



# Facility Tool Kit

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*Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program*



**Pet Partners**  
*Touching Lives, Improving Health*

Facility Tool Kit

Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program

Published by Pet Partners, Bellevue, WA  
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## **Therapy Animal Program Contact Information**

### **Pet Partners**

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# Purpose of this Document

Thousands of facilities have opened their doors to Pet Partners therapy animal teams. Well-trained and thoroughly screened handlers and their animals can benefit the health and well-being of people in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, retirement communities, rehabilitation centers, and many other facilities.

Introducing or expanding therapy animal presence in your facility might represent a change in protocol or programming for you. This document will highlight considerations and actions that will help set up you, your clients, and visiting teams for success.

# Therapy Animal Standards

Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) can provide a variety of benefits to people, but without careful consideration of safety standards, well-intentioned handlers, therapy animal organizations, and even facilities could jeopardize access to therapy animals.

It's important to realize therapy animal standards aren't just about an animal's friendliness or appropriateness. Standards encompass the handler's preparation and training; the team's demonstrated skills through evaluation; thoughtful risk mitigation; and practices that support animal welfare.

Expert guidance has been compiled on this topic, taking into consideration recommendations by the Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA), the *American Journal of Infection Control*, the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO), and the American Veterinary Medicine Association (AVMA) and other scholarly sources. ***Standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Interventions*** details current best practices animals and handlers should meet, regardless of their organizational affiliation. Visit [www.therapyanimalstandards.org](http://www.therapyanimalstandards.org) to download your free copy.

Pet Partners is committed to professionalizing volunteer-based therapy animal visitation. If you have questions or concerns about whether your facility is operating by best practices, please don't hesitate to contact us. We're here to help.

# Benefits of AAI to Your Clients

Research shows that positive interactions with animals increase endorphins, oxytocin, prolactin, and dopamine. These are the hormones associated with blood pressure regulation, pain relief, stress relief, and joy. Visits from therapy animal teams can normalize stays away from home for hospital patients; improve motivation to participate in treatment protocols; and lessen worry, anxiety, pain, and social isolation.

The body of research is constantly growing and evolving. For an overview of the empirical support for therapy animals, visit <https://petpartners.org/learn/benefits-human-animal-bond/> to download our whitepaper. We also recommend HABRI Central as a resource for searching current studies, particularly their HABRI Central Briefs, which compile multiple studies on the same topic. You can find briefs on animal-assisted interventions for people with depression, autism spectrum disorder, cancer, trauma, and more: [www.habricentral.org/tags/view?tag=habricentralbriefs](http://www.habricentral.org/tags/view?tag=habricentralbriefs)

We've also compiled high-level summary documents for a variety of facility settings, which may help you in bringing the concept of therapy animal visits to your supervisor or colleagues.

Therapy Animals for Aging Adults:  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-seniors](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-seniors)

Therapy Animals and Children:  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-kids](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-kids)

Therapy Animals and College Students:  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-college](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-college)

Therapy Animals in Hospice:  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-hospice](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-hospice)

Therapy Animals in Healthcare Settings:  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-hospital](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-hospital)

Therapy Animals and Individuals with Cognitive Impairment:  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-cognitive](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-cognitive)

Therapy Animals in Therapeutic Settings (OT, PT, ST):  
[www.petpartners.org/aai-therapy](http://www.petpartners.org/aai-therapy)

# Risk Management

## Insurance

All registered Therapy Animal Program volunteers are covered by the Pet Partners \$2M commercial general liability insurance (CGLI) policy for accidents that occur while volunteering on behalf of Pet Partners.. Evidence of insurance can be found at [www.petpartners.org/insurancecertificate](http://www.petpartners.org/insurancecertificate).

## Certificates of Additional Insured

Pet Partners' certificate of insurance names our organization and volunteers as insured and this is all that is needed by the majority of entities welcoming our volunteers and their animals onto their premises. If your facility requires a certificate of additional insured, please Contact Us and include the full name and address of the facility as it will appear on the certificate, a brief description of your facility and the purpose of the visit(s). To offset the administrative hours required to produce certificates of additional insured, Pet Partners respectfully requests a \$250 donation.

