

# **Nashville**



# **Therapy Pets**

**Membership Guidelines  
and  
Policies & Procedures**



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

Nashville Therapy Pets (NTP) loves pets of all shapes and sizes! Any certifiable therapy pet and handler that wants to serve their community is welcome with us! The following are our guidelines for membership as well as our training protocols and policies and procedures:

- NTP is a 100% volunteer organization. Once certified, teams will be able to sign-up and attend visits on their own schedule of availability. Teams are never required to go to a specific visit, even if a facility specifically asks for a certain team. The facilities we visit should always treat teams with respect and be courteous to our volunteers. We want our volunteers to enjoy their work and want to visit these facilities. If a problem with a facility ever arises contact the NTP offices immediately. As volunteers your time is valuable and important to NTP. Our goal is to make sure teams enjoy themselves at every venue they serve at and love the work they do, otherwise teams will not want to continue serving!
  - As a charitable, volunteer organization we are unable to accept gifts from facilities. Receiving gifts is not why we do this work. If they insist, please ask them to send a monetary donation instead. Always be polite and courteous to those offering their gratitude for the work our members do.
- **All NTP teams consist of 1 handler and 1 pet.** Even if a handler is certified with multiple animals, they may only handle 1 pet at a time while on a visit.
- **Pets must be a minimum of 18 months in age to begin the application process** including testing. **If your pet is a rescue** and the age is unknown, you must have owned or adopted the pet and **it lived with you for a minimum of 9 months**. All applications will require you to submit paperwork from a breeder, rescue, or shelter showing the pet's age and/or adoption date.
  - **All owners are their pet's advocates!** We strongly believe this at NTP, you should know your pet and have a strong bond with them before beginning any therapy work training. You should know the signs or signals your pet emits when it is stressed or unhappy. Therapy work is not for every pet nor every owner. Certifying a pet that is not suited for therapy work or that does not have the temperament for therapy work only puts others at risk and causes your pet and yourself stress. As part of our training and certification process you will enter a variety of environments and situations with your pet. If you do not have a strong bond or know your pet well, you put yourself and others at risk of injury from your pet. If you do have a strong bond and know your pet well, you will come out of our training and certification process with an even stronger bond and a new sense of purpose with your pet. However, we will not certify a team that is a liability to others, so please make sure you know your pet's temperament and behaviors well before beginning this process. There is information on signs of stress in animals in the helpful training documents.



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- All certified service animals or certified emotional support animals will be excluded from membership. Those pets have other important jobs to do and we at NTP would never want to distract from those very important jobs. We applaud these pets on the service and work they do for their humans every single day.
  - As such we do not support certified therapy pets receiving special treatment while visiting businesses, not doing therapy work or while flying on an airplane. NTP identification badges and insurance are only valid while participating on sanctioned NTP therapy visits.
  - We at NTP would never want to harm or jeopardize a service animal's standing in our community by misusing our therapy animals training simply for our own ease.
- The focus of NTP is service to our community. We will not certify pets where the primary visits or majority of visits they attend are to the owner or handler's place of employment (this includes handler's spouses places of work and children in the home's schools). We understand that many businesses and/or counselors benefit from having in-house therapy pets, but that is not our goal or aim and our training structure and protocols are not geared towards that type of therapy work. NTP insurance will not cover a team while the handler is working at their place of employment.
- **All pets must have a clean bite record or history.** Those known to have bitten someone previously will not be able to proceed with the application process. Any pets with a history of aggression will not be allowed to become certified.
- NTP does not require pets to be spayed or neutered. However, females in-heat are not permitted to attend visits while in cycle due to sanitary restrictions, even if diapers are worn.
- NTP does not have any breed restrictions or prohibitions. Due to insurance purposes all wolf, coyote, or hybrids of either species are prohibited.
- NTP currently recognizes several classes of mammal and avian species, the most common are Canines and Felines. NTP offices reserve the right to refuse membership to any animal they deem to be unsafe for insurance purposes. All pets applying for membership must be able to wear a collar or harness with a leash or a halter with a lead rope or a flying leash. Reptiles such as snakes, caiman, alligators, monitor lizards, snapping turtles, and crocodiles are prohibited. All wildlife species such as domesticated raccoons, foxes, and squirrels are prohibited.
- All pets should be in good physical health to participate in therapy work. All pets should visit their veterinarian annually to receive a complete physical exam. Proof of the pet's most recent physical exam should be submitted with your application and at each membership renewal.



