



Volunteer Handbook

April 2024



Therapy dogs

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Quality Matters

Therapy Dogs maintains a rigorous standard for all stakeholders involved in our program. We are committed to providing safe, ethical, and enjoyable visits for service users, establishments, volunteers, and their dogs. As therapy dogs often interact with vulnerable individuals, we prioritize safeguarding their well-being to the best of our ability. It is also crucial for volunteers to take responsibility for the safety and well-being of their dogs.

We are proud to be the only organization in Mauritius with a volunteer insurance coverage agreement with GFA Insurance, aligning with international standards. This partnership reflects their trust in our standards and procedures to prevent accidents. Our insurance coverage is extended to volunteers who adhere to our guidelines and agreement, which includes regular temperament assessments and ongoing training.

This handbook comprehensively covers our health and safety policies, visit procedures, stress recognition in dogs, appropriate action protocols, and guidelines for visit limitations. By following these protocols, volunteers contribute to a positive and safe experience for everyone involved in our therapy dog program.



On the Visit: Procedures & Canine Stress



Vaccinations & Parasitic Treatment Policy



Animal Health & Welfare Policy



Raw Meat Policy



Ethical Guidelines and Standards

On the Visit

Therapy Dogs volunteers deliver supervised visits to groups or individuals. Therapy Dog work should be a rewarding and safe experience for you, your pet, our service users, and the host establishment. Upholding our commitment to conducting responsible visits, please adhere to the supervision requirements, and do not visit an establishment that Therapy Dogs has not approved for you and your dog to visit.



Professionalism and Punctuality

Stick to your agreed-upon visit arrangements with the host establishment, including start time, duration of activities, and programme. If you cannot visit for any reason, give the establishment as much notice as possible.



Check-in & Meet Supervising Staff

On arrival, check in with the staff who will be supervising your visit. Remember that you should never be left alone with a service-user and should never move unaccompanied through the institution.



Identification and Dress

Ensure that you and your dog are clearly identifiable on any visit. This includes carrying your Therapy Dogs ID card and your dog wearing their Therapy Dogs Volunteer Bandana or vest (if in advanced training). Please dress respectfully and wear flat shoes. Therapy Dogs Tshirts are available and are a good way of further identifying yourself during the visit.



Temperament Assessed Dogs

You may only bring one temperament-assessed dog per visit, and only the handler assessed with the dog is permitted to accompany it. Family members or friends may not substitute for the assessed handler. Junior handlers under 18 must always be accompanied by the legal parent or guardian.



Approaching Service Users, Consent, and Fearful Individuals

Be mindful that individuals among service users and staff may not have experience interacting with pets or may not want to interact with pets. They may be fearful of them, have been bitten in the past, or suffer from allergies. All service users have a right to consent to the visit. Always introduce yourself and your dog to the individual and ask, "Would you like to pet Lulu?" If staff are pressuring a service user to interact with the dog, politely intervene and say "Don't worry, you can always try later" and move onto the next person.



Considerations in Hospices, Care Homes, and Hospitals

Always knock before entering the room of a patient or resident. If the door is closed or a bedside curtain is pulled around the bed, stop and speak to your supervising staff member. Never be tempted to move or assist anyone in or out of a bed or chair. Immediately inform a staff member if anyone asks to be moved, even a very short distance. Remember, you should never move unaccompanied through the institution.



Food Preparation & Restricted Areas

It's important to ensure that dogs never enter areas where food is prepared or in restricted zones. This precaution is in place to maintain hygiene standards and prevent any potential contamination.



Logging your visits

We require that all your visits be logged in your Therapy Dogs logbook. Visits need to be signed by an establishment. We recommend that you write a few notes to reflect on the visit and your dog's training and welfare.

On the Visit: animal welfare



Only you should hold the leash

Your dog should be under your control at all times. Staff members and service users are not allowed to hold the leash or walk your dog. These activities require a higher level of training and pose risks. Dogs should not be allowed to run off leash to play ball or toilet. Any tricks performed should be performed with the leash on. Your dog should be able to accompany you to the bathroom.



