



# Membership Guidelines

### ***Our Mission***

*Love on a Leash® is committed to bringing comfort, happiness, and healing to more people nationwide by increasing public awareness of pet therapy. Our volunteer organization provides an accessible certification process that allows qualified therapy teams to provide effective pet therapy in their communities.*



## Membership Guidelines

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## Quick Reference Insurance & Non-Profit Compliance

*While the information below is directly taken from the Membership Guidelines for ease of reference, all members and teams in training are responsible for reading and adhering to the Membership Guidelines in their entirety; any violation is grounds for membership revocation.*

### **General Requirements for ALL teams**

- ♥ **ONE handler, ONE pet, no exceptions.** Our insurance does not cover members if guests accompany them during visits, including guests also certified with the same pet. It is important that our focus during visits is on our pet and the person we are visiting. You may only handle one pet per visit even if you are certified with multiple pets. [p.2, 13]
- ♥ **4-foot leash.** All therapy pets must be under the control of their handler on a maximum 4-foot leash for the entirety of all official visits. Never drop, let go, or hand off the leash during your visit. Rabbits and cats may be transported in strollers or baskets but must also be on a 4-foot leash at all times while on official visits. Tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable leashes are not permitted. If a team is using anything longer than a 4-foot leash, it must be sent home. [p.8, 9, 12, 15-16, 17-18, 23, 27]
- ♥ **Flat collar.** Standard cloth and leather flat collars are acceptable. ***Love on a Leash® prohibits the use of remote electronic collars, pinch (prong) collars, and choke/slip (chain) collars on visits.*** If you choose to use a martingale or halter-type collar, such as a Gentle Leader®, be prepared to answer questions from those you visit. [p.9, 12, 15]
- ♥ **Appearance.** Both handlers and pets are expected to be clean, neatly groomed, and healthy. Clothing from any other pet therapy organization may not be worn on Love on a Leash® visits on either the handler or pet. Pet nails should be trimmed and filed to avoid scratches. Teeth and ears should be clean and free of infection. Pets should be obviously well cared for. [p.12, 17]
- ♥ **Behavior. Any** Love on a Leash® member has the right & responsibility to "un-invite" a team from any visit or activity due to disruptive behavior on the part of a member of a visiting team, whether it is caused by the handler or the pet. "Mouthing", even play-mouthing, is not allowed, and no treats while visiting. [p.6, 13, 21-22]
- ♥ **Volunteer.** Love on a Leash® is not affiliated with any for-profit entities; members who are working in any capacity may not wear Love on a Leash® apparel or IDs on themselves or their pet. No payment of any kind may be accepted in exchange for pet therapy services. All donations must be made to the national Love on a Leash® organization to support all members. [p.2, 23]
- ♥ **Facility.** Handlers must adhere to any facility requirements where they are visiting. [p.13, 26]

### **Additional Requirements for CERTIFIED TEAMS**

- ♥ **Handler & Pet ID Cards** must be current (unexpired) and visible at all times. [p.13, 21, 25, 27-28]

### **Additional Requirements for TEAMS IN TRAINING**

- ♥ **Control Evaluation.** Prospective members must carry their successfully completed, unexpired, Control Evaluation while on all supervised visits. Consider this similar to a Driver's permit. [p.4, 8]
- ♥ **Assign a supervisor.** Before entering a facility, a certified Love on a Leash® team must be assigned to any teams in training. Teams in Training may only enter a facility or visit when accompanied by a supervising Visit Captain, certified team, or a pre-approved substitute. [p.8, 27]
- ♥ **Appropriate visit venues.** Hardware stores, pet stores, malls, fairs, festivals, social events, community walks, public events, or similar are not acceptable visits for teams in training. [p.4, 13, 15]



## Membership Guidelines

**\*\*\*Any Love on a Leash® Member who fails to comply with Member and Chapter Guidelines (Policies & Procedures) is subject to revocation of membership.\*\*\***

**\*\*\*This version of the Love on a Leash® Membership Guidelines is effective immediately and supersedes all prior versions.\*\*\***

### Membership Definitions

A **Certified Therapy Team** consists of one person who is at least 18 years old and one therapy pet. Love on a Leash® certifies dogs, cats and rabbits as therapy pets. All pets must be a minimum of one year old to begin the certification process. Love on a Leash® accepts Rescued, Re-homed and Career Change pets. Love on a Leash® does not allow Wolf or Coyote hybrids to be certified as therapy pets, our insurance does not cover them.