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- **All pets must be current on their rabies vaccine** in accordance with Tennessee state laws. Owners will be required to present proof of current vaccination or a passed rabies titer test with their application, as well as each year at membership renewal.
  - Many facilities may require additional recommended “core vaccines” in dogs. NTP HIGHLY recommends all dogs be current on their Distemper-Parvo (Da2pp or DHLPP) vaccine as well as their Bordetella (Kennel Cough) vaccine, as most teams will commonly be in contact with other dogs. The Canine Influenza vaccine is also recommended.
  - Many facilities may require additional recommended “core vaccines” in cats. NTP HIGHLY recommends all cats to be current on their Distemper vaccine (FVRCP or FVRCP-C). The Feline Leukemia vaccine is also recommended.
  - A rabies vaccine is often required in ferrets as well. Rabbits are recommended to receive the RHDV2 vaccine. There are no current vaccine requirements for birds. All equines should have a Coggins test performed annually. There are no current vaccine requirements for alpaca/llamas. There are no current vaccine requirements for reptiles.
  - If your pet is medically excluded from vaccines due to an auto-immune disorder, previous cancer diagnosis, or other medical condition, you must submit a letter from your veterinarian stating such, including at each annual membership renewal. Most pets with such conditions may experience additional medical issues due to stress if they participate in therapy work. Please be sure to consult your veterinarian if this applies to your pet. No matter how great a pet may be at therapy work and spreading joy and happiness we at NTP would never want to risk shortening your time with your pet.
- NTP recommends all therapy pets be microchipped. This ensures safe return of a possibly scared pet in the event of an accident or medical emergency while your pet is away from home.
- **All pets must be clean and free of fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites to begin their training and throughout their membership.**
  - A monthly or quarterly flea and tick preventative is HIGHLY recommended for all pets to avoid the possible transfer of parasites to those we are serving.
  - A monthly or quarterly heartworm and intestinal parasite preventative is also HIGHLY recommended in cats and dogs. Pets pick up intestinal parasites from the dirt outside and it is very easy to not know when a pet is infected. Heartworm disease is spread by mosquitos and can infect indoor pets. A monthly or quarterly preventative of this kind is recommended by all veterinarians for all cats and dogs. This can often be a combination pill, topical, or chewable treat with your pet’s flea and tick prevention.



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- All pets other than cats and dogs should also be free of intestinal parasites. Please consult your veterinarian to ensure your pet is parasite free before beginning visits.
- All pets should be clean and well-groomed when doing therapy work. If you have a pet that is also a working pet on a farm, please make sure the pet is dust, dirt, hay, and odor free for all visits.
- All pet's nails should be trimmed to remove sharp edges and tips prior to attending visits. Smoothing, sanding, or dremmeling nails is recommended to prevent accidental scratches and scuffs especially to facilities with senior citizens and/or children.
  - Declawing cats is not a requirement of therapy work.
  - Large bird species beaks should be trimmed also.
- All pets applying for NTP membership should have good dispositions and excellent temperaments. See the helpful documents section for more detailed information on what personality traits therapy pets should possess.
  - Pets should have limited vocalizations while on visits. Dogs that bark or whine excessively will not be able to pass the NTP Training Test. Please bear in mind that some dog breeds tend to be more vocal than others. But excessive and/or loud whining or barking is not acceptable behavior for therapy pets working on visits as it may scare or startle those we are serving.
- All handlers should be 18 years of age or older and able-bodied. If a handler has recently undergone a medical procedure that hinders their mobility or ability to control their pet, they should wait until they have received medical clearance before resuming visits.
- **All handlers should also have a clean and well-groomed appearance.** Handlers should not arrive at a visit in excessively worn or torn clothing. They should be dressed modestly and appropriate for the work they are doing. They should be clean, have neat and kept hair, and be odor-free. Closed toed shoes are recommended in most facilities, but not always required. Jewelry should be minimal and not a danger to those we are serving. Handlers should avoid excessive use of colognes, perfumes, body sprays, and lotions. **All handlers should be free of recreational drugs and alcohol on visits.** This includes marijuana/weed/pot and CBD oils. **There will be no smoking or vaping while on visits or while at any facility a team is visiting** (including the parking lot). Many senior facilities tend to run their thermostats higher than normal; handlers should be prepared for these temperature changes and may want to consider wearing light layers.



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- **All pets are required to wear a collar, harness, or halter on visits.** Collars or harnesses should be cloth, leather, or nylon. Metal choke collars and cloth martingale collars for dogs are also accepted. For the safety of those we are serving metal prong, metal pinch, spiked, or studded collars are NOT permitted in dogs. Large, bulky collars such as electric fence, bark, and shock collars are NOT permitted. Plastic pinch collars with no gaps may be allowed on some dogs in special cases. Head halters and Gentle Leaders are also NOT permitted in dogs. An ID tag with the handler's contact information should always be on the pet. Extra-large ID tags or excessive numbers of tags on a pet should be avoided. All hoofstock (equines, alpacas, llamas, goats, and cattle) are required to wear a halter with a lead rope. Pigs are allowed to wear a harness or a collar. All Small Animals (rabbits, bunnies, hares, guinea pigs, ferrets, and rats) and Reptiles (iguanas, bearded dragons, turtles, and tortoises) should wear harnesses and birds should have flying leashes. All Training Tests or Skills Evaluations must be administered with the pet wearing the collar, harness, or halter they plan to wear while doing therapy work. All pets applying for membership must be able to wear a collar or harness with a leash or a halter with a lead rope or a flying leash.
- **All pets will be on a four (4-foot) foot cloth, leather, or nylon leash or an eight (8-foot) lead rope while on visits and in training.** Retractable leashes, slip lead leashes, and chain leashes are prohibited. Leashes over 4 feet in length are not permitted in cats, dogs, small animals, and reptiles. Eight-foot lead ropes are only permitted in hoofstock animals. All birds should have flying leashes. Leashes must hook or clip onto the pet's collar or harness. Leashes should never be hooked to "break-away" collars. Pets will remain on leash/lead and in the handler's control the entire time they are on a visit. Handlers should always remain in control of their pet's leash/lead. Training Tests or Skills Evaluations must be administered with the pet wearing the leash or lead they would while doing therapy work.
- **Handlers are required to wear their NTP ID badges** at all times while on visits. Handlers also have the option of purchasing and wearing a NTP name tag once they become members. Handlers are encouraged to wear any NTP apparel they have or animal inspired apparel they have while on visits. **NTP recommends all pets wear a NTP vest or NTP bandana while on visits.** Training Teams are required to wear a training name tag and have a "in training" leash wrap. These items are required to be returned to the NTP offices with your application packet so future training teams can use them as well.
- **Handlers should have supplies for their pets with them at all times, including poop bags.** Handlers should come to visits prepared with any needs their pet might have in mind. Small bags such as fanny packs, over-the-shoulder purses, belt bags, backpacks or treat pouches are recommended for each handler to take on visits. Large bags or purses are not recommended. Pets may need water, bowls, poop bags, or a washcloth/small hand towel for drool or wet paws in the rain. These bags also serve as a good place for cell phones and car keys without loading down your pockets or having to carry larger bulker bags on visits.