As a reminder, in order for insurance and any certificates to cover Pet Partners volunteers, they must be visiting as a volunteer, following Pet Partners policies and procedures, identify as a Pet Partners team, and display a Pet Partners badge.

## MOUs and Contracts

Every registered Pet Partners volunteer commits to our visiting policies through a volunteer agreement, which aligns them to the policies, procedures, and best practices outlined at [www.petpartners.org/volunteer-policies-procedures/](http://www.petpartners.org/volunteer-policies-procedures/).

Through signature, volunteers are entrusted to operate independently when choosing a facility and arranging visits, so long as they operate by that agreement. As such, Pet Partners does not require an MOU or a contract with facilities before teams can visit; however, we will review and sign MOUs and contracts upon request from facilities.

When requesting an MOU or contract with Pet Partners, be sure to consider whether those topics you wish to include are appropriate for Pet Partners as the registering body, or are better left to an agreement or training with individual volunteers. Also keep in mind that there is no need to restate expectations that align with Pet Partners' policies and procedures to which all volunteers already agree to operate.

If your facility requires a contract with indemnification language, note that Pet Partners requires mutual indemnification in almost all cases.

Generally speaking, Pet Partners will not sign MOUs or contracts that include the following:

- ▶ Policies or procedures that are more lenient than our own.  
**Example:** MOU states teams will visit in two-hour increments. While our teams can visit for up to two hours, our policies state that handlers should choose timing and length that is most appropriate for their animal based. This allows handlers to proactively manage potential stress for their animal.
- ▶ Protocols that are not included in our requirements and that we cannot enforce.  
**Example:** Contract requires specific human immunizations. It is at a facility's discretion to require handlers to have immunizations, but it is not information Pet Partners tracks.

## Starting a Program at Your Facility

### Creating Buy-In

Visiting therapy animals have the potential to impact a variety of people at your facility, both directly and indirectly. We strongly recommend you have conversations with stakeholders to explain the benefits and hear what concerns they may have.

Stakeholders might include:

- ▶ Senior leadership who will ultimately be held responsible for problems as well as successes with visiting therapy animals.
- ▶ Managers and staff who may feel regular impact of therapy animals on site. Listening to their input and educating them about the benefits of therapy animals in advance may lead to them becoming your greatest advocates for bringing therapy animals to your facility.
- ▶ Risk management staff who will want to review insurance coverage and practices which will mitigate risk, including in the areas of infection prevention and control.
- ▶ Human resources staff who will want to understand the qualifications of the therapy animal teams and may have their own requirements for volunteers on site.
- ▶ Public relations staff who will need to be prepared to answer questions from the media or public.
- ▶ Custodians or facilities staff who may have concerns about cleaning and maintenance.

## Determine the Basics

Therapy animal visitation is most effective when there is a plan in place. It helps set expectations for all involved. Some questions to ask yourself as you envision therapy animals at your facility might include the following:

### **Who will receive the most impact from visiting therapy animal teams?**

Is there a target client group you'd like to receive visits, such as those experiencing long stays, those who need motivation to participate in treatment, or those with specific diagnoses like dementia? Or do you prefer to bring this impact to everyone on site to enhance mood and decrease stress?

### **Where do you want teams to visit?**

Depending on your facility and clientele, therapy animal teams could visit people individually, room to room. Or you might wish to focus on building community and reducing social isolation by coordinating visiting in a shared space.

### **What species of animals are welcome?**

Pet Partners registers nine species as therapy animals. Many facilities don't realize that a rabbit or mini-horse handler may want to visit. Non-canines can be an excellent inclusion, as they may pique more interest among your clients, or provide an alternative for those allergic to or fearful of dogs. Consider whether you are open to other species and any special considerations for them. Handlers of these species are generally able to help you understand some of the differences; Pet Partners staff can assist as well.

### **What level of staff involvement is right for your facility?**

If you are planning to incorporate animals as part of a therapeutic treatment, such as physical or occupational therapy, that would require a great deal of staff involvement and direction. Or perhaps your clients are medically fragile or behaviorally unpredictable and may need more supervision with therapy animal teams on site. Alternately, you may have clients who can be alerted to an upcoming visit and choose to participate or not, in which case the need for staff involvement would be far less.

