog's stress levels regularly during this period of acclimation. If a handler notes their dog shows signs of stress, the visit should be ended immediately.

Watching Your Dog's Position

You must actively watch your dog's position at all times while visiting in ABC Health Care Facility.

- a. Do not allow your dog to walk ahead of you around corners or through doorways.
- b. Do not allow your dog to have any contact with medical equipment or apparatus while visiting.
- c. Do not allow your dog to have contact with patient wounds, bandages, medical equipment, and so forth.
- d. Do not allow your dog to explore the room as there may be items on the floor that pose a safety risk for your dog.

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Encountering Other Dogs

Handlers should avoid allowing their dog to make physical contact with other dogs while working in a therapy dog capacity at any ABC Health Care Facility site. Although many dogs in the program might enjoy socialization with other dogs, therapy work requires that your dog be focused on the visit and your direction and not distracted by any other dog while visiting as an AAI Program team.

- a. If you see another dog in the hospital, do not allow the dogs to make physical contact.
- b. If you arrive at a unit and another therapy dog is already present, leave this unit immediately to visit elsewhere.

Ensuring Hands Are Free

Having hands free facilitates better control over the therapy dog and minimizes distractions to the handler and others in the environment.

- a. Leave bags and purses in a safe location.
- b. Use a waist pack to carry brochures, treats, cell phone, water bowl, etc.
- c. Avoid cell phone use while visiting.

Infection Control

ABC Health Care Facility infection control policies and procedures must be strictly followed during all AAI visits. The following rules are vital to minimizing risks to the patient, to your dog, and to you.

- a. Always provide ABC Health Care Facility approved hand sanitizer (found in dispensers attached to walls in patient areas) to be used by anyone touching your dog both before and after contact with your dog.
- b. Always use ABC Health Care Facility approved hand sanitizer on your hands before and after entering a patient's room.
- c. Do not allow contact with your dog's mouth.

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- d. Do not allow patients to feed your dog treats.
- e. Do not allow contact with your dog's paws.
- f. Do not allow your dog to lick.
- g. Always place a clean linen barrier on a patient's bed before allowing your dog to lie on it.
- h. Always discard linen after one use in an appropriate soiled linen area.
- i. Never enter any isolation room, which may be identified with a sign indicating contact, droplet, or airborne precautions.
- j. Never enter where a pink sign is posted (airborne particle precaution).
- k. Never enter where an orange sign is posted (droplet precaution).
- l. Never enter where a sign asking for "no visitors" is posted.
- m. When responding to a request from a staff person to visit a patient, we encourage you to ask if the patient is in isolation.
- n. When entering communal patient areas, please ask the care provider whether a patient is on isolation (contact, droplet, or airborne precaution) before interacting.
- o. If you come in contact (you or your dog physically touch or have extended close interaction) with a patient on isolation, do the following:
 - Notify unit staff.
 - Immediately sanitize any area of your skin exposed to contact with the patient.
 - Bathe your dog as soon as possible.
 - Notify a member of the AAI Program staff as soon as possible.

Entering a Patient's Space

Dogs may not enter patient rooms or be allowed on patient beds without permission from the patient and any others inside the room.

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Permission must be obtained from the patient and/or family and hospital roommate before you enter a patient's room.

Patients, families, and roommates have the right to refuse an AAI visit at any time. If your dog is of reasonable size, he or she may be allowed on the bed if there is a towel or sheet placed between the dog and the patient's bedding. Unit staff can provide this for you. A fresh new towel/sheet must be used for each patient; this towel/sheet must be removed and deposited in a designated soiled linen container before entering a new patient's room. Ask a staff person if you do not find one of these containers in the patient's room or in the hall. Remember, if you place your dog on a bed or chair, or even hold your dog up to be petted, do not allow anyone to come into contact with your dog's paws. It is also important to remember that dogs must be removed from any dining area during patient meals.

Unit staff may ask you to remove your dog from the unit at any time, for any reason. Cooperate fully with any instruction given to you by medical professionals while on a unit. Disruptive dogs must be promptly removed from the unit. Any dog that is not under the handler's control or creates any disruption must be immediately removed from the facility with corrective action needed to resume visitation.

