

Therapy Dog Manual

5. EXTENSION OF THE BASIC PROGRAM

There will be times when volunteers from the Therapy Dog Program are invited to participate in visits or events outside of the basic program, which is visitation of adults in hospitals, nursing homes or homes for the aged. In each case, there will necessarily be some changes in prerequisites, training for the volunteer and the dog, or in the program delivery itself.

A. Visiting Children

[1] Prerequisite to Evaluation

The handler/dog team must have completed at least ten weeks visiting adults before they can apply to their Coordinator to take the Evaluation for Handler/Dog Teams Visiting Children. Members who are successful on this evaluation will be issued a letter of approval by the Provincial Evaluator or a Certified Evaluator approved to administer this evaluation. The number of qualified teams should only be as needed. It is to be noted that not all handler/dog teams will qualify and should be encouraged to visit in the normal program. Records must be kept at the Provincial/ Territorial level for those who are successful.

[2] Access to the Evaluation

For information on the Evaluation for Handler/Dog Teams Visiting Children, and a list of Certified Child Visitation Evaluators, contact the Provincial/Territorial Therapy Dog Coordinator.



B. Visiting in Private Homes

It is permissible to visit ill, convalescing or bedridden people in private homes, as members of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program.

[1] Procedure

All requests for this service should be directed to and authorized by the local Therapy Dog Coordinator. Particulars of the person requesting the service, including family relationship, position in the household, and expectations, must be recorded. An interview with the family, visiting member and the Therapy Dog Coordinator must be held before visiting begins.

The handler/dog team must be accompanied for the first two visits by the Therapy Dog Coordinator or a designated senior volunteer. The client should be accompanied by a family member or a responsible friend.

[2] Parameters

It is essential that volunteers undertaking this type of visit are prepared to make a commitment to the family.

All other guidelines as outlined in this Manual are applicable to visiting in private homes. Members working within the criteria and procedures of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog training and evaluation, and who are visiting on an authorized Therapy Dog visit, are covered by the national insurance policy as they would be on any other authorized Therapy Dog visit.



C. Emergency Response

Some Councils that take part in emergency response have already designated a role for Therapy Dog handlers and dogs as part of the “Meeters and Greeters” at designated Rest Centres or as helpers (without the dogs) at the Pet Stations set up in conjunction with the Emergency Provincial Response Plans. Dogs who regularly work with children may be especially useful in family areas and members (without the dogs) can be assigned various tasks within the centres (excluding first aid duties unless they are certified). These volunteers are responsible to the St. John Coordinator and responsive to the Rest Centre Manager for assignment.

The Provincial/Territorial Coordinator should work with the local Branch and the Emergency Planning Officer/Member to set up such response in times of need. Plans should be made as to the role and area of response at local levels, and who should designate call-out and placement of members.

The Coordinator must ensure that call-out lists are kept up-to-date. Those members not able to respond must be noted on the lists; those indicating willingness to respond either with or without their dogs must be given up-to-date information on personal preparedness both for themselves and their dogs.

Examples of emergency response by Therapy Dog members to date include:

- (a) Therapy Dog members and dogs were present at Trenton during the Kosovo refugee crisis;
- (b) Therapy Dog members (without the dogs) responded to the Ice Storm crisis in Quebec in various capacities;
- (c) Therapy Dog members (with and without dogs) have responded successfully at Rest Centres in BC both in reality and during exercises.



D. Funerals

It is imperative that any support given to a grieving family by handlers and dogs is done in a dignified and intensive manner, and only upon request of the family concerned.

[1] Guard of Honour

Sometimes, a request for a Guard of Honour may be received. Members and dogs line up on either side of the church entrance with the dog sitting on the left side of the handler. They must remain still and silent until the casket, family and congregation have left the church.

[2] Guidelines

- (a) The presence of Therapy Dogs at a funeral must be at the request of the family.
- (b) Members must wear their working uniform, and dogs must wear their kerchiefs (and tags if applicable).
- (c) If a member is asked to give a eulogy, it should be brief and appropriate to their visits with the individual concerned.
- (d) All contact regarding arrangements should be carried out through the funeral home and not the family.
- (e) It is appropriate to inform the Provincial Coordinator so that condolences can be sent on behalf of the Therapy Dog Program.



E. Investitures

It may be appropriate for a Therapy Dog Member to be accompanied by their dog if they are being invested in the Order at a Provincial/Territorial or National Investiture. It may also be appropriate for a Guard of Honour to take place at an Investiture. This must be pre-arranged with the event organizer.

[1] Nominee

If a Therapy Dog Member is to be invested in the Order, they must indicate on their acceptance form that they wish to be accompanied by their dog. The organizer for the Investiture will then make the appropriate arrangements, if possible, with the facility in which the Investiture is taking place. It is preferable that the member and their dog have easy access to an outside door, depending on the length of the ceremony.

themselves, equally, on both sides of the entrance. Their role is to greet guests on arrival and departure.

[2] Guard of Honour

A Guard of Honour should only take place outside of the facility in which the Investiture is being held. Six to eight handler/dog teams should arrange

[3] Receptions

Members being invested, and members taking part in the Guard of Honour, may be invited to attend the reception following the Investiture. The dog may accompany their handler only if event organizers agree. Care must be taken by members to keep their dogs under control at all times, and preferably at the edge of the crowd. The member must decide if this is suitable for their dog, and if not, decide either to attend without the dog, or to not attend at all.

[4] Dress for Investitures

The member should wear one of the following:

- (a) working uniform: grey/black skirt/pants, white shirt
- (b) dark blazer, grey/black /skirt/pants, white shirt, black tie, black shoes
- (c) Brigade dress uniform, with appropriate rank markings
- (d) Grey/black skirt/pants, white shirt with insignia, black shoes

If medals are to be worn, then a blazer or Brigade uniform is required. In cold weather, a dark overcoat or jacket is appropriate.

The dog should wear their St. John kerchief and appropriate dog tags. A red buckle collar and leash are also appropriate, if possible.

F. Youth Program

Members of the Therapy Dog Program are encouraged to assist members of St. John Ambulance's Youth Program who are interested in completing their Therapy Dog Proficiency. This proficiency is towards completion of the young person's Grand Prior's Award. Detailed information about this program, including age restrictions, is available in the Cadet Proficiency Program Manual, available from your local Youth Division or your Provincial/Territorial Council.