



KPETS  
CANINE AND SMALL  
ANIMAL VOLUNTEER  
HANDBOOK

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# Canine/Small Animal Volunteer Handbook

## **Our Mission Statement:**

Our volunteer teams of people and their pets enhance well-being through the power of human/animal interactions.

## **Our Vision Statement:**

A community where the power of human/animal interactions enhances well-being.

## **Our Core Values:**

### **Respect**

Treating those whom we serve, those who serve, and their companion animals with compassion and dignity  
Promoting a culture committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion

### **Community**

Valuing and nurturing the well-being of our communities—volunteers, donors, and those whom we serve  
Partnering with agencies and businesses to fulfill our mission

### **Integrity**

Acting ethically and honestly in all that we do

### **Compassionate Service**

Interacting with a therapy animal means that clients can pet it, play with it, let it sit on their laps, simply look at it—whatever makes them feel comfortable and less stressed. Animal-assisted intervention offers unconditional love, companionship, and reduced stress. It helps people relax, provides comfort, reduces loneliness, and provides an escape or happy distraction.

## **History**

Founded in 1998, KPETS consisted of a small group of volunteers from a local church. As more volunteers who were not affiliated with the church became involved, there was a need to expand the organization to better serve the community.

Originally, KPETS used nationally based therapy pet organizations as the source for registered volunteers. When the demand for volunteers became overwhelming, the decision was made to implement KPETS own registration process and its own insurance. KPETS was incorporated in January of 2003 and received 501(c)(3) status in August of that same year.



Applying elements from these national registering organizations, KPETS designed a comparable process for screening and registering potential therapy teams. Combining instruction during group evaluations and guidance during onsite supervised visits ensures that our teams are well-qualified to serve the community in animal assisted therapy services.

This handbook will provide a valuable resource for registered KPETS therapy teams. Thank you for becoming a therapy team with us!

## PET INFORMATION

### Therapy Dog Requirements

Dogs can make wonderful therapy pets; however, they must first have the temperament and health to be a good candidate for animal assisted activities. It is imperative that dogs not be forced into this role. They need to welcome, not just tolerate, interactions with people.

Your dog must

- 🐾 be at least one year old and have lived with you for at least six months,
- 🐾 **not** display aggressiveness toward people or other dogs, (Aggressive behavior includes the following: becoming stiff and rigid; hard staring; guttural, threatening barking; lunging or charging even without contact, mouthing so as to move or control; muzzle punching; showing teeth with curled lip; and snarling, nipping, and biting.)
- 🐾 **not** be easily startled or unsettled by people moving awkwardly or using walkers, canes, or wheelchairs,
- 🐾 walk on a relaxed, loose leash,
- 🐾 respond to "sit," "down," "stay," "come," and "leave it" commands on leash as the breed permits,
- 🐾 look to the handler for direction when startled or unsure,
- 🐾 exhibit a calm demeanor,
- 🐾 have a tolerance for unexpected, rough, or clumsy petting that might include pulling on ears or tail, crowded petting, and restraining hugs,
- 🐾 tolerate loud noises and screaming,
- 🐾 walk comfortably on multiple surfaces and through sliding glass doors,
- 🐾 ride comfortably in elevators,
- 🐾 move around wheel chairs easily and calmly,
- 🐾 ride in a car without getting stressed or sick,
- 🐾 be well housetrained with no accidents, and
- 🐾 be well-groomed and clean.

Animal scratches can be serious to anyone but much more so to the elderly or those with compromised immune systems. Keep your dog's nails clipped and smooth.

### Therapy Small Animal Requirements

Cats and rabbits can make wonderful therapy pets; however, they must first have the temperament and health to be a good candidate for animal assisted activities. It is imperative that cats and rabbits are not forced into this role. They need to welcome, not just tolerate, interactions with people.



Your cat or rabbit must

- 🐾 be at least one year old and have lived with you for at least six months,
- 🐾 be calm and unflappable, well-groomed and clean,
- 🐾 be open to new experiences like changes in routine and visiting new places,
- 🐾 be able to ride in a car without getting sick or upset,
- 🐾 be well housetrained with no accidents,
- 🐾 be comfortable wearing a harness and leash **or** riding in a carriage/stroller,
- 🐾 be able to be held or placed on a towel or blanket without eliminating, and
- 🐾 be relaxed around dogs since some facilities may have dogs living or visiting there.

