

Steps Toward Becoming a LAPS Therapy Team

LAPS wants all our volunteers and pets to feel comfortable and secure in the therapy setting. While the steps toward active membership may seem extensive, they are designed to benefit the handler, each pet and the facilities we serve. LAPS offers ongoing support and the time and activities should pass quickly.

Please understand - each team must complete all required steps for Delta Society / Pet Partners registration AND for Loving Animals Providing Smiles BEFORE becoming a recognized LAPS Therapy Team.

Ⓞ Denotes required steps for registration with the Delta Society for their Pet Partners Program.

- 1) **Complete and submit:** a) an **Application to LAPS for membership**, and b) a **copy of pet's vaccination record**.
- 2) Upon receiving the above paperwork, a **LAPS Volunteer will call the potential team and conduct a phone interview**. This helps LAPS understand the team's skills and abilities, as well as the handler's interests.
- 3) **The handler must attend a minimum of one LAPS group therapy session *without* his / her pet**. This helps the individual to see how pets are utilized in animal-assisted therapy and how handlers respond to conditions. This also allows the opportunity for the new handler to consider the best way to prepare his/her own pet for therapy sessions.
- 4) **The handler & pet will attend the Animal-Assisted Therapy Team Handling Skills Class**. LAPS members volunteer their time to educate new teams in the best practices of AAT, and provide training scenarios for the pet and handler to acquire the skills needed to be successful in a variety of therapeutic situations. This class is generally offered in the Spring and the Fall each year and meets once per week for 6 or 7 weeks. The class may include a field trip to allow our new teams to practice their skills in the real world.
- 5) Ⓞ **The handler will complete the Delta Society / Pet Partners Home Study Course**. This should take place while the team attends the AAT Team Handling Skills Class.
- 6) Ⓞ **After completing the Home Study Course, the handler & pet will take the Delta Society/Pet Partners Skills and Aptitude Evaluation**. This practical test closely simulates situations a team may experience in an actual therapy setting. It is designed to assess the animal's aptitude plus the ability of the handler and pet to work consistently together.
- 7) **LAPS Team Evaluation** immediately follows the successful completion of the Delta Society / Pet Partners Skills and Aptitude Evaluation. These additional exercises assess whether the pet has a sound temperament, is well-socialized and can perform animal-assisted therapy in a group setting. Upon passing the LAPS Team Evaluation, the handler will receive a package of LAPS forms and materials to review PRIOR to the Introductory Training Session.
- 8) Ⓞ **Submit all required paperwork to the Delta Society**. This will include the Study Course, Skills and Aptitude Testing Results and the Animal Health Screening Form. *[Note - this completes the steps required by the Delta Society for registration in their Pet Partners Program.]*

- 9) **LAPS Trainees will attend an Introductory Training Session BEFORE starting therapy programs.** This session will occur a few weeks after testing, and will include reviewing, signing and submitting the forms given earlier. Handlers will receive the LAPS Membership Handbook and a supply bag. Those wishing assistance in completing the Pet Partner's registration paperwork will be offered help at this time.

Additional Training Session(s) may be required for teams needing to work through specific concerns, &/or for teams wishing to work with special-needs populations. The Training Director or Vice President will let the handler know if these sessions are needed.

IMPORTANT:

As a new handler, you are encouraged to attend LAPS therapy sessions *without* your pet until you receive your official acceptance by the Delta Society.

- 9a) Upon acceptance by the Delta Society into their Pet Partners Program, **each Trainee will submit to LAPS a copy of his/her Delta Society / Pet Partners Therapy Team Identification Number.** (This can be accomplished by providing a photocopy of the handler's Pet Partner ID tag or the Acceptance Letter.)
- 10) **LAPS Trainees will enter a Probation Period where they work directly with their Mentor and other seasoned handlers.** This is a time for new handlers to ask questions, learn by example, and train their pet partners to perform quality animal-assisted therapy in a group setting. The Mentor or seasoned handlers will accompany each new team to therapy sessions and provide aid throughout the Probation Period. **This period lasts for a MINIMUM of three months.**
- 10a) **A new team must attend a minimum of four (4) group therapy sessions within three months to complete probation.** Each team is different and some teams may need more time and experience to acquire the necessary skills. Teams that *do not* complete the minimum probation requirements within the given time may be dropped from membership consideration and would have to reapply. *[Note - New teams are not allowed to visit LAPS facilities independently until they complete probation.]*
- Probationary Periods may be extended for one of two reasons. Only one extension is granted per team with the Probationary Period extended a maximum of three months. **Either:** The team needs more experience before an accurate assessment can be completed by the Membership Committee; **Or:** The team requests an extension in writing due to extenuating circumstances, such as illness, a family emergency, etc.
- 10b) **A "LAPS Trainee Report" will be given to each new handler.** This form is to be signed by the Mentor, Program Coordinator or senior handler at the end of each group therapy session the new team attends.
- 10c) When three months have passed AND your probation form is completed, return the form to the Membership Committee. *[Note - when starting therapy programs please call the Program Coordinator several days in advance to say you will be coming so the Coordinator can plan for a successful session.]*
- 11) **Upon successful completion of all of the above, the Trainee and pet are eligible to become a Loving Animals Providing Smiles Therapy Team.** The Membership Committee will review the LAPS Trainee Reports for each individual team and assess their skills and appropriate placement. When the committee determines that a team has successfully completed the probationary period and possesses satisfactory skills, the team will be accepted into membership. **Each newly-certified team will receive a pet scarf and certificate.**