**You may only handle one pet per visit even if you are certified with multiple pets.**

Anyone who will be handling the pet on visits must be certified with that pet. Responsibility for a pet may not be transferred, i.e. having another Love on a Leash® member or client control your pet.

**All therapy teams are volunteers. Love on a Leash® is not affiliated with any for-profit entities, therefore, Love on a Leash® trademarks or apparel may not be utilized during any activity that involves any payment of any kind. If you, as a handler of a therapy pet, are at work or working in any capacity, then the Love on a Leash® trademarks and apparel must be removed from the pet until the therapy team's activity is clearly volunteer only.**

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

Each handler must complete a Control Evaluation, perform at least ten (10) hours of supervised visits, and pass the Visit Evaluation. Visit hours cannot be shared or credited to more than one handler.

A **Continuing Member** is a member (owner/handler) in good standing whose pet is unable to participate in visits due to illness, infirmity, or is no longer living.

An owner/handler who foresees adopting another pet and training it for therapy work in the future may continue to renew their own membership each year, thereby becoming a Continuing Member. When a new pet is ready for certification, the owner/handler may then complete all the steps to become a team and submit a new application with the "Current Member Adding Additional" pet option selected.

A Continuing Member may supervise teams in training and may continue to be a Visit Captain for scheduled visits, if desired.

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## ***Definition of a Re-Homed Pet***

A **Re-Homed Pet** is generally defined as a rescue, career change or any pet that is new to your household. ***It is strongly recommended that you take a minimum of 6 months to bond with this pet and to get to know its reactions in various situations before beginning the process of becoming a certified therapy team.***

## ***Spaying and Neutering***

Love on a Leash does not require a pet to be spayed or neutered. Unaltered animals are eligible to become therapy pets, however, females in season may not be brought on any visit.

## ***Assistance or Service Animals vs. Therapy Pets***

A ***Therapy Pet's*** sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support to those we visit. While they do provide a valuable service, they **do not** qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A ***therapy pet*** does not have the same legal rights as an assistance or service animal.

***Service Animals*** are defined as animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The work or task an animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.

***Misrepresenting an animal as a service or assistance animal may be punishable by incarceration and/or fines – as determined by local, state, and federal laws.***

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## Steps to Take to Become a Member of Love on a Leash®

- ♥ Read the Membership Guidelines and each page of the application.
- ♥ Attend a therapy pet class (not required, but highly recommended).
- ♥ Successfully complete the **Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation**. Have your pet evaluated for temperament and obedience. (Use the most current version from the website at the time of evaluation).
  - The Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation for dogs must be administered by a Certified Animal Behaviorist, Certified Dog Trainer, Certified Obedience Instructor, or AKC approved Evaluator. A list of trainers in your area, qualified to administer the Control Evaluation can be found at the AKC website: [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org).
  - The Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation for Cats and Rabbits must be administered by a veterinarian.
  - **The Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation is to be fully completed and passed before going on any supervised visits.**
  - Candidates for membership and evaluators may not evaluate their own pets or pets they may become certified with. The Control Evaluation and the Visit Evaluation must be completed by two different evaluators and may not be in the same family or household.
- ♥ Attend at least 10 hours of supervised visits. **Love on a Leash® Supervised Visit Log Sheet**
  - Prospective members must carry a copy of their completed Control Evaluation while on supervised visits and may only enter a facility or do visits when accompanied by a Visit Captain or a pre-approved substitute. (Contact National Love on a Leash® to arrange for a pre-approved substitute in writing or email.) Love on a Leash® insurance coverage only applies to prospective members while being supervised.
  - Supervised visits and Membership Application must be **completed and submitted within one year from date of Control Evaluation**. A maximum of one hour per day may be counted during the probationary (supervised visits) period.
  - ***At any time, including National's application review process, a Team in Training may be asked to complete one or more additional supervised visits to ensure confidence that the team in training will be successful on their own.***
  - Contact a chapter near you for a list of approved supervised visits. If there is no chapter near you, contact National Love on a Leash® for instructions. ***Hardware stores, pet stores, malls, fairs, festivals, social events, community walks, public events, or similar are not acceptable visits for teams in training.***
  - Have a successful evaluation of the supervised visits.
  - Candidates for membership and evaluators may not evaluate/supervise their own pets, pets they share a home with, or pets they may become certified with. Supervised visits may not occur at the handler's place of employment or places they are regularly associated with. Family members or those living in the same household may not supervise another household member for certification.



