

Paws & Relax: Animal Assisted Interventions Resource Guide



Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities
at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Building Partnerships. Changing Lives.

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Definition of Terms

What are Animal Assisted Interventions (AAIs)?

AAIs are conceptualized as “mutually influential relationships between humans, non-human-animals, and the broader environment to support human health and wellness” (Flynn et al., 2020). An AAI is a broad term that encompasses animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted activities.

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

- Animals that provide emotional support/comfort.
- Legally prescribed by a mental health provider.



Service Animals

- Dogs trained to perform one or more specific task(s) for their owner.
- Allowed access to public facilities by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Do not require professional training.

Therapy Animals

- Certified dogs that accompany their owners to hospitals, schools, or other settings to volunteer.
- Provide opportunities for petting, affection, and basic interactions.
- Legally prescribed by a mental health provider.

Sources: (Gibeault, 2019; Karetnick, 2019)



Emotional Support Animal FAQ

What types of assistance do emotional support animals provide?

- Emotional support animals provide companionship and calming, therapeutic effects. They are not trained to perform specific tasks related to a disability like a service animal is.
- Source: (Alliance of Therapy Dogs, 2019)

Where are emotional support animals allowed to go?

- The regulations vary by state. Maryland does not recognize emotional support animals. It is up to the discretion of an establishment whether or not to allow an emotional support animal inside.
- Source: (Guerin, n.d.)

Are emotional support animals federally protected under the ADA?

- Emotional support animals are neither recognized nor federally protected under the ADA.
- Source: (Service Dog Certifications, 2020)

What laws protect the rights of emotional support animals?

- While emotional support animals are not protected under the ADA, they may represent a reasonable accommodation under the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).
- Sources: (Guerin, n.d.; Service Dog Certifications, 2020)



Service Animal FAQ

What is considered a service animal?

- Dogs and horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities are considered service animals.

What is the difference between a service animal and an emotional support animal?

- Service animals are trained to perform one or more specific task(s) to help an individual with a particular disability, such as noticing the onset symptoms of a panic attack.

Where are service animals allowed to go?

- Service animals are allowed in any public accommodation as long as they are on a leash. Public accommodations include:
 - Hotels and other lodging establishments
 - Public transportation terminals, depots, and stations
 - Restaurants and other places that serve food/drink
 - Any place of public gathering
 - Places with entertainment and exhibits
 - Places of exercise/recreation
 - Recreational facilities (zoos, parks)
 - Educational institutions
 - Social service centers
- However, service animals can be denied access to an establishment if they pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others, such as being aggressive.

Source: (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015)



Service Animal FAQ Continued

Where are service animals NOT allowed to go?

- Service animals cannot go onto private property if an owner does not want them there, for example, a person's house.

Are service animals required to provide public facilities (such as hotels, stores, museums, etc.) with legal proof of training?

- No, proof of training is not required for service animals to enter public facilities.

What questions can business owners ask about a service animal?

- Is this dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has this dog been trained to perform?
 - Business owners/staff cannot ask about a person's disability, require medical documentation/special identification cards/training documentation, or ask that dogs demonstrate their ability to perform any work or tasks that they are trained to perform.

What laws protect service animals?

- Service animals are protected under federal law. Denied access to a public accommodation is considered discrimination under the ADA. The FHA requires landlords to waive no pets' rules and fees for service animals.

Source: (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015)



Therapy Animal FAQ

What is animal therapy?

- Animal therapy is a type of animal-assisted intervention in which “an animal meeting specific criteria is an integral part of an individual’s treatment process.” Animal therapy is provided in various settings and can be utilized by a group or individual.
- Source: (Huss, 2018)

Where can therapy animals go?

- Where therapy animals are allowed to go is up to the discretion of an establishment. Therapy animals are currently not allowed special privileges in public accommodations.
- Source: (Alliance of Therapy Dogs, 2019)

What questions can business owners ask about therapy animals?

