



The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy
P.O. Box 4115, Oceanside, CA 92052-4115 (760) 740-2326
info@loveonaleash.org

Member Guidelines

Membership definitions:

A **Certified Therapy Team** consists of one person and one therapy pet. LOAL certifies dogs, cats, or rabbits as therapy pets.

You cannot be the handler for more than one pet on a visit. Anyone who will be handling the pet on visits must be certified with that pet. A handler and pet must remain together during the entire visit. Responsibility for a pet may not be transferred, i.e. having another LOAL member or client control your pet.

An **Additional Handler** for a therapy pet must complete the entire membership certification process with the pet.

Each handler must complete their own Control Evaluation, perform at least ten hours of supervised visits, and pass the Visit Evaluation. Visit hours cannot be shared or credited to more than one handler.

An **Associate Member** is a member in good standing who is not currently part of a therapy pet team.

A **Junior Handler** is a member of a certified therapy team who is between the ages of 16 and 18.

A Junior Handler's membership application and release form must be signed by a parent or legal guardian, who is already a certified member in good standing with Love on a Leash, acknowledging responsibility and agreeing to accompany the Junior Handler on all LOAL activities and visits.

Love on a Leash does not certify pets to be assistance or service animals. A therapy dog does not have the same legal rights as an assistance or service animal.

Any LOAL member who allows their membership to lapse for one year or more will be required to complete the entire membership process — Control Evaluation, supervised visits, and Visit Evaluation — before renewing.

Steps to take to become a member of Love on a Leash:

- Attend a therapy pet class (not required, but highly recommended)
- Have your pet evaluated for temperament and obedience:
 - LOAL Control Evaluation form**

The LOAL Control Evaluation for Dogs may be administered by any certified behaviorist, professional dog trainer, veterinarian, or obedience instructor. A list of trainers in your area, qualified to administer the AKC (American Kennel Club) Canine Good Citizen Test, can be found at the AKC website: www.akc.org.

The LOAL Control Evaluation for Cats and Rabbits may be administered by a veterinarian.
- Perform at least 10 supervised visits:
 - LOAL Supervised Visit Log form**

Prospective members should carry a copy of their completed Control Evaluation while on supervised visits and should only enter a facility or do visits when accompanied by a Visit Captain or an approved substitute. Contact LOAL's national office to arrange for an approved substitute. LOAL insurance coverage will only apply to prospective members while being supervised. A prospective member has one year from date of Control Evaluation to complete ten supervised visits (usually one hour per visit).
- Have a successful evaluation of the supervised visits:
 - LOAL Visit Evaluation form**

The Visit Evaluation form should be completed by whoever supervised at least five of the visit hours.
- Complete **LOAL Membership Application** form:
 - (use LOAL Membership Checklist)
 - Include two photos of your pet, showing full body, for LOAL files
 - Email a digital photo of pet's face, for membership ID

Forms may be downloaded and printed from our website, www.loveonaleash.org, under **Forms**. LOAL members or applicants are responsible for any charges or fees incurred by returned checks.

Owner/Handler Agreement

As the therapy pet's owner and handler, I understand and agree that:

- I am responsible for all my pet's actions at all times, including but not limited to financial or physical injury.
- I shall consider the safety of other people at all times.
- I shall continue my pet's education, refreshing obedience commands, and teaching special commands.
- On each visit, my pet shall be clean, neatly groomed, parasite-free, healthy, and up to date on all vaccinations.
- If at any time my pet can no longer do this work due to age, illness, disability or behavior problems, I will stop the work and will notify LOAL. Love on a Leash reserves the right to make such determination.
- I will remember at all times that my pet and its actions, my behavior, actions, and attitude represent all therapy animals in the eyes of the public.
- I agree to abide by The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy's policies and procedures concerning the regulation of fundraising, promotion, and all other activities including any revisions, as they are handed down from time to time.
- I give Love on a Leash permission to use my photograph and the photograph of my pet for the purposes of education or promotion of Love on a Leash and its programs.

