

Therapy Dog Manual

2. STANDARDS

The National Operational Standards for the Therapy Dog Program are outlined in the St. John Canada Instructions (StJCI) 2-5-2, and repeated in this Manual as appropriate. Other information pertinent to membership in St. John Ambulance can be found in other sections of StJCI: Part 2 - Volunteers.

Initial evaluations for a Council will be under the guidance of the National Therapy Dog Coordinator. The Provincial/Territorial Evaluator will, in turn, train others to the required standards. Evaluators are expected to complete all necessary forms, which are to be held at the Council Headquarters for reference. Actual evaluations will not be released to a Council wishing to set up an initial program until authorization by the National Therapy Dog Coordinator has been obtained.



B. Structure

The St. John Ambulance Brigade is comprised of three main areas: Patient Care Services, Community Care Services and Youth.

Patient Care Services are the traditional uniformed

volunteers that provide first aid and patient care services at public events. Community Care Services include programs that provide community service that is not directly first aid related. The Therapy Dog Program is

included, and is currently the only national program that is part of the Community Care Services.

A. Operational Standards

The Operational Standards for the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program include the following:

1. All evaluation of handler/dog teams for admittance to the Therapy Dog Program must be conducted using the national Therapy Dog Evaluation. To ensure the preservation of national standards, deviation from this evaluation may not occur. The responsibility for all national Therapy Dog standards rests with the National Therapy Dog Coordinator.
2. All handlers must undergo the screening process as outlined in Section C on Membership in Chapter 1 of this Manual, and detailed in StJCI 2-9-2.
3. All handlers must participate in the Pre-evaluation Seminar.
4. Annual veterinarian-signed verification must be provided for all dogs, for rabies certification, and current vaccination for distemper, hepatitis, para-influenza and parvo-virus, as required by the local Public Health Department.
5. All visits must be in accordance with the General Visiting Rules, as outlined in detail in Chapter 3, Section E, on Rules of Visitation.

The Therapy Dog Program, as a community care service, is an element of the existing Brigade organizational structure. All policies and procedures outlined in the StJCI for other Brigade members apply equally to members of the Therapy Dog Program, with the exception of StJCI 2-4 which outlines the Patient Care Training System.



Therapy Dog Units function as separate units, and Program Coordinators are appointed to each unit level. Generally, units are aligned with Branches which are responsible for providing support to the local Therapy Dog Unit in the same manner that they provide support to other Brigade units.

When a request for the program is made from a community (e.g. dog clubs,

hospitals) and factors such as geography or logistics limit the possibility of Branch alignment, then independent Therapy Dog Units may be established. These units should be self-supporting and deal directly with the local community and report through their Provincial/Territorial Commissioner to their respective Council on all financial support issues.



C. Roles and Responsibilities

Several positions with specific roles and responsibilities have been identified to ensure the efficient running of the Therapy Dog Program. Each position is outlined in the following sections.

[1] Provincial/Territorial or Area Therapy Dog Coordinators

Therapy Dog Coordinators at the Provincial/Territorial or Area level are senior volunteers responsible to their respective Commissioner for the efficient implementation, administration and operational support of the Therapy Dog Program within their geographic jurisdiction. Councils are responsible for providing resources to support the operation of Therapy Dog Coordinators.

Therapy Dog Coordinators at the Provincial/Territorial or Area level are responsible for ensuring the continuity of the Therapy Dog Program within their jurisdiction. This includes overseeing operational matters, coordination of meetings and work groups, development of reports as requested, and liaison with the Provincial/Territorial Evaluator and other Coordinators.