- Business owners and staff can ask any question that will help them better understand the service a therapy dog is providing.
- Source: (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015)





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Fun Facts of Animal Assisted Interventions

- 1.** Humans have had a long-standing relationship with animals! 12,000 years ago a human skeleton, holding a puppy, was found in northern Israel (Morrison, 2007).
- 2.** The simple act of petting an animal releases an automatic relaxation response, releasing hormones that can play a part in elevating one's mood (UCLA Health, 2020).
- 3.** Dogs are the most common type of animal used in AAls, but the following animals have also been shown to have beneficial health effects: cats, guinea pigs, cockatoos, African gray parrots, fish, horses, goats, chickens, donkeys, dolphins, pot-bellied pigs, and llamas (Delta Society, 2005).
- 4.** In times when the use of real animals is prohibited or not practical, virtual pet therapy has been shown to be helpful, even lowering individuals' heart rates and blood pressure (Wells, 2005).
- 5.** Research has shown that AAls have been beneficial in hospitals, nursing homes, hospice care, mental health facilities, schools, and correctional facilities (Morrison, 2007). These settings are non-exhaustive.



8 WAYS

Owning Cats, Dogs and Other Friends Can Improve Our Quality of Life



- 1. Reduces Loneliness**
 - Pets make the best of friends! Bonding with furry friends creates feelings of trust and friendship!
- 2. Reduces Stress**
 - Activities like watching a fish swim around in a tank can result in a feeling of calmness.
- 3. Improves Social Skills**
 - By reading and talking to animals, your levels of sharing, cooperation, and volunteering increase.
- 4. Helps Us Recognize Signs of Stress**
 - Children will begin to recognize signs of stress in their pets. Knowing when it is not safe to approach an animal or person in distress is an important life skill.
- 5. Lowers Blood Pressure**
 - Stroking, hugging, and touching an animal creates a feeling of relaxation for both of you!
- 6. Boosts Our Mood**
 - Pets have been shown to increase serotonin levels in many ways. Simply being in the same room as your pet can boost your mood!
- 7. Increases Routine**
 - By caring for their pets, children begin to understand the importance of routine and self-care in their own lives.
- 8. Increases Physical Activity**
 - Activities like walking a dog, chasing a hamster, or petting a cat are all ways to increase physical activity!

Source: (National Institutes of Health, 2018)



Service Dog Etiquette



DO'S

- Understand the training a service dog goes through.
- Recognize when a service dog is at work, which is almost always!
- Ask before you assume a service dog is safe to interact with.
- Walk on the handler's side of the dog.
- Take responsibility of your children and other pets when around a service dog.

DONT'S

- Do not engage with a service dog at work.
- Never feed a service dog without permission of the handler!
- Try not to create any distractions for the dog.
- Never question the legitimacy of a service dog.
- Do not ignore a service dog who is trying to get your attention.

Source: (Magnuson, 2008)



AAIs and the I/DD Population

The following statements refer to some of the benefits that AAIs can give to individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD).

Dog walking programs can help people with I/DD build social connections in their communities (Bould et al., 2018).

Animal assisted therapy may be successful in improving the psychosocial outcomes (emotional, behavioral, cognitive) of people with I/DD (Maber-Aleksandrowicz et al., 2015).

Hippotherapy involves horses and can improve the cognitive, social, and motor skills of people with I/DD (Giagazoglou et al., 2013).

Evidence shows that dogs can act as pain relief stimuli for children with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (Lima et al., 2013).

Dog-assisted interventions have positive impacts on the visuomotor abilities and basic social skills of adults with I/DD (Scorzato et al., 2017).



How Animals Can Improve Patient/Provider Relationships

In order to understand how animals improve patients' trust in providers, we must first address how animals affect an individual.



HOW DO ANIMALS AFFECT THE INDIVIDUAL?



- o Improve social attention, behavior, interpersonal interactions, and mood.
- o Reduce stress-related parameters such as cortisol, heart rate, and blood pressure.
- o Enhance empathy.
- o Increase trustworthiness toward other persons.