Training:

LOAL does not endorse a particular training style, provided the training is structured to foster a positive, loving bond between the dog and his handler.

Attending a therapy dog class is not a requirement for membership in LOAL, but is highly recommended if you can find one in your area. A group basic obedience class is useful for teaching your dog to listen to you while in the presence of other dogs and other people.

Any certified behaviorist, professional dog trainer or obedience instructor can help you complete the membership process. The trainer does not have to be a LOAL member.

Behavior:

Any LOAL member has the right and responsibility to "un-invite" a LOAL team from any visit or activity due to disruptive behavior on the part of a member of a visit team, whether the handler or the pet. (Disruptive behavior can include a dog "talking", whining, or barking, during a visit.) "Mouthing", even play mouthing, is not allowed.

Any incident that could potentially affect a pet's status as a therapy pet should be reported to the visit captain, facility contact person, chapter leader, and/or our national office. (An Incident Report is available from our website www.loveonaleash.org.)

Any incident that involves written communication between visit sites, members, and/or leaders, is of sufficient importance that the National Office should be notified.

Any team with behavior issues is required to stop visits until reevaluated. Serious behavior issues, like aggression, should be referred to a professional who is qualified to evaluate the particular behavior and work with the dog and handler.

Members of Other Organizations:

Some LOAL members have membership in other pet therapy organizations. In order to be certified by LOAL, a potential member must complete the full LOAL membership process, using LOAL documentation.

For the purpose of Advanced Therapy Degrees, documented visits are accepted from other organizations.

Insurance:

Members of Love on a Leash are covered by two kinds of insurance.

The first is a liability policy that covers injuries that your pet causes to third persons (anyone not a member of LOAL). Remember you are always financially responsible for your pet, so if there is other primary insurance coverage (such as a homeowner's policy), that other insurance company or companies will likely be asked to contribute equal shares.

The second is an accident policy covers injuries that your pet causes to another volunteer of Love on a Leash. This policy is a secondary liability policy only; your own personal insurance will be used first.

Insurance will be in effect (including during the hours of supervised visits) if the following conditions are met:

- 1) You are a member and or a volunteer of Love on a Leash while acting on behalf of and within the scope of our principal objectives.
- 2) You are following all of the rules and regulations of the place that you are visiting and LOAL's rules and regulations.
- 3) You are participating in the activity on a strictly volunteer basis. This means that you won't be covered if you have your pet with you while you are at work or use your pet as part of your work. You can't receive pay of any kind.

Example 1: You are a physical therapist at a hospital. You take your dog to work to help one of your patients exercise by throwing a tennis ball 100 times in 15 minutes. Your patient is scratched by your dog. Our insurance policy will not cover the injury.

Example 2: You are a physical therapist at a hospital. You take your dog to your work after-hours to visit patients in the rehab unit as part of a hospital-run therapy pet program. You are not required to participate in this program as part of your work. You are not paid for time spent at the hospital. The patient throws the ball 100 times. The dog scratches the patient. You are covered by our insurance policy.

Visits:

At this time, there is no minimum number of visits required for individual members.

No one associated with Love on a Leash is to charge for visits or ask for donations from those who are visited.

All visits are to be made with leashes that are four foot in length or less. Extendable leashes are not to be used for visits. Off leash work is not permitted during a visit.

LOAL has no formal policy on the type of collars that may be worn on visits. If you choose to use a chain, pinch or halter type collar, be prepared to answer questions from those you visit.

Handler and pet ID membership cards must be visible at all times. Prospective members visiting during supervised visits must carry a copy of their completed control evaluation.

Pets are not required to wear the LOAL vest or bandana to all visits, but consider it an honor! You've earned it. It sets you and your pet apart and designates you and your pet as a certified therapy team.

Handlers are not required to wear LOAL attire but if the Love on a Leash logo is used it should conform to our national standards:

- The official color is **medium blue**.
- The official logo is a **paw print within a heart** with **Love on a Leash** written at the top.



