



Therapaws of Michigan, Inc.

Sharing the Human-Animal Bond Through Canine-Assisted Therapy
PO Box 92, Dexter, MI 48130 | www.therapaws.org | info@therapaws.org

POLICIES & PROCEDURES (Amended August 24, 2016)

In accordance with our mission of using companion animals in therapeutic settings as an expression of sharing the human-animal bond, the program of Therapaws of Michigan, Inc. is characterized by the following policies, standards, and procedures carried out by the membership at large under the direction of the Board of Directors. It is each member's responsibility to know, understand, and follow the Guidelines put forth by Therapaws.

SECTION I: ADMINISTRATION

A. BOARD AND OFFICERS

1. The Board

- a. The general management of the affairs of Therapaws of Michigan, Inc. (Therapaws) shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors. (See Bylaws, Article II, Section 2.1.)
- b. The composition, size, length of term, procedures for filling vacancies, and procedures for removal are detailed in the Bylaws. (See Bylaws, Article II, Sections 2.2 to 2.5, and Article III, Sections 3.2 to 3.4.)
- c. All regular and special Board of Directors meetings are open to the membership. Upcoming meetings should be announced in The Woofers newsletter or via email. Members must notify the Board of planned attendance. Executive sessions are not open to the general membership. (See Bylaws, Article IV, Parts 4.2, 4.3).
- d. Order of Business of Board of Directors Meeting
 - Call to Order
 - Report of President
 - Introduction of Guests
 - Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting
 - Report of Treasurer
 - Report of Secretary
 - Committee Reports
 - Unfinished Business
 - New Business
 - Adjournment



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2. Officers: (see Bylaws)

- a. President
- b. Vice-President
- c. Secretary
- d. Treasurer
- e. Past President

B. COORDINATORS

1. Membership Coordinator

- a. Holds hard copies of records of membership.
- b. Updates membership information twice a year, January and July.
- c. Keeps Therapaws google.docs updated.
- d. Makes contact with the local Therapaws coordinators to answer questions or concerns.

2. Placement Coordinator

- a. Offers placement to new members of Therapaws. Criteria is based on facility openings and handler's interest as well as the dog being comfortable in the setting.
- b. Places applicant in a Therapaws-approved facility best suited for the team. The coordinator of the facility is sent information on new team.
- d. Once member is placed, membership coordinator is notified.

3. Facilities Coordinator-Hospitals

- a. Takes requests from their facility for additional teams.
- b. Maintains Therapaws-staff contacts at their facility.
- c. Oversees all Therapaws teams currently placed in their facility.
- d. Where required, arranges for an escort for Therapaws teams.
- e. Ensures that new handlers have completed the facility's volunteer orientation.
- f. Responds to any issues with Therapaws teams at the facility.



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4. Facilities Coordinator-Non Hospital

- a. If the facility is outside of Washtenaw County, Coordinator sends new member directly to facility, with instructions to meet with Activities Director of that facility, and instructs member how to get started in a facility. Coordinator will go with member if necessary or feasible.
- b. If the facility is in county, Coordinator makes arrangements for new member to meet activities director in facility. Oftentimes, Coordinator will go with new member or arrange another team member to accompany new team.
- c. Emails member periodically to see how things are going.
- d. Emails facility to see if teams are doing well, showing up on time, etc.
- e. Recruit other Therapaws members to be an assistant for this job.

5. Events Coordinator

- a. Sends an email to all members regarding a new event.
- b. Collects teams for event.
- c. Sets up time schedules and oversees event.
- d. Emails those attending to collect data on success of event.

6. Therapaws to READ Coordinator(s)

- a. Schedules with schools or libraries a program for the year, and explains the program to all involved.
- b. Takes all new READ requests from new members and sets up a shadow for new team of experienced team.
- c. Makes a schedule for the year for teams with alternates to substitute.
- d. Provides materials to READ teams to use (pencils provided by Therapaws, ideas, etc.)

SECTION II: OPERATING POLICIES, STANDARDS, AND PROCEDURES

A. GENERAL POLICIES: The program of Therapaws is characterized by the following features:

1. Handler/dog teams, registered with Alliance of Therapy Dogs (Formerly called TDInc.), make regularly scheduled visits to hospitals, assisted living facilities, psychiatric and rehabilitation centers, schools and libraries, as well as other community groups, where patients, residents, and other interested persons are seen on a one-on-one or group basis.
2. All visits are considered therapeutic and made on a paraprofessional level, following the guidance of appropriate staff where so indicated.



