



# **PETS FOR LIFE, INC.**

## **VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

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**Version 4.8**

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## **DEDICATION**

**This Volunteer Manual is dedicated to the memory of our  
founders**

**William D. & Harriett M. Snyder**

**and**

**Aileen V. Callaway  
for her many years of devoted service to**

**PETS FOR LIFE, INC.**

## **LETTER OF WELCOME FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR:**

Pets for Life, Inc. (PFL) provides a wonderful opportunity for our human volunteers to share their love of animals with the community. Animals have a way of bridging a gap between people of all ages and capabilities, bringing happiness and joy to all.

PFL's volunteers are the most important part of our program. Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) can help children learn to read, teach them how to interact with animals, and show them that animals give love no matter what your abilities are. AAT can help lower heart rates, lower blood pressure, increase mobility, encourage people who have been withdrawn to talk, pet, and engage with the animal and the human volunteer.

Volunteering with PFL brings joy and happiness and enriches the lives of everyone involved, including our clients, facility staff, visiting family members, as well as yourself. We are pleased that you have chosen to be part of our program and look forward to working with you. We hope that you will be able to say that you receive as much as you give by being a part of PFL.

**Thank you,**

Kim Southard

**Program Director**

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

The purpose of Pets for Life, Inc. is to enhance the physical well-being and emotional health of people in need through interactive visits with our certified teams of pets and their human volunteers.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**

PFL is a local, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supported by community donations and grants. There is no charge to facilities for our service. We are headed by a Board of Directors and are staffed by a Program Director and Volunteer Coordinators. Our volunteers take their carefully screened pets on scheduled visits to facilities throughout greater Kansas City including nursing homes, Alzheimer's units, skilled nursing units, physical rehabilitation, pediatric and other medical units in hospitals, mental health centers, centers for youth with behavior issues and emotional disturbances, corrections facilities, shelters for domestic violence and special education classes. Our focus is on those whose situation is most restrictive and who are least likely to receive, but are most in need of, the social, mental, and physical stimulation provided by our volunteer teams.

## **BACKGROUND OF ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT):**

The exact mechanism by which animals exert their effects on the health and well-being of humans is still largely not understood. However, animals have been used to benefit mankind for centuries. We do know that in the presence of a pet, and when tactile contact is made, our bodies release a hormone called endorphins. These hormones relieve us of the stressors that lead to high blood pressure, elevated heart rate and the related health problems associated with our stress-filled lives. Clinical studies have shown repeatedly, and in a variety of ways, that pets enhance our health and well-being, physically and emotionally. Animal Assisted Therapy covers multiple areas of support for the local community that PFL serves. We certify our volunteer teams under the AAT umbrella which consists of the following:

AAT – Animal Assisted Therapy is a goal oriented structured intervention incorporating animals as part of a treatment plan. It is delivered or directed by health, education, or human services professionals. The process is goal oriented and is documented and evaluated, Examples include a therapy dog assisting a patient in physical therapy or a trained animal being part of the patient’s treatment plan

AAA – Amino Acid Assisted Activities is more recreational and motivational in nature. These are less structured and focus on providing motivational, educational, or recreational benefits. AAA activities are often used to enhance quality of life and can take place in various settings, like hospitals, nursing homes or community centers. Examples include visiting patients in hospitals and residents in assisted living facilities.

AAT – Animal Assisted Therapy is the overarching term encompassing both AAT and AAA as well as other forms of human interaction aimed at therapeutic or educational goals.

## **TIMELINE OF ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT):**

1800’s – First recorded attempt to use AAT at a residential facility for people with disabilities

1790’s – Mentally disturbed patients were encouraged to spend time with farm animals in an institution at a Quaker retreat in York, England.

1940’s – Pawling, NY Convalescent Hospital – American Red Cross and the Army Air Corps set up patients with a variety of animals in a farm setting.

1969 – Yeshiva University in NY, Boris Levison, Ph.D., Psychologist and Professor wrote *Pet Oriented Child Psychology* – a cry for more research based on his experiences using his Old English Sheepdog, Jingles, when treating children.

1970 – Ethel Wolff, Ph.D., a Psychologist in Philadelphia, PA prepared a *Survey of the use of Animals in Psychotherapy in the United States*.

1977 – Delta Society emerged promoting research, education and funds for research. This research showed that the presence of a pet lowered blood pressure and heart rates, and lowered cholesterol and triglycerides. It also showed that people with pets had fewer health complaints, had fewer visits to the doctor, and experienced lower levels of perceived pain at the dentist, as well as a 22% higher survival rate after heart surgery.

1977 – Australia’s University of New England found that cat owners had fewer psychiatric disturbances than those without felines.

University of NY at Buffalo found that hypertensive stockbrokers improved

dramatically after owning a pet for 6 months.

1984 – Pets for Life, Inc. was founded.

1990 – Pet Partners formed under the umbrella of the Delta Society, setting training and screening standards for organizations like Pets for Life, Inc.