All Pet Partners teams are qualified as suitable for either predictable or complex environments. Environments are judged on a combination of staff involvement and activity level. By considering where you would like visits to occur and what kind of staff involvement will be possible, you can set up volunteers and the clients they visit for success. To read more about this, visit [www.petpartners.org/qualification-ratings](http://www.petpartners.org/qualification-ratings).

### **Ask yourself:**

- ▶ Is my facility's environment *actually* complex? Many facilities will automatically classify their environment as complex based on the belief that complex-rated teams present the highest quality. However, all teams, regardless of rating, are safe, reliable, and capable of providing deep comfort to clients and patients. To

choose complex teams when it is not actually necessary will reduce the number of wonderful teams available to make an impact on your community. Nearly every facility has some areas appropriate for predictable teams and some areas where complex teams may be more appropriate.

## Establishing Guidelines

Begin by reviewing the Pet Partners policies and procedures that all volunteers abide by at [www.petpartners.org/volunteer-policies-procedures/](http://www.petpartners.org/volunteer-policies-procedures/). This will familiarize you with our expectations for volunteers. Based on the unique needs of your facility, you'll likely need to establish some additional guidelines and procedures for therapy animal teams at your facility. The following questions may help you think through some areas where you'll need to make decisions before your first teams arrive.

### **Who will be the point person for your therapy animal team volunteers?**

It's always best practice to have at least one individual as a point person for your therapy animal teams. This may include scheduling visits and maintaining necessary paperwork. It would also be while the teams are on site, should a question or concern arise. This person could be a volunteer coordinator or just a champion of therapy animals, willing to facilitate logistics.

### **What site-specific orientation will they need?**

While all Pet Partners handlers have completed our core training on best practices, your orientation could include training specific to the population you serve, such as hospice, families in grief, or patients with specific mental health challenges or unique physical considerations.

Orientation should also include information specific to your physical building, including but not limited to the following:

- Where to park
- The door you prefer teams to use
- Where to check in
- If there are locations within the facility that are off limits to animals or volunteers
- Where animals may go for breaks

We recommend that volunteers complete an orientation to your facility the first time without their animal present. This will allow the volunteer to focus on critical information you have to share. Additionally, it will allow the handler to look for potential challenges for their animal at your location, such as slippery floors.

**What area of the grounds can animals use for breaks?**

Therapy animal handlers should have easy access to an outdoor space to take their animal for breaks. You may wish to consider where this space is in relation to entrances and exits and ensure there is an appropriate trash receptacle for waste.

**Are there additional requirements for your facility?**

Both handler and animal must be in good health to participate in a visit. However, a clinical facility may wish to require additional health screenings for a handler such as a TB test or a flu vaccine. If you do choose to establish additional requirements, you may wish to consider if you can facilitate these for your volunteers. For example, if you are a hospital facility, can you provide a flu vaccine free of charge? Such requirements should be established with individual volunteers through orientation or an individual volunteer agreement. These inclusions cannot be included in an MOU or contract signed by Pet Partners. See page 5 for more information on risk management, contracts, and MOUs.

**How will you determine who should receive visits?**

It's important to identify which of your clients may not wish to interact with therapy animals. Screening for allergies and fears are the primary considerations. If visits will occur one on one, you could have clients sign up to participate in advance. If visits will occur in shared or communal spaces, you could communicate these events in advance, allowing those who prefer not to participate to avoid that space on a specific day and time.

In some facilities, there may be other important screening considerations in addition to allergies or fears. For example, a client with a known history of animal abuse would likely not be a strong candidate for a therapy animal interaction, unless it was part of a therapeutic approach and closely supervised. Even then, a therapy animal handler may wish to have the option to not participate in that situation.

It's worth noting that the ability to actively engage with a therapy animal isn't required in order to benefit from AAI. Some individuals may wish to see or watch a therapy animal, without petting. With a family member's permission, clients who are unconscious may still benefit from the physical sensation of having their hand placed on the soft fur of a therapy animal, even if they can't actively pet. Individuals who are lonely or isolated may enjoy the conversation with the handler as much as the presence of the animal. While it's important to establish consent — no one should be forced to interact with a therapy animal — don't artificially limit who may benefit based on their abilities.

