

# THERAPY DOGS INCORPORATED RULES AND REGULATIONS

## Part I

### GOVERNING MEMBER GUIDELINES

**Failure to adhere to the Therapy Dogs Inc. Governing Member Guidelines, Code of Ethics or Policies will jeopardize your membership in Therapy Dogs Inc.**

#### **I. The organization:**

1. **Therapy Dogs Inc.** is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization. We do not accept monetary reimbursement for any of the services our members provide. Donations are welcome. All requests to use the registered Therapy Dogs Inc. name, logo, slogan must be submitted in writing to the president. The requestor will be notified in writing whether permission is granted. Permission to add the link [www.therapydogs.com](http://www.therapydogs.com) to a personal website is not needed. Permission to add the logo and link will not be granted to any for-profit websites.
2. **Membership is a privilege**, not a right, granted by the Therapy Dogs Inc. Board of Directors through the various committees appointed to represent and protect the interests and safety of the organization.

#### **II. Description of therapy work and members:**

3. **Handler/Dog teams only:** Therapy Dogs Inc. registers only handler/dog teams. A prospective member, or current member testing with a new dog, must own or have had a close relationship with the dog for a minimum of 3 months before testing. For insurance reasons, Therapy Dogs Inc. cannot register wolves or wolf-hybrids or coyotes or coyote-hybrids because the rabies vaccination has not been proven to be effective with these animals. Membership is open to handlers with all other breeds of dogs. Therapy Dogs Inc. does not certify, register or train dogs to be service dogs, guide dogs, hearing dogs or any type of assistance dogs.
4. **Therapy dog functions, insurance and red heart tag:** Therapy Dogs Inc. provides liability insurance that protects you from claims of others for injury, illness and property damage resulting from therapeutic visitation with your dog. This coverage does not protect you or your dog from injury or illness as a result of participation in this program. Coverage applies to the Therapy Dogs Inc. registered handler/dog team functioning as a therapy dog team at a visit or event such as described below. Members are covered only when Therapy Dogs Inc. is the primary insurance and there is no other insurance (whether from the facility or another organization) in effect while they are visiting.

If a claim is filed on your behalf by Therapy Dogs Inc., and it is determined that you were not following the Therapy Dogs Inc. rules at the time of the incident, you may be required to reimburse Therapy Dogs Inc. for any monies paid out on the claim.

A therapy dog function may include, but is not limited to, making visits at a facility such as hospital, nursing home, library, school, detention center, hospice care center, etc. Therapy visits can also be for community events such as a parade, educational seminar, dog breed

showcase, public educational event, or event promoting or describing the national Therapy Dogs Inc. organization. At such an event, if the dog is displaying the red heart Therapy Dogs Inc. tag, the team is representing Therapy Dogs Inc. Dogs may not wear Therapy Dogs Inc. identification, including the red heart-shaped tag, at any other time. Identification from other independently insured pet therapy organizations is prohibited when representing Therapy Dogs Inc., including during the Therapy Dogs Inc. registration process.

Members who take their dogs to work with them and/or use them in their jobs, including, but not limited to, teachers, therapists, doctors or psychologists, are not covered by Therapy Dogs Inc. insurance when functioning as employees. During such times the dog must not display any official Therapy Dogs Inc. identification.

#### 5. **Assistance Dogs and two dogs on visits:**

If a member has a therapy dog that is also the member's assistance dog, official Therapy Dogs Inc. therapy dog identification should not be displayed while the assistance dog is assisting the member in restaurants, stores, flights etc. Therapy Dogs Inc. is not liable for damages caused by the handler's use of medical equipment during visits including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, electric chairs, scooters, walkers, canes or crutches.

Therapy Dogs Inc. does not allow members to handle two dogs at the same time on a Therapy Dogs Inc. visit, including an assistance dog and a therapy dog. The only exceptions for a two-dog team are for special events, such as parades or public events, and these must be approved by the Alternative Review Committee.

#### 6. **Junior handler requirements:** The minimum age requirement for regular Therapy Dogs Inc. membership is 18. Where permitted by the facility, a prospective junior member/handler aged 12 through 17 may accompany a T/O on one visit before being tested.

