



ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY

Sandra Long, LMFT
Lilia Sheynman, PhD

BxTx
PROS

Behavioral Treatment Professionals

CONTENTS

What is a Therapy Dog

Certification

Benefits

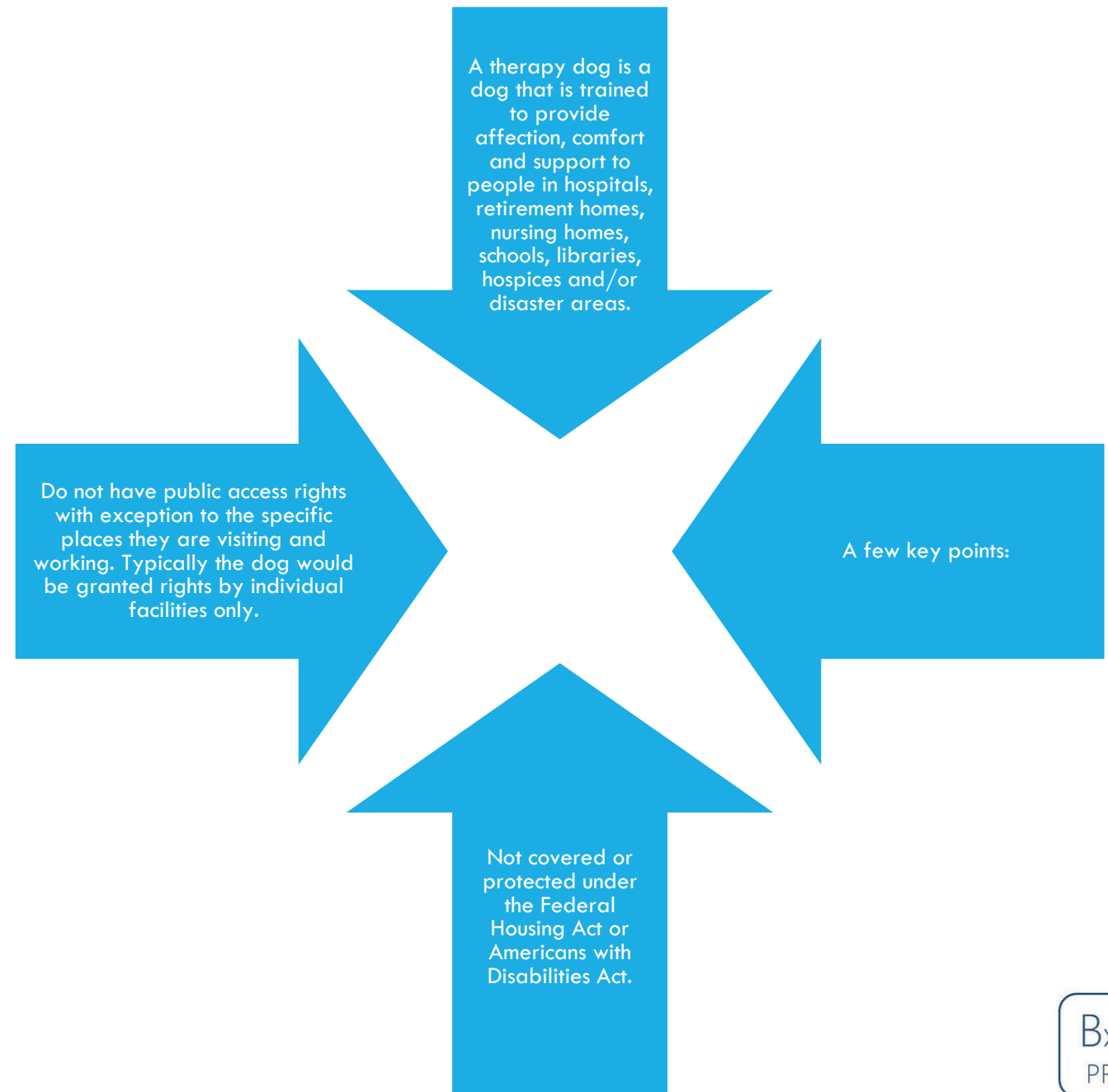
Cultural Considerations

The Research

Resources



WHAT IS A THERAPY DOG?