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- Treats or snacks are allowed for pets while attending visits, including supervised visits. However, all food items used as treats/snacks must be provided by the handler. Additionally, the handler is only allowed to offer treats/snacks to their own pet. This is to avoid dietary restrictions and/or food allergies of other therapy pets on a visit with the team. Also, only the handler is allowed to hand feed their pet. No facility personnel, staff, residents, or guests we are visiting are allowed to hand the pet food, even if the handler provides it. This is to avoid possible accidental injury. Even the gentlest of therapy pets can cause accidental injury due to unknown medical conditions of those we are visiting with.
- All handlers should plan to arrive at a facility for a visit a few minutes before the visit start time to let pets meet and greet each other before meeting those they are serving. This will help avoid any altercations between pets and make sure there are no issues between pets before the visit starts. Handlers are their pet's advocates and as such should never feel ashamed at having to remove your pet from a visit if you think a problem may arise with another team. Teams can always arrange to meet at a later date to work on interactions with one another in a safe environment, away from people they could injure. Pets that are on visits are there to serve those at the facility we are visiting, pets should not be focused on the other animals on the visit with them. Teams should give each other space to work while on a visit without the pets wanting to play or examine each other further after initial introductions at the start of the visit.
- All handlers should plan to arrive at a facility for a visit a few minutes before the visit start time to allow their pet to relieve themselves before the visit. Many pets get nervous in new environments and are prone to leaving puddles or droppings within facilities if they are not given time prior to a visit to relieve themselves. If an accident does occur, it is the handler's responsibility to clean it up quickly and thoroughly. Do not leave any remnants of the mess behind.
- All handlers should be alert and aware while doing visits. They should be cognitive of their surroundings and potential issues that may arise for their pet. This could include crowded rooms or small spaces, outdoor visits with music or people walking by, heavy handed petting, poking, touching sensitive areas of the pet including eyes, ears, and nose, pulling of fur, pulling at limbs or tails, touching the pet's feet. Handlers are their pet's advocates once again. Never feel ashamed at having to politely guide hands to gently stroke or pet your animal. Many seniors may have lost some motor skills and may not be as gentle as they think they are being. Children tend to get excited and express themselves through joyful squeals or may not know the proper procedure for petting animals if they do not have them at home. Those with Special Needs may move in odd motions or pet with curled or cupped hands or make loud vocalizations. Any of these situations may scare a pet and handlers should be aware and know how to react and guide their pet through these situations safely.



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- Handlers are likely to encounter people who ask to hold their pet. This is completely at the handler's discretion based on the handler's view of the situation and knowledge of their pet. If a 3-year-old asks to hold your 30 pound dog, that is likely not a good idea. If an unstable senior asks to hold your pet, feel free to ask them to sit in a chair so they do not risk falling. Children often do better sitting on the floor and petting rather than holding a pet in their lap. This can be based on the size of your animal also, as we try not to let the animals squish people. If the handler deems the situation safe, they should lift the pet into the arms or onto the lap of the person and they should be the one to remove the pet. Do not let someone else pick up your pet.
- Pets should never jump onto a bed or surface to get closer to a resident. They should always be picked up and placed on the bed or surface. Larger pets may place their front feet on a bed or chair to get closer to a person but should always be sure to avoid accidental scratching or scuffing a resident's skin. Pawing at or asking for pets with a foot from residents should be discouraged as it may lead to accidental scratches or scuffs from pet's nails.
- Many pets may be prone to licking as a sign of affection. Handlers should be aware if their pet is prone to this behavior and ask visitors if they are okay with "kisses or licks" before approaching them.
- Pets should be familiarized with stairs, elevators, and escalators as many facilities may require their use. Pets should be exposed to stairs, elevators, and escalators before or during their training. Pets should be physically well and able to do stairs. Pets should NEVER walk on escalators for their safety and should always be carried if they are small enough to do so. Bigger pets should always take the stairs or an elevator. Handlers should be aware that escalators and elevators may scare pets and know how to react and guide their pet through those situations. If elevators are occupied with people when the doors open, let the people exit before you ask any remaining people if they are okay with sharing an elevator with your pet. If they seem hesitant or say no, wait for the next elevator. Most pets should be able to handle elevators well when doing visits and should remain calm and controlled during an elevator ride. If they are unable to do so, take the stairs.
- Some facilities may have other pets that live there or work there. Teams should be kind and welcoming when entering these pet's home.
- Cell phone usage is not allowed during a visit as it can become distracting. A handler's focus should always remain on their pet. If a handler needs to take a phone call, they must remove themselves from a visit and can return once the call has ended. This includes checking text messages or visiting social media sites or web searches.