This section provides the guidelines for proper AAI handling in an acute health care facility.

These rules were developed with these goals in mind:

- a. Minimizing the risk of infection
- b. Minimizing the risk of injury to patient, staff, visitor, or AAI team
- c. Minimizing the stress of the animal while interacting at the facility
- d. Minimizing disruption of staff duties, patient treatment, and family/guest visitation

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VIII. Interaction With Patients, Visitors, and Staff

You and your dog are both important ambassadors of the AAI Program and ABC Health Care Facility. It is important to remember that a main objective of an AAI visit is to provide comfort and distraction from the patient's medical problems and improve overall mood. With these points in mind, please read the following section carefully for guidelines on interactions with all individuals at ABC Health Care Facility.

Engaging With Patients and Families

While it is perfectly acceptable to engage with families and patients in general discussions, there are guidelines on appropriate conversation that should be observed.

- a. Do not ask specific questions about their illness or condition.
- b. Keep all information about a patient's medical condition confidential.
- c. Be polite, respectful, attentive, and nonjudgmental when encountering patients.
- d. Treat every patient with dignity and worth, regardless of condition.
- e. Discuss neutral topics such as the weather, pets the patient may have at home, your dog, or the AAI Program.
- f. Ask open-ended questions and listen actively to responses. Such information can help you have meaningful interactions.
- g. Remember that interaction with your dog is the primary objective of your visit, and patients and their families are happy to have this time with your dog.
- h. Watch the time spent with one patient as it can often be difficult for you to leave even after an extended amount of time. Kindly mention that you have other patients to visit or that your dog needs to take a break.
- i. Some patients may have limited ability to interact. In these cases, family and staff will help you in determining the level of participation.

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- j. Some patients may exhibit irritability, anger, nervousness, withdrawal, and other reactions commonly linked to hospitalization. Be respectful of the patient's situation and do not take any negativity personally. It is likely a reaction to the burden of being hospitalized.

Visiting With Patients in a Wheelchair

When visiting patients in a wheelchair there are several points to remember in order to maintain safety and make the visit more enjoyable.

- a. Do not move the wheelchair without asking.
- b. Do not lean on the wheelchair.
- c. Do not talk over the person, but rather sit or squat so you can be at his or her level.
- d. Do ask the patient (or family member) to ensure that the wheelchair is locked.
- e. Do ask the patient how he or she would like to have your dog positioned: sitting in a chair next to the patient, or in the patient's lap (if dog weighs less than 10 pounds); do not position the dog's face close to the patient's face.
- f. Do follow all hygiene rules, the same as you would if you were putting the dog on a patient's bed.

Information to Others About the AAI Program

Be prepared to discuss the AAI Program with individuals you encounter both at ABC Health Care Facility and at outside events in the community. Many people will have questions about your participation, how to become a therapy dog team, and what AAI Program teams do on a typical visit. You may also be asked how the patient can visit with his or her own pet. In the latter case, refer the patient to his or her care team to determine if the facility has policies permitting patients' pets to visit.

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Elevators and Enclosed Spaces

Always remember that some individuals have an allergy to or a fear of dogs, and encountering your dog can be anxiety provoking for some people. This is particularly important to think about when entering enclosed areas.

AAI Program teams are required to ask permission to enter an elevator, office, or patient room before doing so.

If there is any reaction of fear or apprehension from those around you, courteously stand aside and leave the area immediately.

This section provides the guidelines for proper interaction with patients, family, and staff. Maintaining patient comfort and privacy is key when interacting with an AAI team, and it is helpful to provide specific guidance on what is appropriate for AAI teams to discuss with patients. This section also provides an opportunity to address the needs of particular patient populations found at your facility.

IX. Your Dog's Needs

While your dog enjoys time spent working as a therapy dog, it is important to be aware of your pet's needs at all times. This includes water, treats, rest breaks, and stress relief. It is your responsibility to ensure that your dog is comfortable during visits and to be alert for any signs of stress, such as shaking, panting, pacing, yawning, licking lips, whining, avoiding eye contact, or hiding behind you.