Maintaining Temperament Assessment Standards

Dogs should be kept on a standard lead at all times to ensure that they stay close to you and do not jump up. Small dogs may be allowed to sit on a chair or bed so that the person you are visiting can stroke them more easily. This should only be done with the consent of the service users and assistance of your supervising staff member.



Visit Duration

While most visits last one hour, Therapy Dog visits can last a maximum duration of 2 hours, provided that your dog has a moment before, during, and after the visit to drink water and give them the opportunity to toilet in a designated area. If your dog starts to show signs of fatigue and stress, visits should be ended immediately to prevent accidents.



Noticing and Responding to Stress

Know your pet's normal behaviour and demeanour and monitor behavioural changes before, during, and after the visit. If a therapy dog shows signs of stress, the visit should be ended, or the dog should be given a break to use the bathroom. If the dog appears happy to continue, the visit may resume.



Treats & Dropped Items

Therapy dogs should not pick up food or other items off the ground. Stay vigilant and note if your pet is trying to pick something up off the floor - there may be a dropped pill or something else hazardous to their health. If someone wants to give your pet a treat, ensure that it is one that you provide. Keep our Raw Food Policy in mind, and remember that treats should be cooked, preferably dry foods.



Safeguarding Your Dog

Where a person is either not fully responsible for their actions or not in complete control of their actions or reflexes, it is the responsibility of Therapy Dogs Volunteer to safeguard their dog from potential harm.

Canine Stress

Recognizing stress in dogs is vital, particularly in settings where they may feel restricted and uneasy. Research conducted by Rachel Malkani, PhD, shows the significance of secure emotional attachments in dogs, mirroring the benefits seen in humans. Attachment security aids dogs in coping effectively with stress. Additionally, the concept of "goodness of fit" emphasizes the importance of selecting dogs with temperaments, preferences, and energy levels that align harmoniously with their roles in animal-assisted activities (Fleet, 2021). These are the reasons that we regularly temperament assess dogs.

Recent advancements in understanding dog cognition and emotions, including empathy, have shed light on the complexity of our dog's inner worlds. This highlights the importance of viewing therapy dogs not merely as tools for service delivery but as sentient beings capable of experiencing a range of emotions similar to their human counterparts (Townsend & Gee, 2021). Acknowledging and understanding these emotional complexities in dogs are crucial steps toward ensuring their well-being and effectiveness in their therapeutic roles.

The main job of a therapy dog handler is to look after the dog's well-being. This means paying attention to signs of stress the dog might show, being aware of the surroundings, making sure the dog enjoys what they're doing, and interacting with the people they're helping. Dogs show stress in different ways, starting with small signs like lifting their paws and possibly escalating to more obvious signs like growling or snapping. Each dog is unique, so handlers need to know their dog well and help them get used to the therapy setting.

Canine Stress Signals

Avoidance: Dogs show hesitation or uncertainty through subtle avoidance behaviors such as looking away, lifting a paw, leaning against the handler, or hiding. Handlers often overlook or misinterpret these signals, especially during busy interactions, leading to the dismissal or discouragement of avoidance behaviors to encourage dog engagement with humans.

Fear in dogs is characterized by more pronounced stress signals, including avoidance behaviors like looking away and leaning away, along with physical signs such as bracing hind legs, flattened ears, lowered head, and tucked tail. If dogs can't escape the source of fear and feel trapped, they may escalate to aggressive displays.

Gaze: Dogs use directed gazing to communicate with humans and seek safety information about ambiguous situations. Studies suggest that dogs' gaze patterns may vary based on their attachment to handlers and breed characteristics, such as Border Collies' tendency to stare for herding purposes. Further research is needed to fully understand the role of canine gaze across breeds and contexts.