## **PETS FOR LIFE BEGINNINGS:**

In 1984 the husband-and-wife team of William D. and Harriett M. Snyder were inspired by a *60 Minutes* telecast about the benefits of animals for the elderly. They felt such a program would be a valuable and much needed service for the metropolitan Kansas City community. They donated the initial seed money and formed the organization that blossomed into Pets for Life, Inc.

## **VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION PROCESS:**

The process to become a certified volunteer team with Pets For Life is a simple six step process.

### **ORIENTATION**

Orientation is the introduction of Pets for Life to potential AAT teams. All teams must complete the PFL evaluation process and be matched with a mentor to help ensure volunteers feel successful when beginning their journey with Pets for Life. There are regularly scheduled online events as well as periodic in-person orientation sessions that last approximately thirty minutes.

- Sign up and attend the PFL virtual Orientation Session
- Read volunteer manual and prepare for the comprehension test

### **ANIMAL / HANDLER PRE-TEST WORKSHOP**

Please be aware that the workshop is for dogs and their handlers, cats and rabbits will proceed to the evaluation step.

- Sign up and attend a pre-test workshop to address any feedback prior to scheduling the evaluation for PFL certification. The session is usually offered each month and lasts about an hour. It is typically limited to 5 individuals and



their pets. There is no additional charge for the pre-test workshop, however you must register to attend. Check out the calendar dates online.

## **SCHEDULE PFL VOLUNTEER TEAM EVALUATION**

- There is fee for the VTE. Volunteer will schedule, pay for, attend and pass the onsite Volunteer Team Evaluation (VTE). The volunteer will come prepared to the evaluation. Please note that no treats are to be given to the pet during the evaluation.
- After scheduling the VTE, a link to all additional required forms/fees will be sent to the volunteer.
- Upon successful completion of the VTE, a mentor will be assigned by PFL to the newly certified team. See Mentor Program below.
- All pets must be recertified every 2 years. This will be the same Team Evaluation test used for the initial certification. The evaluation team fee of \$30 applies.
- Please note that a (A) VTE Fee, (B) Background Check with a “NO-FLAG” result, (C) Successful Volunteer Manual Knowledge Comprehension Test with results, and (D) all identified completed forms must be received before a scheduled volunteer is admitted for testing.

## **BACKGROUND CHECK AND FORMS COMPLETION**

Registered volunteer submits/receives criminal background check – Volunteers will be supplied a link to the vendor to which you will register, pay the required fee, and complete the criminal background check. Results will be returned to the volunteer and PFL within approximately 48 hours. All personal, sensitive information will be masked and only “FLAG or “NO-FLAG” will be shared with PFL. Anything marked with “FLAG” is showing that there are offenses and PFL will close the application.

- Volunteer successfully submits the Volunteer Manual Knowledge Comprehension test
- Submission of all forms provided by PFL
  - i. Volunteer Information Form
  - ii. HIPPA Confidentiality Agreement
  - iii. Annual Medical Evaluation to be completed by Veterinarian
  - iv. Agreement of Understanding

v. Authorization for Release of Veterinary Records

## SHADOW VISIT

- The volunteer will attend a required shadow visit with an existing, experienced volunteer/animal team. This visit is for the new volunteer only and he/she will learn visiting techniques and safe handling practices from another seasoned volunteer and their certified therapy animal.

## SUPERVISED VISIT

- Volunteer and pet will complete a supervised visit (with the PFL Program Director or another designated person)
- Pay remaining fees which includes Lifetime Membership Fee

## FEES

The following is a list of the fees for PFL volunteer teams. These fees are competitive and aligned with similar organizations.

**Background Check:** Upon completion of the pretest workshop and prior to attending the VTE, the new/aspiring volunteer will register with and complete the background check with Validity Screening Solutions. The non-refundable fee of \$17.50 (+processing fee) is paid directly by the volunteer to the vendor. Results “FLAG” (**Red**), or “NO-FLAG” (**Green**), will be shared with volunteer and PFL. No other information will be received by PFL.

**Animal Testing / Volunteer Team Evaluation:** The fee of \$30.00 per appointment is to be paid by all new/aspiring and existing volunteers upon scheduling of, and prior to completion of the Vendor Team Evaluation. This fee would be paid for all/any VTE appointment being scheduled, and is necessary to assist in covering all facilities rental, professional evaluator’s and PFL support staff labor costs needed to support this session.

**Cancellation policy:** Fee is non-refundable for cancelation of test date for any reason prior to scheduled testing start date. Rescheduling is absolutely supported, and staff will work to accommodate as much as possible.

**Exceptions:** on a case-by-case basis, requests for testing fee exception will be reviewed. Each request must be directed to our PFL Executive Director and presented to board officers for review and consideration.

**Lifetime Membership:** Effective September 1, 2025, all new volunteers will incur a \$100 lifetime, non-refundable membership fee with PFL.