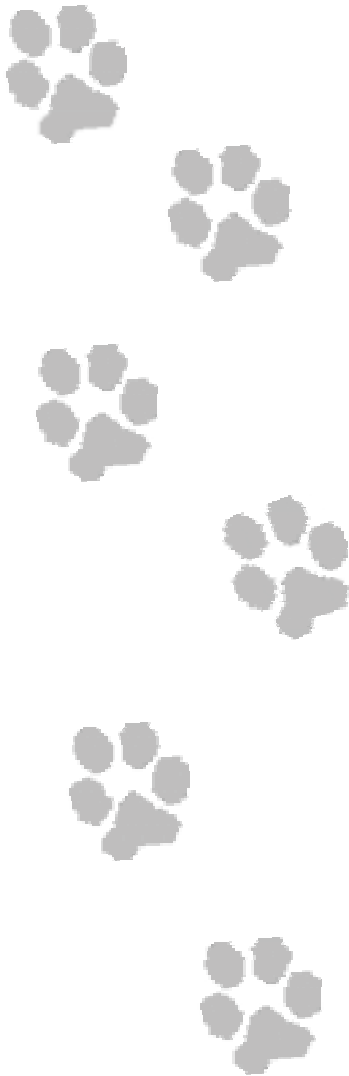
Therapy Dog Coordinators at the Provincial/Territorial or Area level liaise directly with Therapy Dog Units in their jurisdiction on a regular basis.

They can help the Units with:

- (a) identification of community needs and resources as they relate to the program;
- (b) assistance and advice on the policies and procedures for establishing new Therapy Dog Programs;
- (c) assessment and acquisition of Therapy Dog training and resources, and assisting the Provincial/Territorial Evaluator with evaluations, including the assessment and training of evaluators as required;
- (d) training Therapy Dog Coordinators in the use of Pre-evaluation Seminar materials, and ensuring the requirements of the Pre-evaluation Seminar are carried out;
- (e) development and implementation of community relations initiatives as they relate to the program;
- (f) coordination of evaluator activities, in conjunction with the Provincial/Territorial Evaluator.

[2] Unit Therapy Dog Coordinators

The Unit Therapy Dog Coordinator is responsible for the overall organization, administration, and training within their Unit. They work closely in cooperation with their Provincial/ Territorial and Area counterparts and with local Branches to ensure the smooth, efficient operation of the program.



Responsibilities of the Unit Therapy Dog Coordinator include:

- (a) ensuring that both members and dogs are fully qualified and that every member has the opportunity to obtain St. John Ambulance and Therapy Dog training as required;
- (b) ensuring that all prospective members participate in the Pre-evaluation Seminar before the handler/dog teams are evaluated;
- (c) liaising with the local Branch or Council on relevant administrative support issues such as financial management, fundraising and service territory;
- (d) liaising with and arranging scheduled visits to facilities in their region;
- (e) monitoring new handlers with and without their dogs on first visits, and new dogs with their handlers on first visits;
- (f) assisting in the coordination of Therapy Dog evaluation, workshops and seminars, in conjunction with the Evaluator;
- (g) coordinating and/or assisting with public relations initiatives;
- (h) scheduling and chairing a minimum of 2 Unit meetings per year;
- (i) ensuring that members have access to adequate resources;
- (j) identifying community needs and resources as they relate to the program;
- (k) providing uniforms, and service recognition (dog tags and certificates) to appropriate volunteers in a timely fashion (note that dog tags are optional in each Council; certificates for members are issued by National Headquarters, dependent on receipt of annual reports);
- (l) orienting members to program policies and procedures;
- (m) coordinating, tracking and reporting all honours and awards;
- (n) ensuring that all records and reports are completed accurately and submitted on time to the appropriate level in accordance with StJCI 2-8.

[3] Evaluators and Assistant Evaluators

Evaluators provide St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog evaluation to handler/dog teams. They are responsible for ensuring that all certification records and reports are completed accurately and submitted to the Provincial/Territorial Evaluator within 14 days of evaluation, with copies to the Provincial/Territorial Coordinator. Evaluators are required to update their qualifications by attending seminars as required, and must recertify annually.