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- Handlers should always remain vigilant in extreme or severe weather. Your pet's safety is paramount! Nashville is known to experience high temperatures, snow, ice, heavy rain, hail, thunderstorms, tornados, and high winds. Pets should never be left in vehicles for extended periods of time (even with automatic start vehicles). If the handler does not feel comfortable driving to and from a visit in bad weather, they should not do so. If the handler is the only team signed up for a visit and they need to cancel on short notice they should call the facility to let them know. If there are additional teams signed up the handler should let the other teams or Visit Captain know instead. Handlers should avoid leaving their pet in their vehicle even before or after a visit. Be aware of your visit location and make arrangements and time allowances to take your pet home after a visit or running errands before a visit.
- **Handlers should remain with their pets at all times** and should never leave their pet with a guest or resident or facility staff member. A good training item should be practicing taking your pet into a public restroom with you as you will likely have to use one on a visit at some point. A handler should never leave their pet to assist a resident or child, that job is for the facility staff. A handler's focus should remain on their pet at all times. If such a need arises, the team (handler and pet) are welcome to leave the resident to find a facility staff member and alert them to the need.
- All handlers should be respectful and kind to those we are serving, even if they are not nice to you. Handlers may encounter people who dislike animals or whom are angry at their situation. Handlers should never take these things personally. Many people will only like big dogs vs little dogs or dogs vs cats. They may have pet allergies or be afraid of animals. They may only want to look at the animal rather than pet it. People that teams are visiting are never required to pet the animals, it is always the individual resident's choice. Many people do not like pets near areas where they are going to eat, so those areas should be avoided. Residents whom teams encounter that are sleeping should be allowed to do so in peace. Handlers should always be conscience of these things and respond in respectful ways or move their pet along if something negative is said. Always smile and be polite when answering questions about you and your pet. Feel free to keep your answers short and the conversation simple as the focus should be on your pet and not on the saga of your life. A useful tactic with overly chatty new friends is to say that you have to move along to the next group of residents or rooms to make sure everyone gets a chance to see the pets. Remember to use gentle, soft voices while on visits. Pets should never be yelled at or spoken to in harsh tones as this may upset residents. Praising your pet on a job well done will go a long way to smooth tense situations.
  - Handlers should always refrain from using profanity, foul, crude, or harsh language, and remain in a professional level of decorum while on visits. This includes when speaking with fellow handlers and at any time while on the property of a facility.



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- NTP Members are allowed to purchase promotional items to hand out on visits. These may be bookmarks, stickers, pet business cards, trading cards, or other similar items. Please be aware, members are responsible for the costs of these items themselves. Members may use the NTP organization name, logo, website, and email on these items if they wish to. As such, the NTP Board of Directors asks that you use good judgement when designing these products and when giving them out while on visits. You are representing NTP as a whole with these items, as well as your individual pet.
  - If you need the logo file, please send an email to the main NTP account and it will be given to you. CoVisit teams should feature both organizations on their items if the organizations are being promoted on their items since they are certified with their organization but attending an NTP visit.
  
- NTP Members are allowed to take photos while on visits, however photographs are not the reason we are doing the visit and therefore are not a priority. The main focus should always remain on your pet and the work being done. Safety is always paramount to anything else and all guidelines, protocols, and procedures should be maintained at all times during the visit. This includes the handler remaining in control of their pet at all times and the pet being on leash at all times.
  - All photo rights should be considered during the visit also. Photos of children must have written parental consent prior to being posted. Photos of hands on the pet/with faces excluded are always preferred with children. Adults should give verbal consent or NTP must have a signed Photo Release from the facility in order for photos to be posted. Adults may also give written consent. Photos taken within a public place are legal. Members should not take excessive photos while on visits because that is not why we are there. Photos do help promote the work we do but are not a priority.
  - Any photos taken on the visit should be sent via text message to the NTP Social Media Chair so they can be posted on the NTP social media accounts. Members are welcome to share photos on their personal social media accounts, but please be respectful of people's consent to the photos being taken. Members are welcome to share the posts off the NTP page or the facilities page to their personal social media pages.
  
- The majority of NTP visits will last 1-2 hours. Most pets begin to get worn out after that amount of time. If the two-hour long visit is too long for your pet, feel free to excuse yourself after 1-hour or stagger your arrival time. All supervised visits must be 1-hour or longer in length. If your pet has to repeatedly leave visits early or needs to build up to the 1-hour time length, they may require additional supervised visits.



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- Food is often a distraction for pets. Residents should be discouraged from giving your pet any type of food on a visit, even if you provide the food or treat. Pets should be discouraged from begging for food on visits or picking up food or crumbs from the floor or ground. Residents that provide snacks or treats for repeat visiting teams may encourage a pet to lose focus on the task at hand and focus on the food instead. Pets focused on scanning the floor for food may find other items instead including trash, plastic, or medications.
- All pets should remain actively engaged during a visit. Teams should work their way through a room or have residents take turns coming to their pet. Pets should not lay down and nap for extended periods of time while on a visit. Teams may make multiple loops around the room to ensure every resident sees their pet (in memory care facilities residents often forget they've just seen an animal). Each facility will have a different protocol or procedure for residents to visit with teams. Teams may be doing room to room visits or visits in a common area. See the typical visit procedures page for additional information.
- All NTP visits should be done at the request of the facility we are entering or in the case of in-home hospice visits, the request of the family to visit the home. If a family member of a resident within a facility reaches out to ask for visits, the permission of the facility should be obtained before a visit is arranged. The primary contact for most senior care facilities is the activity director or the executive director. If a business requests a visit, the manager or owner should give permission for the visit to take place. If a conference or event requests a visit, the approval of the venue should be obtained.
  - Each facility should have a Visit Captain that coordinates the schedule and frequency of visits to that facility. Visit Captains will be the primary contact person for that facility as well.
  - Facilities inquiring about therapy visits will often ask about visit procedure. These procedures vary for each facility based on their resident's needs and abilities. Visit Captains should work with the facility contact to create a customized visit plan for each facility that benefits the residents and the teams prior to the initial visit.
  - If there is not a Visit Captain for a facility, the main NTP office calendar coordinator will be the contact person for that facility. The facility's contact person's information should be in the information section of the calendar event listing.
  - All teams should adhere to any rules and regulations a facility has in place for the protection of its residents including but not limited to privacy and confidentiality. Handlers should not discuss an individual's medical history or personal information.
  - Handlers should be aware of all signs, protocols, and procedures implanted by facilities. This includes COVID procedures. Many senior facilities may have limited access at times