NOTE: All existing, Active volunteers prior to September 1, 2025, are now classified as Heritage members and will not be required to pay the initial membership fee. Inactive members desiring to re-activate their membership will now become new members and therefore will be required to pay all new membership fees. Membership for **all** members include:

- PFL Insurance Coverage
- 2 Badges with 1 lanyard
- 1 Certificate of VTE completion
- 1 Volunteer, short-sleeve, logo T-shirt
- 1 Bandanna for animal
- 1 package of Member/Animal Trading Cards
- PFL Administrative Support including printing, postage, shipping services

**NOTE:** For all members (Heritage and New); any additional quantities of the items listed above will be required to purchase and can be ordered and paid for directly by the volunteer.

## **PEOPLE VOLUNTEER CRITERIA:**

- Able to commit to 12 regularly scheduled PFL hours within a 12-month period of being certified to remain an active volunteer. This is known as the 12/12 rule.
- Genuine interest in institutionalized, physically and mentally challenged persons
- Qualified pet (see Pet Volunteer Criteria)
- Always Have control of your pet during PFL visits
- 16 years of age or older
- Responsible for monitoring pet's health and behavior (see Health & Safety – Pets)
- Own Transportation
- Always represent PFL in a professional manner during a PFL visit.

PFL also has non-animal volunteer opportunities that may be of interest. Consider the following:

- Become a PFL board member and participate in board meetings and associated activities
- Become a member of one of our Board Committees and participate in meetings and associated activities
- Attend any of the annual Fund Raiser Events scheduled throughout the year
- Consider becoming a mentor to further support our current and future volunteers during facility visits, training and hosting or participating in continued education working sessions.

## **MENTOR CRITERIA:**

- Must have minimum of 1 year experience visiting facilities
- Must be available to attend the first solo visit with the volunteer.
- Must follow up with volunteer one, three, and six months, and be on call to the new team up to one year after first visit together
- Answer questions or address concerns from volunteer to help ensure a rewarding experience for all.

- Must inform the PFL office of any concerns with the capability of the new volunteer/team.

## **PFL WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING RESOURCES:**

There are a series of helpful workshops for PFL volunteers. The workshops consist of a variety of topics, such as:

- Training tips for AAT work and how to read a dog's cues.
- Visit protocols -Safety and Navigation Around Durable Medical Equipment (DME) cover how to approach and navigate wheelchairs, walkers, beds, as well as tips and tricks for ensuring the safety of the animal in therapeutic settings, such as ignoring fallen items.
- Advocating for your animal will cover how to advocate for your animal in a variety of situations and weather conditions. Situations include redirecting inappropriate touching of the animal, handling introductions or distractions from other animals on visits.

Additional resources for PFL volunteers are made available regularly on the PFL website.

## **PET VOLUNTEER CRITERIA:**

- Dogs must be 1 years of age and. Cats and rabbits must be 1 year of age to volunteer.
- Dogs must be physically and mentally mature enough to pass the temperament test and sustain expectations of visits.
- Must have been owned for at least 6 months by volunteer
- Annual Medical Evaluation satisfactorily completed by pet's veterinarian
- Satisfactorily complete PFL's Volunteer Team Evaluation given by a PFL Animal Behavior Evaluator bi-annually.
- No history of aggressive behavior

## **PFL EVALUATION/CERTIFICATION:**

To pass the PFL Volunteer Team Evaluation, your pet must successfully complete all criteria defined on the PFL Evaluation form located on the PFL website:

- It is the responsibility of the volunteer to review and come prepared with the acceptable equipment allowed for the evaluation.
- Entering the room for the evaluation should be a relaxed experience for both the handler and the dog.
- The evaluator will establish that the equipment being used is compliant with PFL standards prior to beginning the evaluation and will answer any questions the handler may have.
- The evaluators will explain what is being tested and will allow a few minutes to allow the pet to acclimate to the room.
- Prior to signing off on the evaluation feedback will be provided to the handler after which a copy of the evaluation with the written comments will be emailed to the handler.

Senior (over 10 years old)/deaf/blind dogs can be considered for PFL certification provided they meet the same criteria for cats or rabbits and do not show any aggressive/defensive behaviors when handled by two or more evaluators.

## **CAT/RABBIT BEHAVIOR:**

To pass the PFL Volunteer Team Evaluation, your cat or rabbit must:

- Be calm around a chaotic, loud or busy environment
- Seem to enjoy being handled by strangers including touching feet, tail and body
- Be calm around dogs
- Be confident when placed on the floor
- Be well groomed with nails cut short

## **FACILITIES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

**FACILITIES** – Facilities that volunteer teams visit must have a current contract with PFL, signed by the facility’s Recreation Therapist/Activities Director and Administrator and PFL’s Program Director. Volunteer teams may only visit currently approved facilities under Pets for Life’s name. If a volunteer team visits facilities that are not currently approved by PFL, they should not use PFL’s name and will not be covered under PFL’s insurance. If you have a place that you would like to visit, but they are not a PFL contracted facility, that facility must contact PFL office to start the procedure.

## **DRESS CODE**

PFL follows OSHA standards, therefore dress code is important for the safety of all.