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3. Handler/dog teams are subject to the rules and regulations of the facility and its activities department or volunteer services where they are assigned.
4. Handler/dog teams shall adhere to the Rules and Regulations of Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Parts I, II and III, including especially the Governing Member Guidelines and to the Policies and Procedures of Therapaws as defined and specified herein.

B. CODE OF ETHICS

1. **Member Code:** A code of ethics is a set of principles mandating members' conduct when representing Therapaws during animal-assisted activities in assigned facilities and before the general public.
 - a. Your and your dog's actions exemplify therapy dogs to your facility, your community, and all with whom you come in contact.
 - b. Always advocate training methods that are in keeping with the best interest of the dog, the handler, and therapy dogs in general.
 - c. When visiting a facility always handle your dog and yourself in a manner that will bring credit to Therapaws.
 - d. Maintain strict confidentiality in all visitations.
 - e. Follow all facility procedures and work within their rules and standards.
2. **Organization and Board of Directors Code:** The code of ethics also reflects the professional position of the organization and the Board of Directors toward its members.
 - a. Therapaws will maintain all member records and member conflict/grievance issues in strict confidence.
 - b. Therapaws will not sell, loan, rent, or divulge personally members' identifiable information to anyone unless required by law, with the exception that donors may be listed in a newsletter unless anonymity is requested.
3. **Conflict of Interest Policy:** The Board of Directors and all Therapaws members shall scrupulously avoid any conflict between their respective individual interests and the interests of Therapaws in actions taken by them on behalf of Therapaws. Any possible conflict of interest shall be disclosed in writing in full detail to the Board of Directors and the person shall abstain from voting or otherwise attempting to influence the decisions on such actions. The disclosure as well as the abstention from voting shall be made a matter of record in the minutes of the meeting in question. Directors in potential conflict must be excused during the Board's review and subsequent vote on the decisions in question.



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C. PROCESS OF APPLICATION FOR THERAPAWS MEMBERSHIP

1. Role of Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD)

Alliance of Therapy Dogs is a national organization promoting canine-assisted therapy and providing liability insurance for their member therapy dogs. Every applicant for membership with Therapaws must first complete the testing, observations and membership application process for registration with Alliance of Therapy Dogs before becoming a member of Therapaws of Michigan, Inc. This requirement is mandatory.

2. Therapaws Membership Requirements

- a. Therapaws members must be registered members of Alliance of Therapy Dogs
- b. Dog handlers must be at least 18 years old to visit on their own, but may join the organization as junior handlers as defined by ATD.
- c. Dogs must be at least one (1) year old.
- d. All breeds and mixed breeds of dogs that have passed the Alliance of Therapy Dogs Testing/Observation protocol may apply to the Therapaws program. However, facilities served by Therapaws have the right to refuse visits from certain breeds, dogs or handlers at their discretion.
- e. For insurance reasons, wolves or wolf-hybrids and coyotes or coyote-hybrids may not be registered.
- f. Dogs must show no aggression in proximity of other dogs, regardless of whether they or the other dogs are on or off leash.
- g. A team must be able to physically navigate a facility on their own, without staff assistance, and be able to exit the building under their own power in case of an emergency. If the physical condition of the handler changes and they are unable to do this, they must report it to the Facility Coordinator, or to the Placement Coordinator if there is no Facility Coordinator.
- h. Additional screening may be required for some facilities.
- i. Therapaws asks for at least a 1-year commitment.
- j. Members must renew with Alliance of Therapy Dogs each year, and send a copy of their renewal to the Membership Coordinator by January 1 or July 1 depending on their renewal date, in order to remain a member of Therapaws. If a member misses the deadline, a \$25 fee will be imposed to reapply to Therapaws. Members can appeal this decision in a detailed letter or email to the Board or may discuss the case in person at a Board meeting.

3. Timeline for Alliance of Therapy Dogs Testing and Therapaws membership application

Applicants should follow these steps:

- a. Applicant contacts an Alliance of Therapy Dogs tester and schedules a test with that person.