- ♥ Complete **Love on a Leash® Visit Evaluation** form.
  - The Visit Evaluation form must be completed by someone who supervised at least five of the required hours, and may not be completed until the conclusion of the required minimum 10 visit hours.
  - ***The last visit must be supervised by the person signing the Visit Evaluation form.*** The Control Evaluation and the Visit Evaluation must be completed by two different evaluators. A certified Love on a Leash team must supervise a new team in training. If a certified team is not available in your area, please contact National. If a substitute is approved by National, the completed substitute form and pre-approval email must be included with your application packet for processing.
- ♥ Complete **Love on a Leash® Membership Application** form.  
(use Love on a Leash® Membership Checklist)
  - Include two (2) different full-body photos of your pet for Love on a Leash® insurance
  - Email a digital photo of pet's face for membership ID
  - Email a digital photo of the handler's face for membership ID
  - Include payment for [fees and dues](#). (Love on a Leash® members or applicants are responsible for any charges or fees incurred by returned checks.)

Forms may be downloaded and printed from the Love on a Leash® website, under [Forms/Guides](#).

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## ***Training***

Your pet must be a minimum of one year old to begin the certification process. If the pet is re-homed or new to your household, it is strongly recommended you wait a minimum of six months to bond and familiarize yourself with its reactions in various situations before applying for certification.

Love on a Leash® does not endorse a particular training style, provided the training is structured to foster a positive, loving bond between the pet and its handler.

Attending a therapy pet class or Canine Good Citizen class is not a requirement for membership in Love on a Leash® but is highly recommended if you can find one in your area. A group basic obedience class is useful for teaching your pet to listen to you while in the presence of other pets and other people.

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

## ***Behavior***

**Any** Love on a Leash® member has the right and responsibility to "un-invite" a Love on a Leash® team from any visit or activity due to disruptive behavior on the part of a member of a visit team, whether it is the handler or the pet. (Disruptive behavior can include a dog "talking", whining, or barking during a visit. Or, a handler that is distracted on a visit by not paying attention to their pet or the client/patient.) "Mouthing", even play mouthing, is not allowed.

**Any** team with behavior issues is required to stop visits until re-evaluated. 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.

**Any** incident that could potentially affect a pet's status as a therapy pet must be reported to the Visit Captain, Facility Contact Person, Chapter Leader, and our National office. (An Incident Report is available on the Love on a Leash® website in the [Member area](#).)

**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 may be required to perform additional supervised visits to become a better therapy team before continuing on further visits.

**While** medications for calming or anxiety are used for some pets occasionally for medical reasons or specific situations like fireworks, these medications should not be taken or needed for any therapy pet to be comfortable during therapy visits. If your pet is not, or is no longer, comfortable on therapy pet visits the pet should be retired.

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## ***Dual Membership with Other Organizations***

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

For the purpose of Advanced Therapy Degrees and Recognition Patches, documented visits will only be accepted for volunteer hours served as a certified Love on a Leash® team.

## ***Visiting with Other Pet Therapy Organizations***

Love on a Leash® teams are welcome to visit with pet therapy teams from other pet therapy organizations, however, each pet therapy organization must have their own Visit Captain (or lead team) who coordinates with the facility/event contact to organize the visit for their team(s). This will ensure the facility/event contact is aware of which teams represent which organization. Love on a Leash® insurance will only cover Love on a Leash® certified teams who abide by Love on a Leash® Guidelines while on a visit.