Freezing in dogs occurs when they are unable to avoid a threatening situation. This behavior involves postures that make the body appear smaller and protect vulnerable areas, with the goal of reducing visibility and signaling calmness to others. Freezing is a final attempt to avoid conflict and may precede aggressive behavior. Dogs in this state may have difficulty responding to environmental cues and handler commands.

Aggression in dogs can initially go unnoticed, especially in busy environments, as early signs may not be easily recognizable. These signs include raised hackles, closed mouth, alertness, and targeting a chosen stimulus. If not addressed, aggression can escalate to overt behaviors like growling, barking, lunging, air snapping, and biting.

Animal Assent/Dissent: Dogs communicate their willingness or unwillingness to interact with humans through body language and behavior, termed as "animal assent and dissent." Unfortunately, many humans misinterpret signs of dissent and assume dogs welcome physical touch and interaction. The "canine consent test" recommends a nonthreatening approach, offering an open palm near the dog's chest. If the dog remains still or moves away, it indicates dissent, while moving towards and initiating contact shows willingness. This test helps determine if a dog is open to interaction. Handlers can advocate for their dogs by educating others on the best approach, allowing dogs to provide consent and respecting their desire to move away. This strengthens the bond between handler and dog and sets a positive example for clients involved in the interaction.

Contextual Factors

Crowds: Therapy dogs often encounter crowded environments during Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI). These settings can include bustling waiting rooms, busy hospital corridors, elevators, and areas with elevated noise levels and various stimuli like balloons, music, children, emergency responders, and more. The journey to such locations may also involve additional sounds, smells, and delays, creating pressure and stress for the dogs.

Classrooms: In educational settings like classrooms, there are often multiple individuals, including children of different ages and abilities. Children's behavior can be loud and spontaneous, particularly among younger age groups. Dogs may be surrounded by enthusiastic children wanting to interact simultaneously. Unfortunately, many children may not have been taught the proper way to interact with dogs, which can lead to rough handling like pulling ears or tails, hugging tightly, or engaging in behaviors that could stress the dog.

Hospitals: Therapy dogs in hospital settings are exposed to various sensory experiences, including smells of bodily fluids and cleaning agents, sights and sounds of medical equipment, bustling healthcare workers, crowds of people, and emotions running high. They may encounter situations where medication is dropped or meals are served in their presence. The hospital environment can quickly transition from calm interactions to high-intensity activities.

One-to-one visits: During one-to-one visits, the environment may seem quieter and more relaxed for human-animal interaction, but these visits come with their own set of stressors. Therapy dogs may find themselves confined to small spaces with closed doors, which can create feelings of confinement. Depending on their presenting issues, they may also encounter atypical physical behaviors and intense emotional expressions from clients. Some clients may try to hug or hold the dog while expressing their emotions, but this can be alarming and uncomfortable for the dog.

Noise and Urgency Level: Therapeutic environments vary in their noise levels and sense of urgency. One-on-one therapy sessions are typically quiet and slow-paced, creating a calm atmosphere without much urgency. On the other hand, hospital environments are often busy and fast-paced, with sudden activities like staff responding rapidly to medical emergencies.

Canine Characteristics

Fatigue: A dog's ability to handle stress can vary based on the activities they are involved in and their physical and emotional state. Some organizations don't set specific time limits for visits, while others restrict them to one or two hours. Fatigue can impact various aspects of a dog's functioning, such as cognition and frustration tolerance. Extending visits beyond a dog's fatigue threshold can reduce their responsiveness to cues and ability to tolerate frustration.

Aging can affect a dog's response to therapy situations differently. Older dogs may be accustomed to therapy environments but may tire more easily. Younger dogs may feel more stressed due to the novelty of the environment but are typically more resilient to fatigue.

Health: Therapy dog organizations typically require regular vet checks and recommend additional checks if a dog shows signs of illness. Subtle changes in behaviour, like altered posture and feeding habits, can indicate early illness onset. Being aware of these signs and prioritizing routine vet visits helps ensure the well-being of therapy dog.

