



# Loving Animals Providing Smiles

*Bringing acceptance, laughter and love into the lives of others.*

## The difference between Therapy Dogs, Visiting Dogs and Facility Dogs

There is sometimes confusion as to the differences between therapy dogs, visiting dogs, and facility dogs. The chart below details the differences.

	<b>Therapy Dog</b>	<b>Facilities Dog</b>	<b>Visiting Pet</b>
<b>Helps other people</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Is allowed in businesses where pets are not allowed</b>	No	No	no
<b>Is only allowed where it is invited</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Has solid basic obedience and is tested on consistency of skills</b>	Yes	Yes	Varies
<b>Has specialized training and testing to ensure it has good public access skills</b>	Yes	Yes	Usually not
<b>Has passed behavioral assessments for different client populations and therapy dog settings</b>	Yes	Yes	Usually not
<b>Monitored/re-evaluated every 2-3 years to ensure the pet's health and training remain intact</b>	Yes	Often	Usually not
<b>Has advanced skills to assist in the therapy of a person such as physical therapy, working with autistic children, etc.</b>	Yes	Often	Usually not
<b>Is registered / certified with an organization and has liability insurance</b>	Yes	Yes	often

The term **“Therapy Dog”** and **“Therapy Team”** should only be used by organizations with a thorough training and screening program. Such groups provide hands-on training and comprehensive testing of the person and pet working as a team, plus consistent and rigorous pet screening (including behavior assessment). Genuine therapy dogs demonstrate not only solid basic obedience but also advanced skills directed toward helping clients. Such dogs have the ability to work with a variety of client populations, in different therapy settings, in the presence of distractions and without food/treat rewards. Therapy Teams are evaluated every 2-3 years to ensure the continued safety of the public, pet and the volunteer.

Current use of the term **“Facility Dog”** (also called **“Therapeutic Facility Dog”**) refers most often to canines trained by service dog organizations as potential assistance/service dogs. These canines are placed in the private homes of educational &/or healthcare professionals with the intention the dogs work alongside those professionals in traditional therapy settings. Such canines are companion dogs and many have the same or similar skills as trained and certified/registered Therapy Dogs. Facility dogs are seldom certified or registered via an animal-assisted therapy organization however the pet may meet standards like those of [Pet Partners®](#). Facility Dogs usually carry liability insurance through the service dog organization where they were originally trained.

Organizations with **“Visiting Dogs”** and **“Visiting Teams”** (sometimes referred to as **“Visiting Pet/Dog Programs”** or **“Social Therapy Dog Programs”**) focus on providing pets that are friendly with strangers outside their own homes. Such organizations commonly use the AKC’s Canine Good Citizen evaluation to assess a dog’s ability to work in public settings, but training varies widely. Rarely do these groups proof a dog’s obedience skills, provide comprehensive screening of pets or people, or re-evaluate a team’s abilities every few years. Training can be limited to a classroom setting with the animal’s handler only.