Please remember that cat and rabbit scratches can be life-threatening to anyone but much more so to the elderly or those with compromised immune systems. Keep your cat's or rabbit's nails clipped and smooth.

## Pet Health Policy

- 🐾 Pets must be in good health and be injury free to register and visit as therapy teams.
- 🐾 A completed and signed KPETS Veterinarian Form is required upon initial registration.
- 🐾 KPETS will need proof of your pet's rabies vaccine, including the rabies tag number and expiration date, to be kept on file in the KPETS office.
- 🐾 KPETS will accept your veterinarian's vaccine protocol. Be aware that some facilities you visit may require additional vaccines.
- 🐾 Pets cannot be registered or visit while they are taking antibiotics, anti-fungal, or immunosuppressant medications (includes chemotherapy medications and corticosteroids). The KPETS office should be notified.
  - Even a short course of medication warrants a pause in their work. Once the pet is in the maintenance phase of treatment, the attending veterinarian should assess the risk to both the pet and potential clients.
- 🐾 If your pet gets topical flea and tick treatment, it must be applied at least two days before a visit. Flea collars with toxins may **not** be worn during a visit.

## Equipment

The following equipment is **not** permitted for KPETS visits or activities:

- No retractable or flexis, long leads, or chains;
- No choke, pinch, or shock collars; and
- No collars with metal parts.

The leash used during KPETS visits and activities must be six feet or less. **A four-foot leash is highly recommended.**

Flat buckle quick-release collars, martingales, head halters or gentle leaders, and harnesses are acceptable. Front control harnesses are highly recommended.



Items to take along or have available on a KPETS visit or during a KPETS event:

- 🐾 KPETS ID badge
- 🐾 KPETS vest or scarf for pet
- 🐾 Folder with vet records, insurance letter. and Photo/Video Authorization Release
- 🐾 Blanket/pillow
- 🐾 Poop bags
- 🐾 Water/bowl
- 🐾 Brush
- 🐾 Treats/small toys
- 🐾 Small towel to place under bowl or to wipe pet's face
- 🐾 Hand sanitizer and wipes

## HANDLER INFORMATION

### Handler Requirements

1. A KPETS team consists of one handler and only one pet. The minimum age for handlers is 18.
2. A handler must be well-groomed and dressed appropriately and conservatively. Be aware of facility dress codes (i.e. open toe shoes etc.).
3. Handlers must wear their KPETS identification badge at all times. Pets must be wearing KPETS attire in the form of a scarf/bandana or vest at all times.
4. Pets must adhere to the KPETS 2-4-6 Safety Zone around another animal:
  - two feet for smaller pets
  - four feet for larger pets
  - six feet for mini equines
5. Handlers are responsible for their pets' actions at all times. Be constantly aware of your pet and your surroundings.
6. **Junior Handlers** will need a letter of recommendation from a teacher, coach, professional trainer, and/or a KPETS volunteer.
  - Younger volunteers under the age of 18 may handle their therapy pet, but a parent or guardian must be present and available as a backup to take over the visit. The parent/guardian must be a registered KPETS handler with the same pet. If a Junior Handler is handling the pet, the parents/guardians may not have another pet with them.
  - Both the Junior Handler and the parent/guardian must complete the entire registration process with the responsible adult finishing the entire process first.
    - **Each** must attend an Orientation (together), pass a Group Evaluation, and complete two successful Visit Evaluations separately with the parent/guardian attending the screenings for the Junior Handler.



## Liability Insurance

1. The insurance provided by KPETS is liability insurance. It does not cover you or your pet in any way. If an accident happens, the insurance is there to cover medical costs for the third party.
2. Insurance is valid when you are acting on behalf of KPETS. This means KPETS must have on file any facility or venue you are visiting. A record of when, where, and who may be required should a claim be submitted. Because of this requirement, logging your volunteer hours is imperative. KPETS insurance is applicable only to KPETS registered teams when they are acting on behalf of KPETS in a volunteer role.
3. The insurance is not applicable if the pet is used in a handler's job while the Handler is "on the clock." Be sure all involved understand that KPETS does not provide insurance while Handlers are working at their jobs. KPETS does not screen emotional support animals and facility animals.
4. For insurance purposes, KPETS requires re-evaluations of teams to refresh and review any new guidelines. KPETS will notify you every third year in your renewal documentation so that you will have time to complete a re-evaluation.

