

## ALLIANCE OF THERAPY DOGS RULES AND REGULATIONS

**These rules and regulations govern how members must conduct themselves as representatives of Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Failure to adhere to the ATD Rules and Regulations will jeopardize your membership and nullifies the liability insurance policy.**

### I. The organization:

1. **ATD** is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization. Members shall not accept monetary reimbursement for any of the services our members provide. Donations are welcome. All requests to use the registered ATD name or logo and slogan must be submitted in writing to the president.
2. **Membership is a privilege**, not a right, granted by the ATD Board of Directors through the various committees appointed to represent and protect the interests and safety of the organization.
3. **Insurance:** ATD provides liability insurance that protects you from claims of others for injury, illness, loss, and property damage resulting from therapeutic visitation with your dog. This coverage does not protect you or your dog from injury or illness as a result of participation in this program. Coverage applies to the ATD-certified handler/dog team functioning as a therapy dog team at a visit or event such as described below. Members are covered only when ATD is the primary insurance and there is no other insurance (whether from the facility or another organization) in effect while they are visiting.

If you do not renew by your renewal date on time, either January 1 or July 1, there is no insurance grace period. You will not be covered by insurance on visits until you receive your new membership card.

If a claim is filed on your behalf by ATD and it is determined that you were not following the ATD rules at the time of the incident, you may be required to reimburse ATD for any monies paid out on the claim.

4. **Volunteer Handler/Dog Teams and Dogs at Work:** The purpose of ATD visits is to provide service in a volunteer capacity. Liability insurance coverage is provided to handler/dog teams serving in a volunteer capacity only. Teams are not covered by ATD's general liability policy if the member receives pay, wages, or other financial compensation during a visit. If a member chooses to visit where s/he is working, s/he must do so as an unpaid volunteer. Members who use their dogs in their work can now apply to purchase separate insurance to cover them in their workplace. Information can be found on the ATD website under the "Members" tab.
5. If you take your dog to work with you, you must still complete at least one volunteer visit every three months to maintain your ATD certification. This volunteer visit may be at your place of employment, but not during your paid working hours. When you are on an ATD visit, you must follow ATD rules and display the red heart tag.

- 6. Non-ATD Therapy Dogs/Animals:** ATD handlers may not bring any animals other than their certified therapy dogs on ATD visits. If a facility has free-roaming animals or family pets that might be present during a visit, ATD handlers should request that they be allowed to visit in an area away from the other animals.
- 7. Service dogs and two dogs on visits:** If a member has a therapy dog that is also the member's service dog, official ATD therapy dog identification should not be displayed while the service dog is assisting the member in restaurants, stores, flights etc., and is not acting as a therapy dog. ATD is not liable for damages caused by the handler's use of medical equipment during visits including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, electric chairs, scooters, walkers, canes, or crutches.

Handlers who want to take their therapy dogs into places that normally allow only service dogs MUST explain that their dogs are therapy dogs, not service dogs, AND that they do not have legal access rights like service dogs.

ATD does not allow members to handle two dogs at the same time on any visit, including a service dog and a therapy dog. For safety and liability reasons, ATD will no longer grant exceptions for two dogs with one handler for any visits and/or events.

- 6. Junior handler requirements:** The minimum age requirement for regular ATD membership is 18. When permitted by the facility, a prospective junior member/handler aged 12 through 17 may accompany a T/O on one visit before being tested. Prospective junior members are not required to do the background check.

Junior member/handlers, ages 12 to 15, must be accompanied at all times by a certified ATD handler, with or without a dog, **and** a parent/guardian during testing and on all visits. If the parent/guardian is also an ATD-certified handler, s/he may not bring an additional dog but may handle the junior handler's dog if also certified with that dog. The parent/guardian and ATD member supervising a junior team may supervise only one team at a time. Junior handlers ages 16 and 17 are not required to have a parent/guardian accompany them but must be accompanied by an ATD-certified handler. A parent/guardian must sign the junior handler's Release of Claims Form. Upon reaching the age of 18, the handler is required to contact the office and sign a release of claims for the ATD member files.