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due to illness. Warning signs and medical alert signs may also be present such as Fall Risk, Isolation, Infectious, or Mask Required and teams should proceed with the necessary caution indicated. Never put yourself or your pet at risk while on a visit. Feel free to skip a room or floor if caution warrants doing so.

- Grandfather Clause – NTP was formed in May 2023 by members of Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® wishing to leave their nationally recognized pet therapy organization. The Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® roster in May 2023 included only cats and dogs. All certified pets and members of the Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® are grandfathered into the new Nashville Therapy Pets organization, if membership to NTP is placed prior to December 31, 2023. As such, established members of Music City Love on a Leash® wishing to place new membership with Nashville Therapy Pets will not have to undergo the NTP Canine Training Test or the NTP Feline Skills Evaluation or Supervised Visits stage since they are already established members of Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® and performed a similar test in order to obtain certification through Love on a Leash®. Members will have to undergo the observatory visit and must submit all required documents including the Canine Good Citizen certificate. If members of the Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® do not currently possess a Canine Good Citizen certification for their dog, they must obtain one prior to December 31, 2023, in order to retain their new NTP membership. All current Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® training teams that have begun their supervised visits may transfer their supervised visit hours to NTP. The Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation will substitute the NTP Canine Training Test for these teams. Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® Training Teams must submit all required documents including the Canine Good Citizen for their dog. If members of the Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® Training Teams do not currently possess a Canine Good Citizen certification for their dog, they must obtain one prior to December 31, 2023, in order to retain their new NTP membership. All Music City Chapter of Love on a Leash® members who have had their Love on a Leash® membership for 1 year or longer will be considered Senior NTP members.

Violation of these guidelines shall result in the suspension of the team and possible loss of membership. Violation also renders the member's NTP insurance coverage null and void.

Other Therapy Organization Memberships (Co-Visit Teams) – NTP welcomes visits with other certified therapy pets or animal-assisted therapy pets! Before a member of another organization joins a NTP visit they must submit proof of their current, good standing membership of another recognized pet therapy organization to the NTP offices to be kept on file. This includes a copy of official ID badges and the expiration date of their membership to that organization. If the team's membership to another organization expires, they must send proof of renewal immediately to NTP offices. Members of other organizations should adhere to all of their organization's



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guidelines, procedures, and policies while on any NTP visits so that the insurance coverage from their organization is not jeopardized. This including wearing their ID badges and/or any required apparel and their pet wearing any required vest or bandana from their organization. NTP insurance will not cover teams certified with another organization while on a NTP visit. Other known organizations may include Love on a Leash<sup>®</sup>, Pet Partners<sup>®</sup>, Therapy Arc<sup>®</sup>, Intermountain Therapy Animals, Mid South Therapy Dogs, Reading Paws, Alliance of Therapy Dogs, and others.

NTP also welcomes teams that wish to obtain dual certification with NTP and another organization. Members seeking dual certification must complete the entire NTP certification and application process, even if they already have existing membership with another organization. Once a team is dual certified, they should abide by all NTP guidelines, policies, and procedures while on NTP visits.

For new teams wishing to place membership with NTP but that have current membership with another pet therapy organization, the NTP membership process, specifically the number of required supervised visits, may be altered pending board approval and on a case-by-case basis. For handlers who have previous experience doing therapy work with a prior pet than the one they are applying with, the NTP membership process, specifically the number of required supervised visits, may be altered pending board approval and on a case-by-case basis.

Even with extensive training, detailed guidelines, and implemented policies and procedures accidents can happen. If an incident occurs, it must be reported to NTP offices immediately. An incident report should be filled out by the handler as well as a facility staff member and returned to NTP offices as soon as possible.



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### Training Protocol & Membership Process – let's begin with the most common, the dogs!

- **All dogs must pass the Canine Good Citizen test given by a certified dog trainer.** This test may be administered at the same time as the NTP Training Test or may be done beforehand. CGC's administered after the NTP Training test will not be accepted.
  - If two handlers living in the same home wish to both become certified with the same pet, the same CGC test may be used. Each handler will have to pass the NTP Training Test individually with the pet. Each handler must also complete the supervised visit stage individually. The non-training handler must not be present at the Training Test or while on any supervised visits that the training handler is administering.
- **All volunteer handlers and dogs forming a new therapy team must pass the NTP Training Test given by a certified dog trainer** prior to entering the supervised visit stage. The Training Test must be administered after the team passes their CGC test or they may be administered on the same day. CGC's administered after the NTP Training test will not be accepted.
- Once a team passes the NTP Training Test they will automatically enter into the supervised visit stage of the application process.
  - Once a team has earned their CGC and passed the NTP Training Test, **they will email [nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com](mailto:nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com)** to inform the office they are ready to be added to the calendar so they can begin signing up for their supervised visits.
  - A training name tag and/or leash wrap will be sent to all training teams that must be worn on all supervised visits.
- **Teams will do a minimum of 10 supervised visits to a variety of venue types** during their training.
  - Supervised visits should be 1-hour in length minimum. If your pet must repeatedly leave visits early or needs to build up to the 1-hour time length, they may require additional supervised visits.
  - Venue types may include retirement/senior living homes, hospice care facilities, hospitals, daycares or schools, colleges, businesses, conferences, memory care facilities, mental health facilities, independent living facilities, special needs facilities, hotels, airports, and others.