Visit Facilities:

LOAL Therapy Pet Teams can visit any place they have been invited. Therapy Teams visit hospitals, retirement homes, Alzheimer care facilities, day care centers, libraries, preschools, grade schools, and homes. Community education presentations are encouraged and can be great fun.

If you would like to offer pet therapy visits to a facility, an "Introductory Letter" and a brochure explaining Love on a Leash can be downloaded from the Forms page on our website, www.loveonaleash.org.

When visiting, be aware of any special restrictions or guidelines for a facility. For example, some facilities ask for a copy of each pet's vaccination records to have on file.

When visiting as a group, it is a good idea to have a Visit Captain who organizes and oversees the visits to a particular facility, and communicates with team members regarding changes in schedules or other information of interest.

Any LOAL member, but especially Visit Captains, can help educate the staff of the facility as to "acceptable behavior" towards the visit teams. Every visit team has a responsibility to insure the safety of handlers and pets in any situation, even if it means not visiting a particular facility.

List of items to carry in visit bag:

- **Required: LOAL membership card (or copy of control evaluation)**
- Spare leash
- Poop bags
- Copy of proof of vaccinations
- Pen and pad
- Bookmarks/brochures/business cards
- Hand wipes/antibacterial hand gel
- Water bowl

Manners for Visits:

The following list was created by a group of seasoned volunteers:

- 🐾 “Meet and greet” other teams before you go in to a visit. Be sensitive to new pets.
- 🐾 Visits can be social, but you **must know** what your pet is doing at all times.
- 🐾 Don’t touch a wheelchair or walker or any medical equipment without asking.
- 🐾 Respect the client’s space and belongings. Ask permission before moving anything, such as a table or wheelchair, and be sure to replace the object in its original position at the end of the visit.
- 🐾 Ask permission before bringing your pet close to someone. If someone doesn’t like pets, realize it’s not personal.
- 🐾 When introducing your pet, don’t let the person you are visiting put their face right up to your pet or vice versa.
- 🐾 Plan ahead of time how you will handle your pet being offered treats by others and always get permission to give treats to other pets.
- 🐾 Take potty breaks away from activity. Be discreet and pick-up waste and dispose of it properly. (Be prepared to clean up after your pet. Stress levels can be high – especially for the first few visits.) If clean up is required, notify staff immediately.
- 🐾 Keep sensitive pets apart from each other.
- 🐾 Know your pet. If he shows signs of being tired or irritable, simply excuse yourself and make plans to return at another time.
- 🐾 Remember that not everyone likes to be kissed by a pet.
- 🐾 Allow those you visit their privacy. Never disclose personal information you learn. Knock or announce yourself before entering a room.
- 🐾 The facilities you visit are staffed with professionals. Report anything out of the ordinary.
- 🐾 Remember that the staff in the places you visit like to be visited, too.
- 🐾 Watch out for the shy people in the corner. Make an effort to include them.
- 🐾 Listen.

A Special Word about Visiting Nursing Homes and Care Facilities:

- The purpose of a therapy visit is to bring comfort by facilitating safe contact between the person you're visiting and your pet. Listen to the patient's needs. Clients are not a captive audience for your life story or problems.
- We are not medical personnel. Most of our client's have medical problems, and we are not to move them, or their wheelchairs or beds, or bring them food or beverages, or adjust their pillows, or do anything except visit. Any requests from the client should be passed on to the appropriate staff at the facility.
- Most of our visits take place where most of the people are not feeling well, so we **MUST** be respectful and as quiet as possible. That means making sure our dogs do not "talk," whine, or bark during visits.
- Most of our clients are either physically fragile or already injured so we must be extra vigilant not to cause any injury from ourselves or our dogs. Pay attention to how your dog is interacting with the client—"paws up" should only be done under controlled circumstances: with the client's permission, with a safe place to put your dog's paws, and with you assisting your dog so that he stays calm and in place.
- Maintain control of your pet at all times. Visits can be social but you must know what your pet is doing at all times.
- Respect the client's space. Ask permission before bringing your pet close to someone. Ask, "Would you like a visit?"