- Dress must be modest and professional. You should wear your PFL Logo T-shirt at every visit/event.
- No cologne or perfume (Many ill clients find fragrance offensive, and some are allergic.),
- No dangling jewelry or open toed shoes PFL name tags must be worn by volunteer and pet while on visits.
- Wear clothing and shoes that make moving around easy. It is desirable, although not required, that pets wear PFL scarves or vests while on visits.
- Be prepared for accidental spills. Always be clean and well groomed. There is always the possibility of newspaper or TV cameras at a facility. When you are with PFL consider yourself camera-ready.

## **VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

**Safety** – Safety is the Volunteers #1 priority for both their pet and for those around them. You must pay attention and keep track of your pet. It is a good idea to keep your hand on your pet when other people are interacting with them. This should allow you to interrupt any inappropriate handling before it starts. You should never force your pet to interact with others and you should end the visit if your pet starts displaying signs of stress. You are your pet’s advocate, so be aware of stress signals your pet is sending during the visit.

**Attendance** – Must make a commitment to make 12 scheduled hours within a 12-month period of being certified (12/12 rule). Call or email the PFL office and the facility you are scheduled to visit if you are unable to keep your scheduled visit. To remain an active volunteer, you must meet the 12/12 rule.

**Counts** – After each visit, record the date, facility visited, and the number of people visited. Send this information to the PFL office at the end of the month.

**Confidentiality** – Do not divulge confidences shared with you by our clients. Do not discuss illnesses or ailments of your clients with anyone else. If something looks suspicious or client complains of abuse, report to the PFL Program Director or state Ombudsman, not to nursing. See the last page for contact information. Pictures can be taken of your volunteer team but cannot include any client or staff without permission.

**Emergency Notification** – Volunteers must fill out the Volunteer Information Form completely and submit it to the PFL office. Your emergency notification contact should be someone available while you are on a visit, not someone who is accompanying you on a visit.

**Event Photography** – Volunteers must ask permission from the activity director at the facility/event as well as the subject prior to taking a photograph. Photos may not be posted to social media without masking the individuals in the photo, particularly children. Photos of handlers and their pets can be shared with PFL staff for posting on the PFL website. The volunteer information form contains a photography release and must be completed by the volunteer as outlined in the steps above.

**Transportation** – All volunteers must have their own transportation to and from scheduled visits. PFL is unable to reimburse volunteers for mileage, but mileage is tax deductible on your federal tax return.

**NO SMOKING OR VAPING** around pets or in facility or on facility grounds.



## **VOLUNTEER PET RESPONSIBILITIES:**

**Hygiene** – All pets should be clean, nails trimmed (not on the same day as a visit), ears should be clean, eyes free of any matter and breath should not be offensive. Fur should look clean, brushed and feel nice to touch with no bad odors. It is best not to groom your pet the day of a visit except for brushing and touch up care. Full grooming can be stressful for your pet and damp dogs tend to have an odor. PFL recommends volunteers to carry hand wipes to offer to those who have interacted with the animal.

**Fleas – NO FLEAS!** Check your pet carefully before each visit. Do not use a flea spray, chemicals or topical flea product within 3 days of a visit.

**Skin Conditions** – There should be no matted fur, hot spots, wounds, sores or rashes on your pet’s skin.

**Accidents** – It is the volunteer’s responsibility to clean any mess if your pet voids or eliminates on a visit either indoors or on facility grounds. Keep bags with you and antibacterial wipe or lotion in case of an accident. Give your pet ample opportunity to “take care of business” before leaving home or entering the facility.

**Towels** – Always bring a clean towel with you, unless you carry your pet in a basket. If you have a lap pet (under 15 pounds) you should place the towel on the client’s lap before placing your pet on the lap (Always ask prior to placing or removing the towel. Don’t reach into someone’s personal space without permission). If you are placing your pet on furniture or a bed, put the towel down first.

**Collars & Leashes** – The following represents the acceptable equipment for PFL animals. Cats/Rabbits:

- Cats must wear a standard harness
- Volunteers must use a standard leather or nylon leash
- Cats may be carried by the volunteer

Dogs:

- Volunteers must use a standard leather or nylon leash, with a length no greater than 6 feet. Exceptions to being off leash can be made for obedience demonstrations, games like fetch or performances. You must receive pre-

approval from the Program Director before you participate in any off-leash activities.

- No metal, flexible, extension leashes or leashes over 6 feet in length are allowed.
- Dogs must wear a flat buckle collar, humane collar, Martingale collar (without a chain), or standard harness.
- No prong, pinch, slip, choke, electronic, head collars, chains or martingales with chains are permitted. These are all considered training tools and should not be needed for a therapy pet to do their job.
- **Raw food diet** is not permitted
- **Titers** are not accepted in lieu of vaccinations

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Stress Signals** – Safety is your priority and safety starts with your pet. Know your pet's stress signals! If at any time during a visit your pet starts to appear stressed or uncomfortable, stop the visit immediately.

Signs to watch for include:

- Restlessness
- Straining on the leash to move away
- Defensiveness, growling
- Ears back
- Cowering
- Hissing
- Licking lips
- Yawning repeatedly
- Panting
- Avoiding a situation by looking away
- Tucked/lowered tail
- Shake offs

You know your pet best, so be aware of changes in your pet's behavior during all visits. If you need to cut a visit short, notify the contact person at the facility of your

departure. AAT is rewarding for our clients and you. It is your responsibility to make sure it is rewarding for your pet. Be very aware of who and what is around your pet. Don't allow anyone to grab your pet's face or put their own face near your pet's face. If you see someone reaching for your pet's face, gently, but quickly turn them so your pet's back is to them and/or explain that your pet doesn't really like to be kissed but loves to have their back rubbed.

