

Therapeutic Connections Counseling Services, PLLC

Erika Meek, M.Ed., LPC, NCC

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CONSENT FOR WORKING WITH ANIMALS IN TREATMENT

Animal assisted therapy is a vital resource in the therapy process. I hope you are comfortable with the presence of the therapy dog in your sessions. However, the therapy dog is an animal; I am responsible for his welfare. Although the therapy dog has had training he is still an animal and behavior of animals cannot always be predicted. Therefore it is important to discuss in advance both the rules needed to insure the animal's safety and health, and try to create as safe a working situation as possible, and to provide you with diligent warning about the potential harm that could be present when working with animals.

RULES:

1. The animal has individual rights, just as each client has rights. Therefore, the animal is allowed to determine if and when it participates with others. While it may be planned to use the animal in session, the animal will never be forced to do so.
2. The animal has his own quiet space where he can rest, sleep, or just take a quiet break. The animal should not be disturbed when he is in this area.
3. The animal is always treated gently. He should never be hit, tails or any other parts pulled, carried roughly or treated in any other way that is uncomfortable to him.
4. The animal will always need his handler present in any therapeutic situation.
5. If the animal becomes irritated, scared, or in any way acts in a negative manner, the handler will put the animal in a safe place. No other person should touch the animal at these times.
6. The animal is always carried in a manner where it is fully supported.

RISKS:

1. Animals have their own natural defenses. While the therapist handler will do everything possible to prevent injury, it is possible that someone will get scratched or bitten.
2. Animals often use their mouths in play. Therefore, even when playing, it is possible for light biting to occur.
3. For his own safety and dignity the animal is not declawed. While the claws are routinely trimmed, when playing it is possible to get scratched.
4. The animal has been screened by a veterinarian before commencing to work as a therapy animal, animals do sometimes carry disease. Because your contact is minimal, this risk is very small.

By signing below you are stating your acceptance of these rules and risks and agree to accept full liability in the event that the animal harms you in any way in the course of treatment.

CLIENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF CLIENT

DATE

THERAPIST

DATE

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CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY

The formal definition of Animal Assisted Therapy: "AAT is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. AAT is directed and/or delivered by a health/human service professional with specialized expertise, and within the scope of practice of his/her profession.

AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning [cognitive functioning refers to thinking and intellectual skills]. AAT is provided in a variety of settings and may be group or individual in nature. This process is documented and evaluated." (From Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Activities and Therapy)

AAT is used in counseling to assist with meeting the following goals:

Improvement in Mental Health.

Increase attention skills (i.e., paying attention, staying on task).

Develop leisure/recreation skills.

Increase self-esteem.

Reduce anxiety.

Reduce loneliness.

Increase motivation.

Improve willingness to be involved in a group activity.

Improve interactions with others.

Increase exercise.

Huey is a 3 year old, male, Pomeranian who has completed the required training for animal assisted therapy and is a registered therapy dog with Pet Partners. Erika Meek, LPC, NCC has also completed the Handler training for Animal Assisted Therapy with Pet Partners.

I, _____ have been informed that Huey is a registered therapy dog with Pet Partners. I understand that at any time I can refuse to participate in Animal Assisted Therapy and ask the therapist to remove Huey from the session. I have been provided information on the rules and risks of having an animal in therapy.

PRINTED NAME OF CLIENT

SIGNATURE OF CLIENT/ GUARDIAN

DATE

SIGNATURE OF THERAPIST

DATE