



Thank you for considering an Annie's Dog graduate team for work in your organisation. The following booklet contains information that many organisations may wish to consider prior to, or while working with a graduate for employment or volunteering in their setting. I wish you all the very best in whatever decision you make. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or if there is anything I can clarify further.

Annie Silva

Annie's Dogs

0473 739 067

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING



POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Currently in Australia there is no regulating organisation that govern Therapy Dog status.
- There are however a set of standards that most therapy dog trainers hold to - such as temperament testing, obedience training, socialisation standards etc.
- As there is no regulating body for therapy dogs, every therapy dog course in Australia is certified in the same way - through the company's own business.
- Considering it's an unregulated industry, the question may arise: What's the point of certification? While it is possible for workplaces/community sites to grant permission for dogs with no formalised training, however, increasingly many organisations (hospitals, schools, courts of law, prisons) are requiring dogs on site to be accredited as "Therapy Dogs". This a growing trend as organisations are becoming more aware of therapy dogs, their specific training, and are standardising what a therapy dog should be able to do (i.e. not jump on the elderly causing skin tears, or not bark and chase children in the school yard).
- As a result, having a Therapy Dog certificate helps to identify that the dog on site is not "just a pet", rather has completed training and testing and has been found to meet certain standards which ensure they are safe to the public, are temperamentally sound, and have been taught how to be calm and bring joy to all people.
- The strengths of Annie's Dogs: Therapy Dog training: This certificate is endorsed by my qualifications as a Cert III Dog Trainer and Behaviourist, my Bachelor of Education, Graduate diploma in Ministry, Theology and Counselling, and my Masters degree in Community Growth and International Development, as well as my years of working experience as a Nursing Home Chaplain, Church Pastor, Hospital Chaplain, Primary and Secondary School Teacher, and Wellbeing Officer.
- Hence, when graduates complete my course they receive education of both how to train dogs as well as real life experiences of many of the areas they are likely to work in the future.

OVERVIEW OF WHAT A THERAPY DOG IS AND ISN'T

- Therapy dogs are dogs that are trained to bring joy, love and non-medical support to humans. They are often found in hospitals, nursing homes, court houses, schools, child care centres, libraries, counselling and psychological centres, and exam halls, among other community centres.
- They are different to assistance dogs, as assistance dogs are trained to provide life-giving assistance to an individual (i.e. a seeing-eye dog for the blind, a hearing dog for the deaf, a medical alert dog for a diabetic etc).
- They are also different to your household pet as they have been taught high levels of obedience and have been assessed as having a temperament which is non-reactive and which loves people.

(See the following page for a table identifying the above differences.)

- To perform their role, therapy dogs must have impeccable manners (i.e. they are going to wait to be invited through door ways, are not going to push children over or fight other dogs, be too noisy, etc). They must enjoy human attention and be non-reactive to the environment or people around them. They also need to be of a stable temperament (i.e. they must be trustworthy around all types and ages of people and environments). They need to listen to their owners and have outstanding obedience levels.
- Generally speaking there are two types of therapy dog certifying businesses:
 - Organisations such as DELTA and Lort Smith require you to have already trained your dog to these standards. They then provide testing to ensure you have achieved the standard, and you then become their employee (they find work or volunteer placements and you go on behalf of their organisation).
 - Other organisations, such as my business, differ fundamentally from this and operate more like a university - providing you and your dog with the training, upskilling and knowledge required so you and your dog can achieve therapy dog standard. I provide testing, placement experience, and certification throughout our 5 day course which enables you to go out and find work or volunteer in any setting you wish. This often works well for those who already are working as teachers, nurses, carers, psychologists etc and who wish to bring their dog with them. It also often works well for people who are retired and wish to provide joy in a volunteer capacity.
- As a result, a therapy dog and therapy dog handler are trained to bring love and joy. You may hold a separate degree (i.e. as a teacher, nurse, counsellor etc) which enables you to perform that degree-certified role with your dog, OR you may have no prior degree. If you have no prior degree you will be certified as a therapy dog handler who can conduct therapy dog visits - in which the sole aim of your visit is to bring generic joy and love to the facility and/or people you are visiting. (In other words, just because you have a therapy dog that can visit schools, does not give you a qualification to teach a high school English class; or, because you have a therapy dog that can visit a nursing home, does not make you an aged care worker. You can visit those places with your dog and be paid for it, but the skilled work of a teacher, counsellor, aged care worker etc can only be attained through a University degree).