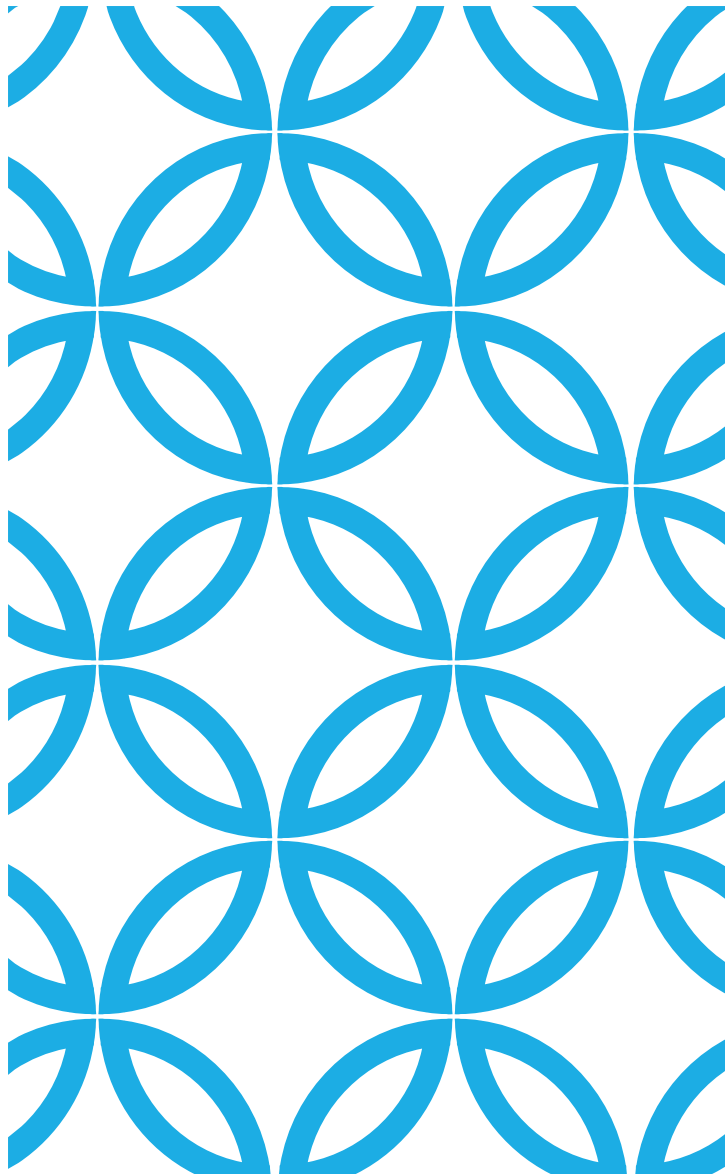




CERTIFICATION



Behavioral Treatment Professionals



WHAT MAKES A THERAPY ANIMAL DIFFERENT?



AAAIP

Association of Animal-Assisted
Intervention Professionals

	THERAPY ANIMAL	ASSISTANCE ANIMAL	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL
Primary role is to benefit many people.	✓	✗	✗
Primary role is to support one individual.	✗	✓	✓
Okay to approach and pet in public places.	✓	✗	✗
Has been evaluated to be tolerant of a wide variety of environments.	✓	✓	✗
Able to live in housing with "No Pets" policies.	✗	✓	✓
Special rights of access in public such as stores, restaurants, and airplanes.	✗	✓	✗

*Assistance animals include service, hearing, and guide dogs.

aaaiponline.org

CERTIFICATION

Therapy dogs are subjected to several tests to ensure that they are fit for the job. These tests look at their ability to block out distractions, comfort level around a variety of people with many different disabilities, and if they are comfortably able to walk through many different terrains.



CERTIFICATION

California does not have specific certification requirements and does not register therapy animals, but you should be sure that your therapy pet and their handler have been through a program that includes the following:

- Socialization in multiple settings with many types of individuals and other pets
- General obedience training
- Has passed tests to determine the pet's performance in multiple settings. Most important:
 - Responds to handler despite multiple distractions
 - Allows strangers and others to touch and handle them
 - Remains calm in groups and unfamiliar surroundings
 - Is non-reactive to sudden movement, loud noise, persons with unusual gait or motions, and other unexpected stimuli
- History of visiting sites similar to yours.





BENEFITS



Behavioral Treatment Professionals

BENEFITS

Animal assisted therapy has been shown to have multiple benefits for patients in healthcare settings. It can effectively help patients cope with an injury or illness.

In some patients, pet therapy can decrease:

- Stress levels
- Blood pressure
- Pain
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Isolation
- Loneliness

BENEFITS

Animal assisted therapy has also been shown to improve

- Patient satisfaction,
- Energy levels, self-esteem, and
- Mood (as well as decrease depression)

Additionally:

- Increased motor skills and movement
- Improved social skills and verbal communication
- Pet therapy can promote social interaction and encourage exercise and playfulness.
- It may also have a beneficial effect on physiologic processes, such as reducing cardiovascular disease and stroke risk.



