Characteristics of Quality

15 Essential Questions to Ask Your Animal-Assisted Therapy Group or Registry
adapted with permission from Deborah Carr at Therapy Animals of Utah http://therapyanimalsutah.org

Name of Registering Organization: ANGEL PAWS Animal Assisted Activities & Therapy
a registered Delta Society Pet Partners ® & Reading Education Assistance Dogs ® (R.E.A.D. ®) affiliate organization in Newark, OH

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1. What training do you provide for therapy animal handlers (apart from dog training)?
Pet Partners® volunteers are required to successfully complete either an 8 to 14 hours (minimum of 8 hours) of multi-media interactive workshop including individual personal action plans conducted by a licensed Instructor without their dogs or an extensive interactive, multimedia online course (including segment knowledge checks and an overall assessment required to pass) before taking a skills & aptitude test with their pets. Angel Paws candidates complete the 14 hours of interactive class instruction. In addition, our Angel Paws volunteers who pass their required skills & aptitude test attend another hour multi-media interactive classroom training and orientation without their pets before on-site training and orientation (1 observation visit without their pet and 1 or more training visits with their pets). Angel Paws considers dog training to be a personal choice subject to many variations so specific prescribed dog training is not required. Angel Paws works closely with a number of recommended Positive Reinforcement Dog Trainers (in Licking County and Columbus) who offer our candidates generous discounts and provides a vast amount of dog training information, recommendations and resources on our web site. Scholarships are also available.

2. How are your instructors trained and licensed?
Licensed Pet Partners® Instructors must have completed at least 50 documented hours of visiting service in at least 2 different types of environments within the previous 2 years of completing an extensive interactive, multimedia online course (including segment knowledge checks and an overall assessment required to pass) and must renew their registration, with documented class participation, every two years.

3. How are your therapy animal-handler teams tested for skills and aptitude for therapy work?
Pet Partners® Therapy teams are tested in a private, indoor, standardized 22 element Pet Partners Skills and Aptitude Test with a licensed Pet Partners® Team Evaluator that assesses not only the animal’s obedience skills and manners, but also the handler’s skill and aptitude, the teamwork between the animal and handler, and their aptitude for working – as a team - with people with special healthcare needs. Both Animal and Handler are evaluated and each given separate scores and detailed feedback for each exercise. The lower of the two scores is the team score for each exercise and the only score to factor into the overall Team score. Teams may be scored 1, 2 (highest), Not Ready or Not Appropriate.

4. How can consumers determine an animal/handler team’s skill/aptitude level?
After passing the Skills and Aptitude Test, the team is assigned a rating of either “Predictable” or “Complex.” This is an indicator of the complexity of environment, predictability of client population, and degree of staff involvement with which the team has been determined ready to work. To receive a “Complex” rating teams must score a 2 on certain elements of the test that teams who receive a “Predictable” rating may have only received a 1 or even Not Ready on. Angel Paws is also very careful to assess the individual appropriateness of environmental assignments and provides additional training to accommodate environmental preferences where necessary.

5. How are your therapy animal-handler team evaluators for the Skills & Aptitude Test trained and registered?
Pet Partners Team Evaluators must have completed at least 50 documented hours of visiting service in at least 2 different types of environments within the previous 2 years of completing an extensive interactive, multimedia online course (including segment knowledge checks and an overall assessment required to pass), AND an 8 hour live practicum conducted by a licensed Pet Partners Team Evaluators Instructor.

6. What are the health requirements for therapy animal-handler teams?
Pet Partners registered therapy animals must provide a detailed veterinary exam report as part of their evaluation. This includes a health assessment, vaccination record, parasite control program, and fecal analysis. Handlers must
bathe their animal within 24 hours before every visit, and are trained and required to groom and assess their animal’s physical and mental condition immediately before visiting and during visits. They are instructed not to visit if they or their animal is not well. Pet Partners volunteers are also extensively trained to recognize subtle stress signs in their animals as well as in those whom they will be visiting.

7. What kind of liability insurance do you provide for your therapy animal-handler teams and their clients?
Pet Partners provides $2,000,000.00 of primary liability insurance coverage for Pet Partners working as volunteers and adhering to Pet Partners Policies and Procedures.

8. What policies and procedures do you have to guide your therapy animal-handler teams in their work?
Pet Partners and Angel Paws’ extensive Policies and Procedures are attached. (or available upon request)

9. What are your infection control policies for your therapy animal-handler teams?
Pet Partners and Angel Paws extensive Infection Control Policies are attached. (or available upon request)

10. How often are your therapy animal-handler teams re-tested for suitability in their work? How do consumers know when their registration expires?
Pet Partners teams (both animal and handler) are re-tested every two years to assure that they remain reliable, predictable, controllable, suitable for therapy work, and are able to inspire confidence and comfort in the people with whom they work. Each team is issued a photo ID card that shows the environments in which they may work (Predictable or Complex) and the expiration date of their registration. Registered Angel Paws Pet Partners wear uniforms (blue logo polo shirt & khaki slacks) with matching logo bandanas on their animal Pet Partners.

11. How are therapy animal-handler teams qualified and assigned to different areas to serve?
Pet Partners teams may choose their own environments in which to volunteer, in keeping with the rating that they have received. Angel Paws staff visits and assesses the facilities that request our therapy teams, work closely with facility staff to implement a standards based program, and we match our Angel Paws Pet Partners teams to facilities and clients that suit them best. Additional training for specific environments is provided if necessary.

12. What kind of coaching/mentoring/continuing education do you provide for members?
Pet Partners provides continuing education opportunities through their website, conferences and training throughout the U.S., and a magazine newsletter, “Interactions.” Angel Paws also provides a newsletter, and invites all our handlers to refresh their skills by attending any training class or team evaluation free of charge. Our novice teams are mentored in new environments by a licensed evaluator/instructor until all parties agree the novice teams are ready to visit alone and a 4 page review of initial supervised training visits are provided. Angel Paws also offers on-going training to assure a team’s suitability to visit certain environments with certain recipient populations when appropriate or necessary &/or to fine tune skills.

13. What sort of training is available for facility staff to help us utilize your services more fully?
Angel Paws provides an annual (or as requested) staff in-service orientation for staff at facilities we partner with and we evaluate the program together as needed. In addition, many printed resources are available through the Pet Partners website, and Pet Partners has a specific course for health care professionals, entitled “Animal Assisted Therapy Applications I.”

14. Where can I find more information on animal-assisted therapy, supporting research, and techniques?
Pet Partners has more information available on it’s website, http://www.petpartners.org/, Other supporting research in peer-reviewed publications can be found on Google Scholar. Two of the primary international organizations that promote research in the benefits of human-animal interactions are ISAZ and IAHAO. For a professional reference on Animal-Assisted Therapy, we recommend Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy, edited by Aubrey H. Fine. For activity resources for practitioners, we recommend 101 Creative Ideas for Animal-Assisted Therapy, edited by Stacy Grover.

15. How has your organization contributed to the field of animal-assisted therapy?
Pet Partners funded the development and publication of Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Activities and Animal-Assisted Therapy in 1996. It is recognized throughout the world as an organization with standardized and rigorous requirements for training and testing of its registered Pet Partner therapy animal-human teams and facility program implementation. Members are involved in current scientific research studies all over the world.