

## Preparing for Therapy Animal Handling: Documentation and Partnering with Volunteer Teams

**APA HAI Section Webinar** 





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- Executive Director, AAAIP
- National Director of AAI Advancement, Pet Partners
- Background in dog training and mental health counseling

AAAIP is an organization affiliated with Pet Partners, one of the world's largest and most esteemed therapy animal organizations.

While Pet Partners focuses on serving volunteer therapy animal teams, we noticed an increasing demand among the field of AAI professionals for services specifically designed for those who partner with animals in vocational practice.



## Agenda

**Best Practice Documentation** 

- How did we identify these documents?
- Why are they important?
- Examples

Diamond vs. Triangle Models in AAI

- When to use each model
- Best practices in recruiting, training, and maintaining volunteer teams

#### Next Steps

- Invitation to Join AAAIP
- Discount code to corresponding online course

Discussion

• Questions/Answers





1. Responding to the call to professionalize & standardize the industry



2. Provides framework for professionals to follow



3. Protects well-being of therapy animals, clients, and handlers

Process for Generating Documentation Suggestions







- Created team of subject matter experts to draft essential knowledge/skills
- Draft refined over series of facilitated virtual meetings



Validation surveys sent out to the field at large



Finalization of AAAIP Competencies and Resources



Documents like informed consent or client participation contracts:

- Educate clients about the intervention
- Provide information specific to your therapy animals
- Establish participants as stakeholders in protecting animal welfare (expected behavior clearly outlined)
- Liability protection





#### Informed Consent Documentation for the Inclusion of Therapy Animals in Professionalized Settings

If you're a professional who aims to unleash the power of the human-animal bond within your vocational offerings, you'll need to have an informed consent document that is specifically inclusive of your animal-assisted intervention (AAI) offerings. As you create that document for your practice, consider including these important components.

#### 1. Description of Services:

Briefly describe the kind of AAI you incorporate into your work. Is it AAT, AAE, ARE? Provide your client with details about the services you offer.

#### 2. Therapy Animal Registration:

Provide information about the therapy animal organization with whom you are registered. Briefly outline the corresponding standards of practice of the organization.

#### 3. Therapy Animal Background:

Provide information about your therapy animal. Details you might include in this section are: species, breed, age, size, training background, and personality traits.

#### 4. Expectations and Risks:

What steps have you taken to minimize the risks associated with AAI? How will you respond to risks in session? List the risks associated with your type of AAI offerings. Inform clients that they are to closely follow all directives when working with therapy animals.

#### 5. Release of Liability:

You may wish to include a release of liability for your client to sign as a portion of your informed consent documentation.

#### 6. Signature:

Once you have reviewed the information with your client, obtain signatures and provide clients with a copy of the consent document. If your client is unable to provide consent for the intervention, be sure to obtain a signature from their caregiver.

## Participation Contract Examples

When greeting the therapy animals, I'll ask permission from the handler before trying to touch the animal.

I will do my best to remain calm when in the animal's presence.

I will never give the animal something to eat without the permission from the handler. I understand that I will not be able to interact with the therapy animal if I am not following the rules that keep the animal safe.



## Screening Clients for Inclusion in AAI

Proactive considerations related to therapeutic process, risk assessment, and personal background related to animals.

