



## Ask Isa

*Isa and Deb Helfrich*

**If you have a question for me, please e-mail it to: [admin@therapydogs.org](mailto:admin@therapydogs.org). I can use your name or you can remain anonymous! Looking forward to your questions! —Isa**

**Dear Isa:**

*Sometimes I come across non-therapy dogs in the nursing home where I visit. Is it okay to meet these dogs when I'm on duty?*

*—Happy, the Bloodhound*

**Dear Happy:**

*Excellent question!!! As more and more facilities become open to the healing power of dogs like us, and the public sees more of us working dogs in facilities, we're also seeing an increase in the number of non-certified pet dogs making trips to the same facilities where we do our official therapy dog visits. I've come across a few of them myself—and some of them have even been so inspired by what we do, that they become therapy dog teams too! Isn't that great?!*

*However, there are a few things to consider when you and your human partner come across a non-certified dog when making visits:*

1. You don't know if the other dog is healthy and/or vaccinated. (Don't assume facilities check this!)
2. You don't know how much control the human on the other end of the leash has. His or her dog may jump all over you, knock things (and people!) over, and not be aware how to be calm and quiet in a visitation setting. Even if you are trying to be calm and good, think about how the interaction may look—you have the bandanna on and carry the TDV reputation.

3. You don't know if that other dog is friendly! An innocent meeting in a hallway may turn into an unfriendly, out-of-control situation.

So, what's the safest option when you spot another dog in a facility? Avoid meeting. Your human partner can simply say to the other human partner, "My dog is in working mode, thanks for understanding if we don't greet your dog."

If you do experience issues (dogs off leash or out of control/aggressive, interfering with your safe visits in any way), talk to facility staff. If you need additional help, contact TDV—we are always happy to help you solve a problem in a facility.

Remember—good judgment and safety must always be the rule for visits!



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!