

Getting Started in a Facility



—Isa Helfrich, German Shepherd & therapy dog (and Deb Helfrich, Vice President)

QUESTION:

I just got my new member packet in the mail and can't wait to get started! Now how do I get into a place to visit? * *Teacup, Chihuahua*

ANSWER:

Congratulations and welcome to TDV! So, you've got a brand new spotless bandanna, shiny tag, and a spiffy ID—but no place to go? Here's what to do...

1. FIND A PLACE TO VOLUNTEER

- **Go to the TDV website's "Volunteer Opportunities" page** (always changing!) for a list of facilities that have requested visits.

- **Blaze your own trail.** Got a place in mind that you want to visit? Call em! Ask for the volunteer coordinator (or whoever manages volunteers), tell him/her that you are certified with TDV, and that you'd like volunteer with your dog to provide therapy dog visits. Contact TDV if you need help or if the volunteer coordinator has questions you can't answer.

2. KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Each facility has its specific rules and arrangements (in addition to the TDV guidelines) for volunteers. Make sure you know all of the facilities guidelines before you start, and brush up on TDV's guidelines and policies too.
- If not already covered in the facility's guidelines, here are a few things you may want to ask before you start visiting a new place:
 - Does the facility allow other pets? (so you and your dog don't get surprised by a llama in the hallway one day!)
 - How will I know who and who *not* to visit?
 - Are there any special infection control guidelines (for example, some facilities do not allow patients to feed a dog treats)? How are isolation rooms marked?
 - Are there any other safety regulations I should know about?
 - In case of an emergency when I am in the facility, who should I contact? (important if you are visiting evenings or weekends, when regular staff is gone for the day).
 - Do you prefer scheduled visits or drop in? What are your expectations for how often I should visit and what times?
 - Do I need to sign in or check in with someone each time I visit? Do I need to wear any special identification? Is there a dress code? Is there a volunteer orientation or special training?
- It can be helpful to visit the facility and do a "walk through" without your dog the first time—get a feel for the facility, the people, find a place your dog can relieve itself, etc.

3. UPDATE TDV

Let TDV know where you are visiting so we may update our member database and insurance provider for your coverage.



HAVE FUN AND BE SAFE!

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