

Is It Enough to Have a Great Dog?

Ask Isa . . .



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—Isa Helfrich, German Shepherd & therapy dog
(typed by Deb Helfrich, Training & Testing Officer)

Question:

Becoming a Therapy Dog Team: Is It Enough to Have a Great Dog?

Answer:

The short answer to that?

Nope!

Successful, effective, positive, safe therapy dog visits are not just about having a sweet impeccably-mannered dog at the end of your leash.

The HANDLER is a critical factor to the successful team equation—and not just because he or she drives the dog to the visits and carries the poop bags and water!

It's the TEAM working together that matters. As the leader of the team, handlers must be able to:

- Understand and apply the many TDV policies and guidelines when making visits
- Know their dog's signals and body language
- Be completely aware of the surroundings to make sure everyone is safe and comfortable—dog, patient, and staff.
- Know the facility's rules and work within the facility harmoniously with medical personnel and other staff
- Be good with people—respectful, friendly, professional, and compassionate

TDV is also looking for members who want to be a part of the TDV community and who support our mutual cause to spread canine magic in our community. This involves being responsive to TDV's membership requirements—such as keeping up with vaccinations, letting TDV know where you are visiting so that we can keep our records current, keeping your membership current with annual renewals. It also means supporting the organization in any way they can (by at least making therapy dog visits and ideally by volunteering time in service of organizational needs, and spreading the word about TDV's mission).

The "Ask Isa" column appears in the Therapy Dogs of Vermont newsletter —reproduced here for TDV website readers. It is not meant as a substitute for seeking proper veterinary, training, or behavioral advice from professionals!

