

CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE MANUAL

SECTION I:	PATIENT FOCUSED FUNCTIONS
CHAPTER 2:	Provision of Care, Treatment and Services
PROCEDURE 2.18:	Animal-Assisted Therapy / Animal-Assisted Activity/Service Animals
REVISED:	04/27/05; 01/25/08; 01/13/10; 10/15/10; 11/09/15; 3/28/16; 2/6/17; Reviewed 02/18
Governing Body Approval:	11/17/10; 12/17/15; 4/14/16; 2/10/17; 04/18

PURPOSE: The Animal-Assisted Therapy/Animal-Assisted Activity Program will provide participants with opportunities for emotional expression, stimulation/motivation, nurturing experiences, problem solving, acceptance and self-confidence.

SCOPE: All Clinical Staff

I. Program Description: **Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)** is a goal directed intervention in which an animal is an integral part of the participant's treatment plan. Specific treatment goals are identified, implemented, and documented. "Handlers" (animal owners) work in collaboration with the participant's treatment team and their "hospital mentor" (assigned CVH employee) to deliver animal-assisted therapy. Specific treatment objectives may include

- A. improve fine motor skills
- B. improve assisted or independent movement (balance, ROM)
- C. increase self-esteem
- D. decrease anxiety
- E. increase verbal communication
- F. increase willingness to join in activities/engagement in treatment
- G. improve interactions with others/social skills
- H. motivate willingness to exercise
- I. develop trust
- J. develop responsibility
- K. foster care for others
- L. mood enhancement and personal enjoyment
- M. increase comfort and willingness to interact in group settings
- N. decrease loneliness and isolation

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) provide opportunities for motivational, educational and/or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life. While more informal in nature, these activities are delivered by a specially trained professional, paraprofessional and/or volunteer, in partnership with an animal that meets specific criteria for suitability.

Qualification of Animals

Animals used in these programs must have current registration with a professional AAA organization such as Pet Partners or Therapy Dog International. Through these professional

AAA organizations, animals have been determined to be of appropriate disposition, health, training and experience to be used in the health care setting. Animals participating in the program must have:

- A. A copy of their professional registration with an AAA organization.
- B. A current vaccination history from a Veterinarian.

Handlers (owners) need to submit these to the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies in order to be accepted into the program at CVH. If accepted into the program, the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies will register the animal and handler with CVH Agency Police.

Qualification of Animal Handlers/Group Leaders

Group leaders who are CVH employees are either independently certified by a professional AAA organization or will be working under the direction and supervision of registered personnel, who have successfully completed training and orientation to animal-assisted therapy.

Outside participants must be registered by a professional AAA organization **and** be registered with the hospital as a volunteer, with necessary orientations to confidentiality, safety, security, work rules, and circumstances of commitment for assigned work areas. Outside volunteers will function under the direct supervision of a designated “hospital mentor”/CVH employee at all times, and will abide by the rules and guidelines of their professional AAA organization and CVH policies and procedures.

Animal Assisted Trainees/Puppies

A request to register a trainee or puppy (affiliated with an organization) is first submitted to the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies.

Documentation of current vaccination status is provided to the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies and copies of the animal’s file with the Infection Prevention Department. Documentation of compliance with vaccination requirements is updated as needed. Documentation is submitted to the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies that verifies that the animal’s Veterinarian finds the animal to be of a suitable disposition to participate in Animal-Assisted Therapy. Documentation of suitable disposition is copied to the Infection Prevention Department.

When the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies accepts the animal as a Trainee, arrangements are made for CVH photo identification for the animal. The Director of Rehabilitation Therapies will notify the Agency Police of the Trainee animal.

PROCEDURE:

A request to register an animal is first submitted to the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies.

The following documentation must be provided to the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies:

1. Documentation of current vaccination status; updated annually or as requested by the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies. Copies will be provided to Infection Control Department.
2. Documentation from Veterinarian stating that the animal is of suitable disposition to participate in Animal-Assisted programs.
3. Documentation of current registration with a professional AAA organization i.e. Pet Partners or Therapy Dog International.
4. Signed Agreement by Handler to follow AAA guidelines **AND** CVH policies and procedures.

Once the Director of Rehabilitation Therapies accepts the animal, arrangements will be made for CVH photo identification (ID badge) for the animal.

The Director of Rehabilitation Therapies will assign a hospital mentor (qualified CVH employee) to provide mentorship, direction, and supervision to each accepted animal therapy team.

Guidelines for Animal Therapy Teams

1. Animal-Assisted Activity/Animal-Assisted Therapy shall always be offered on a *voluntary* basis.
2. Patients who report serious allergies to animals shall be discouraged from participating.
3. Patients with a history of risk to animals shall be evaluated by their treatment teams for appropriateness of participation in this program.
4. At the time of visits, animals shall be clean and well groomed.
5. Animals shall be escorted into patient care areas appropriately leashed and under control of handlers at all times.
6. Participants may be encouraged to pet, hold, or groom animals as clinically appropriate.
7. Any contact that results in a scratch or skin break shall be reported immediately to nursing staff for evaluation, first aid, and follow up.
8. An Animal-Assisted Activity or Animal-Assisted Therapy session may be terminated at any time, if deemed unsafe.
9. Clean-up of animal waste is the responsibility of the animal handler. Clean-up may be accomplished using hospital housekeeping supplies. Bagged waste is to be disposed of away from patient care areas.
10. Handlers will take responsibility for providing frequent breaks to animals to assure that they do not get over tired or too stimulated.
11. There will be no food allowed in the vicinity of the animals during AAA/AAT sessions.
12. All participants shall use Purell before and after each session of AAA/AAT.

13. Animal-Assisted Therapy is a goal-directed intervention/treatment that is prescribed by treatment team for a participant. A physician/APRN order must be obtained prior to any AAT session.
14. Employees that are performing AAA/AAT must get prior approval from their supervisors, as well as have made appropriate arrangements with their supervisors to structure their schedule to accommodate for the care and transportation of their animals. ***At no time shall animals be left unattended.***
15. All Animal Therapy Teams will abide by the guidelines of their professional AAA organization **AND** CVH policies and procedures.
16. Any staff concerns, i.e. allergies, should be reported to the unit director, program manager or supervisor. A decision will be made regarding any modifications needed to maintain safety and/or changing the location of the treatment session.

II. Service Animals

All service animals must be licensed and have a tag. If the animal has not been licensed, the owner would need to present documentation that the animal has received appropriate training as a Service Animal in order to obtain a license. A file is kept on all Service Animals which includes their credentials and immunization record.