Infection prevention can be another reason to limit who may receive visits. Therapy animal teams may not enter rooms with posted transmission or isolation precautions including contact precautions, droplet precautions, and airborne precautions.

### What if policies differ?

In the case that both Pet Partners and the facility have a policy on the same topic, the more conservative of the two shall apply. For example, Pet Partners has a two-hour visit limit. You may choose to limit visits at your facility to 60 minutes. In this case, the facility's policy is more conservative and therefore applied. In another example, Pet Partners requires therapy animals to be on leash at all times. If a facility says the animal does not need to be leashed, that would be less conservative, so the Pet Partners rule applies.

## Communicating to Colleagues

If you've done the work of creating buy-in with multiple stakeholders, your initial communication to colleagues about a new therapy animal program at your facility allows you to thank your colleagues for their input and share broadly how therapy animals will benefit your facility and clients. It's also a chance to let your coworkers know how they'll be informed about when therapy animals will be on site.

Some options for informing colleagues on an ongoing basis could include posting to an intraoffice calendar, posted signs in the staff room, or sending out an email reminder the day before a visit.



### Sample Email to Colleagues

*Greetings colleagues,*

*This note serves as a reminder that tomorrow we will have the pleasure of having therapy animal teams on site at our facility. These teams will be here to promote the power of the human-animal bond to improve the health and well-being of our clients. These handlers and their therapy pets, who are registered through Pet Partners, will spend up to two hours interacting with clients and staff. Feel free to introduce yourself to the teams and take advantage of their time here at our facility by interacting with these special animals.*

*Thank you for welcoming Pet Partners teams to our facility.*

*Sincerely,*

*Your Name*

## Communicating to Clients

Depending on your type of facility, your communication strategy to clients will vary. If you have clients who are residents, such as a retirement community, or clients who

are regularly on site over an extended period, such as students at a school, an announcement email at the start of the program may meet most of your needs.

You'll want to address why therapy animals will be visiting and discuss any practical considerations, such as how you plan to accommodate those with allergies and fears.



### Sample Program Announcement

*Greetings,*

*FACILITY NAME is starting a therapy animal program at our facility. Therapy animals and their handlers — specially trained, evaluated, and registered through Pet Partners — will be on site regularly to provide therapy animal visits to those interested in the various physical, social, and emotional health benefits of the human-animal bond. Teams are on site for up to two hours and anyone is welcome to interact with these special animals. For more information about Pet Partners and all of the amazing benefits therapy animals can provide, please visit [www.petpartners.org](http://www.petpartners.org).*

*For those who may have allergies, a fear of animals, or who do not wish to interact with these animals for any reason, the therapy teams will only be allowed in designated areas of the facility and any client is empowered to decline interaction. Please keep in mind that the teams will be on-site and will utilize publicly accessible entrances and exits. Additionally, handlers will have access to certain areas in order to relieve their pets as necessary.*

*Should you have questions or concerns regarding the therapy animal program, please contact INSERT CONTACT INFO.*

*Sincerely,*

*Your Name*

If you're starting a program at a facility with clients who may drop in or visit only occasionally, such as a library or hospital, you may wish to publicly announce your new therapy animal program in a press release. A sample can be found at [www.petpartners.org/press-release](http://www.petpartners.org/press-release).

Healthcare facilities may wish to consider an informed consent form that is supplied at intake. A sample can be found at [www.petpartners.org/sample-consent-form](http://www.petpartners.org/sample-consent-form).

# What to Expect from Pet Partners Teams

## Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures of the Therapy Animal Program apply regardless of the facility, as well as our code of ethics and standards of professional conduct. These can be found on the Pet Partners website at [www.petpartners.org/volunteer-policies-procedures/](http://www.petpartners.org/volunteer-policies-procedures/).

## Professionalism

Pet Partners teams commit to a code of ethics and standards of professional conduct via their licensing agreement with our organization. Facilities can expect teams to perform duties that are consistent with their training, be ever mindful of respecting clients and animals, stay informed and educated on AAI, and comply with all local, state, and federal laws as well as Pet Partners policies (see above).

