



Dogs Who Help People

In Ontario's public institutions, including hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and schools, there are different kinds of working dogs. These include:

Guide Dogs - These assist people who are blind or visually impaired. Identified by the leather harness and the U-shaped handle held in person's left hand, these dogs guide people safely while they walk. They receive specialized training for many months before being matched with a person with a visual impairment.

Service Dogs - Depending on the disability, these dogs assist in different ways. Some dogs assist people who are mobility impaired, for example, a person who cannot move their hands and arms. Service dogs also are sometimes called 'assistance dogs' because they assist people in everyday tasks. They can be taught to push open doors or fetch objects, for example.

Seizure disorder dogs are trained to alert their handler when they are about to have a seizure. Other service dogs help people with a mental health disability or with autism. For example, these dogs can help to reduce anxiety and fear in a crowd situation.

- These trained dogs assist people who are deaf and hearing impaired by making them aware of important sounds, such as the doorbell, an alarm clock or passing traffic.

Therapy Dogs - including our own OTD teams, bring companionship, comfort and motivation in visits and in Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT). They are family pets that have gone through a detailed evaluation. No special training is required except for a good temperament and some obedience training. Unlike guide dogs or assistance dogs, therapy dogs have a very different job. They are there to be petted and enjoyed.

People interested in learning more about the evaluation criteria for therapy dog teams should check out the Becoming a Member section of this web site.

What the Law Says

In Ontario, the law states that guide dogs, service and hearing dogs are permitted to enter any public space and all forms of public transportation with their handler.

Therapy dogs are permitted access to their volunteer placement site. Currently, in Ottawa, therapy dogs are not permitted on public transportation. The city of Ottawa does waive dog license fees for evaluated and currently working therapy dogs.

Family Pets and Friendly Visits

Depending on the public place, family pets may be invited into a facility for a friendly visit. Some hospitals, for example, allow patients to visit with a family pet. Certain rules may apply, such as where and when the pet may visit, and proof of vaccination. Currently, not all places have policies and procedures in place for these kinds of pet visits.

How does OTD safeguard its therapy dogs?

Prior to OTD dogs visiting any facility, the OTD Placement Coordinator arranges for a thorough on-site safety check. Included in this inspection is a list of questions to determine the kinds of pets who visit residents, as well as any policies and procedures in place pertinent to pet visitation. A facility would be excluded, for instance, if family pets were permitted to visit off leash or left unsupervised.

OTD Etiquette with Other On-Site Dogs

- Avoid direct contact with other dogs during therapy dog visits.
- Report any unusual situations to OTD and your facility director as soon as possible.
- OTD therapy dogs should wear proper identification, including the OTD badge and scarf, while working and when representing OTD in public. Otherwise, these items should not be worn.

For more information:

Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario regulation 429/07: <http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=guide&lang=en&page=7>

Written by Julianne Labreche, Associate Member, OTD and Jeannie Stafford and Margot Montgomery, OTD Members.



OTD Toolbox Infosheet #5

Design donated by www.guymerier.com

Good dogs doing great work!



Ottawa Therapy Dogs

Suite 750, 1500 Bank St.

Ottawa, Ontario

K1H 1B8

613.261.6834

info@OttawaTherapyDogs.ca

ottawatherapydogs.ca