



# Animals Visiting in Healthcare Facilities

# Why Are Animals Therapeutic



## What Animals Offer

- Unconditional love
- Value of touch
- Security of companionship
- Unselfish kindness

## How This Helps

- Socially (increases interaction with others)
- Psychologically (reduces stress and anxiety; increases motivation and sense of well-being)
- Physiologically (decreases blood pressure)

# Overview of Animal Assisted Activity(AAA) and Animal-Assisted Therapy(AAT)



- Both are used in outpatient, acute care, rehab, extended-care facilities, etc.
- Dogs are most frequently used
- Not a patient's pets
- Other animals used: Cats, Birds, Guinea Pigs, Rabbits
- Animals must be screened and trained to ensure temperament to tolerate healthcare environment
- National and local animal-assisted organizations certify animals for AAA/AAT
  - Animal screened for parasites, skin and dental problems, and immunizations by vet
  - Does a temperament evaluation
    - Dogs must respond to commands
    - Cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs must be willing to remain in a basket or blanket when held
  - Certified animals often have liability insurance

# Animal Assisted Activities (AAA)

## What AAA Is:

- Same animal doesn't visit same person each time
- Effect of animal visits on the person not measured
- "Meet and greet" activities
- Opportunities for recreation, motivation, education
- Not directed at specific therapeutic goals
- May take place one on one or in a group setting
- Single animal or group of animals
- Ex.: Visitation

## How AAA Helps:

- Help increase patient responsiveness
- Provide a fun experience
- Enhance treatment (ex. Reduce patient's need for pain meds.)
- Keep patient in touch with reality
- Foster rapport
- Decrease loneliness
- Improve well-being

# Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)



## What AAT Is:

- Directed towards specific goals
- Certified therapist or healthcare professional facilitates interaction
- Uses trained therapy animals
  - Additional training with equipment used and in specific environments
- May also participate in AAA
- Ex.: Patient brushing a dog to improve physical movement of hand and arm

## How AAT Helps:

- Improve motor skills
- Verbal, tactile, and auditory stimulation
- Improve verbalization skills
- Improve ambulation and equilibrium
- Improve instruction-following and decision-making
- Improve memory recall
- Improve concentration

**Physical, Occupational, Recreational, and Speech Therapy may use AAA/AAT**



# Pets Vs. Service Animals

- A pet is an animal that is kept for fun, friendship, etc.
- A service animal is a legal term defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - Dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability
- Animals that help with AAA/AAT are usually pets

# Animal Guidelines

- Animal must be a domestic companion animal
  - Many pets still excluded such as: reptiles, amphibians, hamsters, gerbils, mice, etc.
- Must not be a current resident of an animal shelter, pound, etc., and must be in a permanent home for at least 6 months
- Must be at least 1 year old
- Must be registered or certified for AAA/AAT
- Must pass health, skills, aptitude and temperament tests
- Records of health must be up to date
- Must be appropriately restrained or on a short leash
- Must never be left alone with patient
- Restricted from certain areas of healthcare facility
- Must not have been fed raw foods of animal origins within the previous 90 days



# Infection Prevention and Safety



Potential Risks	Guidelines
<b>Zoonosis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Good hand-hygiene</li><li>Healthy, well-behaved animals</li><li>Designate appropriate patient populations</li><li>Bathe animal within 24 hours of visit</li><li>Animals must have clean ears</li><li>Animal up to date on vaccinations</li><li>Animal annual physical exam</li><li>Handler make sure animal doesn't lick patient's wound or devices</li><li>Place barrier between animal and patient if lying next to patient</li><li>Handler free of communicable disease</li><li>Patient wash hands after visit</li></ul>
<b>Allergies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bathe animal with allergen-reducing shampoo</li><li>Wipe animal with a pet wipe before visit</li><li>Have animal wear protective clothing</li><li>Don't allow animal to visit patient with allergy</li></ul>
<b>Phobias</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ask patient if they want an animal visit</li><li>Don't allow animal to visit patient with phobia</li></ul>
<b>Animal-caused Injuries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make sure animal has had temperament eval.</li><li>Animals must have short nails</li><li>Animal must be trained not to scratch</li><li>May use protective animal foot coverings</li></ul>