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

- Training Teams may receive sign off for supervised visits from any NTP member. Registered CoVisit teams with NTP may not sign off on training teams supervised visits. Although we enjoy doing visits with our CoVisit teams, they are to abide by their own organization's protocols and procedures while on visits and therefore there may be some differences in protocols. To avoid confusion and liability only NTP members may sign off on supervised visits for NTP training teams.
- Only visits listed on the NTP calendar system may be counted as supervised visits. Training teams are not covered by NTP insurance until their membership application has been approved. Even if training teams attend a visit organized by another pet therapy organization with a dual certified member, they may not count that visit as an NTP supervised visit (NTP training teams may not count a ATD organized visit with an NTP/ATD dual member as a NTP supervised visit).
- Training teams should receive supervision from more than 1 other NTP team. Ideally training teams will be supervised by at least 3 NTP member teams with 1 senior NTP team supervising multiple visits. Receiving supervision from multiple teams allows training teams to gain insight and tips from several perspectives.
- **Teams have 1 year to complete supervised visits** before having the NTP Training Test readministered.
- *Note the word MINIMUM of 10 visits – some teams may take longer to adjust to therapy work than others. If a training team needs additional visits, the supervising teams may suggest so. We are happy to work with training teams for as long as it takes to get them to where they can safely serve our community by being a pet therapy team. However, bear in mind that therapy work is not right for every animal or handler and not every animal does well in every type of venue or situation. This is why we recommend a variety of venue types during your training so that you as a handler can determine what types of visits are best for you and your pet.*
- Once a team completes their supervised visits, they can **submit their complete application packet with all required forms and membership dues** to the NTP office for review.
  - Please be sure to return any training name tags or leash wraps with your application.
- Approved applications will receive **membership for 1 year**. After 1 year the team will receive a notice to renew their membership annually. Once members receive their membership packet they are approved to go on visits without supervision. In the membership packet will be the team's ID badges and name tag as well as a NTP vest or bandana and any other merchandise that was elected to be purchased separately.



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

- **All members must commit to a minimum of 4 visits a year** (1 every 3 months) to remain an active team and retain their membership. If teams are unable to volunteer quarterly each year, they will become an inactive team and have 18 months to resume visits. If the team does not resume visits within the allotted time their membership will be revoked, and they will be considered a permanently inactive team and will have to start the application process over from the beginning to become a NTP team once more.
  - *Inactivity due to handler or animal mental or medical leave is allowed and excused if the NTP offices are made aware of the upcoming need for leave. We recommend receiving a doctor's or veterinarian's advice/permission before returning to volunteer visits.*
  - NTP's mission to serve our community with loyal and active volunteer teams. We understand our teams have everyday lives and responsibilities that require our member's focus, time, and dedication before their volunteer work. However, we were not formed simply to certify therapy animals, *our goal is service to our community*. If you only wish to obtain a therapy title for your pet, NTP is not the program for you. We encourage all NTP members to remain active in their community's service by continuing to volunteer as a pet therapy team.
- **All members will keep a visit log of volunteer hours** which will be submitted at the time of their membership renewal each year. Certificates of Merit based on the number of visits teams have done in the previous year will be sent out with the member's renewal packet. This is how NTP offices will confirm the required minimum of 2 visits a year.
  - Visit logs are often useful for teams attempting to earn AKC therapy titles for their dogs.
  - NTP plans to launch their own therapy titles in the future and the visit logs submitted each year will allow teams to earn NTP titles as well.
  - If a team decides to stop participating in visits prior to their annual renewal due to illness, injury, the pet's retirement, or any other reason the handler may still submit the visit log for that year for a Certificate of Merit or NTP title.
- **All members must sign a membership agreement each year** stating they have read these practices and protocols and will abide by all guidelines while on NTP visits.
- Members continuing their membership for several years will be subject to an **observatory visit once every 3 years** by a senior NTP member or certified trainer. This is to ensure teams maintain their pet's training and are actively following all NTP protocols and guidelines.
  - Members will be given notice of when their third year has arrived. Prior to their renewal in the fourth year, each handler should contact NTP offices to arrange for a senior NTP





## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

member or trainer to observe them on a visit. Members will not be able to renew for their fourth year if the observation visit has not taken place and they will become an inactive team until they can arrange an observation visit.

- Senior NTP members or trainers may give members feedback or suggestions on behavioral changes. These reports will be sent back to NTP offices and necessary steps taken to help the member with any issues that may arise from the observation, which could include returning to the supervised visit stage of training.
- The Senior NTP member or certified trainer who does the observation visit should be an individual the member does not interact with or do visits with regularly to avoid biases.