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THERAPY DOGS AND OTHER DOGS



THE POINT:

Service dogs are for people with life-risking conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy etc. They perform certain tasks for their owner that help keep them alive. They are often subsidized through NDIS.

Therapy dogs are for all people. They are trained to love, comfort, and provide joy to groups of people and one on one settings. They are often employed in nursing homes, schools, hospitals, and other community settings.

Emotional support dogs are a cross between service dogs and therapy dogs. They are not service dogs as they are not performing life-saving functions. They are not therapy dogs as they should only be focused on one individual. They are often utilized in homes of children or adults with ASD, anxiety or other mental health concerns.

	Public Access <i>Permission to enter shops, places preparing food, or other public access spaces</i>	Emotional Support <i>Provides emotional support</i>	Visits nursing homes, schools, hospitals, etc. <i>Trained to bring joy, comfort and love to settings of people</i>	Trained and Certified <i>Has undergone formal assessment</i>	Family Pet <i>Able to be a family pet</i>	Trained to assist with life-saving functions <i>Performs specific tasks to aid with life risking diagnosis i.e. epilepsy/diabetes</i>
Therapy Dogs	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Service Dogs	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Emotional Support Dog	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Family Pet	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
	Public access is the right only of service dogs . Service dogs are trained to provide specific life-saving functions (i.e. alerting a person with diabetes to low blood sugar levels) and therefore are allowed access wherever their charge is.	Research shows all dogs (when behaving appropriately) can provide emotional support to humans who feel positively about dogs.	Only dogs trained and certified as therapy dogs should perform this role. Service dogs should remain attentive only to their owner – hence the “no pat, I’m working” signs on their vest. Conversely, therapy dogs are trained to thrive in any setting with people. Their role is to provide love and comfort to all in the room. They are ideal for nursing homes, schools, prisons, and other community settings.	To be a certified therapy, service, or emotional support dog, the dog and handler must undergo formalised training.	Due to the nature of the service dog’s role (to provide life-saving functions) the service dog is defined by Australian Law as a ‘Disability Aid’ and not a family pet/companion animal.	Service dogs are the only dogs trained to aid in life saving functions (i.e. a dog that has been formally trained to calm a child’s anxiety is not an emotional support dog, rather is a service dog).



PLACES TO CHECK OUT MORE:

Visit: 3 days and a new dog training and Annie's Dogs: Therapy Dogs on Facebook to see videos of the obedience attained.

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

LEVEL OF OBEDIENCE REQUIRED AND ACHIEVED

If a graduate of mine is approaching you about the possibility of working in your facility, you can be assured their dog's obedience is to an extremely high standard. In order to graduate my course, all participants and their dogs are expected to pass a variety of PAT (public access test) level tests, and obedience standards.

This includes:

- They have been placed in situations of high distractions (including: animals, children, toys, food, bikes, and high energy situations) and have proven their recall, listening, and choosing of their owner in these situations.
- They have conducted a variety of public visits (including: nursing homes, schools, farm, public café, childcare centre, day activity centre) and have proven their temperament and obedience in these settings.
- They have been tested for their obedience (including: sit-stays; drop-stays; off lead recall; listening; impulse control; non-jumping; loose lead walking; stationing; and more) and have demonstrated consistent high level achievements of these standards.
- They have been assessed by myself (Annie Silva). I am a dog trainer with experience training hundreds of dogs; years of experience as a therapy dog handler in a variety of settings (including: schools, nursing homes, hospitals, community programs, churches, youth drop in centres, and more); and a myriad of degrees and working experience (including: Bachelor of Education- 9 years teaching experience; Graduate diploma of ministry and theology, chaplaincy minor – 5 years church, chaplaincy and mental health coordination roles; Masters of International Development and Community Growth – 3 years experience coordinating local community events and advocating for societal change at the local level).

