

# What is a Therapy Dog Team?

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### There are two (2) key elements:

1. A dog that has the temperament of warmth, love and companionship to humans.
2. A human that has the dedication to give of their time, warmth and care to other human in need.

### Handler Skills:

The handler must enjoy being around people, be friendly and polite, and have good visiting manners.

He or she should be able to:

- Demonstrate active listening skills.
- Communicate with different populations.
- Understand and follow current rules of confidentiality.
- Demonstrate disability etiquette, wheelchair etiquette, and proper terminology regarding people with disabilities.
- Understand infection control issues and zoonotic concerns.
- Remain aware of the dog at all times and remain in control.
- Help the dog carry out the tasks needed for the job.
- Praise the dog's good behavior, and redirect inappropriate behavior.
- Recognize stress in the dog, be aware of ways to relieve it promptly.

### Canine Talent and Skills:

The dog must be willing to initiate contact with unfamiliar people and have good social skills and manners. Most organizations require that dogs be at least a year old for full registration.

He or she should be able to:



- Offer rabies certificate, documentation of good health and freedom from parasites which is required by the national registry or the facility being visited.
- Reflect cleanliness and appropriate grooming including teeth and nails.
- Function well around equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, and respiratory devices.
- Demonstrate basic obedience commands in the midst of distractions;
  - Sits, lies down, stays on command
  - Walks on leash without pulling
- Remains well controlled around other dogs.
- Greets people politely (without jumping or mouthing), and calmly accepts the petting from strangers.
- Must be dog friendly while greeting and in the presence of strange dogs.
- Must be able to focus on the people visited.

### Preparation:

Building and maintaining confidence and trust is the most important preparation for a team. Strong socialization is also very important, followed by acclimatization to unusual sounds, sights and odors.



### ***PLEASE NOTE:***

***A SERVICE DOG IS NOT THE SAME AS A THERAPY DOG***

The ADA defines a service animal as this: "Service animal means any dog or other common domestic animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items, assisting an individual during a seizure, retrieving medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and assisting individuals, including those with cognitive disabilities, with navigation."

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***Be an Angel Therapy Dogs Ministry***

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***"Turning Frowns Upside Down"***