



# **Furry Friends**

**Pet  
Assisted  
Therapy  
Services**

## **Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Member Handbook**

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## **Mission Statement**

Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services' mission is to consistently facilitate delivery of the love and affection of our volunteers and their pets. We enhance the lives and touch the hearts of people with special needs.

## **Purpose**

Furry Friends teams visit people in schools, libraries, nursing homes, facilities for disabled, psychiatric or acutely ill patients and hospitals, in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties, California.

## **Background**

Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services (Furry Friends PATS) began in 1983 by Judy Kell, whose nine-year-old daughter was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer that eventually took her life. Judy noticed that one of the very few things that lifted her daughter's spirits was the interaction with her cat.

Judy, a veterinary technician by profession, consulted with Dr. John Quick, a veterinarian in Morgan Hill and together with Dr. Cecil Agee, a pediatric physician, approached Lucile Packard Children's Hospital with the idea of bringing animals to the hospital. This was the first visitation of Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services.

## **Organization**

Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services is a registered nonprofit corporation and governed by its Board of Directors. All meetings of the Board of Directors are open to the public. As a volunteer organization, volunteers help administer, manage and deliver services. The organization is a registered 501(c)(3); for further information please contact the board treasurer.

## **How Pet Assisted Therapy Works**

Through the human/animal bond, Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services offers comfort, compassion, support, and companionship to children and adults during serious disability or confinement. The benefits of our animal/volunteer visits include:

- Our pets act as bridges, increasing the interaction between clients and between clients and staff.
- During the visit, clients and staff initiate the sharing of stories about their favorite pet.
- Activity Directors report that these conversations continue long after the visit.
- The visiting pets provide an emotional release as clients and staff can laugh at their playful antics.

- The lives of those we visit revolve around pain, illness, or troubles. The visits from our furry friends provide a distraction that is restful and positive.
- The client has an opportunity to be the nurturer and to feel needed.

## Classes

### Etiquette Class

In order to go on Furry Friends visits, all volunteers and each pet are required to attend the Etiquette Class. Other optional classes qualify the volunteer and pet to do other types of visits. A listing of upcoming classes can be found on the Furry Friends website.

The etiquette class is the baseline evaluation of the volunteer and pet. Some key assessments include:

- Volunteer interaction with and management of their pet
- Volunteer and pet manner, temperament, and reactions
- Pet interaction with others (human, dog, and other animals)
- Volunteer and pet handling around health aide devices
- General pet assessment by Furry Friends' animal behaviorist

### Off-Leash Class

Visits can be on-leash or off-leash. Everyone must attend the off-leash evaluation class prior to beginning visits on an off-leash team. The focus of this class is:

- Volunteer and pet management while on and off-leash
- Voice recall
- General control of pet
- Getting along with other dogs but paying more attention to people

### Reading Buddies Class

Reading Buddies visits have children reading to volunteers' pets in a library/classroom setting. You must be an active volunteer for at least six months before signing up for this class. The focus of this class is:

- Volunteer and pet interaction with children
- Volunteer management of pet in controlled environment
- General behavior in small spaces
- Pet behavior with other pets in small spaces

## Captains Class

This is an optional class. You do not have to take this class to be a captain. This class is focused on the responsibilities of being a team captain:

- Overall responsibilities of the captain
- Site responsibilities
- Management of volunteers
- Communication with volunteers and the Furry Friends administrator
- Handling and troubleshooting of issues

## Membership

An individual or family membership fee is due every year to maintain your membership. Each volunteer will need to attend the Etiquette class in order to attend visits. The Etiquette class, Off Leash Class, and Reading Buddies Class each have an associated fee. Additional details for fees and classes can be found at <http://FurryFriends.org>.

The term of the membership is one year, December through November (Fiscal year through 12/1). Dues notices are sent out in advance of the end of the term. Dues must be sent in prior to the end of the term in order to continue membership.

If financial hardship impacts payment of dues, please contact our administrator about the process for a single year waiver (requires board approval).