As a result, in considering the request of my graduate, you should have no concerns regarding their dog's level of obedience or suitability with the public.

**The PAT test is the base standard for assistance dogs to achieve and be considered temperamentally sound. It is in operation in NSW and QLD, though currently Victoria does not use it or have an equivalent. Hence many therapy dog and service dog training facilities use it as the basis for our testing.*

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

THERAPY DOG RESEARCH

When you consider the impact a therapy dog may have on your facility and clientele, you need to consider a two-fold research base:

- 1) Research conducted specific with therapy dogs (i.e. peer reviewed reports that have studied the presence of therapy dogs); and
- 2) Research conducted around the mechanism that causes therapy dogs to be effective (i.e. the impact of oxytocin).

Accordingly, research conducted specific with therapy dogs demonstrates:

- **Therapy Dogs have provided benefits to specific population groups:-** Aged care residents and the elderly in general; children and adolescents; people with disabilities; people with mental health concerns; people with physical injuries or health conditions (Julius, Beetz, Kotrschal, Turner & Uvnas-Moberg 2013).
- **Specific benefits have been seen:-** Benefits have been documented in health and wellbeing, social engagement, rapport and communication; reductions in stress and increases in oxytocin; improvements in mood and coping skills; increased capacity to learn new skills; increased capacity for communication, concentration, focus and attention; increases in pro-social behaviours (i.e. smiling) and reductions in anti-social behaviours (Jones, Rice & Cotton 2018).

(This does not mean therapy dogs cannot help other population groups, and cannot cause other benefits, rather at the time of writing I am unaware of robust, peer-reviewed research which has been conducted with such parameters around the use of therapy dogs).

Research conducted around the mechanism that causes therapy dog effectiveness:

- **The Oxytocin Effect (Odendaal 2000):-** During positive human-animal interactions greater oxytocin (a neurotransmitter produced when we have positive experiences with those we love) is created in the brain (Handlin et al. 2011). The reported benefits of therapy dogs in the research cited above, is posited to have its cause-effect relationship rooted in the oxytocin effect (that is, because oxytocin is increased in the human by the interaction and presence of the therapy dog, then oxytocin is the change agent which causes the benefits seen).
- **What does oxytocin do?** Increases in oxytocin lead to feelings of relaxation, acceptance and of accepting others (Julius et al. 2013b). It also leads to feelings of trustworthiness, less fear and anxiety, increases in concentration, memory and learning (Handlin et al 2011). It is also suggested to increase one's willingness and desire to engage socially. Oxytocin also affects other hormones resulting in reductions in stress physiology (heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol production etc), pain sensitivity and gut function (Uvnas-Moberg et al. 2011). The presence of oxytocin can create changes to our social, cognitive and nervous system functions (Handlin et al. 2011; Handlin, Nilsson, Ejdeback, Hydring-Sandberg & Uvnas-Moberg 2012; ISAZ et al. 2012; Julius et al. 2013, Uvnas-Moberg, Handlin & Petersson 2011).
- **Who may benefit from the oxytocin effect** Individuals who have some form of disruption to the oxytocin or stress pathways are likely to exhibit the strongest benefits. The disruptions often exist for people who have experienced trauma, loneliness or isolation. As well as people who have Autism Spectrum Disorders, mental health difficulties, pain syndromes or disorders, and attachment difficulties (Sigal Zilcha-Mano, Mario Mikulincer & Phillip Shaver 2011; Grandin, Fine & Bowers 2010; Barker, Pandurangi & Best 2013).

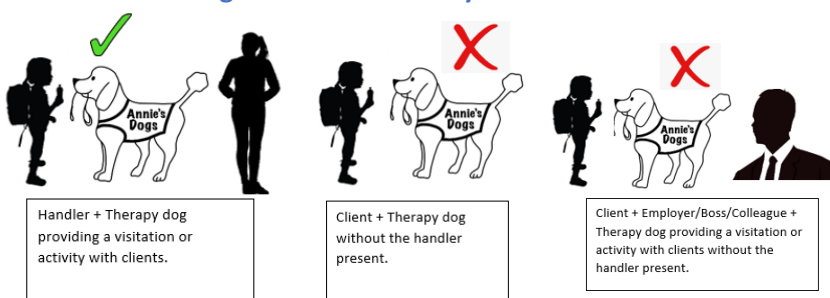
Considering therapy dogs can increase the presence of oxytocin in the human, it is suggested that whatever oxytocin benefits have been observed and wherever they have been observed, is grounds for further potential areas where a therapy dog could benefit.