A Special Word about Visiting Children:

It is important that members of LOAL maintain a safe and controlled environment when visiting children. Many children do not know dog safety and may have pre-conceived ideas that are false or even dangerous. Because the media tends to humanize dogs through commercials, shows and animation, many of us have unrealistic expectations about dog behavior. There are children, for example, that believe it is perfectly natural for a dog to accept close face to face contact or a hug from a child. Many dogs, however, may view this as a threatening gesture, especially from a stranger. The result may be avoidance, a snarl, or worse.

As an organization, we safely visit with hundreds of children each year, and these guidelines can help keep you, your pet, and the children you visit, safe.

- 1. Remember, visiting children is not the same as visiting adults.** Children are often unpredictable, particularly those with physical challenges that might result in jerky motions, or mental challenges that might result in misunderstanding. As much as you might want to visit school age children, if your pet has ever shown aggression to children he is not a good candidate for this work.
- 2. Know your pet.** Does he genuinely seem to like children? If a pet merely tolerates children, he is better suited to more adult situations. A therapy pet visiting children must be steady, not easily upset, and highly tolerant of noise and quick moves.
- 3. Plan ahead.** Discuss your visit ahead of time with the teacher or adult in charge. Ask what their goal is for the visit. Is it a “meet and greet” or is there a more specific purpose for the visit? Be sure to ask the following questions so you know what to expect: How many students are in the class? Are they mainstream children or are there special needs? What is the layout of the room? Do any of the children have allergies? What are the goals of the visit? Where will the pet(s) be located in the room? How long do they want the visit to be? (We recommend no longer than 45 minutes.)
- 4. Make your expectations clear.** Let the school know that children must be seated when you arrive. Children must be told ahead of time to be calm and move slowly around the pets. At no time should the children be permitted to run up to the pets as a group or individually. The visit must be controlled and organized. Teachers should be present. You are the only one who should give treats to your pet.
- 5. Prepare the pets.** Be sure the pets in your group are comfortable together. If visiting with more than one pet, it is particularly important that they greet one another before you enter a classroom. If there is any sign of aggression between pets, remove them immediately from the situation. Any dog that appears “out-of-control” (lunging, pulling or barking etc.) should be asked to leave before you enter the classroom.

6. **Be observant.** Watch your pet for signs of stress. For example, if your pet turns his back to the children, tries to walk away, hides under furniture, or otherwise tries to disconnect, remove him from the room and give him a break. Remember, pets can get overwhelmed and over-stimulated by too many hands and react poorly. We want the visit to be positive for the children but of course we want the experience to be positive for the pets also.

7. **Smaller groups are better.** Never let more than a few children surround a pet at the same time, and always have them approach slowly. Often, when visiting with several pets, you can divide a larger group of children up into smaller groups and rotate the different pets between the groups (having the children stay in place).

8. **Safety first.** Pets should be on their leashes (4 feet or less) at all times. Children should be given instruction on how to safely approach. You must be free to give the guideline “gentle” to children regardless of disability. If a child truly cannot understand the concept of “gentle” he is not a good candidate for visits. Simple direct communication usually works best, such as “gentle hands” and “hands down”. Or distract them by asking them to hold your hand or pick a leash they want to hold. Please remember under no circumstances should your pet be subjected to improper treatment by children. Also, children should not put their face in the face of any pet.

9. **Have fun!** There are few visits more rewarding than an eager group of children. If your pet knows any tricks, now is the time to let him perform. Be aware that children will often ask if they can give the pet a command (like “shake”).

Here are a few other recommendations for specific circumstances:

→ For *reading programs* a pet needs to be able to lay relaxed next to a child as they read. If your pet cannot do this, do not volunteer for a reading program. As with any visit, never leave your pet.

