

Characteristics of Quality

15 Questions to Ask Your Animal-Assisted Therapy Registry

Name of Registering Organization: ANGEL PAWS Animal Assisted Activities & Therapy, a registered Delta Society Pet Partners & Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.) affiliate organization in Newark, OH

Name/Position of representative: Patti Shanaberg, Executive Director

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

Delta Society volunteers participate in either an extensive home study or a minimum of 8 hours of class instruction without their dogs. In addition, our Angel Paws volunteers who pass their skills & aptitude test attend a 12 hour classroom training and orientation without their dogs before on-site training and orientation with their dogs. Although Angel Paws does offer and highly recommend our own 8 week Therapy Dog Training Course it is not required. Angel Paws also works closely with a number of recommended Positive Reinforcement Dog Trainers and provides many dog training information resources on our web site.

2. How are your instructors trained and registered?

Delta Society Instructors attend an 8- hour training course and are re-registered every two years.

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

Delta Society Therapy teams are tested in a private, indoor, standardized 22 element Pet Partners Skills and Aptitude Test with a licensed Delta Society Team Evaluator that assesses the animal's basic obedience skills and manners, the teamwork between the animal and handler, and their aptitude for working with people with special healthcare needs. Both Animal and Handler are evaluated and receive a score and detailed feedback for each exercise. The lower of the two scores is the team score for each exercise. Teams may be scored 1, 2 (highest), Not Ready or Not Appropriate.

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

After passing the Skills and Aptitude Test, the team is assigned a rating of either "Predictable" or "Complex." This is an indicator of the complexity of environment, predictability of client population, and degree of staff involvement with which the team has been determined ready to work. To receive a "Complex" rating teams must score a 2 on certain elements of the test that teams who receive a "Predictable" rating may have only received a 1 on.

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

Delta Society Pet Partner Team Evaluators have had at least 2 years of Pet Partner volunteer experience visiting in a minimum of 2 different types of facilities, completed an 8-hour class or home study, and an 12-14 hour practicum with a licensed Pet Partners Team Evaluators Instructor.

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

Delta Society registered therapy animals must complete a veterinary exam as part of their evaluation. This includes a health assessment, vaccination record, parasite control program, and fecal analysis. Handlers must bathe their animal within 24 hours before every visit, and are trained and required to groom and assess their animal's physical and mental condition immediately before visiting and during visits. They are instructed not to visit if they or their animal is not well.

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

Delta Society provides \$1,000,000.00 of primary liability insurance for Pet Partners working as volunteers and adhering to Delta Society's Policies and Procedures.

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

Delta Society and Angel Paws Policies and Procedures are attached. (or available upon request)

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

Delta Society and Angel Paws Infection Control Policies are attached. (or available upon request)

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

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

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

Delta Society Pet Partners teams may choose their own environments in which to volunteer, in keeping with the rating that they have received. Angel Paws staff visits and assesses the facilities that request our therapy teams, work closely with facility staff to implement a standards based program, and we match our Angel Paws Pet Partners teams to facilities and clients that suit them best. Angel Paws also offers on-going training to assure a team's suitability to visit certain environments with certain recipient populations when appropriate or necessary.

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

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

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

Angel Paws provides an annual staff in-service orientation for staff at facilities we partner with and we evaluate the program together as needed. In addition, many printed resources are available through the Delta Society website, and Delta Society has a specific course for health care professionals, entitled "Animal Assisted Therapy Applications I."

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

Delta Society has more information available on it's website, www.deltasociety.org, Other supporting research in peer-reviewed publications can be found on Google Scholar. Two of the primary international organizations that promote research in the benefits of human-animal interactions are ISAZ and IAHAO. For a professional reference on Animal-Assisted Therapy, we recommend Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy, edited by Aubrey H. Fine. For activity resources for practitioners, we recommend 101 Creative Ideas for Animal-Assisted Therapy, edited by Stacy Grover.

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

Delta Society funded the development and publication of Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Activities and Animal-Assisted Therapy in 1996. It is recognized throughout the world as an organization with standardized and rigorous requirements for training and testing of its registered Pet Partner therapy animal-human teams. Members are involved in current scientific research studies all over the world.