If your dog exhibits signs of stress, please pause the visit and give your dog a break.

If signs of stress persist, please end the visit.

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You can prevent stress and fatigue by taking short breaks. A walk outside, playtime away from people, or a drink of water can be helpful. If you notice stress in your dog, make note of potential causes so that you can guard against stressors during future visits.

After you return home, give your dog some exercise and playtime to unwind, along with petting, a relaxing massage, and a quiet place to rest undisturbed. Allow your dog at least 10 hours of rest between AAI visits, and be sure to take regular “vacations” from visiting.

Please note the following:

- a. Feed and exercise your pet before the visit, and bring an appropriate water bowl for drinking.
- b. Approved relief break areas are located in the following grassy areas on the ABC Health Care Facility campus:
 - Across Main St. from Main Hospital *and*
 - In the grass area outside the Orthopedic Rehabilitation Center on First Street
- c. For relief breaks at other sites, please consult facility staff.
- d. Please properly bag and discard any solid waste.

Animals participating in AAI should be treated and protected as valued members of the organization in which they serve as volunteers. Not only is it important to protect the well-being of the animal, but it also reduces the chance of a negative incident when the animal is not stressed or fearful. AAI handlers should be educated on the signs of stress in their dogs, and AAI program staff should have a clear understanding of the signs of stress in dogs and how to address any issues that may arise as AAI teams visit in the environment. Educational resources on dog body language and signs of stress can be found in the References and Suggested Resources section of the manual. Protocols surrounding relief breaks should also be clear, and AAI teams should have designated areas for their dogs to eliminate safely and away from patients and staff.

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X. Adverse Events

It is very important to know how to respond if an adverse event happens to you or someone around you while you are visiting in an ABC Health Care Facility site.

In the case of any adverse event, your first responsibility is to maintain the safety and control of your dog.

Adverse events may include the following:

- a. A severe distress reaction from a patient
- b. The dog coming in contact with or disrupting medical treatment or equipment (such as an IV)
- c. An unauthorized or inadvertent entering of an isolation room
- d. An incident resulting in harm to the patient from a dog scratch or bite
- e. A sudden symptom of illness in your dog
- f. An accidental urination or defecation from your dog
- g. An adverse reaction from your dog in response to something in the environment

The following steps should be taken immediately following an adverse event in the facility:

1. Remain calm and keep control of your dog.
2. Immediately seek help from a staff member near you.
 - If this is a patient medical emergency, do not try to give medical aid to the patient but rather seek medical personnel to assist you.
 - If your dog urinates or defecates, keep control of your dog, alert the nearest staff member, and clean the area as best you can.
3. End the visit.
4. Report via email or telephone to AAI Program staff and the staff of Volunteer Services immediately.

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If your dog has shown any signs of aggression, end the visit immediately, exit the hospital, and report the incident to Volunteer Services and the AAI Program staff. We approach these incidents individually and will evaluate the situation for further action.

If there are any concerns regarding infection or hygiene issues, report to the nearest medical staff member. When you return home, bathe your dog and wash your clothes immediately.

Dial *XX from any hospital phone if there is an emergency.

Adverse events are an uncommon result of AAI but are possible in an acute care environment. It is important for AAI program staff to reiterate that in any given situation the role of an AAI team is to maintain control of their dog safely. Once a handler has complete control of his or her therapy dog, the handler may ask for help in a way that is appropriate for your facility (i.e., pushing a call button, or finding the nearest staff member for assistance). The most common adverse event is an accidental elimination by the dog. Conferring with appropriate environmental services and infection control personnel, AAI program staff should identify the best method of responding to this event. After any adverse event concerning an AAI team, proper administration at the health care facility should be notified, and records should be kept of the event, the response, and preventative measures taken to lessen the likelihood of future adverse events.

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XI. Social Media, Photography, and Media Concerns

To protect the privacy of all patients, staff, and visitors, you must follow all guidelines below when in the ABC Health Care Facility.