## II. Visits:

- 7. Facility or sponsoring organization regulations:** Therapy dog teams must strictly adhere to all ATD rules and regulations as well as the rules and regulations of each facility or sponsoring organization. If facility rules are unclear, ask a staff member or activities director to explain them. If a facility rule is in conflict with an ATD rule, contact the office for guidance.
- 8. Visits/Functions:** Therapy dog visits may include but are not limited to visits at a hospital, nursing home, library, school, detention center, hospice care center, etc. Therapy dog functions are community events such as a parade, educational seminar, dog breed showcase,

public educational event, or event promoting or describing ATD. At such events, if the dog is displaying the red heart-shaped tag, then the team is representing ATD. Dogs may not wear ATD identification, including the red heart-shaped tag, at any other time. Identification from other independently insured pet therapy organizations is prohibited when representing ATD.

- 9. Visit Duration:** The visit or event begins as soon as you reach the facility property, including the parking lot. The visit does not end until you leave the facility property.

**10. Items required on visits:**

- membership card
- dogs must wear the official red heart shaped ATD identification tag on the collar, harness, vest, or leash when representing ATD on visits or at events.
- written proof of the dog's vaccinations readily available at each visit, either carried with on the visit, or in the car and available upon request.

- 10. Behavior of dogs:** Dogs must remain under control at all times. Any inappropriate behaviors must be quickly and quietly corrected: barks should be quieted and jumping/pawing dogs should be quickly moved away while apologizing and checking to see if the person is OK. If not quickly corrected, the team must leave the property. ATD has zero tolerance for any dog displaying aggression toward humans or unprovoked aggression toward other dogs. Any dog displaying aggression must immediately be removed from the visit and reported to the office. (Please see Policy VIII for details.)

- 11. Ask before entering:** Always ask before bringing your dog up to a person for visiting. If you are entering a room, make sure everyone in the room wishes to have the dog visit. If one person does **not** want a visit, ask that person if it is OK to visit with others in the room. If not, do not enter the room.

- 12. Frequency of visits:** ATD requires a minimum of one visit every three months per handler/dog team. If a team fails to make the required visits, refer to Rules and Regulations 19. If you bring your dog to work with you, refer to Rules and Regulations 4 to determine how to satisfy this requirement.

**Guests on visits:** Anyone accompanying an ATD-certified team on a visit (e.g., family member, spouse, friend) must not require assistance from the handler and must be at least 18 years old. Facilities must give permission for all visitors.

- 13. Do not give food, water, or assistance to a patient or resident, even if asked.** Notify a staff member if help is needed.

**Read and obey all warning signs on room doors,** such as "ISOLATION" or "INFECTIOUS, DO NOT ENTER." Handlers must stay alert to their surroundings at all times. If any facility rules conflict directly with ATD, please contact the ATD office.

- 14. Walking the dog in a facility:** Dogs may not precede handlers down halls, around corners, at doorways, or at stairways. Stand back while waiting for an elevator door to open. When the door opens, wait to assure safe exit of passengers. If the elevator is occupied, the handler must ask permission to enter with the dog.
- 15. Mobile/Smart Devices:** Member/handlers must not make or receive calls or text messages using a cellphone/smart device inside a facility. Pagers and cell phones/smart devices must be set on silent or vibrate while inside a facility. If the use of a phone becomes necessary, handlers must excuse themselves temporarily and complete the call outside the facility. **Handlers using their personal cell phone to take photos should follow ATD Photo guidelines. (See IX. Legal issues #43)**

### III. Member Handler/Dog Team Annual Review/Re-Evaluation

- 16. Annual review:** Members must pass an annual member review which shows their familiarity with the ATD rules. Renewals will not be finalized until 100% accuracy is achieved.
- 17. Re-Evaluation:** If ATD has been alerted to a possible high-risk or behavior issue with a member or a member's dog, ATD may request that the team be re-evaluated. When there is no T/O in the general area who can give an unbiased report or evaluate the handler/dog team fairly, ATD may choose to send one of the directors to the area to re-evaluate the handler/dog team at the expense of ATD.

If a team fails to make one visit every three months, they must be re-observed at least one time by an ATD T/O.