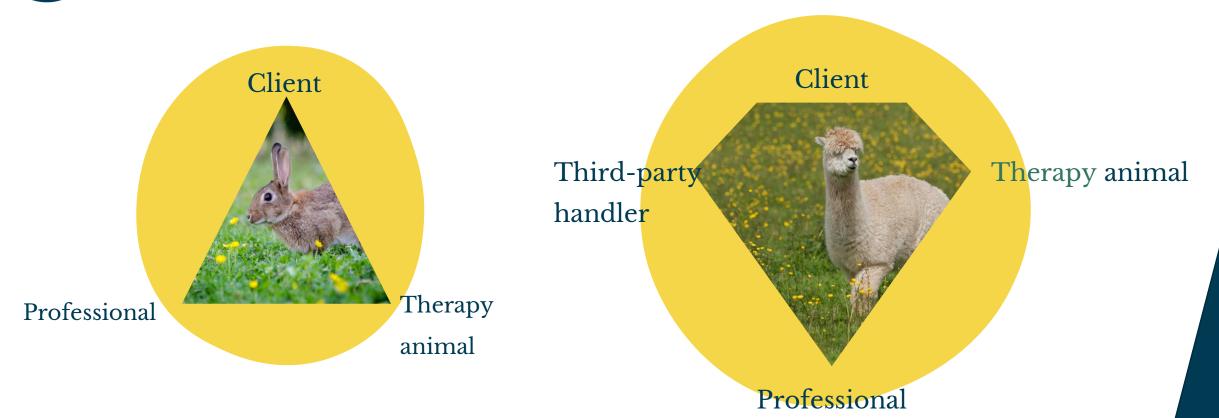
- Rationale for offering intervention
- Client allergies, fears, phobias, and past animal experiences



Full Program Manual Templates and Rationale Available through AAAIP's "Getting Started" Online Course

## First Aid Supplies List **Incident Reports** Informed Consent **Participation Contacts** Permission Slips **Client Screening Forms** Therapy Animal Health Records Therapy Animal Training Record Therapy Animal Working Log **Treatment Planning Templates** Scenario Worksheets





 Allows for higher confidentiality and a strong working relationship with the animal partner

- Allows for more diversity in animal selection
- Provides focused attention on both animal and client
- Practitioner not required to have animal

## Professional Example: Cathy's Programming



- The Medical University of SC utilizes Canine Therapists in both AAA and AAT capacities
- Eighty-six teams
- Teams can be found in multiple hospitals and ambulatory clinics seven days a week

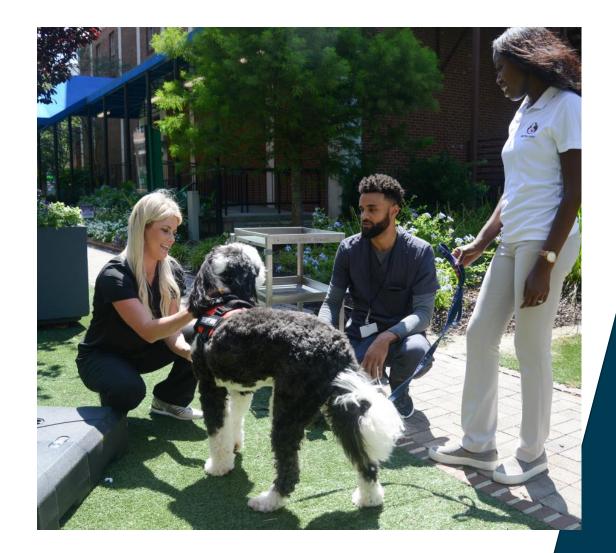




- Local Media
- Facility PR and Marketing
- Volunteers
- Special Events
- Community Engagement



- Tailored training
- Mentors (Pack Leaders)
- Communication
- Tools
- Creative assignments



## The Importance of Volunteer Appreciation



- Empower
- Include
- Involve
- Respect
- Acknowledge



AAAIP's "Getting Started" course walks through scenarios commonly encountered when partnering with volunteer teams and can be printed and used for your orientation materials.

## **DISCOUNT CODE:**

<mark>apahaiweb2</mark>

50% off course valid through 6/18/24





## Join AAAIP Today!

- Free events monthly
- Discounted online coursework
- \$100 off AAIS Certification exam
- Online community
- Resource library/ template documents
- Liability insurance



AAAIP's Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialist Certification (C-AAIS) will distinguish you as a professional who is qualified to integrate therapy animals into your practice.

C-AAIS will position you as a qualified advocate for the welfare of both the humans and the animals involved in AAI.



# Questions or Discussions?





Connect with us!

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