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

BxTx
PROS

Behavioral Treatment Professionals

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION

In the United States, companion animals are common, with 66% of homes having a companion animal¹ with most saying they consider their pets a family member. But there may be some cultural differences to keep in mind:

- Latino and Caucasian cultures are more likely to have companion animals, and therefore may respond most readily to animal assisted therapy.
- In Native American culture, the animal-human bond may be stronger than in any other culture, and a reverence and respect for all animals has been related to healing for centuries
- Socioeconomic factors may also be relevant, as clients of lower socioeconomic status may have had less exposure to animals and may have related fears or discomfort
- *Most Important:* Explain Animal-Assisted Therapy to your clients before the visit, and let the handler know if you have someone who might need extra attention to make them comfortable with the process.

¹Megna, Michelle. Pet Ownership Statistics 2023. Forbes Magazine. 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/pet-insurance/pet-ownership-statistics/>



THE RESEARCH



Behavioral Treatment Professionals

THE RESEARCH

Studies on use of animals in dementia.

Study	Type of study	N	Summary of results
Kongable et al. [7]	Case series/observational	12	Demented subjects had more social behaviors in presence of animal
Richeson [8]	Case series/observational	15	Animal therapy reduced amount of behavioral disturbance
Moretti et al. [9]	Controlled, unblinded, prospective	21	No difference between control and intervention, both had improved MMSE and lower GDS scores
Sellers [10]	Case series/observational	4	Subjects had less agitation and more social behavior with pet present
Edwards and Beck [11]	Case-control/prospective	62	Subjects exposed to a fish tank had greater weight gain ($P < .000$)
Bernstein et al. [12]	Self-controlled, prospective, observational	33	Longer conversations in subjects with animals present
Fick [13]	Self-controlled, prospective, observational	36	More social behavior when animals present
Tamura et al. [14]	Controlled, unblinded, prospective, observational	13	Social response similar to real or toy dog



RESOURCES

Always interview your handler and their pet and give them a trial if possible. Pets and their handlers have diverse personalities, and there may be those that match better to your site.

Here are some agencies that can link you with Animal Assisted Therapy Teams in the Los Angeles Area:

<https://www.uclahealth.org/programs/pac/about-us/how-request-visit>

<https://paws4healing.info/about-us/>

<https://www.loveon4paws.org/>

<https://www.therapydogs.com/join-therapy-dogs/>

<https://www.AAAlPonline.org>

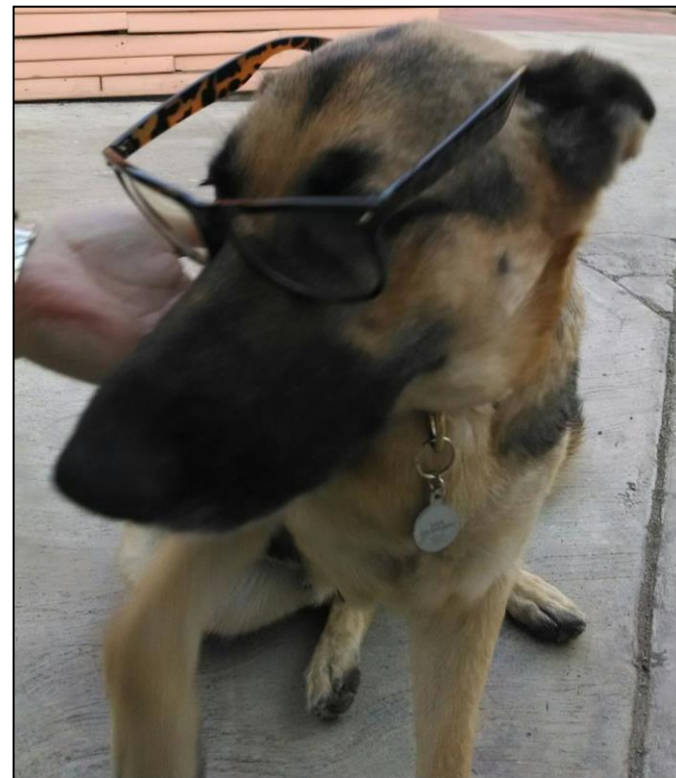
<https://www.sundogtherapy.com/>



IN MEMORIAM



Mr. Freckles



Sadie

CURRENTLY IN TRAINING



Frankie