## Visits

### Monthly Visits

- **Notification of upcoming visit** – The team captain usually sends out an email a few days before the visit asking who is planning on attending. Please respond to the captain whether or not you will be attending.
- **Meet and greet prior to visit** – This is up to the discretion of the team captain and would simply be an opportunity for the pets to meet with each other before the visit. Please be prompt; lateness can cause disruption to the visit.
- **For New Volunteers** – New volunteers should attend their first visit to a site without their animal in order to get a feel how that site operates.
- **During the visit** – The captain will explain how the site operates. Visits usually last one hour. Bring a smile and share your love of your pet.
- **Post visit communications** – Some captains write a brief post visit communication to discuss any news about the site. Furry Friends recommends reading the quarterly

newsletter and checking the Furry Friends website for the latest news. The newsletter is Furry Friends' main communication tool with its members.

## Dress

- **Badges** – You will be issued a Furry Friends badge with a photo of you and the expiration date of your membership. You will also receive a badge with a photo of your pet and when the next vaccination is required.
- **Furry Friends apparel** – You will receive one Furry Friends T-shirt. This shirt, or other Furry Friends approved logo apparel, must be worn during any Furry Friends visit. Other apparel options are available for purchase on the Furry Friends website.

## Leashes/Collars

- A Furry Friends 4' purple leash will be given to you when you complete the Etiquette class. You are to use the purple leash during all visits. If you need a replacement leash at any time, just ask. Your pet's leash is to remain in your hand, under your control, at all times.
- Any collar is OK, with a few exceptions:
  - No pinch/prong collars are allowed on any team or visit for any reason. It is acceptable to use a traditional, metal choke chain, martingale collar (either with or without chain) for indoor, leashed visits **as long as the site and your team captain allow it**. It is up to a captain/site's discretion; if they feel metal on a collar is an issue, then they can request that a flat collar be used, or a nylon martingale instead.
  - If you are on an off leash visit, choke chain style collars are not allowed because they can result in injury to your dog should they get caught on playground equipment, sprinklers, or another dog during play. ***Electronic collars (Includes shock, vibration, sound, and similar combinations) are not allowed on a Furry Friends visit at any time. This includes a "Dummy" Collar that is also used as a part of Electronic Collar Training.***
  - You may use a flat buckle or clip collar of any material, Halti, Gentle Leader Head Halter, body harness, or no-pull harness of any kind.

## Questions Before You Visit

- How are you feeling? Not well...don't visit!
- How is your pet feeling? Not well...don't visit!
- Do you have all your Furry Friends gear (FF logo apparel, badges & purple leash)?
- Do you have water (for you and your pet)?

## Site Visit Photos

Photos are not allowed without prior authorization from the site administrators. When authorization has been obtained, the conditions of the approval are shared with the captain. A Furry Friends captain or designee takes a photo using a Polaroid- style camera. Instamatic photos are handed to the visitor as a keepsake of the visit. Volunteers may decide if they wish to be included in a photo. The captain is responsible for ensuring proper use of the Furry Friends camera and the disposition of the photos.

## Special Visits

Special Visits are a one-time team visit. These are on leash visits and all of the basic rules that apply to a regular monthly visit apply. This includes wearing FF apparel, badge, using the purple leash and no treats.

Members can sign up to attend a Special Visit using SignUpGenius. All Special Visits will use SignUpGenius to ensure all members have equal opportunity to sign up for Special Visits. Any Furry Friends member can captain a Special Visit. Sign up for the captain slot on SignUpGenius.

If a member or captain is representing Furry Friends, the visit must be submitted for approval. The Special Visit Request form can be found on Furry Friends' website. All Special Visits must have prior approval by the board.

Examples of Special Visits include:

- Stress relief visits to schools
- Stress relief visits to business
- Health fairs

If a current site approaches you for a Special Visit, please refer them to Furry Friends' website for a Special Visit Request form. A move of the date of a regular visit due to a conflict is not a Special Visit and does not require Board approval. The Board approves Special Visits that meet our mission. We do not go to events that are utilizing our pets for show or entertainment. Please submit requests at least six weeks in advance. Furry Friends receives many Special Visit requests during school finals time and spots fill up early.

