

What is a Therapy Dog?

Therapy Dogs play a much different role than service dogs and emotional support animals. They aren't trained to assist a specific handler. Rather, these are dogs often volunteer with their handlers (typically their owner) in a large variety of settings, such as hospitals, mental health institutions, court rooms, hospices, schools and universities, nursing homes, and anywhere a friendly and well-mannered dog is requested to visit. They (handler and dog) must be evaluated by an organization and meet their requirements before being registered, must be well-groomed and willing to provide comfort and affection during interactions. Therapy dogs are also trained to be comfortable in several types of environments and to interact with a variety of different people, in a friendly and comforting manner. They should have a calm temperament, be unfazed by unfamiliar noises, movements and smells, be well-behaved when working with other therapy animals nearby, love engaging with people, and be comfortable being handled/petted by strangers. Some handlers and dogs with pet therapy experience, continue on with additional training and also become Crisis Response Teams, providing love and comfort with their friendly dog during and after a crisis or disaster. Keep in mind, not all therapy dogs feel comfortable in such high stress situations.

<https://www.akc.org/sports/title-recognition-program/therapy-dog-program/what-is-a-therapy-dog/>
<https://petpartners.org>

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