- a. Do not take photos of patients, visitors, or staff.
- b. If a patient, visitor, or staff member wishes to take a picture with your dog, use his or her phone and not your own.
- c. If an outside media outlet contacts you about the AAI Program or volunteering at ABC Health Care Facility, direct the caller to AAI Program staff.
- d. While we very much appreciate the attention of outside media outlets, ABC Health Care Facility policies require all requests for interviews go through the AAI Program. We will coordinate media requests with the appropriate ABC Health Care Facility personnel.
- e. If you ever have a question regarding media practices, contact a member of the AAI Program staff.

Social media, photography, and media guidelines should be set in accordance with your facility's media policy. With the advent of social media and increased use of portable electronic devices, it is vital that policies control the risk of a breach of confidentiality concerning patients, staff, and visitors. AAI teams should understand their role in maintaining privacy of patients, families, visitors, and staff. All AAI teams should also have a basic understanding of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and how it relates to patient privacy. This training is often covered under health care facility volunteer orientation programs.

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Additional Notes

Insurance

Please be aware that neither the ABC Health Care Facility nor its affiliated locations provides insurance for you or your dog while visiting as an AAI Program team. Please contact your therapy dog registration organization or your private insurance company for information on insurance coverage.

While many registering therapy animal organizations offer some type of insurance to teams they have registered, it is important to clarify the health care facility's policy regarding AAI team liability.

Veterinarian Examination of Your Dog

ABC Health Care Facility reserves the right to have a veterinarian or veterinary tech examine therapy dogs to ensure that they are free from disease or parasites at any time before, during, or after an AAI visit.

Cafeteria and Food Vendors

Therapy dogs are not permitted in the cafeteria or food vendor areas located inside the ABC Health Care Facility or affiliated facilities.

Depending on the location of your health care facility, there may be laws governing the presence of animals in food service and food preparation areas. Keeping AAI teams away from food areas is also ideal from a behavior standpoint and makes it easier for the dog to avoid this potential distraction.

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Retirement

Throughout a therapy dog's career, it is important for the handler to remain vigilant on behalf of the dog's welfare. As pets age, they may have decreased energy and stamina and be less able to adapt to new people or environments. They may also exhibit declining vision and/or hearing, as well as diminished mobility and tolerance for interacting with strangers. It is important to be attuned to your dog and aware of changes that occur over time.

When AAI retirement becomes necessary, it can be done in a gradual manner by decreasing the frequency and duration of visits. An older pet can continue as a therapy dog on a limited schedule and/or in less demanding settings. Although it may be appropriate for your dog to retire, please know that you are a valued volunteer and invited to continue volunteering with us without your dog or with a new dog.

AAI Program Team Contact and Communication

The AAI Program maintains a database of all AAI volunteer contact information. At no time will this data be shared with any third party.

General informational updates related to policies, procedures, research opportunities, and AAI Program events will be emailed to AAI teams as needed. Pertinent AAI Program information is also posted on our website and Facebook page.

This section allows for a variety of topics to be addressed. Any specific issues related to your program, information, or materials may be added to help better prepare and inform AAI teams.

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References and Suggested Resources

ADA National Network. *Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals*. <https://adata.org/publication/service-animals-booklet>

Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD). www.therapydogs.com

American Kennel Club (AKC). Canine Good Citizen test. <https://www.akc.org/products-services/training-programs/canine-good-citizen/training-testing/>

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended. <https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm>

Americans With Disabilities Act: Service Animals. https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

Art and Science of Animal Behavior, The [Legacy of Dr. Sophia Yin website]. www.drSophiaYin.com

- See *Body Language of Fear in Dogs* [poster] as an additional resource on dog body language. <https://drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/dog-bite-prevention-week-poster-on-the-body-language-of-fear-and-aggression/>

Delta Society (1996). *Standards of practice for animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted therapy*. Renton, WA: Author.

Disability Rights California (2014). *Psychiatric service and emotional support animals* (Pub #5483.01). Sacramento, CA: Author.

Fine, A. H. (Ed.). (2015). *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Foundations and guidelines for animal-assisted interventions* (4th ed.). London, UK: Academic Press.