If a team fails to make a visit within six months of a previous visit, a full retest is required to reinstate membership. The team becomes inactive and is not covered by insurance until re-tested and paperwork is approved by the office.

In the event a retest and/or re-observation is required or requested for any reason, the T/O shall:

- Use the current test/observation paperwork
- Follow the current guidelines for testing/observing

If the team passes, the handler shall submit the paperwork to the office within 7 days (standard mail, fax, or email).

If the team fails, the team shall refrain from visiting until they hear from the office. The T/O will send the paperwork to the office within 7 days

### IV. Health Requirements:

- 18. Dog health requirements:** Dogs must have an annual wellness examination, including a fecal check, by a veterinarian. They must be current on their rabies vaccination and any other vaccines as advised by their veterinarian. Veterinary reports of rabies titer levels of 0.5 IU or

greater are acceptable and must be measured every two years to ensure levels are acceptable. Maternity leave is required for pregnant bitches from 30 days prior to whelping date to 60 days after whelping. Bitches in season will not participate in therapy visits. Dogs who have any fresh wounds, recent surgery, injuries, or infections may not do pet therapy visits until recovered and healed. Dogs must also be free of any drugs or substances that might affect performance.

- 19. Chemical Substances:** ATD members will not provide chemical substances or apply them to their dog unless authorized or provided by the facility. Substances include, but are not limited to, hand sanitizers, hand wipes, or lotions.
- 20. Certified dog developing disabilities and/or stress:** The member/handler must notify the ATD office if the dog has developed any disability since the initial testing or shows signs of physical and/or mental distress during visits. The handler/dog team will need to be retested with one observation before continuing any visits.
- 21. Handler health requirements and developing medical issues:** Handlers who have any fresh wounds, recent surgery, other injuries, infections, or any condition which may inhibit their ability to handle the dog safely may not do pet therapy visits until recovered and healed. Any member/handler who has had any change in medical condition since initial testing, even if temporary, that may impede his/her ability to safely handle his/her dog, including but not limited to: stroke, broken limb, weakened strength, change in disability, change in mental or emotional condition, etc., must notify the ATD office and may need to be retested and/or observed before continuing any visits.

## V. Grooming Requirements

- 22. Dog grooming requirements:** Participating dogs must be clean and well groomed, have trimmed/filed nails, clean teeth, be free of internal and external parasites, and in good general health. If used, topical flea and tick preventative must be applied a minimum of three days prior to any pet therapy visits. Flea and tick prevention collars shall not be worn during ATD visits.
- 23. Handler grooming requirements:** While participating in therapy visits, handlers must be clean, well-groomed, and without influence of alcohol and/or drugs that would impair safety or judgment. Handlers must be able to act quickly enough to remove themselves and their dogs without assistance from a facility in the event of an emergency. All visited facilities must be informed of any medical conditions that would affect the team's ability to perform volunteer duties.
- 24. Olfactory sensitivity:** Avoid using perfumes, colognes, and other scented oils on both the handler and the dog. Handlers who smoke or are exposed to smokers should minimize their smoke exposure before entering a facility. Never try to cover smoke or other odors with perfume or scented oils.

## VI. Attire and Equipment

- 25. Handler attire:** Skimpy or tight-fitting attire including short shorts, tank tops, and bare

midribs are not allowed. Wear sensible, safe walking shoes with backs or at least a strap around the heel (no flip-flops, high heels, spike heels, or shoes without backs).

**26. Dog equipment: Equipment that is not allowed includes clickers, retractable, elastic/bungee or chain leashes, pinch, prong, spiked, or electronic collars.** Collars, including slip, buckle, quick release, martingale, limited slip, or any other smooth collars made of chain, nylon or leather, are acceptable. Leashes must be four feet in length or shorter and made of material strong enough for the size/strength of the dog. The use of a traffic leash is recommended for large dogs. Leashes may not be tied to make them four feet in length or shorter after the handling test and first observation are completed. A convertible leash that is designed to be adjusted to four feet or shorter may be used as long as it is used only at the four foot or shorter lengths. The collar should fit snugly enough so the dog cannot easily back out of the collar or slip it off of his/her head. A slip collar should be correctly worn so it releases properly as designed. Head halters and body halters/harnesses made of fabric webbing or leather with metal or plastic buckles are acceptable. Body halters/harnesses fastened with Velcro® or metal clothing snaps are not allowed. Dogs wearing a body halter/harness, or a head halter must also wear an approved collar. The leash may be attached to the collar, halter, or harness.