The junior member/handler must be accompanied at all times by a regular Therapy Dogs Inc. member, with or without a dog, **and** a parent/guardian during testing and on all visits. If the parent/guardian is also a Therapy Dogs Inc. member, he/she may not bring an additional dog but may handle the junior's dog if also registered with that dog. Upon reaching the age of 18, the handler is required to contact the office and sign a release of claims for the Therapy Dogs Inc. member files.

### III. **Visits:**

#### 7. **Starting a visit:** The visit or event begins as soon as you reach the facility property, including the parking lot. All rules must be followed at this time.

#### 8. **Items required on visits:** Handlers must carry a current membership card, and dogs must wear the official red heart-shaped Therapy Dogs Inc. identification tag when representing Therapy Dogs Inc. on visits or events. Members must have written proof of their dog's vaccinations readily available at each visit, either carried with them, or in the car and available upon request.

#### 9. **Ask before entering:** Always ask before bringing your dog up to a person for visiting. If you

are entering a room, make sure everyone in the room wishes to have the dog visit. If one person does **not** want a visit, ask that person if it is OK to visit with others in the room. If not, do not enter the room.

10. **Frequency of visits:** Therapy Dogs Inc. requires a minimum of one visit every three months per handler/dog team. If a team fails to make these four visits in one year, they must be observed at least one time by a Therapy Dogs Inc. Tester/Observer (T/O).
11. **Guests on visits:** Anyone accompanying a Therapy Dogs Inc. registered team on a visit (e.g., family member, spouse, friend) must not require assistance from the handler and must be at least 18 years old. Facilities must give permission for all visitors.
12. **Facility regulations:** Therapy dog teams must strictly adhere to all rules and regulations in each facility. If these rules are unclear, ask a staff member or activities director to explain them. Therapy Dogs Inc. members will not provide chemical substances or apply them to their dog unless authorized or provided by the facility. Substances include, but are not limited to, hand sanitizers, hand wipes, or lotions.

**Do not give food, water, or assistance to a patient or resident, even if asked.** Notify a staff member if help is needed.

**Read and obey all warning signs on room doors,** such as “ISOLATION” or “INFECTIOUS, DO NOT ENTER.” Handlers must stay alert to their surroundings at all times. If any facility rules conflict directly with Therapy Dogs Inc. Rules and Regulations, please contact the Therapy Dogs Inc. office.

13. **Walking the dog in a facility:** Dogs may not precede handlers down halls, around corners, at doorways or at stairways. Stand back while waiting for an elevator door to open. When the door opens, wait to assure safe exit of passengers. If the elevator is occupied, the handler must ask permission to enter with the dog.
14. **Cell phones:** Member/handlers must not make or receive calls or text messages using a cell phone inside a facility. Pagers and cell phones must be set on silent or vibrate while inside a facility. If the use of a phone becomes necessary, handlers must excuse themselves temporarily and complete the call outside the facility.

#### **IV. Health Requirements:**

15. **Dog health requirements:** Dogs must have an annual physical examination, including a fecal check, by a veterinarian. They must be current on their rabies vaccination and any other vaccines as advised by their veterinarian. Veterinary reports of titer levels of 0.5 IU or higher are acceptable and must be measured every two years to ensure levels are acceptable. Maternity leave is required for pregnant bitches from 30 days prior to whelping date to 60 days after whelping. Bitches in season will not participate in therapy visits. Dogs who have any fresh wounds, recent surgery, injuries or infections may not do pet therapy visits until recovered and healed. Dogs must also be free of any drugs or substances that might affect performance.
16. **Registered dog developing disabilities and/or stress:** The member/handler must notify

the Therapy Dogs Inc. office if the dog has developed any disability since the initial testing, or shows signs of physical and/or mental distress during visits. The handler/dog team will need to be retested with one observation before continuing any visits.

17. **Handler health requirements and developing medical issues:** Handlers who have any fresh wounds, recent surgery, other injuries, infections or any condition which may inhibit the ability to handle the dog safely may not do pet therapy visits until recovered and healed. Any member/handler who has had any medical condition change, even if temporary, since initial testing that may impede their ability to safely handle their dog, including but not limited to: stroke, broken limb, weakened strength, change in disability, change in mental or emotional condition etc., must notify the Therapy Dogs Inc. office and may need to be retested and/or observed before continuing any visits.