## Branding

When your facility chooses Pet Partners you will be partnering with the most respected organization and brand in the therapy animal community. The Pet Partners program is the gold standard in the field. We have the highest caliber curriculum in the industry and we offer our teams superior risk management and the industry's highest safety standards, continuing education, and insurance.

By following the branding guidelines outlined below, you help promote consistency and recognition that benefits both your facility and the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program. These are basic guidelines, but if you have specific questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We're happy to assist as you update your website or create localized materials to align with Pet Partners.

- ▶ To demonstrate the working relationship that your facility has established with Pet Partners, we will provide your facility with permission to use the Pet Partners logo, or a customized logo incorporating your facility's logo with the Pet Partners logo. Contact us for more details.

- ▶ Use the Pet Partners name and logo on printed materials, handler and therapy animal apparel, and electronic media, where appropriate, to indicate your facility's participation in the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program.
- ▶ Provide a link to the Pet Partners website, *petpartners.org*, from your facility's website and other social media pages.

## Terminology

Therapy Animal Program is the proper noun to describe the Pet Partners program.

Animal-assisted interventions, animal-assisted therapy, animal-assisted activities, and animal-assisted education are all appropriate terms, depending on how you have structured your program. Detailed definitions of these terms are available at [www.petpartners.org/terminology/](http://www.petpartners.org/terminology/).

Avoid using *pet therapy* when describing therapy animal visits. Pet therapy, once a more common term, now refers to situations where the pet is receiving therapeutic treatment.

There is often confusion about the difference between therapy animals, emotional support animals, and service animals. We have a helpful chart that illustrates the differences at <https://petpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Comparison-chart-scaled.jpg>

# What Teams Will Expect from You

A successful therapy animal visitation program is a partnership. Just as Pet Partners works to support handlers through free continuing education, comprehensive insurance coverage, and providing answers to questions that arise, you'll need to plan necessary support for therapy animal teams to flourish at your facility.

## Appropriate Direction

Therapy animal handlers will expect some guidance on who should receive a visit. This could be a list of room numbers who have expressed interest, a common space that's been communicated to clients in advance, or, at a minimum, areas that are considered off limits or inappropriate.

Handlers should also be provided with instructions around basic logistics and expectations specific to the facility, including where animals can take breaks, where waste should be disposed of, where to park, and where to sign in upon arrival.

## Point of Contact

If a handler needs to communicate a conflict with a previously scheduled visit, or has a concern while on site, they should have access to a facility point of contact. Similarly, if there is a change in policy for the facility, this point of contact can be responsible for disseminating relevant updates. Centralizing a point of contact at your facility is beneficial for consistency.

## Understanding

There may be times when a therapy animal visit needs to be cut short or cancelled. If an animal is unwell or displaying signs of increasing stress, it is in everyone's best interest for that visit to end.

Pet Partners has a deep commitment to animal welfare. Our program is grounded in the philosophy that animals aren't tools: They're sentient beings that can make choices and express preferences, and that deserve protection from exploitation. Moreover, when animal welfare is prioritized, it supports client safety. Animals who become fatigued, anxious, or stressed are more likely to behave in a way perceived as unsafe and unpredictable. If a handler indicates they need to leave 30 minutes early because their animal is struggling, respect that decision. It is the safe choice for your clients; do not ask them to stay even if they will be ending their shift early.

# If the Unexpected Happens

## Incident Reporting

Pet Partners defines an incident as any unusual occurrence that happens while on a therapy animal visit. This includes:

- ▶ Injury to a person or an animal
- ▶ High potential that an injury could have occurred either to a person or an animal, even though no one was hurt at the time
- ▶ The perception of an injury
- ▶ The perception of an accident, error, or misbehavior by either the handler or animal
- ▶ Damage to property because of a therapy animal or handler

By reporting an incident, you allow Pet Partners to best support the handler, as well as your facility. We may be able to make suggestions specific to your visiting program.

Reporting also allows us to identify areas where additional training might benefit teams throughout our program.

Incidents should be reported to Pet Partners within 24 hours and teams will be asked to suspend visits until the situation has been resolved. Pet Partners has a deep regard and respect for our therapy animal teams and the important role they play in meeting the needs of clients and facilities. Efforts to understand and resolve incidents are handled promptly and with sensitivity to everyone involved.

