



ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT) FACT SHEET (Pet-Assisted Therapy)

What is Animal-Assisted Therapy? Animal-Assisted Therapy is a therapeutic tool that utilizes animals as catalysts to meet specific goals. The professional who delivers or directs AAT is a health/human service provider with expertise in integrating animals as a treatment modality, and is knowledgeable about animals and behavior. The AAT Specialist is licensed and/or recognized by a separate professional discipline. This individual complies with the legal and ethical requirements of his/her profession; as well as local, state and federal laws relating to this work.

Who can benefit? Animal-Assisted Therapy benefits a wide spectrum of populations, including individual's physical, physiological and psychological issues.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AAT?

Physiological:

- Animals can contribute to the patient's recovery from an illness.
- The presence of animals has been found to lower blood pressure.
- Caring for animals may increase a person's self-care skills.

Psychological, Therapeutic and Social:

- Engaging the client in conversation
- Building rapport and trust
- Good for emotional well-being
- Aids the therapists in treatment objectives with the client: Tasks, Goals, Responsibilities.
- Motivational factors enhance cognitive behavioral change and task completion.
- Socializing: the animal is a catalyst helping to break down barriers of communications.
- Self-management and monitoring of

emotional and behavioral changes by client and therapist through writing, drawing, observations of verbal and non-verbal language.

- Sparks the spirit of cooperation and interaction
- Social Phobias
- Overcome fear
- Unconditional positive regard and companionship
- A reason for living – being needed
- Increased self esteem / confidence mastery / empowerment
- Increased problem solving skills
- Increased attention span
- Increased ability to organize
- Increased ability to concentrate
- Facilitates expression of feelings
- Increasing perceptual skills
- Improved attitude about life
- Develops understanding and sensitivity in relationships

- Provides Humor to lighten situations.
- Mental stimulation: Visiting dogs cause a chain reaction of laughs and conversation among clients, staff and family members.
- People from dramatically different cultures & lifestyles can talk about their dogs. The common experiences allow people to initiate conversation, share moments, laugh / cry.

- Increased balance
- Increased endurance, stamina, energy
- Increased mobility, flexibility
Increased use of affected extremities
- Increased strength & coordination
- Increased fine & gross motor skills

Speech and Language:

- Initiates speech
- Improve description skills
- Improve auditory memory skills
- Improve articulation skills, voice quality, fluency

Physical:

Pet-Assisted Therapy can be applied in different settings and with different forms of therapy. Animals can be used in the following treatment settings: psychotherapy, occupational and physical therapy, recreational therapy, speech and language therapy, in hospitals, prisons, rehabs, mental health clinics, private practice and nursing/assisted living facilities.