Workload: The time spent working in an Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI) greatly impacts a dog's stress tolerance. Dogs that work extensively may show signs of stress during interactions. Handlers should monitor their dogs closely for signs of stress and adjust their workload accordingly to ensure the dog's well-being. Regular monitoring helps ensure that the workload remains manageable for the dog.

Trigger Stacking: Trigger-stacking occurs when a dog experiences multiple stressors without a chance to return to a baseline level. This can lead to seemingly unpredictable behaviors like growling or reluctance to participate. Understanding the triggers that contribute to stress-related behaviors is crucial. These stressors can occur over short or extended periods, depending on their intensity and duration. For example, a dog may experience stress from traveling, changes in routine, or exposure to unfamiliar environments. It's important for handlers to be aware of these factors not just on the day of an Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI) session but also in the days leading up to it.

Human Influences

Level of Canine Behavior Knowledge and Willingness to Act on Knowledge

Pet owners vary in their knowledge of dog behavior and how to respond to canine stress signals. While handlers typically receive training in therapy dog registration processes, their backgrounds and attitudes toward managing canine stress can differ. Experienced handlers are more adept at detecting and responding to their dog's signals compared to newcomers. Changes in environments also pose challenges, requiring both handlers and dogs to adapt. Educational efforts can help owners improve their ability to recognize and respond to signs of stress in their dogs.

Urgency of Problem

Handlers in Therapy Dog settings, such as palliative care or crisis response, often experience pressure to meet the emotional needs of service recipients. These settings are characterized by intense emotions and urgency, leading handlers to potentially extend their dogs' working hours and reduce break frequency to address these demands.

Other Pressures

Programmatic and internal pressures can sometimes lead handlers to overlook or delay responding to their dogs' stress signals. For example, a therapist whose practice heavily relies on one therapy dog might feel pressured to keep the dog working even if it's ill or overworked to avoid disappointing clients. In programs with a small team of therapy dogs, each dog may face increased demand to meet service needs, potentially affecting their well-being. Additionally, individuals involved with Therapy Dogs often prioritize the welfare of others, which can lead them to overlook their dogs' need for rest and downtime.

Importance of Stress Identification

Dogs' responses to stress can vary widely depending on factors like their breed, genetics, workload, and experiences. It's essential to understand that not all dogs show stress in the same way, which can make identifying stress signals challenging. Training plays a significant role in how dogs express stress, with reward-based training often leading to better adjustment and relationships with humans.

However, dogs can also learn to skip subtle stress signals and go straight to more obvious signs if their early signals are consistently ignored. For instance, a dog that feels sniffing or paw lifting is ineffective may resort to growling or task refusal when stressed. Punishing dogs for showing certain stress signals can also backfire, as it may encourage them to escalate to more overt behaviors to get relief.

To address this issue, handlers should take all levels of canine stress signals seriously and provide relief accordingly. This approach helps prevent dogs from skipping lower-level indicators and resorting to more dramatic signals for attention or relief.

Canine Stress: Our message to you

Our top priority is safety and enjoyment. Remember, your dog is a sentient being with emotional needs, so keep your focus on them. Respond to stress calmly and appropriately to ensure their safety. This approach fosters confidence over time, leading to a fulfilling and successful therapy dog career. Never feel obligated to continue a visit if it feels wrong. Reacting promptly to your dog's signals prevents stress escalation and strengthens your bond by showing them that you understand and listen to them. We recommend educating yourself about canine behavior using the resources below and practicing stress recognition by getting to know your dog on a deeper level. As you start to respond to your dog's small cues, you will notice that they respond to your cues as well. You are your dog's advocate.

Resources on Recognizing and Managing Canine Stress

Therapy Dogs: Preventing Stress and Fatigue, Promoting Welfare (Melissa Schiraldi, Executive trainer for Good Dog Foundation)

Recognizing and Mitigating Canine Stress during Animal Assisted Interventions (Townsend & Gee, 2021)

Evaluating stress in dogs involved in animal-assisted interventions (Corsetti et al., 2019)

7 Ways to Ensure the Mental Health of Our Therapy Animals (Heather Etheretti, OTD & PetPartners)

Recommended: Absolute Dogs Calm and Optimism Rocks Free Ebooks

Still stuck? Contact Therapy dogs for further assistance in recognising, managing, and responding to stress in your dog.



