

Monterey County Behavioral Health Policy and Procedure

Policy Number	477
Policy Title	Therapy Animals
References	Attachment One: Therapy Dog Identification Sample
Effective	January 1, 2011

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Policy

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Monterey County Behavioral Health Division (MCBHD) strives to utilize evidence based practice 4 that will benefit in the treatment of its consumers. The use of therapy animals (not to be confused 5 with service or assistance dogs: guide or hearing dog) is encouraged when it is determined such 6 assistance will benefit a consumer without causing distress to others within the clinic. The use of a 7 therapy animal can be a goal directed intervention with specific criteria and is part of the treatment 8 process, within the scope of practice of the therapist. Therapy animals can have a calming effect in 9 10 that they have been shown to lower blood pressure and stress levels during visits, provide unconditional love and warmth. 11

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Animals in general are not permitted in the clinic unless they meet the definition as provided for in 13 the Americans with Disabilities Act (i.e.: dogs for the visually impaired or guide dogs). If a "pet" 14 (dog. cat, snake, parrot, rat, etc.) is brought in the clinic the Patient's Services Representative 15 16 (PSR) would notify the clinician who would then ask that the animal be removed from the clinic. That is done for several reasons (i.e.: allergies, fleas, barking, biting, etc.). The consumer should 17 be informed not to bring the animal to any subsequent appointments. Should any issues arise the 18 supervisor will be advised in regard to following this protocol. The goal is to maintain the health 19 and safety of all concerned. 20

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22 Therapy animals and handlers will be certified or registered by a recognized Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) institution such as Delta Society, Assistance Dog Institute, Therapy Animals 23 24 International, Inc., Canine Companions for Independence, or another organization approved of by the MCBHD. They shall be under the care of a veterinarian, determined to be free of 25 26 communicable diseases, and be up to date on appropriate vaccinations. The therapist must assure sound sanitation practices and be aware of any allergic response by consumers who are 27 receiving the therapy. The therapy animal shall be well behaved and under voice control by the 28 handler at all times. They will be consistently "housebroken". "Accidental" wastes shall be 29 30 disposed of promptly and appropriately. Repetitive "accidents" will exclude the animal from the treatment site as would aggressive behavior. 31

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34 Procedure

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36 The case-by-case proposed use of a therapy animal at a treatment site must be

approved of by the clinician's supervisor, Program Manager, and Deputy

38 Director prior to its use. The clinician must clarify in writing why the animal is

- 39 needed and what the expected outcome will be.
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- The goal directed, specific outcome needs to be documented with each

42 intervention (i.e.: improve social skills, increase attention span, and diminish

43 aggressive behavior, etc) along with any noted improvement and/or

44 effectiveness of that intervention.

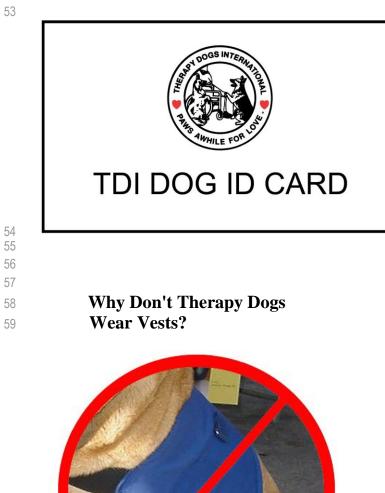
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46 Consumer participation is voluntary and a written agreement to participate in

47 the therapy should be on record.

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- 49 Any complaint about the therapy animal will be reported immediately to the Program Manager and
- 50 documented in an incident report.
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Therapy Dogs are to be petted, and vests cut down on the petting area. Additionally, the use of vests
can confuse a Therapy Dog with a Service Dog. They can be identified by a TDI bandana or TDI ID
tag.

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67		ATTACHMENT ONE
68 TI	HERAPY DOG	

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