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING



THINGS FOR CONSIDERATION

- **Permission slips** When working with minors you will need the permission of parents OR the permission of the organisation on their behalf. If the organisation is willing to endorse the programme and allow parents the space to opt out this is also entirely appropriate. Options should be made available for those people who do not wish to interact with the dog i.e. areas where the dog does not go.
- **Insurance** It is a good idea to insure the dog and handler.
- **Toilet** Thought should be given as to where the dog will be allowed to toilet. Will this be on site, in a specific area, or off site? Consideration must be made regarding the length of time it will take the staff member to take the dog to the site as well as the amount of time the dog will take to do their business, when deciding where the dog will be allowed to toilet.
- **Hygiene** While it is reasonable to expect therapy dogs to be clean, it is important to realise that dogs have different health needs than humans. It is not reasonable to expect the therapy dog to be washed weekly – as this strips the dog of its skin and fur's natural oils. 3-6 weekly baths are more appropriate. In the meantime, dogs can be wiped down before coming on site with dog wipes.
- **Phobias and allergies** Chances are some of your clientele may be allergic or have a phobia of dogs. It is important to have a plan in place as to how you will provide a safe place for these people. Ideas include: areas where the dog does not go; days the dog does not attend; cleaning regimes after the dog has been on site; structured meet and greets of the dog to test allergies/sensitivities and phobias.
- **Break Time** The therapy dog will need a break. This can be in a classroom (if the dog is controlled by a teacher) – however boundaries must be in place that students understand i.e. “when the dog goes on his mat, we do not touch or interact with the dog”. This ensures the dog has the ability to have a break when he/she requires it. In this setting, the dog can self-regulate as they have the ability to get to their mat whenever they need. For dogs that cannot get to their mat upon choice, scheduled breaks need to be made. It is important to make sure their break time is a break. Choosing a place in a frequented location (i.e. the staffroom) may not be best practice. You need it out of the eyesight of that well-meaning receptionist who says “oh he just looks so peaceful laying there, can I pat him?” or those kids who pop in because he doesn't look like he's busy (he is sleeping after all). But your dog's break is just that – a break. Away from noise. Away from people. 10-15 minutes every 2 hours is ideal.
- **What's with the halti?** All of the dogs I train are trained with a specific training collar: the Gentle Leader (aka halti). There are several reasons for my choosing to train dogs in this way: It reduces the risk of common injuries associated with collars, martingales and other neck or chest harnesses; It teaches the general population of a more gentle alternative to a neck collar; and finally it provides an easy “work mode” for the dog to slip into – rather than needing a jacket which in summer is too hot, and winter gets wet. Sometimes the general public perceive these haltis as ‘muzzles’ however, they are nothing like. A halti still allows full range of movement and function (they can bite, bark, drink and eat) with the halti on.
- **The following shows who I certify to control and work with the therapy dog.**



Importantly, I certify the dog as a therapy dog as long as they are in the presence of their handler. This means I do not endorse the therapy dog as a therapy dog with anyone except their handler who did the course with them. Why? Because I have assessed the handler's ability to control the therapy dog, I have not assessed everyone else's ability to control the dog. This includes the boss/manager/principal of the facility. The therapy dog should only work with the handler with which it has been trained.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