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

### Training Protocol & Membership Process – The Cats!

Cats who are Therapy Pets are a completely different “species” than dogs that are Therapy Pets. Cats who can become Therapy Pets can do so more because of their temperament and personality more than their training. Whereas dogs rely on their training before their temperament and personality come into play. Cats often need repeated exposure to an environment to become comfortable within that environment.

Therapy cats may seem more reluctant to go on visits and simply tolerate the additional human interaction on visits. Cats may be great with new people but not with other animals, so feline handlers should be aware and conscience of this. Dogs and other animals may want to greet the cat but if the cat is not a fan, then the handler should suggest the other teams keep their distance. Cats may hiss or growl as a warning to other pets if they get too close but should never direct this behavior towards a human. Cats that are declawed may even want to send warning swats to other pets that venture too close as well but cats that still retain their claws should never be allowed to injure another pet or human, including the handler.

Cats should always remain in a harness while on a visit. Handlers may carry a carrier or other type of bag to place the cat in while walking between those that they are visiting. Leashes should always be clipped to the cat’s harness, and never to a “break-away” collar. The cat should be able to walk on the leash even if it is primarily carried by the handler.

- **All volunteer handlers and cats forming a new therapy team must pass the NTP Feline Skills Evaluation administered by a senior NTP member** prior to entering the supervised visit stage. All Skills Evaluations must be arranged by the NTP offices. The team wishing to place membership will go on a visit with the senior NTP member (who will not have their pet) and the member will administer the evaluation. The Skills Evaluation is NOT a supervised visit and as such cannot be counted towards the training team’s supervised visit log.
  - **Once a team is ready to begin their application process, they must email [nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com](mailto:nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com) to inform the NTP offices and arrange their Skills Evaluation.**
- Once a team passes the NTP Skills Evaluation they will automatically enter into the supervised visit stage of the application process.
  - Once a team has passed the NTP Skills Evaluation, **they will email [nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com](mailto:nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com) to inform the office they are ready to be added to the calendar so they can begin signing up for their supervised visits.**



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

- A training name tag and/or leash wrap will be sent to all training teams that must be worn on all supervised visits.
- **Teams will do a minimum of 10 supervised visits to a variety of venue types** during their training.
  - Supervised visits should be 1-hour in length minimum. If your pet must repeatedly leave visits early or needs to build up to the 1-hour time length, they may require additional supervised visits.
  - Venue types may include retirement/senior living homes, hospice care facilities, hospitals, daycares or schools, colleges, businesses, conferences, memory care facilities, mental health facilities, independent living facilities, special needs facilities, hotels, airports, and others.
  - Training Teams may receive sign off for supervised visits from any NTP member. Registered CoVisit teams with NTP may not sign off on training teams supervised visits. Although we enjoy doing visits with our CoVisit teams, they are to abide by their own organization's protocols and procedures while on visits and therefore there may be some differences in protocols. To avoid confusion and liability only NTP members may sign off on supervised visits for NTP training teams.
  - Only visits listed on the NTP calendar system may be counted as supervised visits. Training teams are not covered by NTP insurance until their membership application has been approved. Even if training teams attend a visit organized by another pet therapy organization with a dual certified member, they may not count that visit as an NTP supervised visit (NTP training teams may not count a ATD organized visit with an NTP/ATD dual member as a NTP supervised visit).
  - Training teams should receive supervision from more than 1 other NTP team. Ideally training teams will be supervised by at least 3 NTP member teams with 1 senior NTP team supervising multiple visits. Receiving supervision from multiple teams allows training teams to gain insight and tips from several perspectives.
  - **Teams have 1 year to complete supervised visits** before having the NTP Skills Evaluation readministered.
  - *Note the word MINIMUM of 10 visits – some teams may take longer to adjust to therapy work than others. If a training team needs additional visits, the supervising teams may suggest so. We are happy to work with training teams for as long as it takes to get them to where they can safely serve our community by being a pet therapy team. However, bear in mind that therapy work is not right for every animal or handler and not every*



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

*animal does well in every type of venue or situation. This is why we recommend a variety of venue types during your training so that you as a handler can determine what types of visits are best for you and your pet.*

- Once a team completes their supervised visits, they can **submit their complete application packet with all required forms and membership dues** to the NTP office for review.
  - Please be sure to return any training name tags or leash wraps with your application.
- Approved applications will receive **membership for 1 year**. After 1 year the team will receive a notice to renew their membership annually. Once members receive their membership packet they are approved to go on visits without supervision. In the membership packet will be the team's ID badges and name tag as well as a NTP bandana and any other merchandise that was elected to be purchased separately.
- **All members must commit to a minimum of 4 visits a year** (1 every 3 months) to remain an active team and retain their membership. If teams are unable to volunteer quarterly each year, they will become an inactive team and have 18 months to resume visits. If the team does not resume visits within the allotted time their membership will be revoked, and they will be considered a permanently inactive team and will have to start the application process over from the beginning to become a NTP team once more.
  - *Inactivity due to handler or animal, mental or medical leave is allowed and excused if the NTP offices are made aware of the upcoming need for leave. We recommend receiving a doctor's or veterinarian's advice/permission before returning to volunteer visits.*
  - NTP's mission to serve our community with loyal and active volunteer teams. We understand our teams have everyday lives and responsibilities that require our member's focus, time, and dedication before their volunteer work. However, we were not formed simply to certify therapy animals, *our goal is service to our community*. If you only wish to obtain a therapy title for your pet, NTP is not the program for you. We encourage all NTP members to remain active in their community's service by continuing to volunteer as a pet therapy team.
- **All members will keep a visit log of volunteer hours** which will be submitted at the time of their membership renewal each year. Certificates of Merit based on the number of visits teams have done in the previous year will be sent out with the member's renewal packet. This is how NTP offices will confirm the required minimum of 2 visits a year.
  - NTP plans to launch their own therapy titles in the future and the visit logs submitted each year will allow teams to earn NTP titles as well.