**27. Dog strollers:** All strollers must be made specifically for dogs. ATD members who wish to use a stroller for an already certified dog must have a T/O perform the handling portion of the test and observe them one time with their dog in the stroller. All handlers, including existing ATD members, must submit the test and observation forms to the office along with a picture showing that the dog is wearing an approved collar and on a four-foot or shorter leash held by the handler while secured in the stroller.

## **VII. Safety precautions:**

**30. Two-foot rule:** Dogs must be kept at least two feet from other dogs and animals at all times while representing ATD on a visit or event to discourage play, to ensure that dogs have enough personal space for focusing on the person being visited, and to prevent any interaction between dogs that could possibly lead to an injury to a third party, the handlers or their dogs. If a dog prefers more than two feet, the handler should be sure to provide for the dog's needs. Insurance is not in effect if your dog is within two feet of another animal, including when posing for photos.

**31. Staring:** Do not let your dog stare (even from a distance) at another dog as this can be a threatening signal to other dogs.

**32. Avoid close proximity:** Never allow your dog to approach a person's lap or bed when another dog is already there. Take extra precautions in doorways, elevators or any tight confined areas.

**33. Facility Animals:** If a facility has free-roaming animals or family pets that might be present during a visit, ATD handlers should request that they be allowed to visit in an area away from the other animals.

**34. Your dog is your first priority:** While participating on an official ATD visit, handlers must have their attention on their dogs for the safety and welfare of their therapy dogs as well as those whom they visit. Do not become so comfortable that you become careless. Excuse yourself and your dog from any situation you do not believe will be a positive experience for all involved. Never put yourself or your dog in a questionable or threatening situation.

Handlers should evaluate their dog's health and attitude, as well as their own, prior to every visit.

**35. Stay alert:** ATD handlers must be alert to their surroundings at all times. Handlers may not participate in activities that take their attention from their dogs, including, but not limited to, reading to a group, directing bingo, or playing a piano.

**36. NO Face-to-face:** Do not allow your dog's face near a human's face. Facial kisses are not allowed.

**37. Only the certified handler may handle his/her dog:** Handlers must never leave their dogs alone with staff, patients, or visitors. The leash must be held by the member's hand and may not be hooked or attached to the member's body, belt, any chair, wall, purse, or other person, etc.

**38. Dogs off leash:** If safe conditions exist, a dog may be taken off leash when performing tricks, demonstrations, and when assisting with therapy such as retrieving. Only one dog at a time may be off leash. Dogs must be on leash when posing for photos while on a visit. A handler may drop the leash for a photo if the dog is not posing with a person or any other animal(s).

**39. Others leash walking handler's dog:** If one additional person wants to walk the dog, the handler may use two leashes or a four foot or shorter two-loop leash with the handler always holding the shorter leash or loop so that the handler always maintains control of the dog.

**40. Dogs on laps/furniture:** The ATD member/handler must know and strictly adhere to the facility policy concerning dogs on any laps/furniture and have permission from the resident/patient. This is for all furniture, including, but not limited to, chairs, couches, wheelchairs, beds, or physical therapy beds/pads. The handler must be in control of the dog's head at all times.

- **Laps** - If the facility policy allows, and permission from the patient/guardian is given, ATD allows dogs weighing 15 pounds or less to be placed in laps. When placing a dog in someone's lap, be sure to face the dog away from the person's face, presenting the back and shoulders to be petted. Do not present the dog face-to-face with the person.
- **Occupied Furniture** - Dogs weighing 50 pounds or less can be placed onto occupied furniture. The handler may lift the dog onto and remove it from the occupied bed, chair, or locked wheelchair without injury to the resident/patient. Dogs are never allowed to jump up onto or jump down from any furniture. Dogs weighing more than 50 pounds may never be placed onto occupied

furniture. Regarding linens or coverings, refer to facility procedures about placing a dog on a bed, chair, or lap.