## Instructions for KPETS Clearances

### PA Criminal Background Check (FREE for volunteers!)

- Website: [Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History - Home \(pa.gov\)](https://www.pasport.com/)
- Click "New Volunteer Record Check"
- Check the box and accept the terms and conditions
- Fill in the information
- Submit your information
- Send us your results (either the webpage that indicates your results or click on the link for the certificate) These results are instantaneous, so you can send them to me through email (which is the fastest way), or you can mail them through the snail mail. Whichever works for you!

### PA Child Abuse History Clearance (FREE for volunteers!)

- Website: [Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information Solution \(state.pa.us\)](https://www.pasport.com/)
- Click "Individual login"
  - Or click "Create Individual Account" if you do not already have a login
- Click "Access my Clearances"
- Click "Continue" at the bottom of the page
- Enter your login information
- EITHER:
  - Access your current clearance if it is within 5 years (ex: xx/2020-xx/2025)
  - Click "Create Clearance Application"
- Follow instructions to obtain the clearance
  - NOTE: Volunteer Category on application is "OTHER"
- Send KPETS your results once they are produced.



## FBI Fingerprinting-who can travel to Identogo location

- Website: <https://uenroll.identogo.com/>
- Enter the Service Code: 1KG6ZJ and hit GO
- Schedule or Manage Appointment – NEXT
- Fill out Name/Method of Contact information – NEXT
- Enter Citizenship information – NEXT
- Answer next three questions – NEXT
- Enter Personal Information – NEXT
- Enter Mailing Address – NEXT
- Documents – choose Driver’s License issued by State or outlying possession of the U.S. If you do not have a driver’s license, choose something else from the dropdown screen. – NEXT
- Enter your zip code and all local locations to get your prints taken will appear. Click on the location that suits you – NEXT
- Set up your appointment. You can walk in at these centers, but it may take more time.
- Follow the rest of the instructions on the site to complete your FBI clearances.

## FBI Fingerprinting- who CANNOT travel to Identogo location

- Website: <https://uenroll.identogo.com/>
  - Enter the Service Code: 1KG6ZJ and hit GO
  - Click “Submit a fingerprint card by mail”
  - Read the prompt – CONTINUE
  - Enter essential information – NEXT
  - Enter employer information – NEXT
  - Enter citizenship information – NEXT
  - Enter personal questions – NEXT
  - NOTE: We are NOT qualified to have an authorization code.**
  - Enter personal information – NEXT
  - Enter address information – NEXT
  - Enter payment information – SUBMIT
- You may have your fingerprints taken on your card at your local law enforcement agency. The results of your fingerprinting will be sent to you. Results normally take 4-6 weeks to come back if using the fingerprinting card.



## Ongoing KPETS Team Requirements

**You must track your volunteer hours!** This information is needed by the KPETS office for many reasons and is specifically required if an insurance claim would need to be processed.

- The link to do this and a video on how to do this is available on the KPETS website under Member Login, TEAM RESOURCES page, (SF Volunteer Hours).
- Volunteers without internet access can request a Volunteer Hours Tracking Form.

The KPETS office must have a record on file for each facility you visit. If a facility you visit is not listed, it must be added promptly. Call the office to have a facility listed.

Handlers are expected to monitor KPETS emails for new visit requests, current guideline updates, and news.

For a list of open visitor requests, access [www.PetTherapyFinder.com](http://www.PetTherapyFinder.com) through the KPETS website via Member Login.

On the upper right of the PetTherapyFinder page, you can *Subscribe to Blog via Email* to be notified of visit requests as they are posted.

Use Signup Genius or the contact listed to confirm your participation in the request.

KPETS volunteer renewal is required every September. A notice with all forms and details will be mailed to you a month in advance. Complete and return the renewal forms by the due date.

Re-evaluation is required to keep volunteers current by reassessing both pet and handler, reviewing information, and updating any guidelines. Re-evaluation occurs every three years. Your renewal notice will include information the year your re-evaluation is due. You will have one year to complete the reassessment. Copies of your completed re-evaluation form must be submitted to the office.

Copies of your pet's current immunization record are required as they are updated. Please submit copies to the office.