# Patient Suitability Guidelines



1. Ask patient if they want to interact with animal
2. Exclude patients with allergies to animals, open wounds, open tracheostomy, immunosuppression, agitation or aggression, or is on isolation precautions (unless approved criteria is met, including physician evaluation, approval, and visitation order)
3. Exclude patients with certain severe communicable diseases

# Personal Pets



- May be the best treatment intervention for the health of patients in special situations
- Usually used for long-term or terminally ill patients
- Require just as stringent visitation policies as certified animals
- Only allowed to interact with owners, handlers, and healthcare staff helping with visit
- Escorted into and out of facility by designated staff

# Service Animals



- Different than animals that help with AAA/AAT
- ADA Definition: A dog that is trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability
- ADA doesn't consider dogs whose sole purpose is to provide comfort or emotional support to be a service animal
- Examples of tasks:
  - Guiding visually impaired
  - Alerting hearing impaired
  - Alerting or protecting someone having a seizure
  - Pulling a wheelchair
  - Calming a person with PTSD
  - Reminding a person with a mental illness to take medication



# Service Animals Cont.

- May accompany people with disabilities in areas where public is allowed
  - Patient rooms
  - Clinics
  - Exam rooms
  - Cafeterias
- Hospitals can exclude service animals from operating rooms and burn units
- Must be leashed, harnessed; unless these devices interfere with animal's work
- If not obvious what the dog helps with, staff can only ask:
  - Is a service animal required because of a disability
  - What work or task is the dog trained to perform
- Access can't be denied to a person with a service animal because of allergies or fear of dogs
- A person with disabilities can only be asked to remove the dog if the dog is out of control or if dog isn't housebroken
- ADA has added a new and separate provision for miniature horses

# Question 1:



Besides Dogs, What Other Animals Are Used for AAA/AAT (Select all that Apply):

- a. Cat
- b. Guinea Pig
- c. Hamster
- d. Horse



**Answer: A, B**  
**Cat and Guinea Pig**

## Question 2:



What is the Difference Between Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) and Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

- a. AAA can be done with your own pets, whereas AAT can only be done with other pets
- b. AAA can be done with any species of animal, but AAT can only be done with certain species of animals
- c. Animals helping with AAT have to be trained, but animals helping with AAA don't
- d. AAA doesn't focus on specific therapeutic goals, but AAT does



**Answer: D**

**AAA doesn't focus on specific therapeutic goals, but AAT does**



## Question 3:



Animals Used for AAA/AAT or Visitation Must be How Old?

- a. 6 months
- b. 2 years old
- c. 1 year old
- d. 3 months old



**Answer: C**  
**1 year old**

## Question 4:



Should patients or residents with pet allergies be allowed to have pet visitation or therapy?

- a. Yes, if they still want to that is their right
- b. Yes, but only if certain criteria and approvals are followed
- c. No, pets shouldn't be allowed in their room
- d. Yes, but only if the pet has been bathed in the last 24 hours



**Answer: B**

**Yes, but only if certain criteria and approvals are followed**

## Question 5:



Where May Service Animals be Excluded From in a Healthcare Facility?

- a. The operating room and burn centers
- b. Anywhere hospital staff decide
- c. Only in other patient/resident rooms
- d. Only in the cafeteria, or placed where food is made/served



**Answer: A**

**The operating room and burn centers**

## Question 6:



When Can a Service Animal be Asked to Leave?

- a. If someone in the facility has allergies to or is afraid of the dog
- b. If the dog is out of control and can't be calmed
- c. If the dog is suspected to be sick with a communicable disease
- d. If the dog looks dirty



**Answer: B**

**If the dog is out of control and can't be calmed**