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## Evaluating Teams in Training

- ♥ The Control Evaluation must be completed before starting Supervised Visits.
- ♥ Teams in training must be supervised by a certified Love on a Leash® team member. It is preferred that the Control Evaluator does not supervise any team in training visits. However, Control Evaluators, if they are a current Love on a Leash® member, may supervise one or two of a team in training's visits, but may not sign off on the Visit Evaluation form. If there are no certified teams in an area where a potential new member resides, then he/she must contact National Love on a Leash® to request approval of a substitute supervisor before beginning any supervised visits. This is required for each new potential team.
- ♥ The ratio of a Love on a Leash® certified team to a team in training is one-to-one, unless the supervisor leaves their pet at home, in which case the ratio may be two teams in training to one Love on a Leash® supervisor, although this should not be common practice. Non-Love on a Leash® substitute supervisors may only supervise one team in training at a time.
- ♥ Check that the pet is on a 4-foot leash. Tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable leashes are not permitted. If using anything longer than a 4-foot leash, the team must be sent home.
- ♥ The handler may talk to the pet and encourage them, but **no treats, calming or anxiety meds, or other incentives** may be used during the supervised visit.
- ♥ Prospective members carry a copy of their completed Control Evaluation while on supervised visits and may only enter a facility or visit when accompanied by a Visit Captain, certified teams, or a pre-approved substitute. Love on a Leash® insurance coverage only applies to prospective members while being supervised.
- ♥ **Supervised visits and Membership Application must be completed and postmarked within one year from date of Control Evaluation.** A maximum of one hour per day may be counted during the probationary (supervised visits) period. At any time, any team may be asked to continue with additional supervised visits to help become a better therapy team.
- ♥ Candidates for membership and evaluators cannot evaluate their own pets or pets they may become certified with. The Control Evaluation and the Visit Evaluation are to be done by two different evaluators and may not be in the same family or household.
- ♥ Supervised visits may not occur at the handler's place of employment or places they are regularly associated with.
- ♥ **All visits are as a volunteer only. No form of payment may be received while on any visit. If you are a dog trainer,** it is important to keep your volunteering with Love on a Leash® totally separate from your dog training business. This separation ensures that the focus remains on the therapy work and avoids any potential conflicts of interest.
- ♥ The Visit Evaluation form must be completed and signed by a certified Love on a Leash® team who supervised at least five of the required hours, but may not be completed until the conclusion of the required minimum 10 visit hours. ***The last visit must be supervised by the person signing the Visit Evaluation form.***

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## Control Evaluator Guidelines for CONTROL Evaluation for Dogs

- ♥ **This evaluation for dogs must be administered by** a Certified Animal Behaviorist, Certified Dog Trainer, Certified Obedience Instructor, or AKC approved Evaluator, and **must be fully and successfully completed before going on any supervised visits.**
- ♥ Candidates for membership must be at least 18 years old and may not evaluate their own pets or pets they may become certified with. The Control Evaluation and the Visit Evaluation are to be done by two different evaluators and may not be in the same family or household.
- ♥ Your pet must be a minimum of one year old before beginning the certification process. If a rescue, re-homed or career change pet, it is strongly recommended you take a minimum of 6 months to bond with this pet and get to know its reactions in various situations.
- ♥ All parts of the evaluation must be performed with the dog on a 4-foot leash. Tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable leashes are not permitted. Additionally, no prong, pinch or electronic collars of any kind, may be used.
- ♥ The handler may talk to the dog and encourage them, but **no treats, calming or anxiety meds, or other incentives** may be used during the Control Evaluation.
- ♥ If the dog shows any aggression towards any person or dog, the evaluation must stop and the dog must be disqualified.
- ♥ The Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation is to test the temperament of the dog and the amount of control that the handler has in various situations. These guidelines are meant to give the evaluator objective criteria and to make the test as consistent as possible in all parts of the country.

**\*\*\*Ask the handler if the dog knows the “Leave It” or “Drop It” command. Many times there are things on the floors such as pills or Kleenex, etc., that can be harmful to a dog. This is not a pass or fail for the Control Evaluation, but the handler should be encouraged to teach this command to their dog.\*\*\***

- 1. I have read and will abide by the Love on a Leash® Evaluator Guidelines, accompanying this form, when evaluating this team.**

As an evaluator you have a responsibility of deciding whether or not this team is ready to begin their supervised visits. By signing off on a team you are acknowledging that the team has satisfactorily performed all required tasks on the Love on a Leash® Control Evaluation. Be sure to include your CGC Evaluator # (if applicable) and include a business card in case you need to be contacted by National Love on a Leash®.