To report an incident, use the online form at [www.petpartners.org/report-an-incident/](http://www.petpartners.org/report-an-incident/).

## Wrong Fit

As the facility, you can always choose which volunteers are the best match for your clients and goals. It is the responsibility of the facility to determine next steps in cases where there may not be an incident, but where things simply are not working out. Perhaps you choose to first communicate with the handler about desired changes and set a deadline for making improvements. Or perhaps you decide it's best to sever the relationship immediately. These situations are at your discretion and generally do not involve Pet Partners, although we are certainly available to consult on matters where we have experience or expertise.

# How to Bring More Teams to Your Facility

When you begin successfully hosting therapy animal teams, you'll find more and more people asking for them to be present — clients and staff alike! There are some things you can do to raise awareness and boost the number of teams who wish to volunteer at your facility.

### **Information Sessions and Team Evaluations**

Pet Partners has created several resources for our volunteers that prepare them to inform and recruit prospective volunteers. Our Volunteering with Your Pet presentation can be offered at your facility by any licensed Pet Partners instructor or team evaluator. You simply need to provide the space and, whenever possible, spread the word! Individuals who attend will hear about what makes for a successful therapy animal team, program requirements, and next steps. Prospective handlers who attend are welcome to choose volunteerism at any facility but, by holding the session at yours, you have taken the first step to welcome them to your volunteer corps. You

can request that a short period at the end of the session is reserved for promoting your facility and opportunities. These sessions are for humans only, requiring only a meeting space, and are between one hour and 90 minutes in length.

Increasing interest in Pet Partners is only the first step, however. Teams are created only through team evaluations. Team evaluation events must be readily available in order for teams to meet their requirements and become registered. Consider allowing a licensed team evaluator the use of a space within your facility. Evaluations can be conducted in as little as 400 square feet and can be as short as a few hours. Again, teams who attend are not required to visit at your facility, but you will benefit from an increasing number of teams in your community; and, once again, allowing them on site provides a warm welcome to them and a greater chance they'll consider visiting at your facility.

Pet Partners can assist in connecting you with licensed instructors (who can conduct a Volunteering with Your Pet session) or licensed team evaluators (who can conduct a Volunteering with Your Pet session as well as a team evaluation event).

### **Premier Facility Partners**

Pet Partners also offers a special sponsorship program designed specifically for facilities called our Premier Facility Partner program. Our partner facilities that invest in the Pet Partners mission receive many exclusive benefits including the administration of a comprehensive and ongoing handler recruitment program.

For more information visit [www.petpartners.org/premier-facility](http://www.petpartners.org/premier-facility).

### **Posting Volunteer Opportunities Online**

Through the Pet Partners website, you can post a volunteer opportunity for no cost. By entering some basic information about your specific volunteer opportunity, you create a listing that becomes searchable to all our registered therapy animal teams across the country. Volunteers in your area looking for new volunteer options will be able to contact you directly, if they are interested.

Submit your entry at [www.petpartners.org/learn/pet-partners-at-your-facility/add-a-volunteer-opportunity/](http://www.petpartners.org/learn/pet-partners-at-your-facility/add-a-volunteer-opportunity/)

### **Boosted Posts**

Our Boosted Post Program offers facilities a fee-based option to increase the visibility of a volunteer request they post online. In addition to being included on our searchable web listing of visit requests, Boosted Post ensures registered handlers near your facility will also receive an email highlighting the opportunity. Boosted Post is a proactive approach to recruitment since the website postings will only appear to teams who are actively searching for visit opportunities.

For more information visit [www.petpartners.org/boosted-post](http://www.petpartners.org/boosted-post).

*ElderPet publishes a **Facilities Directory** for its member Pet Partner teams. You may have your facility listed at no charge by filling out the Request Form at [elderpet.org/facilities.html](http://elderpet.org/facilities.html). Any interested and available teams will contact you.*

# Special Programming

## Walk With Me™

Are you looking for a new way to promote human health and well-being in your facility? Pet Partners offers Walk With Me™, a special initiative in response to the 19th Surgeon General's Call to Action about walking for better health.