## V. Grooming Requirements

18. **Dog grooming requirements:** Participating dogs must be clean and well groomed, have trimmed/filed nails, clean teeth, be free of internal and external parasites, and in good general health. If used, topical flea and tick preventative must be applied a minimum of three days prior to any pet therapy visits. Flea and tick prevention collars shall not be worn during Therapy Dogs Inc. visits.
19. **Handler grooming requirements:** While participating in therapy visits, handlers must be clean, well groomed, and without influence of alcohol and/or drugs that would impair safety or judgment. Handlers must be able to act quickly enough to remove themselves and their dogs without assistance from a facility in the event of an emergency. All visited facilities must be informed of any medical conditions that would affect the team's ability to perform volunteer duties.

## VI. Attire and Equipment

20. **Handler attire:** Skimpy or tight-fitting attire including short shorts, tank tops, and bare midriffs are not allowed. Wear sensible, safe walking shoes with backs or at least a strap around the heel (no flip-flops, high heels, spike heels or shoes without backs).
21. **Dog equipment: Equipment that is not allowed includes clickers, retractable, elastic/bungee or chain leashes, pinch, prong, spiked or electronic collars.** Collars, including slip, buckle, quick release, martingale, limited slip, or any other smooth collars made of chain, nylon or leather, are acceptable. Leashes must be 4 feet in length or shorter and made of material strong enough for the size/strength of the dog. The use of a traffic leash is recommended for large dogs. Leashes may not be tied or folded to make them 4 feet in length or shorter after the handling test and first observation are completed. The collar should fit snugly enough so the dog cannot easily back out of the collar or slip it off of his/her head. A slip collar should be correctly worn so it releases properly as designed. Head halters and body halters/harnesses made of fabric webbing or leather with metal or plastic buckles are acceptable. Body halters/harnesses fastened with Velcro® or metal clothing snaps are not allowed. Dogs wearing a body halter/harness or a head halter must also wear an approved collar.

22. **Dog strollers:** Therapy Dogs Inc. members no longer need to apply for an exception to use a stroller if it is made specifically for dogs. They must have a T/O observe them one time with their dog in the stroller and submit an observation form to the office along with a picture showing that the dog is secured in the stroller, wearing an approved collar and on a 4 foot or shorter leash held by the handler.

## VII. Safety precautions:

23. **Two foot rule:** Dogs must be kept at least two feet from other dogs and animals at all time while representing Therapy Dogs Inc. on a visit or event. If members choose to take group photos with dogs posed less than two feet apart, they will be done at the members' own risk, and the facility must be notified that Therapy Dogs Inc. insurance is not in effect.
24. **Your dog is your first priority:** While participating on an official Therapy Dogs Inc. visit, a handler must have their attention on their dog for the safety and welfare of their therapy dog as well as those whom they visit. Do not become so comfortable that you become careless. Excuse yourself and your dog from any situation you do not believe will be a positive experience for all involved. Never put yourself or your dog in a questionable or threatening situation.
25. **Stay alert:** A Therapy Dogs Inc. handler must be alert to their surroundings at all times. Handlers may not participate in activities that take their attention from their dog, including, but not limited to, reading to a group, directing bingo or playing a piano.
26. **Only handlers may handle their dogs:** Handlers must never leave their dog alone with staff, patients or visitors. Dogs must be kept on a 4 foot or shorter leash held only by the member/handler. The leash must be held by the member's hand and may not be hooked or attached to the member's body, belt, any chair, wall, purse or other person, etc.
27. **Dogs off leash/others leash walking handler's dog:** If safe conditions exist, a dog may be taken off leash when performing tricks, demonstrations, and with assisting with therapy such as retrieving. Only one dog at a time may be off leash. Dogs may no longer be off leash when posing for photos while on a visit. If one additional person wants to walk the dog, the handler may use two leashes or a 2-loop leash with the handler always holding the shorter leash or loop so that control of the dog is always maintained by the handler.
28. **Dogs on furniture:** The Therapy Dogs Inc. member/handler must know and strictly adhere to the facility policy concerning dogs on any furniture. This is for all furniture, including, but not limited to, chairs, couches, wheelchairs, beds or physical therapy beds/pads.
- If the facility policy allows and permission from the patient/guardian is given, Therapy Dogs Inc. allows dogs weighing less than 10 pounds to be placed in laps and dogs weighing less than 50 pounds to be placed onto occupied beds.
  - When space allows, dogs of any size may be lifted and safely placed by the handler onto occupied furniture such as a couch or loveseat. Dogs weighing more than 50 pounds may never be placed onto occupied beds.