→ When visiting *specific needs children* (autism, Down syndrome, muscular dystrophy, etc.) have a pre-meeting (without pets) with the teacher in charge to discuss the goals of the visits. Specific needs teachers have special training. Ask them the best way to approach each child.

→ Often children want to “walk” a dog. Depending on the situation, and the safety to the dog and child, this may be permitted but never without the human partner of the dog present. Use two leashes, one to hand to the child and the other to actually maintain control of the dog.

→ Remember that some children may be afraid of pets. It may be because they have had a negative experience or they have no experience with pets at all. Either way, respect the child and do not force the pet on them. In most circumstances, children who are fearful warm up to pets after repeated visits. Take your lead from the adult responsible for the children you are visiting.

Advanced Therapy Degrees:

Pets that have passed the initial control and visit evaluations for membership and certification by Love on a Leash are awarded the “Therapy Degree (ThD)” from The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy. A number of different advanced degrees are available depending upon your interests or specialty, as well as custom degrees for other specialty work.

ThD (c:dc) children: day care

ThD (c:se) children: special education

ThD (c:pd) children: physical disabilities

ThD (c:ed) children: emotional disabilities

ThD (c:_) children: other

ThD (t:ed) teenagers: education

ThD (t:sd) teenagers: special education

ThD (t:sc) teenagers: special circumstances (drug abuse treatment, runaways, etc.)

ThD (t:_) teenagers: other

ThD (p:c) psychology: counseling

ThD (p:_) psychology: other

ThD (sw:c) social work: counseling

ThD (sw:_) social work: other

ThD (ci) crisis intervention

ThD (e:sv) elderly: social/visits

ThD (e:h) elderly: hospice/critical care

ThD (e:a) elderly: Alzheimer’s/senile dementia

ThD (e:_) elderly: other

ThD (pe) public education

ThD (__) other

To apply for an advanced degree, submit the Advanced Therapy Degree application (downloadable from our website, www.loveonaleash.org, under Forms).

You and your pet must have a minimum of fifty (50) hours working in a particular specialty, document that time on a calendar or journal, and write a short essay (500-1000 words) about your work. You will NOT be judged upon your writing abilities. Essays may be reprinted in our newsletter so others may benefit from your experience.



The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy
P.O. Box 4115, Oceanside, CA 92052-4115 (760) 740-2326
info@loveonaleash.org

Chapter Guidelines

A LOAL Chapter is simply two or more certified teams who would like to participate, individually or in groups, in making visits. Chapters often set up regular visits at various facilities. Members may then choose to visit with the group or visit on their own. A chapter can be organized very loosely, or be more structured. LOAL was started with the idea of making it possible for people with qualified pets to participate. We try not to over-regulate.

A chapter provides support, motivation, and social interaction for you and your pet. More teams mean a greater variety of pets, talents, and interests. Visiting together can also help to relieve the sometimes stressful aspect of the work. Sharing your visit experiences helps to de-stress, and also educates others as to what works and what doesn't. It is good to know someone else will be there when you are unable to complete a visit.

Word spreads when the community begins to see therapy dogs at work. One facility hears about the benefits and fun and wants a program for their facility. Pet owners hear about pet therapy or see a team at work. The local papers and TV stations like to share the "feel good story" on the news.

If you would like to offer pet therapy visits to a facility, an "Introductory Letter" and a brochure explaining Love on a Leash can be downloaded from the Forms page on our website, www.loveonaleash.org.

Depending on the community, as a chapter grows outward it makes sense to become two neighboring chapters. Each Chapter has a regular visit schedule and shares resources when there is a larger event like a Fair. Chapters keep in contact with each other and share each other's news when appropriate. It would be against our purpose and philosophy to become cliquish or selective in chapter formation. Any qualified team should be welcomed and encouraged.