We all know that walking is good for us. The health benefits include increased cardiovascular fitness, reduced risk of heart disease and stroke, stronger bones, and increased muscle strength. Did you also know people who walk with an animal are more likely to meet physical activity recommendations?

This program, which is available to all Pet Partners teams at no cost, could be a new way to promote physical activity at your facility. We've seen groups of seniors walking the therapy animals in their retirement communities and we've seen groups of hospital staff stepping out with therapy animals to reduce stress.

You can learn more at [www.petpartners.org/walk-with-me/](http://www.petpartners.org/walk-with-me/).

## Read With Me™

If you work with emerging readers of any age, consider how a therapy animal could help. That's the premise behind Read With Me, where a therapy animal can be an incentive, a motivational tool, and a non-judgmental listener...all in one!

This program, available to all Pet Partners teams at no cost, provides volunteers with guidance on best practices and strategies to keep students of all ages safe and engaged in a literacy-based therapy animal visit.

To learn more, visit [www.petpartners.org/read-with-me/](http://www.petpartners.org/read-with-me/).

## Animal-Assisted Crisis Response

Currently registered Pet Partners teams can choose to pursue additional credentialing that qualifies them to support crisis recovery in their community. These teams receive training in psychological first aid concepts, sometimes referred to as mental health first aid, as well as an introduction to the FEMA Incident Command System. Whether an unexpected death, an act of violence, or the aftermath of a natural disaster, there may be opportunities where therapy animal teams can provide comfort and support to those affected. If your facility or community is in a recovery situation and would like to request AACR teams, contact Pet Partners at [aacr@petpartners.org](mailto:aacr@petpartners.org)

# Engagement Opportunities

Pet Partners has several national signature events, such as National Therapy Animal Day and the World's Largest Pet Walk. These fun and interactive engagement opportunities are a wonderful way to celebrate the benefits and impacts of therapy animals, highlight our partnership, and involve the community. Consider taking part in one of these special celebrations!

## National Therapy Animal Day

April 30 is National Therapy Animal Day, where therapy animals are recognized and honored for their contributions in their community. This is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the therapy animal teams visiting at your facility, and to educate staff, supporters, and the community about the benefits of therapy animals. Consider contacting your local media and suggesting a 'good news' story about National Therapy Animal Day and the volunteers at your facility.

More information, ideas for ways to celebrate, and resources to help you promote the event can be found at [www.petpartners.org/national-therapy-animal-day/](http://www.petpartners.org/national-therapy-animal-day/).

## World's Largest Pet Walk

If you think Walk With Me™ is fun, don't forget to join the World's Largest Pet Walk each September! This event is for anyone who wants to enjoy the health benefits of being active with pets, while also supporting Pet Partners.

There is no registration fee to walk, but we do ask that you invite supporters to donate in honor of your participation using your online fundraising page. We also encourage you to share your photos with us and spread the word on social media. Make sure to print your official walking bib to wear while you walk.

For more information visit [www.worldslargestpetwalk.org](http://www.worldslargestpetwalk.org).

## Online Education Opportunities for Staff

One of the elements that makes Pet Partners the gold standard is our commitment to education for handlers. Your staff may also wish to continue their education about therapy animals through some of our online training opportunities. Pet Partners offers bulk discounts for pre-purchased courses such as Canine Body Language and Infection Prevention & Control. These courses can help staff better understand how therapy animals fit into facility efforts, and why our teams are the best qualified. If this is of interest to your staff, contact us to discuss pricing and options.

## How Can We Help?

Pet Partners is here to support our volunteers and the facilities where they visit in having positive, safe, and rewarding therapy animal visitation experiences. We are committed to the highest standards in the industry promoting safe and effective therapy animals. As you expand the presence of therapy animal teams at your facility, we're here to answer questions and provide expert guidance.

Don't hesitate to contact us for support or assistance!

[www.petpartners.org/contact-us/](http://www.petpartners.org/contact-us/)

If you are a practitioner wishing to incorporate your own therapy animal into your paid vocation, we encourage you to visit The Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals at [www.aaaiponline.org](http://www.aaaiponline.org) for educational resources, certification, insurance and networking opportunities.