Vaccinations Policy

Therapy Dogs adheres to international vaccination standards as part of our duty to minimize risks to clients and proactively manage infection control and disease prevention. These practices are particularly crucial for protecting vulnerable individuals such as children, the elderly, and the immuno-compromised from zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. One of our top priorities is reducing the risk of zoonotic diseases like leptospirosis, which is why all PAT Dogs must receive an initial course of inoculations against leptospirosis.

As puppies, dogs receive three vaccinations at approximately 6-8 weeks, 10-12 weeks, 14-16 weeks, and a booster at 12 months. Rescue dogs are given a similar course of vaccinations under the supervision of a veterinarian. We require that Therapy Dogs should receive inoculations against distemper, hepatitis, and parvovirus at the frequency recommended by your veterinarian (usually annually or every three years). We do not accept homoeopathic vaccinations and require that you present your vaccination card with the stickers and your veterinarian's stamp as proof of up-to-date vaccinations. A copy of your pet's vaccination certificate must be uploaded on our renewal form with your temperament assessment every six months.



Parasitic Treatment Policy

Dogs should undergo regular parasitic treatment for roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms using dewormers such as Drontal, Zerokirm, or Wormout. We advise our teams to deworm their dogs monthly.

Heartworm is a severe and potentially fatal disease for dogs. Monthly administration of heartworm tablets is crucial, and veterinarians may also recommend Ivomec on a regular schedule.

Our dogs must be clean and in good health. Tick and flea infestations can be prevented with regular treatments such as Simparica, Nexguard, Advocate (monthly administration), or Bravecto (every three months).

To ensure compliance, we request that you keep a picture of the box, serial number, or receipt with a visible purchase date of your parasite treatments."



Animal Health & Welfare Policy

Annual Vet Check

As part of our protocol, Therapy Dogs mandates an annual veterinary check-up for all dogs engaged in therapy work. During this visit, we require the veterinarian to complete our form verifying the dog's overall well-being, confirming they are happy, healthy, and fit for therapy dog duties. You can time this check-up to align with your annual vaccination schedule.

Health Issues

Dogs experiencing short-term health issues should refrain from conducting any visits until they have fully recovered and are in good health. For dogs with long-term health issues, retirement from therapy work may be necessary. However, dogs with chronic conditions, provided they are otherwise healthy, enjoy visits, and do not pose a risk to themselves or others, may continue visiting under the guidance of a veterinarian.

Grooming

Dogs participating in therapy visits should be clean, pleasant-smelling, and free of mud or debris in their coats, which should also be well-brushed. For visits to hospices, hospitals, or with immunocompromised individuals, we require dogs to be bathed using an antifungal antibacterial shampoo. This bathing should be completed within 48 hours before the scheduled visit to ensure optimal hygiene and safety for all involved.

Nails and Ear Care

Dogs' nails should be trimmed and kept clean regularly. This routine also offers a chance to inspect their paw health. Ears should be maintained clean and free from strong odors. If your dog's ears appear dirty, have black wax buildup, or emit a yeasty smell, clean them promptly and consider consulting with your veterinarian if needed.

Dental Hygiene

Dogs' teeth can age and require regular cleaning as well. Options like brushing, using a chlorhexidine rinse, or a dental gel can be beneficial. It's crucial to use dog-friendly products for their oral hygiene. Fresh breath is important for therapy dog visits. If your dog has dental issues or bad teeth, consulting with a veterinary dentist is recommended for appropriate care.