**Hand Washing** – Hand washing is crucial in any health care setting. Hand-to-mouth, eyes or nose is the most common way to spread colds, coughs, flu, sore throats, etc. Wash before a visit to avoid spreading germs from the outside to the clients being visited. Wash after a visit, as clients may not have frequent opportunities to wash after having sneezed, coughed, drooled or blown their noses, to avoid taking their germs with you. Most health facilities have hand sanitizer stations through-out their facilities. It is a good idea to sanitize or wash your hands 3-4 times during a one-hour visit or bring hand sanitizing wipes to use and offer to clients This will limit the possibility of transmitting germs from patient to patient.

**Illness (Volunteer)** – If you think you might be starting to come down with something, DO NOT come to your scheduled visit. Contact the PFL office and your facility to cancel your visit. You are most contagious during the early stage so play it safe and stay home.

**Illness (Pet)** - If your pet has had surgery or a traumatic incident requiring veterinary care, you need to have your veterinarian send a statement to PFL stating that your pet is healthy and ready to return to therapy work. If your pet is ill, but not in need of a veterinary visit, cancel your visit by calling the PFL office and your facility.

**Stay with your Pet** – Never leave your pet unattended. If you must leave the area, take your pet with you, or ask another volunteer (never a staff member or client) to hold your pet for you. If a client is sitting on the floor with your dog, you must be on the floor also, as close to your pet as the client is, but never more than an arm's reach away from your pet. If your pet is on a client's lap, you must always have one hand on the pet.

**Injury** – If a client is injured, immediately notify the staff and the PFL Program Director. Provide information needed for the facility's Incident Report. If a pet bite occurred, the facility will most likely need a copy of your pet's current Rabies certificate or proof of

vaccines. You must also contact PFL immediately and fill out an Incident Report that will be supplied by PFL and return it as soon as possible. In the event of an incident, all visits will be suspended until an investigation is conducted and a determination is made by PFL Program Director. If it is determined that this was an act of aggression, your pet will be disqualified from further visits.

**Client Requests** – You may be asked to “Put me in bed,” or “Take me to the bathroom,” or “Help me,” or “Give me some water,” etc. You must explain that you are a volunteer, you cannot do this, but you will report it to a staff member.

**Weather** – We do not expect our volunteers, or their pets, to take unnecessary risks. In the winter, if it is zero degrees or below, or in the summer over 92 degrees, if public schools are closed, or if newscasters are reporting that people should stay home, if possible, we do not expect you to go on visits. Contact both the PFL office and your facility to confirm you will not be visiting due to the weather.

## INTERACTIONS DURING VISITS

**Privacy** – Always knock before entering a client’s room. If the client is on a commode or toilet, excuse yourself and return later. If the client is exposed, offer to adjust the lap robe, covers etc., or contact a staff person to find an appropriate covering. When visiting in a client’s room, always have a staff member accompany you.

Many clients will sleep throughout the day whether from boredom, a rough night or medication. The staff usually wants them to stay awake during the daytime. It is OK to approach a client and say “Hello.” If the client does not respond, move on.

**Treatment** – Treat each client with dignity and respect. Regardless of a client’s physical or mental condition, aside from what we see on the surface, there is a valuable, precious, significant human being on the inside. Always give the benefit of the doubt. Never assume that the client can’t understand or hear you, despite the response you may see. We have had comatose clients who later remembered the pet’s visit. Many geriatric clients can understand but are unable to respond verbally or physically. Never say anything to a client that you would not want their family to hear. Do not talk down to clients the way adults may talk to small children.

**Reminiscence** – is a genuine therapy. Long term memory is retained better than short term. Limit questions to yes/no answers at first, such as: “Did you have a dog?” “Was it a big dog?” A client may not remember the pet’s name. In dementia, names are the first to go. Do not press a client to give the pet’s name, as this may be frustrating. A client may well remember the characteristics of a pet, but not the name. If the client’s pets stayed in the house, they were probably more like companions. This may help you relate to the client’s perception of pets. You may hear some sad stories. Try to empathize: “That must have been hard for you.” Try to remind the client of happier memories, then focus on your pet with something positive: “He loves to be scratched behind the ears.”

**Approach** – Approach clients slowly from the front, within their range of vision. Stop several feet away and ask if they would like to see your pet. Use the client’s name when possible. The facility staff is often helpful in this respect. Whenever possible, present your pet below face level. Protect your pet by presenting him/her at an angle so that the client is less likely to reach into his/her face. Always watch anyone who is interacting with your pet and NEVER let them grab your pet’s face or put their own face in your pet’s face. This is the quickest way that a client can get bitten. If you see a client reaching for your pet’s face, try to move your pet around so their back is to the client and/or say something like, “Oh, he/she prefers not to be face-to-face. But he/she really likes to be scratched behind the head/under the chin/on his back end.”