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

- If a team decides to stop participating in visits prior to their annual renewal due to illness, injury, the pet's retirement, or any other reason the handler may still submit the visit log for that year for a Certificate of Merit or NTP title.
- **All members must sign a membership agreement each year** stating they have read these practices and protocols and will abide by all guidelines while on NTP visits.
- Members continuing their membership for several years will be subject to an **observatory visit once every 3 years** by a senior NTP member. This is to ensure teams maintain their pet's training and are actively following all NTP protocols and guidelines.
  - Members will be given notice of when their third year has arrived. Prior to their renewal in the fourth year, each handler should contact NTP offices to arrange for a senior NTP member to observe them on a visit. Members will not be able to renew for their fourth year if the observation visit has not taken place and they will become an inactive team until they can arrange an observation visit.
  - Senior NTP members may give members feedback or suggestions on behavioral changes. These reports will be sent back to NTP offices and necessary steps taken to help the member with any issues that may arise from the observation, which could include returning to the supervised visit stage of training.
  - The Senior NTP member who does the observation visit should be an individual the member does not interact with or do visits with regularly to avoid biases.



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

### Training Protocol & Membership Process – The Other Pets!

This includes pets that are not cats or dogs including hoofstock animals (equines, alpacas, llamas, pigs, goats), birds, small animals (rabbits, ferrets, rats), and reptiles (iguanas, bearded dragons). All small animal and reptile species applying for membership must be able to wear a harness and leash, all hoofstock animals must be able to wear a halter and lead rope (with the exception of pigs that can wear collars), and all birds must be on flying leashes even if their flight wings have been trimmed. NTP offices reserve the right to refuse membership to any animal they deem to be unsafe for insurance purposes. The pet should be able to walk on the leash or on a lead even if it is primarily carried by the handler.

These pets that can become certified therapy animals are few and far between. We welcome these special pets into the NTP family and hold them dear to our hearts because we know how special they are.

- **All volunteer handlers and forming a new therapy team must pass the NTP Skills Evaluation for their animal group or species that is administered by a senior NTP member** prior to entering the supervised visit stage. There are three Skills Evaluations options for other species, they are grouped as follows – Hoofstock, Avian, and Small Animal & Reptile. All Skills Evaluations must be arranged by the NTP offices. The team wishing to place membership will go on a visit with the senior NTP member (who will not have their pet) and the member will administer the evaluation. The Skills Evaluation is NOT a supervised visit and as such cannot be counted towards the training team's supervised visit log.
  - **Once a team is ready to begin their application process, they must email [nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com](mailto:nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com) to inform the NTP offices and arrange their Skills Evaluation.**
- Once a team passes the NTP Skills Evaluation they will automatically enter into the supervised visit stage of the application process.
  - Once a team has passed the NTP Skills Evaluation, **they will email [nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com](mailto:nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com)** to inform the office they are ready to be added to the calendar so they can begin signing up for their supervised visits.
  - A training name tag and/or leash wrap will be sent to all training teams that must be worn on all supervised visits.
- **Teams will do a minimum of 10 supervised visits to a variety of venue types** during their training.



## Nashville Therapy Pets Training Protocol & Membership Guidelines

- Supervised visits should be 1-hour in length minimum. If your pet must repeatedly leave visits early or needs to build up to the 1-hour time length, they may require additional supervised visits.
- Venue types may include retirement/senior living homes, hospice care facilities, hospitals, daycares or schools, colleges, businesses, conferences, memory care facilities, mental health facilities, independent living facilities, special needs facilities, hotels, airports, and others.
- Training Teams may receive sign off for supervised visits from any NTP member. Registered CoVisit teams with NTP may not sign off on training teams supervised visits. Although we enjoy doing visits with our CoVisit teams, they are to abide by their own organization's protocols and procedures while on visits and therefore there may be some differences in protocols. To avoid confusion and liability only NTP members may sign off on supervised visits for NTP training teams.
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- **Teams have 1 year to complete supervised visits** before having the NTP Skills Evaluation readministered.
- *Note the word MINIMUM of 10 visits – some teams may take longer to adjust to therapy work than others. If a training team needs additional visits, the supervising teams may suggest so. We are happy to work with training teams for as long as it takes to get them to where they can safely serve our community by being a pet therapy team. However, bear in mind that therapy work is not right for every animal or handler and not every animal does well in every type of venue or situation. This is why we recommend a variety of venue types during your training so that you as a handler can determine what types of visits are best for you and your pet.*



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  - NTP plans to launch their own therapy titles in the future and the visit logs submitted each year will allow teams to earn NTP titles as well.
  - If a team decides to stop participating in visits prior to their annual renewal due to illness, injury, the pet's retirement, or any other reason the handler may still submit the visit log for that year for a Certificate of Merit or NTP title.





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- **All members must sign a membership agreement each year** stating they have read these practices and protocols and will abide by all guidelines while on NTP visits.
- Members continuing their membership for several years will be subject to an **observatory visit once every 3 years** by a senior NTP member. This is to ensure teams maintain their pet's training and are actively following all NTP protocols and guidelines.
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  - The Senior NTP member who does the observation visit should be an individual the member does not interact with or do visits with regularly to avoid biases.