Non-Coercive Training Tools & Techniques

We strictly oppose and discourage the use of coercive training techniques that rely on force, pain, or fear to compel dogs to obey commands. Such methods and tools are often abusive and can cause significant pain to the animal. Building trust between therapy dogs and their handlers is paramount, as we heavily depend on a strong and meaningful relationship for successful therapy work.

Safeguarding Animal Abuse

We firmly oppose animal abuse and are dedicated to upholding animal welfare standards. As part of our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of animals, we will report any cases of abuse or neglect to the Mauritius Animal Welfare Unit. This aligns with Sections 3, 32, and 36 of the Animal Welfare Act 2013.



[Download the Animal Welfare Act 2013](#)



[Contact the Animal Welfare Unit](#)



Raw Meat Policy

Pets As Therapy has thoroughly considered the risks associated with feeding pets a raw meat-based diet, which can contain parasites and bacteria like E. coli, salmonella, and listeria, posing serious dangers to humans.

Following recent advice from veterinary experts, we've updated our guidelines to minimize health risks during PAT Visits, especially for vulnerable recipients.

Many healthcare and educational institutions, including the Royal College of Nursing and NHS Trusts, now prohibit visits from therapy dogs fed raw meat. Complying is essential to ensure PAT Dogs are safe for future visits.

Therefore, we advise against feeding PAT Dogs raw meat or unpasteurized milk to uphold our duty of care and prioritize client safety.



Ethical Standards & Guidelines

Rights of Volunteers

- Understand their responsibilities
- Be provided with clear information
- Be shown appreciation
- Work in safe environments
- Withdraw from voluntary work at any time without giving a reason

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- Strive to ensure that they and their dogs are never put at risk
- Act in accordance with the advice and wishes of the establishment staff but within Therapy Dogs guidelines
- Conduct themselves in accordance with the values of Therapy Dogs
- Respect patients' confidentiality, dignity, wishes, and privacy
- Keep their Therapy Dog well groomed, clean and healthy so as to not cause concern to an establishment, patients, or carers

Rights of Therapy Dogs Pets

- All pets should be treated with care and respect
- Dogs should be given exercise and toileting opportunities prior to the visit
- Dogs should have access to water during their visit
- Dogs are never to be exploited or put in situations where they are physically or temperamentally unable to cope

Therapy Dogs reserves the right to:

- Request references for Therapy Dogs Volunteers
- Decline offers from applicants at our discretion
- Terminate the services of any Therapy Dogs volunteers at its discretion, without question or appeal

Rights of people being visited by Therapy Dog Volunteers

- Any person at an establishment has the right to refuse to be present at the time of, or in the same room, as the Therapy Dog Volunteer team
- Be treated with dignity, respect, and kindness during their visit

Failure to adhere to good practice and the principles in this handbook will result in immediate termination of membership with Therapy Dogs and require that any Therapy Dogs merchandise be returned to Therapy Dogs.

Suspending or Terminating Visits

Please inform Therapy Dogs and your hosting establishment promptly if you need to halt your visits, either temporarily or permanently. Establishments hold the right to terminate therapy dog visits as they see fit; if asked to stop visiting, please comply immediately and notify Therapy Dogs.

Should you encounter discomfort, breaches of our agreement by the establishment, or any safeguarding concerns, please contact Therapy Dogs without delay. We'll investigate promptly to ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

If your dog is unwell or distressed, contact your veterinarian for immediate assistance. For behavioral issues stemming from negative experiences, reach out to us; we're here to provide support and guidance and encourage consultation with your vet.

Sometimes, the expectations of visits may not align with reality. In such cases, we're here to assist in resolving issues and finding alternative placements that better suit you or your dog, ensuring effective support for your needs.

Inclusion and Safeguarding

Therapy Dogs is dedicated to the well-being of you, your pet, and the service users who benefit from these interactions. We strive to ensure a positive experience in a safe environment for everyone, irrespective of age, ability, disability, gender, race, religion, sex, or socio-economic background while safeguarding against abuse during Therapy Dogs-associated activities.