Only pets that weigh 15 lbs. or less should be placed on a client’s lap. The client must be seated if holding a pet. If your pet is too heavy to place on a lap, you can use a chair next to the client. Hold the pet in your arms or kneel on one knee and have your dog place his/her front feet on your extended knee. This method may require practice at home first.

Always smile and give positive feedback: “You have a nice touch. I can tell he likes you. He likes it when you touch his ears.” If a client calls your rabbit a dog, you might say something like “This is a rabbit.” But don’t make an issue of it.

## SENSORY STIMULATION

**Visual** – Put yourself at the client’s level and watch their face. Look at them as you speak. Try placing your pet in their line of vision, when possible. Try different sides or angles until they have eye contact.

**Tactile** – If the client appears interested, ask if she would like to touch your pet. Then assist by saying, “Let me show you how soft he is.” Take the client’s hand gently, unless she is resisting, and place it on your pet. Point out different textures in various parts of the coat like soft ears, smooth, wiry, coarse, thick, curly or silky fur.

**Auditory** – You may need to use repetition to get the client’s attention and comprehension: “Do you like DOGS? This is my DOG. My DOG likes to be petted”.

**Special concerns** – Watch clients for indication that they are tired or are losing interest. Say thank you and move on. If clients ask inappropriate questions, for example “Have you seen my mother?” say “No, I’m sorry, I can’t help you.” Then focus on your pet. If a client asks you for help, say “Let me find someone who can help you.” Then find a staff member and relay the information to them. Some clients will not want to see you or your pet. Never push your pet on the client. Leave on a positive note “OK, thank you and have a great day.” If a client becomes agitated or belligerent, excuse yourself and leave quickly.

**Closure** – Do not drift away or leave abruptly. Say goodbye personally and reassure the client of your return. It is your judgment call as to how much time you spend with each client. Keep in mind how many clients there are to be visited, and how many volunteers are participating. Leave the client feeling successful, “We really enjoyed seeing you, thank you for letting us visit,” or “We will see you next time.”

## CLIENT CONDITIONS

**Aphasia** –

- Unable to use speech
- May be confused, drowsy, have slurred speech, or sound more disabled than they are

- May still understand and know what to say, but it all comes out disjointed
- May disconnect sentences (“I’ve got to go downtown. Will you put me to bed?”)

#### **Alzheimer’s Disease or Dementia –**

- Inability to learn new material
- May be disoriented to person, place, situation and time
- May have difficulty following progressive pattern (step 1, step 2, etc.)
- May have difficulty naming things or have a short attentions span
- May repeat the same questions over and over
- Childhood memories may be clearer than short term memories

#### **Hearing Impaired –**

- Speak slowly and clearly, not loudly or too fast.
- Lower tones are often heard better.
- Allow the client time to understand.
- Speak at eye level so the client can see your facial expression.
- Encourage touching of the pet.

#### **Impaired Judgment –**

The client may love your pet but may hurt him while petting by squeezing or pulling. Monitor both client and pet closely. Assist client with appropriate petting.

#### **Medications –**

Some medications may affect perception by the client or may cause slurred speech, drooling, confusion or drowsiness.

#### **Visually Impaired –**

- Tell the client who you are and what kind of pet you have.
- Ask first, and then assist with placing the client’s hand on pet.
- Describe color, body part (head, back, paw, etc.), length and type of fur.

### **Mental Illness –**

Most of our mental health clients are in an acute unit for a short stay. Some are chronically ill and are in residential treatment. The youth with behavior problems or emotional disturbances, or the corrections facility clientele, may have a history of violence. However, when we see them, they have to have demonstrated self-control and earned merits to come on the visits. Staff is to ALWAYS be present when visiting with mental health clients or children. Generally, our clients may be depressed or schizophrenic. Some are on medication with obvious side effects (drowsiness, slurred speech, short attentions span, etc.) Most are in a somewhat fragile emotional state. However, there is a potential for disruptive or “acting out” behavior. Your first priority is to protect your pet. Always be watchful of someone becoming stressed or agitated. Some adolescents may make bizarre statements to see your reaction (“We throw kittens in front of cars to watch them get squashed.”) In a situation like this report such comments to the staff and focus on the clients who are behaving more appropriately. If a client gets down on their knees and starts barking at your dog, leave the area promptly. This is an accident about to happen. Overall, most of the mental health clients we see are very much like the people you meet every day and are happy to see you and your pet.

If at any time during a visit you do not feel comfortable, tell the client you need to take your pet outside for a potty break. Inform the staff and leave the situation. Decide if you want to continue the visit after assessing your pet’s stress signals and the situation.

### **VISIT ETIQUETTE:**

**Conversation** – Keep all conversations generic. Do not ask “What are you here for?” or talk about controversial topics like politics, etc.

**Pet Toys** – Volunteers may bring toys for the pets to play with allowing interaction with the clients.

- Toys should be smooth-surfaced, non-absorbent (plastic) that are easy to dry off.
- No balls unless in a gymnasium
- Bring several toys so clients don’t have to grasp a slimy toy.
- Nerf type toys are not allowed.