Griffin, J. A., McCune, S., Maholmes, V., & Hurley, K. (2011). Human-animal interaction research: An introduction to issues and topics. In Authors (Eds.), *How animals affect us: Examining the influence of human-animal interaction on child development and human health* (pp. 3–9). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

McConnell, P. M., & Fine, A. H. (2015). Understanding the other end of the leash: What therapists need to understand about their co-therapists. In A. H. Fine (Ed.), *Handbook on*

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animal-assisted therapy: Foundations and guidelines for animal-assisted interventions (4th ed., pp. 103–113). London, UK: Academic Press.

Pet Partners. <https://petpartners.org/>

- See Canine Body Language: Reading Signals From Therapy Dogs as an additional resource on dog body language. <https://petpartners.org/learn/online-education/canine-body-language-course/>
- See Pet Partners Handler Course. <https://petpartners.org/volunteer/volunteer-with-pet-partners/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Reasonable Accommodations Under the Fair Housing Act. https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/ReasonableAccommodations15

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2013). *Service animals and assistance animals for people with disabilities in housing and HUD-funded programs* (FHEO Notice: FHEO-2013-01). Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Justice (2011). *ADA requirements: Service animals*. Washington, DC: Author.

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By: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Appendix 1

Therapy Dogs in the ABC Health Care Facility Policies and Procedures

File identifier: xx.xx.xxx

Owner: ex. Chief Operating Officer

Author: Jane Doe

Revision number: x.x

Date last updated: xx/xx/xxxx

Status: ex. Approved and Released

General Description

Purpose: To accommodate the entry, presence, and visitation of therapy dogs at the health care facility.

Background: Research studies document the benefits of human–companion animal interaction and animal-assisted interventions in health care settings. This policy will allow for the provision of this evidence-based activity while recognizing the need to reduce the risk of exposing patients, employees, and visitors to communicable diseases that might be transmitted from contact with dogs.

Scope: When a request is made for a therapy dog to visit the health care facility or its patients. This policy does not include service animals or emotional support animals.

Responsibility: Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI) Program, Epidemiology, health care providers.

Facility Policy

- a. Only dogs and their handlers who meet the AAI requirements as set forth below by the AAI Program are permitted to visit patients, visitors, or employees.
- b. Patients in isolation may have therapy dog visits with a physician's order; otherwise, handlers and their therapy dogs cannot conduct visits with these patients.

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- c. AAI volunteers must comply with all visitation restrictions as set forth by the AAI Program.
- d. Employees may only bring their dogs to work if they are participating in the AAI Program.

AAI Program Requirements

General Requirements

- a. Therapy dog handlers must complete the requirements of health care facility Volunteer Services to volunteer with the AAI Program.
- b. Therapy dog handlers must wear their health care facility volunteer ID badge at all times in the health care facility. Handlers and therapy dogs should also wear their AAI Program uniform while present in the health care facility. This attire helps identify therapy dog teams to patients, families, and staff.
- c. Therapy dog teams must be registered with ABC Therapy Dog Organization.
- d. Documentation of current therapy dog registration with ABC Therapy Dog Organization must be kept on file with the AAI Program and updated regularly.
- e. Volunteer handlers and their therapy dogs must complete the AAI Program orientation and initial shadowing visits before visiting in the health care facility.
- f. Volunteer handlers and their therapy dogs must participate in annual renewal shadowing visits conducted by a designated staff member from the AAI Program.
- g. Participation in the AAI Program requires annual documentation of veterinary wellness visits and current rabies vaccination submitted to the AAI Program.
- h. Participation in the AAI Program requires compliance with all procedures outlined in the AAI Program Manual provided to all new volunteer handlers.

Therapy Dog Requirements

- a. Volunteers may only visit in approved areas outlined in the AAI Program Manual.