- Therapy dogs are not allowed onto any occupied bed, chair or wheelchair unless that practice is allowed by the facility and the resident/patient has given permission. Only with this permission may the handler lift the dog onto and remove it from the occupied bed, chair or locked wheelchair without injury to the resident/patient.
- Teams should use clean linens on the patient's/resident's lap or bed either provided by the facility or personal pads brought along.
- The handler must also control the dog's head while in this position.
- For safety reasons, Therapy Dogs Inc. will allow only one dog at a time on any occupied furniture as described above.
- Be cautious with patients who might have existing or recent injuries or surgery with regard to placement of the dog so as not to cause an injury with the dog's feet or body weight. Always ask if the person has a sore spot or if there is an area which you should avoid when placing the dog.
- Remember to watch for tubes, lines, and other medical equipment.

### VIII. Special permission:

29. **Special permission:** It is Therapy Dogs Inc. policy not to grant exceptions to the rules due to safety and insurance reasons. For example, two dogs with one handler are never allowed on any visit or reading program while representing Therapy Dogs Inc.

Therapy Dogs Inc. sometimes grants special permission for certain circumstances. Members may apply to the Alternative Review Committee by submitting a cover letter explaining the reason for their request. If the request involves special equipment, such as a dog carrier or cart, a picture of the dog with the equipment is required. Certain requests may also require letters of reference from someone directly involved or those who will need to be aware of these situations (e.g. a facility, hospital, school, etc.) Obtain the appropriate information from the Therapy Dogs Inc. office.

Special permission may be granted for the following:

- Handlers with assistance dogs
- One handler handling more than one dog during a public relations event such as a parade (maximum of two dogs through special permission approval)
- Two or more dogs are participating in a trick, demonstration or presentation
- Special equipment or devices, such as carts and dog carriers, etc.

If a handler chooses to engage in a behavior/activity that is outside of these guidelines without permission, the handler must remove the dog's official Therapy Dogs Inc. red-heart shaped tag and notify a facility supervisor that Therapy Dogs Inc. insurance is not in effect for the duration of the behavior/activity.

## IX. Legal issues:

30. **Privacy:** Observe all rules of privacy and confidentiality as required by HIPAA. Never discuss a patient's health or personal issues with the patient or anyone else.
31. **Photos** may not be taken without prior written permission of the subject (or guardian) and a representative of the facility. Members must use a Therapy Dogs Inc. Photo Authorization form for any submission to Therapy Dogs Inc.-owned publications or social media.
32. **Expenses and taxes:** Therapy Dogs Inc. members may not provide information regarding to whether expenses resulting from volunteer activities are tax deductible. Anyone having questions about whether certain expenses are tax deductible should be told to seek the advice of their tax preparer or the Internal Revenue Service, not other Therapy Dogs Inc. members, the board of directors or the Therapy Dogs Inc. office.
33. **Incident or Injury:** If an incident or injury to an employee, resident, or visitor in the facility occurs while representing Therapy Dogs Inc.:
  - Immediately contact the facility's supervisor on duty.
  - If the incident is a suspected bite, end the visit immediately.
  - Document the incident on all required forms for the facility.
  - Immediately contact the Therapy Dogs Inc. office and report the incident. If after hours or weekend please leave a voice message and make contact with the Therapy Dogs Inc. office during the next business day.

**Suspected dog bite:** If a registered dog is suspected of a dog bite, whether to another dog or to a person, the dog should not participate in any pet therapy work until the bite incident is investigated by Therapy Dogs Inc.

34. **Felonies:** If a member has been convicted of a felony that has not been previously reported to the Therapy Dogs Inc. office, he/she must do so.

## IX. In Conclusion:

**Therapy Dogs Inc. reserves the right to deny, revoke or not renew membership. At the discretion of the Therapy Dogs Inc. Board of Directors, a handler/dog team will be asked to temporarily or permanently refrain from further visits under the name of Therapy Dogs Inc. if they fail to comply strictly with these Rules and Regulations (or) as provided by Article III Section 4 of the Therapy Dogs Inc. By-Laws. Should this action be necessary, the handler will be requested to return the official red heart-shaped Therapy Dogs Inc. identification tag and membership card to the Therapy Dogs Inc. office.**