## Volunteer Responsibilities, Qualifications & Commitment

- You must have the ability and desire to work with your pet while visiting with adults and children who may have physical and/or emotional challenges. You must be friendly, patient, and possess good communications skills.
- Please attend visits regularly and be on time. If you are unable to attend a visit, please inform your team captain.
- Be responsible for your pet at all times. All pets must be on a 4 foot purple leash (except on approved off-leash sites). Retractable leashes and pinch collars are not allowed on Furry Friends PATS visits. You must have the leash in your hands at all times, or give the leash to another Furry Friends volunteer. Non-members must not be in control of your pet.
- Facilitate the persons touching, holding, or otherwise interacting with both pets and volunteers. Encourage people to talk and share their feelings and experiences.
- You may sign up for as many teams as you wish. However, each team captain can reject a new volunteer based on the Pet Behavior Evaluation and/or the pet's behavior during a visit, or a personality conflict with the volunteer.
- Furry Friends PATS members shall not misrepresent their therapy pets as service pets for the purpose of gaining public access to planes, restaurants, public buildings, stores, etc.
- The minimum age for Furry Friends volunteers is 12. Volunteers between the ages of 12 and 16 must be accompanied by an adult Furry Friends member. Some of our sites have their own age restrictions and do not allow any visitors under the age of 18.
- Therapy teams must strictly adhere to all rules and regulations in each facility. If these rules are unclear, ask a staff member or activities director to explain them. Do not give food, water, or assistance to a patient or resident, even if asked. Notify a staff member if help is needed.
- Read and obey all warning signs on room doors, such as "ISOLATION" or "INFECTIOUS, DO NOT ENTER." volunteers must stay alert to their surroundings at all times.
- Furry Friends PATS volunteers must know and strictly adhere to the facility policy concerning pets on any furniture, including, but not limited to, chairs, couches, wheelchairs, beds, physical therapy beds/pads, using clean linens on the lap or bed either provided by the facility or personal pads brought along, etc. Therapy pets are not allowed onto any occupied bed, chair or wheelchair unless that practice is allowed by the facility and the resident/patient has given permission. Only with this permission, may the volunteer lift the pet onto and remove it from the occupied bed, chair or locked wheelchair in the same fashion without injury to the resident/patient. The volunteer must also control the pet's head while in this position. Be cautious with patients who might have injuries with regard to placement of the pet so as not to cause an injury with the pet's feet or body weight. Always ask if the person if there is an area which you should avoid when placing the pet. Remember to watch for tubes, lines, and other medical equipment.
- Pets may not precede volunteers down halls, around corners, at doorways, or doors at stairways. Stand back while waiting for an elevator door to open. When the door opens, wait to assure safe exit of passengers. If the elevator is occupied, the volunteer must ask permission to enter with the pet.



- Cell phones must be set on silent or vibrate while on a Furry Friends visit. If the use of a phone becomes necessary, volunteers must excuse themselves temporarily and complete the call outside the facility.
- Observe all rules of privacy and confidentiality as required by HIPAA. Never discuss a patient's health or personal issues with the patient or anyone else. Photos may not be taken without prior written permission of the subject (or guardian) and a representative of the facility.
- Furry Friends PATS members may not provide information to others in regard to whether expenses resulting from volunteer activities are tax deductible. Anyone having questions about whether certain expenses are tax deductible should be told to seek the advice of their tax preparer or the Internal Revenue Service.
- If an incident or injury to an employee, resident, or visitor in the facility occurs while representing Furry Friends PATS:
  - Immediately contact your team captain and the facility's supervisor on duty.
  - Document the incident on all required forms for the facility.
  - Immediately contact Furry Friends PATS and report the incident. Report the incident by sending an email to [info@furryfriends.org](mailto:info@furryfriends.org)
- ***Please note that our rules stipulate no more than one pet per volunteer. One volunteer may not handle two pets during a visit.***

**Note:** At the discretion of the Furry Friends PATS board of directors, a volunteer /pet team will be asked to temporarily or permanently refrain from further visits if they fail to comply with these rules and regulations (or) as provided by Article III Section 4 of the Furry Friends PATS By-Laws. Should this action be necessary, the volunteer will be requested to return the official Furry Friends PATS identification cards to the office of Furry Friends PATS.