- For safety reasons, ATD will allow only one dog at a time on any occupied furniture as described above.
- Be cautious around patients who might have existing or recent injuries or surgery with regard to placement of the dog so as not to cause an injury with the dog's feet or body weight. Always ask if the person has a sore spot or if there is an area that you should avoid when placing the dog. Remember to watch for tubes, lines, and other medical equipment.
- **Unoccupied Furniture:** When space allows, dogs of any size may be lifted and safely placed by the handler onto unoccupied furniture such as a couch or loveseat.

### **VIII. Special permission:**

**41. Special permission:** It is ATD's policy not to grant exceptions to the rules due to safety and insurance reasons. Please note, two dogs with one handler are never allowed on any visit while representing ATD.

ATD sometimes grants special permission for certain circumstances. Members may apply to the Alternative Review Committee by submitting a cover letter explaining the reason for their request. If the request involves special equipment, such as a dog carrier or cart, a picture of the dog with the equipment is required. Certain requests may also require letters of reference from someone directly involved or those who will need to be aware of these situations (e.g. a facility, hospital, school, etc.). Obtain the appropriate information from the ATD office.

Special permission might be granted for the following:

- Two or more dogs off lead at the same time, each with their own handler, participating in a trick, demonstration, or presentation.
- Special equipment or devices such as carts, dog carriers, etc.

If a handler chooses to engage in a behavior/activity that is outside of these guidelines without permission, the handler must remove the dog's official ATD red-heart shaped tag and notify a facility supervisor that ATD insurance is not in effect for the duration of the behavior/activity.

### **IX. Legal issues:**

**42. Privacy:** Observe all rules of privacy and confidentiality as required by HIPAA. Never discuss a patient's health or personal issues with the patient or anyone else.

Handlers may not share identifying information about those they visit.

**43. Photos:** If photos are allowed at a facility or function, for the privacy of those whom we visit and to protect both ATD and our members from liability, members must have an ATD Photograph Authorization Release Form signed prior to taking any photo which identifies any individual (e.g. face, tattoo, birthmark, scar, etc.). If you have a signed ATD Photo Authorization form and are posting or publishing the picture on your own, you should keep the form on file for your own protection. The signed ATD Photo Authorization form must accompany any submission to an ATD-managed publication/social media platform. ATD keeps them on file and does not delete them. A facility/organization photo release may not be used instead of the ATD photo release.

**44. Distribution of Materials/Information during Visits:** Members shall not distribute commercial, religious, or political materials and/or information during visits or events sponsored by ATD. Upon request, information may be provided about ATD, local therapy dog groups, and other dog-related topics.

**45. Incident or Injury:** If an incident or injury to an employee, resident, or visitor in the facility occurs while representing ATD:

- Immediately contact the facility's supervisor on duty.
- If the incident is a suspected bite, end the visit immediately.
- Document the incident on all required forms for the facility.
- Immediately contact the ATD office and report the incident. If after hours or during a weekend, please leave a voice message and make contact with the ATD office during the next business day.

**46. Suspected dog bite:** Regardless of an ATD visit or not, if a certified dog is suspected of a dog bite, whether to another dog or to a person, the incident must be reported to the ATD office. The dog shall not participate in any pet therapy work until the bite incident is investigated by ATD.

If a dog has been deemed dangerous, aggressive, or similar designation as defined by local laws as a result of an incident and documentation verifies it, the member must notify the ATD office and the certified dog's membership will be terminated.

**47. Felonies:** If a member has been convicted of a felony that has not been previously reported to the ATD office, s/he must do so.

## **XI. In Conclusion:**

**ATD reserves the right to deny, revoke or not renew membership. At the discretion of the ATD Board of Directors, a handler/dog team may be asked to temporarily or permanently refrain from further visits under the name of ATD if they fail to comply strictly with these Rules and Regulations (or) as referenced in the ATD Policies or By-Laws. Should this action be necessary, the handler will be requested to return the official red heart-shaped ATD identification tag and membership card to the ATD office.**