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- b. The test by ATD Testers/Observers is performed according to the ATD criteria within 3 months of the applicant's request. The testing protocol is described in the Governing Member Guidelines and can be seen on the form obtained from the Alliance of Therapy Dogs website.
- c. After passing the Test, including observations following the Test, applicant mails the completed and signed ATD Test forms, Release of Claims, proof of rabies vaccination, and ATD Membership Application with the registration fee to Alliance of Therapy Dogs in Cheyenne, WY.
- d. When applicant receives the Alliance of Therapy Dogs membership card and the heart-shaped membership dog tag, they will apply to Therapaws of Michigan by filling out the application at Therapaws.org.
- e. A Therapaws Coordinator will contact the applicant.
- f. Applicant may be required to have screening done by Therapaws before proceeding with the registration process. The purpose of this is to match the team with the correct facility.
- g. Therapaws registration process consists of submitting the following to the Membership Coordinator: the Hold Harmless agreement found on Therapaws.org, the \$25 application fee, a copy of the member's Alliance of Therapy Dogs membership card showing both sides of the card.
- h. On receipt of registration materials, new member will receive a new member packet in the mail.
- i. New member will email placement coordinator for an assignment.

4. Placement of Therapaws Handler/Dog Teams

- a. The Placement Coordinator will suggest a team's placement.
- b. Assignments in hospitals are made according to need for teams in any facility.
- c. There may be a mandatory registration process at certain facilities.
- d. Dogs at work: Alliance of Therapy Dogs has a clear policy about the use of your therapy dog at work. Therapaws concurs with that policy. You may not use your volunteer therapy dog during hours when you are working as an employee at the same facility.

D. VISITATION PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS. Note: It is mandatory that Therapaws members, as registered members of ATD observe and comply with all ATD Rules and Regulations, Standards, Guidelines, Tips and Hints in the current Member Handbook. These documents may also be viewed on the Alliance of Therapy Dogs website at: www.therapydogs.com.

1. Dog Health Standards

- a. Complete annual physical exam by veterinarian.
- b. Current on all routine vaccinations based on the veterinarian's recommendations, as well as on any additional immunizations requested by the visited facility(ies). In lieu of a rabies vaccine, proof of



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your annual report of rabies titer levels of 0.5 IU or higher are acceptable when accompanied by a letter from your veterinarian.

- c. Free of internal parasites (negative fecal test repeated annually).
- d. Free of external parasites (fleas, ticks, etc.). **Note:** any external insecticide treatment must be administered not less than three days in advance of a visit to prevent contact with possible harmful residues.
- e. Negative annual heartworm test and application of heartworm preventative.

2. Dog Temperament Standards

- a. Follow basic commands while walking on a four (4)-foot loose leash attached to an approved collar.
- b. Gentle and mellow temperament/behavior; used to traveling in cars.
- c. Well-socialized — eager to meet people, accepts handling, including feet and tail.
- d. Calm response to different people calling name at the same time.
- e. Able to be placed in position, stay and remain calm when touched by strangers.
- f. Able to maneuver between crowded furnishings and equipment.
- g. Tolerant of sudden loud noises, voices, reaching hands, approaching wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc.
- h. Positive response to “Leave it” command for food or other unpermitted items.
- i. No sniffing of trays, commodes, urinals, etc.

3. Appearance and Condition of Visiting Dog

- a. Clean, odorless coat, well brushed to remove maximum amount of loose hair.
- b. Clean teeth, clear eyes, trimmed nails.
- c. Dogs should not be fed for at least two hours prior to visit.
- d. Make sure dog has eliminated before making a visit.
- e. Unaltered female dogs must not be “in season” when participating in therapy visits.

4. Handler Standards

- a. Be neat, well groomed, punctual.
- b. Be sociable and friendly, extend empathy but not sympathy, be a good listener.
- c. Maintain strict confidentiality.
- e. Be familiar and comply with facility standards, rules, and procedures.
- f. Offer no food to patients and/or residents.
- g. Notify facility coordinator at least 24 hours in advance, when possible, if you are unable to make a regular visit.
- h. Keep your dog at least 2 feet from any other dog at all times.
- i. Observe your dog for signs of stress, fatigue, disinterest, over time.