## Code of Ethics

The mission of Furry Friends Pet Assisted Therapy is to consistently facilitate delivery of the love and affection of our volunteers and their pets. We value the special relationship our animals provide to our clients, and strive to uphold the integrity of our mission.

1. Members will follow all of the rules and guidelines outlined in our Member Handbook.
2. We respect the privacy of our clients at all times, during and after our visits.
3. Members will not misrepresent their pets as service pets for the purpose of gaining access to public places normally restricted to animals.
4. Members will maintain the integrity of the organization by reporting any concerns or incidents to their captain and or the board as soon as possible.
5. Members and their pets will wear all of their uniform during all sanctioned visits.
6. Members will be sure their pets are clean and healthy for their visits.

# Appendix A1

## Aggression/Abusive Behavior

Furry Friends PATS has a zero-tolerance policy for any pet displaying unprovoked aggression towards humans or other pets and for any volunteer displaying menacing or abusive behavior while on a visit. In each case, the dog or team will immediately be placed on suspension to allow time to determine the appropriate course of action.

If growling between two Furry Friends occurs, we recommend immediate separation of the animals having the negative interaction, thus neutralizing the situation. The team captain, will advise on the next steps, such as leaving this visit, a consultation with the Pet Behaviorist, etc.

## Treats and/or Food on Therapy Visits

Furry Friends has a policy of no treats or food on any of our therapy visits. In addition, pets may not be given treats by staff or patients/residents on those visits. The presence of food or treats on visits potentially jeopardizes our insurance coverage for all volunteers.

## Patients or Residents Discussing Personal Health Information

The role of our human volunteers is to facilitate the interaction between patients/residents and our pet assisted therapy animals. Showing compassion and being a good listener are important, but volunteers must strive to steer the conversation away from personal details of residents/patients, particularly if said patient/resident is becoming upset, confused, etc. Conversations should be kept light and positive and focus on the pets present for the visit.

## Non-sanctioned visits

Members can only represent Furry Friends during official team or special visits, or during official Furry Friends sanctioned events and activities. Any visit that occurs outside of these visits is *not authorized by Furry Friends*. If a volunteer chooses to visit a facility or a resident outside of the scheduled team visit, they do so under their own auspices and may not represent themselves as a Furry Friends member during that visit, nor will Furry Friends insurance cover those non-sanctioned visits.

## New policy for female dogs in heat

An intact female dog's estrus (heat) cycle lasts 2-4 weeks and dogs generally cycle one to two times per year. Intact female dogs may not do therapy visits during their cycle as this can be disruptive for other dogs on the team whether those other dogs are intact or neutered. Visiting with sanitary pants on an intact female dog in heat is not permitted either.

## **Appendix A2**

The following items can be found on Furry Friends' website:

[Annual Physical/Vaccination Form](#)

[Volunteer Manual](#)

[Off Leash Best Practices](#)

[Furry Friends PATS Bylaws](#)

[Complaint/Incident Form](#)

## **Appendix A3**

### **Email and Board of Directors Contact List**

Board of Directors                      [info@furryfriends.org](mailto:info@furryfriends.org)

Administrator                              [admin@furryfriends.org](mailto:admin@furryfriends.org)

Pet Behaviorist                              [critterdoctor@furryfriends.org](mailto:critterdoctor@furryfriends.org)

For the full list of Board of Directors, visit our website at [ww.furryfriends.org](http://ww.furryfriends.org)