THERAPY DOG GENERAL ACTIVITIES

- **Fetch** In a school? Fetch is a great option at recess or lunchtime, or as a reward/break/zones of regulation activity. In a nursing home? Fetch also provides joy and bonding with the dog.
- **Story time** Have your dog in a drop and allow children to read to him/her individually or in groups.
- **Reward time** Use your dog as a reward based strategy (i.e. 30 minutes of solid work = 5 minutes with the therapy dog on the ground).
- **General positivity** For someone who enjoys dogs, simply having them in their vicinity – on yard duty, walking around the facility, in activities, waiting rooms etc – can make a big difference. Studies show merely the presence of a dog can help people feel calmer and less anxious.
- **Safe space** For some kids/residents/clients a dog provides a safe, calming influence – somewhere they can escape to, debrief or confide in.
- **Exercise time** Some elderly residents sometimes need a little extra motivation to do their daily walks or exercises. Sometimes they might need some more incentive to attend activities. A dog can often provide that little extra. Dogs in P.E classes in schools have been shown to increase participation of students who otherwise would not engage.
- **Comfort** During sad times, a therapy dog can provide a presence of just being.
- **Object lessons** Dogs can provide great life lessons that are helpful to teach children. Things like: Live in the moment; Don't hold grudges; Play everyday; Accept yourself; Jump for joy when you're happy; Drink lots of water; Love unconditionally; It's good to move etc.
- **Emotional connection and expression** Some adolescents find it increasingly difficult to show emotion, or for males to show nurturing or love. A dog can bridge that gap.
- **Overcoming a dog phobia** Some of your clients/residents/students may have a dog phobia. Providing them an experience (when they are ready) may be just what they need to overcome their fear.

Therapy dogs may be beneficial for any/all of the following areas:

Educational These interventions are aimed at skill or knowledge acquisition. Often behaviour management, social skills training, and emotional regulation training involve educational components, as does training for the management of physical injury or illness.

Relational These interventions seek to enhance the bond between humans and animals. They endeavour to enhance social engagement, motivation and rapport between clients and handler, clients and therapy dog, and clients and others. The aim being this relational bond with the therapy dog will generalise to the handler, and life outside the intervention.

Sensory-motor These interventions have at their heart a physical or health related goal. They can be useful with trauma, ASD emotion regulation, wellbeing, hygiene and more.

Self-regulatory Interventions aimed at aiding an individual to better self-regulate their internal world.



THE IDEA:

Client led – the client/student/resident initiates the interaction.

Animal led – the therapy dog initiates the interaction.

Handler led – you initiate and structure the interaction.

Therapy dogs are trained to bring joy, comfort and presence to anyone who is willing to interact with them.

The opportunities for their roles are endless.

If you can do a role with a person, chances are it will be that much better with a dog in tow too.

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

THREE TYPES OF THERAPY DOG INTERACTION

- **Client led** These interactions are initiated by the client. They may be short in duration – such as an initial greeting; or longer in nature – i.e. the client teaching the dog a trick. They may be fully initiated by the client – i.e. the client requests “can I walk your dog?” - or they may be set up by the practitioner – i.e. “do you think you can design an obstacle course for Pauley to walk through?” Client led interactions allow for clients to actively practice strategies or skills independently, while also allowing for the use of client metaphor – where clients are encouraged to make own meanings from the experience (Fournier, Letson, Berry & Pasiuk 2018).
- **Examples of client led interactions include:**
 - Giving the client a task such as “teach the dog a new trick”. The client must then problem solve and engage the therapy dog to complete the task. Upon completion the practitioner may feedback what they saw and ask the client what they learnt.
 - Asking a client to design an obstacle course that reflects their current challenges, and then invite the therapy dog to navigate the obstacles with them, without help from the handler.
 - Clients may be invited to walk with or play with the therapy dog in whatever way feels right for the situation. Upon reflection, the client is encourage to develop their own meanings from the interactions.
- **Animal led** These interactions occur when your therapy dog and a client shares the same space and spontaneously engage one another. The therapy dog is in the “free” and can respond intuitively to the state of behaviour of the client. They often provide the most impetus for relationship building between therapy dog and client.
- **Examples of animal led interactions include:**
 - Therapy dog is “free” and chooses to nose a client, wander th`e room and say “hi” to kids, etc.
 - Therapy dog is present in a waiting room, engaging with people as they wait.
- **Handler led** These include structured and semi-structured activities designed by the handler.
- **Examples of handler led interactions include:**
 - Teaching students how to have the dog perform a trick.
 - Walking the dog with students.
 - Putting the dog in a drop and helping a fearful client overcome their fear.



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