We are committed to safeguarding vulnerable service users, including children and adults, by aligning our practices with statutory responsibilities, government guidance, and Therapy Dogs' best practice recommendations. For your safety and that of others, please only conduct visits at locations explicitly approved by Therapy Dogs.

Different environments can be more stressful for dogs, and certain personalities may be better suited for specific settings. For instance, some dogs excel in interactions with children, while calmer dogs are more suitable for hospitals, which are high-risk areas necessitating stricter training requirements.

Confidentiality Policy

Therapy Dogs Volunteers represent the public face of the organization, and during visits, they interact with a diverse range of individuals, including medical personnel, patients, inmates, children, and caregivers. It is imperative that any information obtained during visits remains strictly confidential.

It should be noted that many recipients of Therapy Dogs visits are vulnerable individuals. If you encounter a situation of safeguarding concern, including harm, neglect, or abuse to a service user, report this to your supervising staff member and contact Therapy Dogs. Never disclose personal information of a service user to any third party.

Never disclose your personal to a service user or staff member to protect yourselves. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in the deregistration of the Therapy Dogs Volunteer involved.

Equal Opportunities Policy

At Therapy Dogs, our policy mandates fair treatment for all employees, clients, beneficiaries, and volunteers, irrespective of race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, disability (visible or invisible), age, or sexual orientation. We prohibit any form of unjustifiable discrimination or disadvantageous conditions. Our recruitment process ensures that all team members are informed about and committed to upholding our equal opportunities policy.

Data Protection Statement

This policy outlines the principles and procedures governing the protection of personal data in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2017 of Mauritius. Our organization is committed to safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of personal data collected, processed, and stored in the course of our activities.

Data Collection and Processing

We collect personal data only for specified, explicit, and legitimate purposes. Data collected will be adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary for processing purposes. Consent will be obtained for data processing activities unless an exemption under the law applies.

Data Protection (continued)

Data Security

We implement appropriate technical and organizational measures to ensure the security of personal data against unauthorized or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction, or damage. Access to personal data is restricted to authorized personnel with a legitimate need-to-know basis.

Data Retention

Personal data is retained only for as long as necessary to fulfil the purposes for which it was collected unless required by law to retain it for a longer period. Following UK GDPR requirements, we retain your data for seven years following the termination of your work with Therapy Dogs.

Data Subject Rights

Data subjects have the right to access, rectify, erase, or restrict the processing of their personal data. Requests regarding data subject rights will be handled promptly and in accordance with legal requirements.

Data Transfers

Personal data will not be transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) unless adequate data protection safeguards are in place.

Data Breach Notification

In the event of a personal data breach, we will notify the Data Protection Commissioner and affected data subjects as required by law.

Training and Awareness

Employees and third parties handling personal data will receive appropriate training on data protection principles and practices. Awareness of data protection responsibilities will be promoted throughout the organization.

Compliance and Accountability

Our organization is responsible for ensuring compliance with data protection laws and regulations.



Therapy Dogs Merchandise

Therapy Dogs merchandise, including bandanas, vests, or shirts, should only be worn during regulated Therapy Dogs visits that fully comply with our established standards and guidelines. It is important to note that these items are meant to signify the official participation of Therapy Dogs in approved activities. In the event of termination from our program, all Therapy Dogs merchandise must be promptly returned to our organization. This policy ensures that the use of Therapy Dogs merchandise is aligned with our mission and values, promoting responsible and ethical representation during therapy dog interactions.

Eligibility for Insurance

We provide insurance for volunteers who follow the guidelines in this manual. The insurance, given by GFA Insurance, lasts for six months after your last temperament assessment, including health check documents. For the first four years, temperament assessments are every six months, then annually should Therapy Dogs be satisfied that all procedures, policies, and ethical guidelines are followed and no incidents are reported.

We will initiate a claim on your behalf only after conducting an investigation to confirm that all our standards and procedures were followed. If you follow our guidelines, almost all accidents involving therapy dogs are preventable.