Evaluator prerequisites include:

- (a) substantial experience with a variety of breeds of dogs;
- (b) a good understanding of basic dog behaviour (theory and practice);
- (c) attendance at an initial training seminar;
- (d) a knowledge of what is expected of a visiting handler/dog team within the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program; and
- (e) current or past participation as a handler in a handler/dog team in the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program.

Evaluators are often qualified Canadian Kennel Club judges, obedience school trainers, groomers or other people with extensive hands-on canine experience.

It is recommended that all Evaluators enter the program as Assistant Evaluators, and graduate to full Evaluator status after a minimum period of one year. During this initial year, they will be active visitors in the Therapy Dog Program and will acquire a strong knowledge of the program and the evaluation procedure.

Assistant Evaluators receive the first level of training obtainable when entering the program. A résumé of qualifications and canine experience must be sent to the Provincial Evaluator.

Assistant Evaluators are expected to attend training sessions and seminars, assist Evaluators, assist local Coordinators and be recertified annually.

Potential evaluators must complete an application to be a Therapy Dog Evaluator. A sample application form can be found in Section 8 of this Manual, or as Annex C to StJCI 2-5-2.

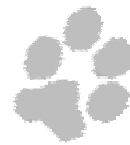
[4] Provincial/Territorial Evaluators

The Provincial/Territorial Evaluator is ultimately responsible for all decisions in relation to Evaluators within each Council. The Provincial/Territorial Commissioner on the advice of the National Therapy Dog Coordinator appoints one Provincial/Territorial Evaluator in each Council.

The Provincial/Territorial Evaluator is responsible for:

- (a) ensuring conformity to national Therapy Dog standards;
- (b) supervising evaluations for Assistant Evaluators and Evaluators;
- (c) scheduling all Evaluator evaluations, seminars and recertifications;
- (d) overseeing Evaluator procedures.

Note that the Evaluator's Handbook is not for general distribution but only for use by certified Evaluators.



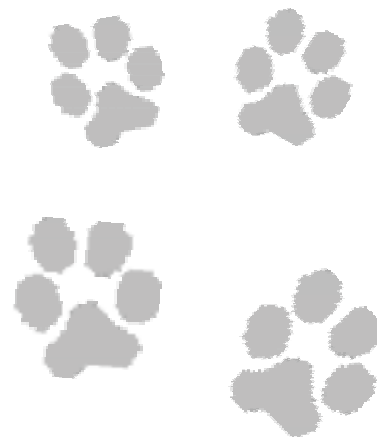
[5] Handler/Dog Team

Therapy Dog Program members (handlers) and their dogs are evaluated and work together as teams. They provide companionship to those who are lonely or ill through regular visits to hospitals and nursing homes.

New members are accompanied by a qualified Therapy Dog Evaluator or Coordinator or a senior member as determined by the Coordinator, without the dog, for one visit to ensure that they are comfortable with the environment they are visiting. The dog is then introduced on accompanied visits - a minimum of two accompanied visits is required; some Councils may require more than two accompanied visits - this is at the discretion of the Provincial/Territorial Commissioner. The accompaniment on second and subsequent visits can be made by a senior Therapy Dog member appointed by the Coordinator. If these visits are successful, a regular visitation schedule is established.

Any handler/dog team may join the program provided:

- (a) the individual is successfully screened according to the policy in StJCI 2-9-2, and meets the requirements for Brigade membership as outlined in StJCI 2-3-1. Note that Standard First Aid certification is not required for membership as a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog volunteer, however such certification is encouraged;
- (b) the member has participated in a Pre-Evaluation Seminar; and
- (c) the handler/dog team is successful on the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog evaluation.



[6] Auxiliary Member

Therapy Dog Members are not to be listed as Auxiliary members. Auxiliary members are individuals who wish to support a Brigade Unit, whether Therapy Dog, Patient Care or Youth, but do not wish to take part in all training and activities associated with the Unit. Auxiliary members may be enrolled through any Brigade Unit (Therapy Dog, Patient Care or Youth) and are invited to assist as "actors" in evaluation scenarios for the Therapy Dog Program.