## Incident/Accident Reporting

If during a KPETS visit, an accident or incident occurs

- report it to a nurse, volunteer coordinator, or other staff person immediately;
- notify the KPETS office as soon as possible; and
- complete the Incident/Accident Form found in the Form Index on the TEAM RESOURCES page of the Member Login and submit it to the KPETS office.
  - You can print and complete the form or submit the form online.



## Concern/Suggestion Reporting

If you as a handler witness behavior that makes you or your pet uncomfortable, **or** if you encounter a situation that raises your concern regarding KPETS guidelines, safety, or standards, **or** if you have a suggestion regarding KPETS guidelines, safety, or standards,

- fill out a Concern/Suggestion form found in the Form Index on the TEAM RESOURCE page of the Members Login.
  - You can print and complete the form or submit the form online.

## TEAM VISITING GUIDELINES

### Finding the Right Visit for You and Your Pet

1. Therapy work is more demanding for your pet than you might think. It is a skill and a gift for a pet to enjoy therapy work.
2. Find a visit environment that will be a positive experience for both you and your pet.
3. Before agreeing to an ongoing visit in any facility, you should do a visit or two to see if the arrangement is a good match for the facility, your therapy companion, and you.
4. Start with a few short visits until your pet is comfortable.
5. Monitor your pet's body language (calming signals) so that you can be your pet's advocate. *On Talking with Dogs* by Turid Rugaas is an excellent source to help you understand your pet's body language.

Calming signals include the following:

- Panting or scratching excessively
  - Yawning
  - Lip-licking
  - Changing facial expression / showing whale eyes
  - Looking, turning away, or avoiding the situation or person
  - Hiding behind or jumping on handler for security
  - Freezing in position
  - Trembling legs or body
  - Seeking an exit
  - Lacking desire to socialize
  - Ears and/or tail pressed close to body
  - Tail wagging
6. If your pet is uneasy and exhibiting any of the above signs, you should shorten or end the visit immediately. Evaluate whether this behavior was a one-time discomfort or whether this kind of visit is not a good fit for your therapy pet.



## General Guidelines for All KPETS Visits

- Your visit or event begins as soon as you leave home and ends when you have returned home.
- Familiarize yourself with the facility and know where to find a safe outside location to walk or potty your dog.
- Always keep your pet by your side. Do not allow him/her to be out in front of you as you enter the building, hallways, or rooms.
- Many facilities you visit may ask that you sign in upon arrival. Be sure to indicate that you are there on behalf of KPETS.
- Step to the side as you wait for an elevator. If someone is in the elevator, always ask if they mind your pet riding with them.
- If someone wants to hold your pet, be sure to place a pillow or blanket on his/her lap first. Then, you must be the one to place your pet on his/her lap. Keep your hand on your pet.
- For pets that tend to lick, you can have them greet from the side or have them face you in order to help the person avoid contact.
- For safety reasons, we do not recommend that you allow the patients or residents to give treats to your pet. It is best if you are the treat dispenser.
- Keep your pet well-hydrated.
- Volunteers are not permitted to give or accept gifts. Donations, however, can be made to the organization. Leaving small cards with your pet's picture on them is usually greatly appreciated. Contact the office for more information.
- Always be your pet's advocate. Excuse yourself and your pet from uncomfortable situations.

## Guidelines for a KPETS Visit to a Healthcare Facility

- ❖ **HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)** is serious business; it's the law. Do not discuss any information with other volunteers, staff, or family members about the medical status of those you visit. Don't forget: their privacy is the law.
- 🐾 Be certain to read and obey any placards at the facility. You may find some rooms with signs marked "ISOLATION" or "INFECTIOUS - DO NOT ENTER."
- 🐾 Remember when you are visiting people in health care facilities, their rooms are their homes. Always knock and ask for permission before entering. Be considerate of those who prefer not to visit.
- 🐾 To protect both the resident and your pet, take notice of any medical equipment and connecting tubes that may be attached.
- 🐾 Never give a resident any food or beverage under any circumstances.
- 🐾 Never physically move any resident.
- 🐾 Be cautious with patients seated in wheelchairs. Always **ask** if you can lock the wheelchair, and then remember to unlock when you leave.



