

Therapy Dog Manual

1. INTRODUCTION

Why the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program?

By offering your time and sharing your dog's loving and accepting nature with someone whose day will be brightened by this simple but generous act, you are making a difference in your community.

You also help to comfort the lonely, the sick and the

elderly, with your visits because you know that the petting, affection and regular visitation of a dog can make a big difference in the health - both physical and emotional - of a hospitalized person.

The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program is unique in that the same dog and handler visit the same place and people on a regular basis.

You are part of this unique program.

The mission of St. John Ambulance is:

To enable Canadians to improve their health, safety, and quality of life by providing training and community service.



A. History

St. John Ambulance has been providing first aid training in Canada since 1882, when the first course was given by the St. John Ambulance Association in Quebec City. The Brigade, the uniformed volunteers, grew alongside the Association, and provided community service through traditional first aid and patient care services. The first division was formed in London, Ontario in 1909, and has grown to over 14,000 members in almost 600 Brigade Units.

It became clear that additional areas of expertise could be found to enhance the community services role played by the Brigade. The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program grew out of a

local initiative that began in Peterborough, Ontario in 1992. The program grew across Ontario, and eventually was adopted in virtually every St. John Council in Canada. Initially, Therapy Dog volunteers were attached to existing Brigade Divisions, but there are now over fifty units within the Brigade devoted to the Therapy Dog Program.

The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dogs have become a familiar sight throughout many of Canada's hospitals, nursing homes and day care facilities. These well-trained, impeccably groomed four-legged volunteers are accepted in most places where a little care and love is appreciated. Typical assignments include long-

term and palliative care, and rehabilitation, as well as psychiatric wards.

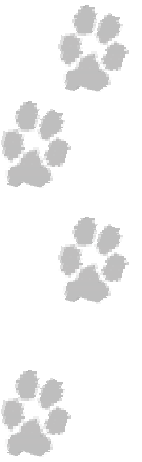
St. John Therapy Dogs are accepted by the institutions they visit because tremendous care is taken in the selection of the dogs. All dogs are evaluated for temperament, and must be in good general health, and certified annually by their veterinarians with up-dated inoculations on request. In addition, it is mandatory that all dogs are clean and thoroughly groomed before each visit, and that the handler wear the identified St. John Ambulance uniform for the Therapy Dog Program.

B. Guiding Principles

The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program is a community-based service offered to the public by the Brigade - the community services arm. Therapy Dog units have been set up in various cities in Canada to offer this service to local establishments and help bring benefits both physical or mental to those they visit through regular contact and the unconditional love of a dog.

What exactly do the dogs do? They do what animals have been doing for centuries: offering unconditional love and friendship to the sick, lonely and helpless. Dogs are non-judgmental. They are undeterred by human frailties and accept human illness, handicap or disfigurement, confusion or tears. They calm the distressed, distract the pain-ridden, and comfort the despondent.

Many theories exist regarding the bond between humans and dogs, and every day the work of the therapy dogs adds to this mystery. New challenges in different fields regularly happen, as the service we provide extends into women's shelters, day care centres and schools.



The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program is carried by the following guiding principles:

- ◆ a recognition that many people are destined to spend time isolated from their families and friends, often in hospitals, senior residences or nursing homes;
- ◆ a belief that St. John Ambulance can, through the Therapy Dog Program, help to alleviate the loneliness of people who are institutionalized;
- ◆ a belief that the petting, affection and regular visitation of a dog can make a difference in both the physical and emotional health of people who are institutionalized; and
- ◆ a professional approach to ensure the Program is well-received by the clients (hospitals, palliative care units, day care centres, senior residences, nursing homes, special needs schools, psychiatric hospitals, etc.)

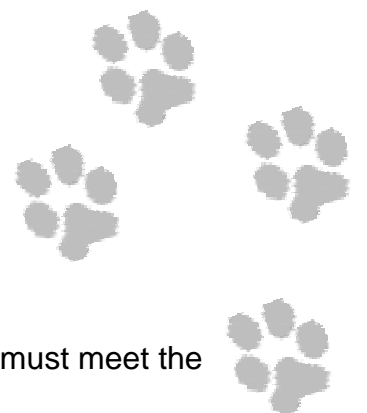
C. Membership

Membership requirements and personnel administration for members of the Therapy Dog Program are the same as for every other member of the community service arm of St. John Ambulance. Details of membership requirements are stated in StJCI 2-3-1.