HOW DO ANIMALS AFFECT THE PROVIDER?



- o Create a higher likelihood of achieving visit goals.
 - o *Make it easier for providers to make progress during visits.*
- o Increase human connection, leading to positive relationships or interactions between provider and patient.
- o Improve dialogue and interaction between patient and provider.
- o Create a tranquil and calming environment, promoting harmony between providers and patients.

Source: (Beetz et al., 2012)



10 WAYS

To Protect Service and Therapy Animals during COVID-19

1. Both the handler and the animal should remain 6 feet away from others.
2. If the animal is sick, do not go out in public.
3. Contact places to confirm that therapy animals are allowed inside during this time prior to leaving the house.
4. People with symptoms of COVID-19 should not touch, be close to, or interact with the animal.
5. Wash your hands before and after contact with the animal.
6. Do not use items like leashes, harnesses, toys, and blankets that a facility might have used for other animals.
7. Disinfect items such as toys, collars, leashes, harnesses, vests, and food/water bowls frequently.
8. Do not allow animals to lick or give kisses.
9. Do not wipe or bathe your animal with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, hand sanitizer, counter-cleaning wipes, or other industrial surface cleaners.
10. Do not put masks on animals, as this could harm the animal.

Source: (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)



Holidays Precautions during COVID-19

Are you traveling for Thanksgiving this year? If so, you should be aware of the risks involved. According to the CDC, traveling increases your chance of contracting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best form of protection.

Low Risk

- **Small dinners with the people in your household**
- **Virtual dinners**
- **Online shopping for Black Friday/Cyber Monday**
- **Movies, sports events, and parades on TV**



Moderate Risk

- **Outdoor dinners with neighbors and friends**
- **Pumpkin patch or orchard outings**
- **Small outdoor sports events**



High Risk

- **Crowded shopping malls/stores**
- **Crowded parades**
- **Large indoor gatherings with many people**



Source: (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)



Helpful AAI Resources

[ADA Now](#)

Detailed information on service animals (ADA)

<http://www.adanowonline.org/winter2018.html>



[Animals & Society Institute](#)

List of animal-assisted therapy programs in USA and worldwide

<https://www.animalsandsociety.org/human-animal-studies/animal-assisted-therapy-programs/>

[Assistance Dogs International](#)

National searching database for assistance dogs

<https://assistancedogsinternational.org/resources/member-search/>

[Canines for Disabled Kids](#)

Educational articles on service dogs

<https://caninesforkids.org/resources/cdk-for-you/educational-resources/>

[Kennedy Krieger Institute – Animal Assisted Therapy](#)

Animal-Assisted Therapy Program at Kennedy Krieger

<https://www.kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/centers-and-programs/animal-assisted-therapy>

[Pet Partners](#)

Animal-assisted intervention terminology

<https://petpartners.org/blog/a-beginners-guide-to-animal-assisted-intervention-terminology/>

[Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center](#)

COVID-19 information by and for people with disabilities

<https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plain-Language-Information-on-Coronavirus.pdf>



Helpful AAI Resources Continued

American Academy of Pediatrics

Caring for children and youth with special health care needs during COVID-19

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/caring-for-children-and-youth-with-special-health-care-needs-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Shared decision-making and children with disabilities

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/139/6/e20170956>

Shared decision-making and parents as partners for children who are deaf or hard of hearing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wLYxqY9Nek&feature=youtu.be>

American Association on Health and Disability

COVID-19 and disability video series

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLw8fXs3gMADVpv6pWI45kmPPY9kQhtAkq>

Center for Addiction and Mental Health

COVID-19 self-help booklet series for people with intellectual disabilities

<https://www.camh.ca/covid19booklets>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

COVID-19 and people with disabilities

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html>

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

COVID-19 and Autism

<https://icahn.mssm.edu/research/seaver/resources/covid-19-autism-resources>



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