- When playing with toys that are caught and returned by your pet, let the client roll or toss the toy with your pet returning it to you to wipe off before the client tosses it.
- No games of tug are allowed.

**Tricks** – You are encouraged to teach your pet tricks, as clients generally really enjoy this. Teaching your dog to “shake hands” can be risky. We don’t want dogs accidentally scratching a client with their paws. Don’t let the client shake hands with your dog.

**Sniffing and Licking** – Do not encourage your pet to give kisses. If a client asks for a kiss, just say “I’m sorry, he/she does not like to give kisses.” Licking once or twice is OK, but not excessive licking. Have a sanitary wipe with you to offer the client if your pet licks.

**Food** – It is a good idea to bring treats with you at least the first several visits so your pet gets a positive association with the new environment, sights, sounds, etc. If you allow a client to give your pet a treat, make sure the client offers the treat with an open palm. Do not let your pet take a treat that is pinched between a client’s fingers. Do not allow anybody to give your pet food, other than what you brought for him/her.

#### **Bedside Manners –**

- When entering a room, always knock first and identify yourself and ask if the client would like a visit from you and your pet.
- If a door is closed or a curtain is pulled around a bed, walk on by unless accompanied by a staff member that asks you to visit.
- Some facilities might encourage you to visit clients that are sleeping so that they stay active during the day and are able to sleep at night. But don’t make this assumption on your own.
- If a client reacts negatively to you and your pet, leave quickly on a positive note- “Thank you, have a nice day”.
- If you need to move a bedside tray, wheelchair or walker, ask permission first and be sure to place it back where you found it when you leave.
- You can use a chair or a knee to have your dog put his feet up on. In some instances, you can have your dog put his paws on the bed, if the staff says it is OK. Don’t take the client’s word for it. Ask a staff member. If you do this, be sure to place a towel under your dog’s feet.

- Small pets can be placed on the bed if it is approved by staff. But be sure to place a towel down first.

### **Surroundings –**

Always be aware of your surrounding space as you move around. Wait for others, or visit with a client, staff or visitor. If your dog is off leash (demonstrations, fetch, etc.), watch closely for clients who might move through the area. When in a congested area keep your pet close to you. Short leashes are recommended for larger dogs.

### **Fearful Clients –**

- Keep your pet on your side farthest from any client that is fearful.
- Attempt a pleasant exchange “We don’t mean to upset anyone; Just wanted to say hello; We’ll try to stay out of your way.”
- Do not try to convince a client that your pet is sweet and harmless or push to have a client touch your pet.

**Discipline –** Visits are not training sessions. Your pet should be under control and relaxed. If your pet is misbehaving, avoiding being petted or seems uncomfortable, end the visit. Absolutely NO PHYSICAL CORRECTIONS are to be used while on a visit. Remember the visit starts when you exit your vehicle and ends when you exit the facility grounds. Use treats, your voice, toys and your energy to maneuver your pet into place.

**Doorways –** As you navigate the facility during your visit, remember – Safety First. Never let your dog walk through a doorway first. You never know what is on the other side of the door or in the hallway. There may be a food tray or scared patient on the other side. Always have your dog Wait at doorways until you confirm the path is clear.

**Elevators –** Always stand at least 3 feet away from elevator doors. This allows other people the space to enter/exit without having to get too close to your pet. Always ask for permission before entering a full elevator. Someone on the elevator may be afraid of dogs. Don’t let your dog’s first exposure to an elevator be during a visit. Elevators can be very scary for some dogs. Take the time to introduce and desensitize your dog to elevators BEFORE your 1<sup>st</sup> visit.

## **INCIDENT PROCEDURES:**

Any time clients or staff at any of the facilities we visit express concern or alarm about our volunteer teams, pets or people, PFL takes their concerns very seriously. No matter how careful we are, if they claim something is wrong, we will investigate it. We are serving at their invitation. Their concerns must be our concerns. We take concerns from our volunteers just as seriously. If you are uncomfortable, unwelcome, or have any concerns about any facility that you visit, please report it to the office immediately. PFL recommends that volunteers carry an incident report with them on visits should the need arise.

When there is a concern or incident, an Incident Report will need to be completed by all parties and witnesses involved and turned into the PFL office. The PFL Incident Report Review Panel consists of the Program Director, a mentor, an Evaluator and any other persons the Program Director determines will add a valuable, objective perspective, relevant to the incident. These individuals will be chosen by the Program Director as he/she deems necessary. The members of the panel will review the report, give their opinions, and discuss appropriate measures to rectify the problem.

The Program Director will give the decision to the persons involved for consideration, including the Recreation Therapist/Activities Director at the facility. The Program Director will then assure that the proposed, accepted measures are followed.

## **ABUSE REPORTS:**

When there is an indication of abuse of a client, either by appearance or a statement by the client, these should be taken seriously and should not be reported to the facility staff, but to the state Ombudsman or state citizens' organization or to the PFL Program Director.

