



## **Characteristics of Quality**

### **15 Questions to Ask Your Animal-Assisted Therapy Registry**

**Name of Registering Organization:** Therapy Animals of Utah (TAU)  
Pet Partners' only Utah Community Partner

**Name/Position of representative:** Deborah Carr, Executive Director  
Contact Information: [www.therapyanimalsutah.org](http://www.therapyanimalsutah.org), 801-706-1389

#### **1. What training do you provide for therapy animal handlers?**

Pet Partners volunteers participate in either an extensive home study or a minimum of 8 hours of class instruction. Our TAU volunteers have attended the 8-hour Pet Partner Handler Training course.

#### **2. How are your instructors trained and registered?**

Pet Partners Instructors attend an 8- hour training course and are re-registered every two years. Our TAU Instructors are registered by the Pet Partners and have certificates in Animals and Human Health from the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. They were participants in the latest revision of Pet Partners' Handler Training Course.

#### **3. How are your therapy animal-handler teams tested for skills and aptitude for therapy work?**

Before their evaluation, potential therapy animals are prescreened for aggressive behavior, raw diet, and illness. The animal and its handler are then tested in a standard, private evaluation, the Pet Partners Skills and Aptitude Test, with a registered Pet Partners Team Evaluator that assesses the animal's basic obedience skills and manners, the teamwork between the animal and handler, and their aptitude for working with people with special healthcare needs.

#### **4. How can consumers determine their skill/aptitude level?**

After passing the Skills and Aptitude Test, the team is assigned a rating of either "Predictable" or "Complex." This is an indicator of the complexity of environment, predictability of client population, and degree of staff involvement with which the team has been determined ready to work.

#### **5. How are your therapy animal-handler team evaluators trained and registered?**

Pet Partners Team Evaluators have had at least 2 years of Pet Partner volunteer experience, completed an 8-hour class or home study, and an 8 hour practicum. Our TAU team evaluators continue to participate in national workshops and Pet Partners training to improve their skills.

#### **6. What are the health requirements for therapy animal-handler teams?**

Pet Partners therapy animals must complete a veterinary exam as part of their registration. This includes a health assessment, vaccination record, parasite control program, and fecal analysis. Handlers must bathe their animal within 24 hours before every visit to clients with medical conditions, and are required to groom and assess their animal's physical and mental condition immediately before visiting. They are instructed not to visit if they or their animal is not well.

#### **7. What kind of liability insurance do you provide for your therapy animal-handler teams and their clients?**

Pet Partners provides \$2,000,000.00 of liability insurance for Pet Partners working as volunteers and adhering to Pet Partners' Policies and Procedures.



**8. What policies and procedures do you have to guide your therapy animal-handler teams in their work?**

Pet Partners and TAU Policies and Procedures are attached.

**9. What are your infection control policies for your therapy animal-handler teams?**

Pet Partners and TAU Infection Control Policies are attached.

**10. How often are your therapy animal-handler teams re-tested for suitability in their work? How do consumers know when their registration expires?**

Pet Partners teams are re-tested every two years to assure that they remain reliable, predictable, controllable, suitable for therapy work, and inspire confidence in the people with whom they work. Each team is issued a picture ID card that shows the environments in which they may work (Predictable or Complex) and the expiration date of their registration.

**11. How are therapy animal-handler teams qualified and assigned to different areas to serve?**

Pet Partners teams may choose their own environments in which to volunteer, in keeping with the rating that they have received. TAU staff visit and assess the facilities that request our therapy teams and match our teams to facilities and clients that suit them best.

**12. What kind of coaching/mentoring/continuing education do you provide for members?**

Pet Partners provides continuing education opportunities through their website, conferences and training throughout the U.S., and a newsletter, "Interactions." Therapy Animals of Utah also provides a newsletter, and invites all our handlers to refresh their skills free of charge by attending any training class or team evaluation. Our novice teams are mentored in new environments by seasoned handlers until all parties agree the novice teams are ready to visit alone.

**13. What sort of training is available for our staff to help us utilize your services more fully?**

Many printed resources are available through the Pet Partners website, and Pet Partners has a specific course for health care professionals, entitled "Animal Assisted Therapy Applications I." TAU has an AAT Applications Course Instructor on staff to provide facility training on request. In addition, TAU has a Staff Training Power Point presentation on DVD.

**14. Where can I find more information on animal-assisted therapy, supporting research, and techniques?**

Pet Partners has more information available on its website, [www.petpartners.org](http://www.petpartners.org). Other supporting research in peer-reviewed publications can be found on Google Scholar. Three of the primary international organizations that promote research in the benefits of human-animal interactions are ISAZ, HABRI, and IAHAO. For a professional reference on Animal-Assisted Therapy, we recommend [Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy](#), edited by Aubrey H. Fine. For activity resources for practitioners, we recommend [101 Creative Ideas for Animal-Assisted Therapy](#), edited by Stacy Grover, which is available for purchase from Therapy Animals of Utah or [www.aatideas.com](http://www.aatideas.com).

**15. How has your organization contributed to the field of animal-assisted therapy?**

Pet Partners funded the development and publication of [Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Activities and Animal-Assisted Therapy](#) in 1996. It is recognized throughout the world as an organization with standardized and rigorous requirements for training and testing of its registered Pet Partner therapy animal-human teams. Members are involved in current research studies all over the world. TAU teams are involved in research studies here in Utah.