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- b. The health care facility reserves the right to have a veterinarian or veterinary assistant examine a dog during normal business hours to determine that the animal is free of disease and parasites prior to allowing access to health care facility sites. Such an examination may take place at any time during the dog's visit.
- c. Therapy dogs must be under the handler's control at all times. Dogs that are not well behaved or not under the handler's control will have visitation privileges revoked.
- d. Volunteers will be provided an AAI Program Manual when accepted into the AAI Program. Volunteer handlers are expected to become familiar with the manual and must follow all procedures as outlined.
- e. Therapy dogs must be at least one year of age.
- f. Therapy dogs must be bathed and groomed within one day of the visit.
- g. Therapy dogs visiting more frequently than once a week must be thoroughly groomed just prior to each visit and bathed weekly.
- h. Therapy dogs must have nails trimmed and teeth cleaned prior to visits.
 - i. Therapy dogs must be free of illness and/or infection.
 - j. Therapy dogs must be free of wounds/sores and have a healthy coat and skin.
- k. Therapy dogs must be well-behaved and firmly under the handler's control at all times.
 - l. Therapy dogs must be leashed at all times. Retractable leashes are not permitted, and leashes must be four feet or less in length.
- m. Therapy dogs must not wear a flea collar.
- n. Therapy dogs must not be treated with flea medication (e.g., Frontline, Advantix) within 24 hours of the visit.
- o. Therapy dogs must not be fed a raw diet within 90 days of visitation.
- p. Therapy dogs must not be fed pork hide or pig ear treats within 90 days of visitation.
- q. Female dogs must not visit while in estrus.

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- r. Therapy dogs must wear an appropriate collar or harness in good condition. Muzzles, chain collars, prong collars, and “gentle leaders” are prohibited.
- s. If disruptive, dogs must be promptly removed from the unit.

Visitation Requirements

- a. Volunteers must schedule planned visits using the online calendar described in the AAI Program Manual.
- b. Volunteers must sign into and out of the health care facility upon arrival and departure for every visit.
- c. Volunteers must alert nursing staff of their arrival in each unit where visits will occur.
- d. Volunteers must obtain permission from the patient and/or family before entering a patient’s room with their therapy dog. If the patient is sharing a room, permission must also be obtained from both patients and/or families. Patients and families have the right to refuse or end a therapy dog visit at any time.
- e. Therapy dogs are not allowed on patient beds without permission. Dogs weighing less than 10 pounds may be allowed on the bed if there is a towel or sheet placed between the dog and the patient’s bedding. Health care facility staff will provide this towel or sheet for you. A new towel/ sheet must be used for each patient.
- f. Therapy dogs must have no physical contact with any patient areas where there are open wounds or intravenous treatment.
- g. Therapy dogs and handlers must not enter any patient isolation room where a contact, airborne, or droplet precaution sign is posted.
- h. Strict hand sanitation by staff and patients must take place before and after contact with a dog using health care facility approved hand sanitizer.
- i. Therapy dogs are prohibited from visiting dining areas during patient meals.

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- j. Handlers must take their dog out for a break if visiting in the health care facility for more than 1 hour.
- k. Handlers should limit the total visitation time at the health care facility with their therapy dog to a maximum of 2 hours.
- l. Handlers are responsible for properly bagging and discarding any solid waste. If an accidental elimination occurs in the hospital, it is the therapy dog handler's responsibility to (1) clean the area, (2) bag the waste, and (3) ask a staff member to disinfect the area immediately.
- m. Handlers must prevent contact with their therapy dog's paws during visitation by (1) ensuring their dog keeps all paws on the floor while visiting or (2) using a clean sheet or towel if a dog under 10 pounds is allowed on a patient's bedding.
- n. Handlers must restrict contact with their therapy dog's mouth by discouraging licking and any other mouthing behaviors.

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By: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Appendix 2

AAI Program Health Verification Form

Program Health Verification Form	
This registered therapy dog is participating in animal-assisted activity and/or animal-assisted therapy at ABC Health Care Facility.	
Dog owner's name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	
Dog's name: _____	
Date of annual wellness exam: _____	
Date of current negative fecal exam: _____	
Date of current rabies vaccination: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 3 year	
Or rabies titer within last 2 years: _____	Titer level: ____
Veterinarian name: _____	
Veterinarian address: _____	
Veterinarian phone: _____	
I have examined the dog indicated on this form within the last 12 months and believe the dog to be healthy and free of internal and external parasites on the date listed above.	
_____	_____
Required veterinarian signature	Date