State of Missouri Dept of Health & Senior Services Hotline  
1-800-392-0210  
[www.health.mo.gov](http://www.health.mo.gov)

Kansas Elder Abuse Hotline  
1-800-922-5330  
[www.dcf.ks.gov](http://www.dcf.ks.gov)

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Feel free to ask for help from the staff, family members or other volunteers. Be realistic. Remember you cannot help everyone. There are bound to be frustrations at various times. Keep your sense of humor and SMILE.

Share your questions, concerns or comments (positive or negative) about your visits with the Program Director. We love to hear about your special moments when you and your pet make a special connection with a client.

## INCIDENT REPORT

### INCIDENT REPORT

Reporting Party: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet's name(s) if involved in incident: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Incident Details

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did incident happen (room/unit #, building): \_\_\_\_\_

Names of persons directly involved in the incident:

\_\_\_\_\_

Names of pets directly involved in the incident:

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe incident, specify spatial relationships between people and pets, what happened directly before, during and after incident with as much detail as possible (use additional paper or back of form if needed):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Were there any injuries to people or pets? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If yes, please describe:

\_\_\_\_\_

Was a physician or veterinarian notified? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If yes, please give name and phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe any treatment, inpatient or outpatient, hospitalization required:

\_\_\_\_\_

First aid given. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If yes, please describe

\_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

## COUNTS - WHY, WHEN, AND WHO TO COUNT

### Why are the counts important?

Although the quality of our visit is our #1 priority, the only way we can continue to make a difference for our clients is through donations and grants. Being able to report to our benefactors how many people's lives we enrich can help us obtain grants.

### When to count?

Please count at all Facility Hours – Nursing Homes, Schools, Hospitals, and Special Events- that have an educational or therapeutic purpose, and R.E.A.D sessions.

### Who to count?

Facility Visits – Everyone (staff, residents, visitors) that interact with you or your pet with more than a mere passing smile and brief hello. If they ignore you and only pet your pet, they count.

Special Events – Count everyone who is attending, if a small, organized group such as a class, or Boy Scout Troop. If it is a meet and greet in an open area, then count how many people you or your pet interacted with.

R.E.A.D. Sessions – Count children that you read to or that read to your pet. You may also count siblings or friends of the child reading if they are sitting and listening to the story and benefitting from the experience.

## VISIT DATA REPORTING

**Facility:**

**Phone: Contact:**

At least once per month, the volunteer will report on how many people's lives were enriched during your visits. The following items are to be included in the reporting via email:

1. Dates of visits
2. Volunteer and Pet name
3. Location(s) visited
4. Number of interactions – Adults, Youth
5. Amount of time spent at location (HH:MM) – *report/round up, in/to 30-minute increments*

**It is best to record this information after each visit, so you don't forget the numbers. You can submit your counts after the visit or monthly.**



## VOLUNTEER MANUAL KNOWLEDGE COMPREHENSION TEST

Please bring your completed test to your Volunteer Team Evaluation or email your answers to Pets for Life office at [petsforlife@kcpetsforlife.com](mailto:petsforlife@kcpetsforlife.com)

1. List 3 benefits that a client receives from Animal Assisted Therapy.

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2. Volunteers are not allowed to bring toys or treats with them to visits.

True \_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_

3. Aphasia is

Unable to use speech

Unable to learn new things

Unpredictable behavior

4. A \_\_\_\_\_ should be filled out and returned to  
\_\_\_\_\_ any time there is a problem during a visit.

5. What is the weight limit of pets that will be placed in a client's lap?

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6. What should you do if a client, staff member or guest reaches for your pet's face and starts to "go in" for a kiss?

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7. When was Pets for Life founded? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How many hours must a volunteer commit to? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Who founded Pets for Life? \_\_\_\_\_

10. How old must dogs be to be a therapy pet? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How old must cats be to be a therapy pet? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What should you do if a client becomes agitated or belligerent?

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13. Who must accompany you any time you visit in a client's room?

The client's family member

A staff member

We are not allowed to go into clients' rooms

14. What is your #1 priority when visiting with Clients? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Should you help a client scoot up in bed or get up to go to the restroom?

True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

16. You can visit any facility you like with your pet under the Pets for Life name.

True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

17. Who can hold your dog's leash or your cat (or their leash) other than yourself?

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18. It is OK for your pet to lick a client?

True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

19. Instead of asking a client "What was your pet's name?" instead ask something like

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20. Tricks are great, especially "shake." We encourage Clients to ask your dog to shake.

True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

21. Name 3 signs that your pet may be too stressed to continue a visit.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. It is OK to talk to the elderly as though they were children?

True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

23. If your pet is on someone's lap, it is OK to go have a seat while they visit?

True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

24. How is PFL funded?

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25. Why is it important to keep track of how many people you and your pet visit?

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26. Circle all equipment/training that is NOT ALLOWED.

Flat buckle collar - Choke chain - Pinch collar

Leather leash - Retractable leash - Bandana

Physical Corrections - Chain leash - Martingale collar

Food lures/rewards - Shock collars - Vest

No-pull harness - Head halters - Costumes