## Guidelines for Staffing a KPETS Table

- 🐾 If you have KPETS attire, you should wear it to help identify your affiliation with KPETS. You must, of course, wear your KPETS badge, and your pet must wear the KPETS bandana or vest.
- 🐾 There should be a donation jar available. People are often eager to support KPETS. If there is no jar with the booth equipment, try to improvise. Label the improvised "jar" with information like this: "Thank you. Your donation helps our pets continue their work."
- 🐾 Hand out KPETS donation envelopes, brochures, and business cards.
- 🐾 Tell people what we do and where we go.
  - Tell them about the types of visits KPETS does and name some of the facilities we visit.
  - Explain the difference between a therapy dog and a service dog:
    - Therapy pets are our own animals, trained and registered with KPETS as a team
    - Service dogs are individual animals trained to assist one disabled person by performing actual tasks that mitigate that individual's disabilities
  - Promote any upcoming KPETS events

**Important reminder:** If it is a public event that other pets are attending, be very aware of the **2-4-6 Safety Zone**. People will often permit their animals to approach your pet face-to-face without allowing space. You need to be proactive and explain that your pet is working and that you need to maintain at least two feet between animals. You may need to step between the animals and/or move your own pet to maintain the distance

## Guidelines for a KPETS Visit to an Advocacy Center

- 🐾 Arrive 10-15 minutes early to be there before the client.
- 🐾 Keep the conversation neutral. Do not talk about your personal experiences even though they may be similar to the client's.
- 🐾 If minor children talk to you about the case, gently tell them that they will be giving that information to the interviewer. Redirect them to talk about pets or to visit with your pet.
- 🐾 These children have been through more than you know. It is important that you do not touch or hug them.
- 🐾 Leave the room during the care giver's interview with the advocate. If leaving the room is not possible, have reading material so that you are otherwise occupied.
- 🐾 Do enjoy talking with friendly clients and caregivers and have an enjoyable visit with the clients.
- 🐾 Always remember **HIPPA**. The client's privacy is protected by the law.



## Photo Policy

**While you are representing KPETS, do not take a photo of anyone--attendees, patients, guests etc.--without their prior permission.** With their permission, you may take a photo that you send or give to them for their personal use. Do not share or use their photo publicly without a signed Photo/Video Authorization Release form (found under Members Login, TEAM RESOURCES the Forms Index) copied and submitted to the KPETS office. This policy includes social media and online apps, as well as printed materials.

KPETS volunteers must always follow HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act) guidelines. Therefore, KPETS must have signed photo release forms from any individuals clearly identifiable in any picture used for publicity purposes.

### **You may not take photos of residents in facilities or children in school.**

Photos taken at public events may be posted if unknown subjects/individuals are not identifiable.

Any shared photos (online or elsewhere) must always represent KPETS teams following all safety guidelines. Examples include maintaining the 2-4-6 Safety Zone between therapy dogs and leash clearly held by handler. You are always representing KPETS, and any images of you leave a lasting impression.

## Photos for posting on social media

Photos on social media must represent KPETS teams following all guidelines and protocols.

- Any picture of a pet placed on a lap shows the use of pillow or blanket beneath the pet. Handlers must be physically in contact with the pet.
- The Handler must be holding the leash.
- Teams clearly are observing the **2-4-6 Safety Zone** at least 2 feet between small dogs, 4 feet between large dogs, and 6 feet between and around mini horses.
- The **2-4-6 Safety Zone** applies to any animal, not just therapy teams.
- Teams are using acceptable collars and leashes, no choke or pinch collars, no flexi/retractable leads.
- KPETS animals are wearing KPETS bandanas or vests at all visits even if they are also wearing a holiday or fun outfit.
- KPETS handlers are wearing their ID badges. Lanyards and KPETS shirts are optional but encouraged.
- All regulations for children and seniors must be in place. There can be no faces or identifying features visible.

KPETS retains the right to deny any post made by a volunteer or facility that we feel does not follow the KPETS guidelines for social media postings on all social media platforms maintained by KPETS staff. Please contact [info@kpets.org](mailto:info@kpets.org) with any questions.



## Returning to KPETS Visits After an Absence

All volunteers returning to visiting after an absence of **6 months to one year must** pass a group evaluation. We would also suggest that the team complete one visit evaluation.

All volunteers returning to visiting after an absence of **one year must**

- attend an Orientation (at no charge),

- successfully complete a group evaluation,

- successfully complete two visit evaluations, and

- complete and submit registration paperwork to registration.