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- j. A handler must not hand his or her dog to a standing person so that person can hold the therapy dog. If a person wants to hold the dog, the handler should place the dog on the person's lap while the person is sitting, and the handler must also remove the dog when the visit is over. In addition, a dog being held by a person receiving a visit must not be passed to another person except by the handler. The handler must have the dog's leash in his or her hand at all times.

5. Animal Welfare

- a. Visits to a facility should be limited to two (2) hours or less if inside and/or outside temperatures are uncomfortably high.
- b. Availability of an area and dish to provide water for the dog.
- c. Availability of an outside area, if possible not in direct view of residents/patients, where dog can be exercised, and location of a receptacle for disposal of any waste. Note: Handlers must carry bag(s) with them for cleanup.
- d. Handler has the right to terminate a visit if dog shows signs of stress.

E. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Facilities will determine scheduling of visits and give professional assistance where needed or required.
2. Infectious diseases: The facility administration and/or escort or supervisory staff member will inform handler of any infectious and/or contagious diseases in a certain room or area. The appropriateness of a visit will be evaluated on an individual basis.
 - a. Precautions: If necessary, an alcohol wipe for the dog's head and/or body where it has been touched may be requested by the handler and/or staff to prevent dog from becoming a vector.
 - b. Use of wipes for patients' hands after contact with dog is at the option of staff and/or patient.

F. CHANGE OF PLACEMENT

1. Any team member may apply to the Placement or Facility Coordinator for a change of placement.
2. Any team member may request a leave of absence from the Placement or Facility Coordinator.

G. ONE-TIME EVENTS

1. Participation by Therapaws teams in special events is optional for members in good standing.
2. Teams must inform the Event Coordinator of planned participation.
3. Members will be notified via email of upcoming one-time events.



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H. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

In view of the professional, ethical, and legal responsibilities of the healthcare facilities where Therapaws teams are working by invitation, and the fact that animal-assisted therapy is an unquantifiable activity whose success rests on trust and collaboration, any grievance, whether originating from the facility or a Therapaws member, shall be resolved with tact, without rancor, and in a spirit of compromise. Every effort shall be made to settle problems expeditiously, calmly, and in absolute confidence. Communication regarding grievances must follow the guidelines below. Failure to communicate grievances via the appropriate channels may result in Therapaws membership termination.

1. Facility Complaints

- a. Any accident or injury representing an insurance matter must be reported by the member immediately to the facility, and to the facility coordinator, who will complete an Incident Form and report to Alliance of Therapy Dogs.
- b. Other problems shall be handled in confidence between the pertinent facility supervisor and Therapaws facility coordinator, in accordance with Therapaws Rules and Regulations.

2. Member Complaints

- a. Complaints by members shall be immediately taken to the pertinent facility coordinator, or to the Therapaws Board of Directors if there is no facility coordinator or it is an issue surrounding a one-time event.
- b. Any member complaint must be documented by the member, submitted in writing to the facility coordinator (or if none, then the Board.)
- c. Members must NOT contact Alliance of Therapy Dogs with grievances before they have contacted their coordinator or the Therapaws Board.

3. Dog Behavior Complaints

- a. Any complaint made by anyone regarding a member's dog's behavior while on a Therapaws assignment or event should be reported to the facility coordinator, or if there is none, then the Therapaws Board immediately. The member will be contacted and expected to work with the Board to resolve the behavior issue or re-screen the dog.

4. Therapaws Termination Procedure

- a. Refer to governing member guidelines in the Alliance of Therapy Dogs member handbook.
- b. The recommendation to terminate a team by a facility coordinator will be made to the Therapaws Board of Directors, who will make the final decision.

5. Appeals Procedure

- a. If a team wishes to appeal a decision of termination by the Board, they may present their case at a Board meeting.



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SECTION III: PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH

A. PUBLICITY

1. Dissemination of information to the appropriate media, such as recognition of outstanding performance by a team, new Board members, sponsored events, etc., depending upon the size of the community and media outlets.
2. Production of a newsletter, our website, and a Facebook site connection.
3. Maintenance of files of all publicity and outreach information and its use for the records of Therapaws.

B. COMMUNITY VISITS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

1. Establish contact with the general public, schools, health care facilities, etc.