Starting a Chapter:

A LOAL Chapter needs:

- 🐾 Two or more certified LOAL members
- 🐾 A Chapter Leader
- 🐾 At least one established visit

There is no fee to become a Chapter. Individual members pay yearly membership dues to the National Organization. Local chapters can accept donations and/or organize fund raising events to cover local expenses. No one associated with Love on a Leash is to charge for visits or ask for donations from those who are visited. Laws vary, but Chapters may need to formally register as a charity in the state where they reside.

Another organization may sponsor a Love on a Leash chapter. A hospital could start a therapy program, as an arm of their auxiliary, and have it administered by LOAL. An animal rescue group can form a chapter to provide community service and to promote their own agenda. Care must be taken, however, to make certain that there is no comingling of funds, and no direct fundraising through LOAL. One organization cannot raise funds for another. If the Chapter Leader is from the sponsoring organization, the leader must be at least an Associate Member of LOAL.

A chapter may structure itself in any number of ways. Our first and largest chapter, San Diego North County, California, is loosely organized. It does have a regular schedule of organized visits, but members visit as their schedule permits and there are no regularly required meetings. An obedience class is offered one night per week. Participation is not required but it does offer an opportunity for members to socialize, brush up on their obedience work, and learn more advanced skills. San Diego North County has a chapter leader who keeps the whole thing together and communicates, via e-mail, regarding any schedule changes or activities. They also have their own checking account and do a limited amount of fund raising.

Chapters may impose additional requirements on their own chapter members, but may not contradict or negate national guidelines. They may have periodic meetings as well as a requirement for a minimum number of monthly or annual visits. Some of the chapters require additional obedience skills and ongoing training.

Just remember to continue making participation as easy as possible for qualified individuals. Because LOAL members are not required to join a chapter, respect other properly certified Love on a Leash members that you meet within the community who choose not to join your chapter.

A Chapter, though unique in personality, reflects the purpose and function of Love on a Leash: to support and guide certified Visit Teams and uphold high standards and values. We are basically self-governing so this becomes each Chapter's responsibility.

Chapter Leader:

The primary responsibility of a chapter leader is to encourage and support members as they make visits. Chapter Leaders ensure that visit teams in their chapter are properly certified through the National Office. Chapter leaders have a responsibility to their community to provide quality visit teams to facilities and programs and insure that each team meets LOAL guidelines.

We require that all Chapter Leaders be certified members of LOAL (or be Associate members in good standing). The national office of LOAL should be notified of any change in chapter leadership within 30 days. Chapter Leaders are not to receive any pay or other compensation in their role as a Chapter Leader. They cannot personally make money by virtue of being affiliated with Love on a Leash—we are strictly a volunteer organization.

Each Chapter Leader must supply the national office with an annual membership report. The first report is due six months after a chapter is formed and then every year by January 15th. This report will list the names of the volunteers associated with your Chapter, a brief description of where you visit, the number of visits the chapter has made, and a financial report of donations and expenses received by or incurred by your Chapter. To request the Chapter report forms, contact the national offices of LOAL at info@loveonaleash.org or call (760) 740-2326.

Therapy work is a great responsibility. Chapter leaders set goals, educate, lead, and set the example for their chapter members. Chapter leaders remind members that therapy pet work is a service. In order to provide this service, each team must adhere to certain policies to protect those whom we visit as well as those who are doing the visiting.

Chapter Name:

Please remember local chapters are subsidiaries of a national group. Therefore, it is mandatory that all local chapters meet the following standards:

- We require all chapters use the name **Love on a Leash**.
- The official color is **medium blue**.
- The official logo is a **paw print within a heart** with **Love on a Leash** written at the top.



You may choose a secondary name that describes your chapter and your local name may be written at the bottom of the logo. Keep in mind that "Love on a Leash" must be foremost on all accessories and press releases.



The name Love on a Leash, The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy, means best of the best, proud, trusted, honorable, responsible, and recognized throughout the United States as model therapy pets.