[1] Criteria for Membership

Individuals wishing to become St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog volunteers must meet the following criteria:

- a) Be at least 18 years of age, since all Therapy Dog Units are considered to be Adult Divisions. Youth (under age 18) may be attached to an Adult Division as Cadets (age 11 to 15) or Crusaders (age 16 and over) but must, in all cases, be supervised while providing any form of service. At age 16, a member can be evaluated as part of a handler/dog team. If successful, they can handle the dog, but must be supervised while providing community service.



- b) Agree to participate fully in the screening process for volunteers.

The screening policy states:

1. All St. John Ambulance Brigade volunteers have a responsibility to protect the clients they serve and to uphold the reputation of St. John Ambulance.
2. St. John Ambulance will not tolerate any form of assault or abuse, or any other offence that may raise concern in the minds of the staff, clients or other volunteers as to issues of safety, well-being or security.
3. To be accepted as a St. John Ambulance Brigade volunteer, all applicants ages 18 years and up, and upon their first appointment to a leadership position, must be screened according to the following procedures:
 - (a) Complete and sign an application form and authorization for a police records check;
 - (b) Undergo interview process.
4. All St. John Ambulance Brigade volunteers must agree to undergo the screening process at any time, specifically if their appointment changes to one that carries an increase in responsibility or if the supervising officer feels there is just cause.

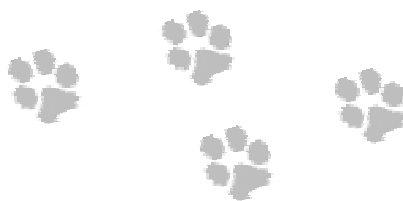
- c) Be physically capable of performing the services expected of them. A member who wishes to support the Therapy Dog Program as a volunteer, but is not physically capable of doing so, or does not possess a dog, is encouraged to work in areas of support such as administration, fundraising, etc.
- d) Have the required training which, for Therapy Dog members, includes participation in the Pre-Evaluation Seminar.

[2] Member Rights

Once you are accepted as a member of St. John Ambulance, you have become part of a much larger organization. All members are encouraged to learn more about St. John Ambulance, its long history (over 900 years), and its many and varied programs. Your local St. John Branch and traditional (patient care) Brigade Division and Youth Division are excellent resources. St. John Ambulance specializes in first aid, and Therapy Dog members are encouraged to take advantage of first aid and CPR training available through their branch or local patient care unit.

St. John Ambulance recognizes the diverse and multicultural composition of its volunteer environment and its workplace, and appreciates the dignity, worth and contribution of each member. Equal rights and opportunities are provided for all members. Detailed rights of all volunteers are listed in StJCI 2-1-1, paragraphs 3 to 5.

St. John Ambulance has a comprehensive harassment policy (outlined in StJCI 2-1-6) and a discipline and grievance procedure (StJCI 2-9-3). Members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these sections.



[3] Membership Responsibilities

Membership in this organization also carries with it some responsibilities: Once you are a member, you have the responsibility to:

- a) provide service to St. John Ambulance to assist in fulfilling its mission, which is to enable Canadians to improve their health, safety and quality of life by providing training and community service;
- b) be honest and open with other volunteers and with staff regarding your intent, goals, needs and skills;
- c) understand the requirements of time and duties of assignments before accepting them, and once accepted, fulfill the commitment to the very best of your ability;
- d) work as a professional and as a respected member of a team;
- e) take the commitment seriously and participate in learning opportunities that are made available;
- f) respect the confidentiality of St. John Ambulance and its members and clients; and
- g) seek and accept honest feedback on performance.

There are also certain obligations of membership. StJCI 2-3-1 states that to retain membership, all members must:



- a) recognize and put into practice the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, as outlined in StJCI 2-1-1;
- b) agree to undergo the screening process as outlined in StJCI 2-9-2;
- c) fulfil the members' obligations as outlined in StJCI 2-9-3,
- d) agree to take part in the procedures for progressive discipline or the grievance procedure as outlined in StJCI 2-9-3, if the need arises;
- e) refrain from taking part in activities that may bring disrepute to St. John Ambulance;
- f) agree to serve the public with due respect, courtesy and responsiveness without prejudice;
- g) conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner; and
- h) prevent improper disclosure of confidential or privileged information acquired in the course of their duties, and agree not to use such information for personal gain or in any way that is contrary to the law or detrimental to the welfare of St. John Ambulance.

[4] Membership Administration

Personnel administration is handled in the same way as all other community service members. This enables the local, provincial and national levels to ensure that every member's service is recorded for eligibility for service awards, and that addresses and statistics are kept current and accurate. At the local or Council level, records

may also include the name and number of hours of service for each member's dog(s) to facilitate recognition of service for the dogs at that level.

Details of personnel administration are stated in StJCI 2-8-1.