

**Purpose:** To provide guidelines for the use of pet therapy.

**Definition: Pet therapy is not visitation with an employee's or student's personal pet.** A Pet Therapy Program reduces stress and anxiety incurred by students, staff, and MMI clients. It provides an opportunity to improve self-esteem, enhance socialization, promote empathy and feelings of being liked unconditionally through the use of specialized pet-facilitated therapy. Pet Therapy sessions must be held in designated areas following the guidelines for Pet Therapy Program (Appendix 1).

I. Pet Therapy Program

- A. This program does not apply to the Nebraska Medical Center Patient areas. Therapy pets utilized for patients must follow hospital guidelines
- B. All pet therapy program animals must be officially registered and certified with a therapy dog program which is approved by The University of Nebraska Medical Center. The University of Nebraska Medical Center approved therapy dog programs follow "Guidelines for Pet Therapy Program" (see Appendix 1).
- C. The pet therapy program event on campus must be sponsored by a UNMC department.
- D. The UNMC department sponsoring the event must assign a person to be present during the pet therapy program visit to monitor, make sure that any pet excrement has been cleaned and the area disinfected. They are responsible to contact Campus Security Department immediately at 402-559-5111 for assistance and to make a report if an injury to an employee, student, volunteer or visitor occurs or UNMC property is damaged during a pet therapy program event.
- E. For each pet therapy program event sponsored, the sponsoring department must maintain the following information on file: the date, time and location of the event as well as information on the Pet Therapy Program dog's certification and handler.
- F. At least 10 days prior to the event, the sponsoring department must email the date, time and location of the event to Amy Lamer, Coordinator Risk Management at email address - [alamer@unmc.edu](mailto:alamer@unmc.edu)
- G. The UNMC department sponsoring the event is responsible for the cost of any damage caused by the animal during the pet therapy program visit.
- H. Pet Therapy program events on campus are acceptable only in these areas designated by the UNMC Safety Leadership Team:
  - Center for Healthy Living (CFHL) – the location must be pre-approved by CFHL Administration prior to the event.
  - Sorrell Alumni Commons area
  - Commons area outside the Sorrell Center
  - McGoogan Library – 6th Floor (Area designated by Library staff)
  - College of Nursing Commons area
  - MMI - Bicycle storage area (open space) – 1060
  - MMI - Gym – 10304
  - MMI - Indoor play area - 10303
  - Bennett Hall 3003 and 3011

NOTE: Other areas may be considered upon request for specific events in buildings that do not have patient care operations. Requests must be submitted to Amy Lamer, Coordinator Risk Management at email address - [alamer@unmc.edu](mailto:alamer@unmc.edu) and John Hauser, Safety Manager at email address – [jhauser@unmc.edu](mailto:jhauser@unmc.edu).

- I. **An employee or student's personal pet is not classified as a "pet therapy" program animal** unless the pet is officially registered and certified as a pet therapy program animal and cleared through Environmental Health and Safety.
  
- II. Pet Therapy Program Criteria
  - A. Dogs are the only pets authorized for pet therapy program.
  - B. Pet records (e.g., vaccinations) must be made available upon request from pet handlers and authorized pet therapy groups.
  
- III. The pet handlers must accept full responsibility for the pet therapy program animals including but not limited to the following (See Appendix 1 - Guidelines for Pet Therapy Program):
  - Proper disposal of excreta – (Double bagged and placed in a waste container outside the building or transported off campus)
  - Appropriate vaccinations and health reports.
  - Animal grooming and cleanliness (which includes bathing and/or wiping with a wet washcloth to remove dander and saliva from the animal's coat).
  
- IV. Exclusions
  - These UNMC Pet Therapy Program Procedures shall not apply to service animals or assistance animals as those terms are understood under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Housing Act, and any other applicable federal or state law. Employees or students seeking to have service animals or assistance animals on campus should contact the following:
    - Employees – Human Resources - Linda Cunningham, Associate Director of Human Resources, 402-559-7394
    - Students – Kelly Swoboda, Counselor, Academic Success Program, 402-559-5553

Reviewed and approved by UNMC Safety Leadership Team 3/14/2022

### **Guidelines for Pet Therapy Program**

- The handler must be an adult.
- Handlers must be clean, well groomed, and without the influence of alcohol and drugs that may impair safety or judgment while participating in a pet therapy program event.
- Handlers must be a member of an official dog handlers' group, (e.g., Therapy Dogs International; Midlands Pet Therapy; Paws for Friendship; Domesti-pups; Love on a Leash; Delta Society TherapyDogs, etc.). The membership must include an acceptance of liability document which outlines the handler as accountable for the actions/reactions of the pet therapy program animal and him/herself.
- Each handler may handle only one dog at a time while participating in a pet therapy program visit/and or activity.
- Pet therapy program animals must be at least one year of age.
- Pet therapy program animals must have an annual physical examination by a veterinarian and have a current rabies vaccination.
- Participating pets must be clean and in good overall health, well groomed, including trimmed, filed toenails, and clean teeth.
- Pet therapy program animals must be transported in a pet carrier or kept on a 4' or shorter leash at all times when entering and traveling within the facility.
- Pet therapy program teams must strictly adhere to all rules and regulations of the University of Nebraska Medical Center.
- If an injury to an employee, student, volunteer or visitor occurs during a visit - immediately contact Public Safety at 402-559-5111.
- Immune compromised/deficient personnel/students should not be exposed to pet therapy program animals.