- 2. I have confirmed that the dog I am evaluating is at least one year old.**

The Control Evaluation may only be administered if the dog is one year of age or older.

- 3. Is the dog able to sit, lie down, or heel with people close by, and come when called while on a leash?**

The dog must sit and lie down at the handler's command. The handler may repeat the command, but no more than two times. It must be obvious that the dog is responding to the handler's command. A hand signal may be used, but no force, such as pulling down on the



leash or pushing the dog into position. The dog should stay in position for at least three seconds before being released.

The dog should be able to heel by the owner's side while walking through a crowd. The dog must be under complete control without pulling on the leash. If the dog is pulling the handler or paying too much attention to other people, the dog should not pass. The criteria should not, however, be one of competitive obedience.

When called to come, the dog should go directly to the handler and not run past. This is not a test of "stay". If necessary, the evaluator may gently hold the dog in position until called - the dog does not need to remain in a sit position. The handler may coax the dog with his voice, but may not use the leash to bring him in.

**4. Is the dog able to do a two minute down or sit/stay with the owner holding the leash?**

The two-minute stay may be done in either the sit or down position. It is the handler's choice. Whatever position the handler chooses, the dog should stay in that position the entire two minutes. The handler may stay close but must not hold the dog in position. He may encourage the dog with his voice. If the dog is sitting, he should not lie down and, if lying down, he should not sit up. The dog may move around in position, but not crawl or leave his spot. If the dog gets up or moves away, the evaluator should start the time again, but no more than two times.

**5. Is the handler able to greet a friendly stranger who has a dog? Is the handler able to maintain control without the dog being aggressive or over stimulated?**

The handler and dog should approach another dog and handler from a distance of about 20 feet, stop, shake hands, exchange brief pleasantries and then move on. (The neutral dog should be proofed prior to the test to make sure that he will remain calm). If, for some reason, the neutral dog reacts to the dog being tested, the test may be redone with another dog.

This will demonstrate that the dog can behave while the owner greets another person, who is also with a dog. The dog being tested may show casual interest, but must stay by the handler's side. The dog does not need to sit, but should not cross in front of or behind the handler. The handler may talk to their dog to encourage it.

**6. Does the dog allow petting including having its head, ears, feet and tail touched?**

The dog may sit, lie down, or stand. The owner should hold the dog. The evaluator should approach the dog in a calm, friendly manner, kneel in front or to the side of the dog and touch the dog's head, ears, run his hands down the dog's side, touch and very lightly squeeze the dog's paws and tail.

The dog should not show signs of fear, aggression or shyness. He may move toward the tester, but must not lunge or jump. He may roll over onto his back, but should not wiggle too much. He must be under the control of the handler at all times. He may stand or lie down to receive attention. The dog should not struggle to the point of needing restraint when the tester checks the dog. The handler may talk to the dog while being handled by the evaluator.



### **7. Is the dog clean and well groomed?**

The dog should be prepared for this evaluation as he would be for an actual visit. He should be clean and trimmed if necessary. His nails should be trimmed and filed so they will not easily scratch. He should be in good health and his teeth and ears should be clean and free of infection. He should be obviously well cared for.

### **8. Is the dog under control with people around, and able to walk on a loose leash without pulling?**

The dog must be able to maintain composure when around other dogs and people. He should be attentive to his handler and not wanting to charge or jump. He should show interest in others, but not insist on attention. He should be able to walk on a leash without pulling.

### **9. Is the dog able to maintain composure when a stranger approaches in an erratic manner?**

A person who is not known to the dog should approach the dog in an erratic manner. He may be wearing odd clothes, such as a long coat and a floppy hat. He could be on crutches or just stumbling. The handler may reassure his dog, but the dog must not lunge, cower, or attack. He may give a short bark but must recover quickly.

### **10. Is mouthing, biting, or dodging apparent?**

The dog may not touch his teeth to skin or clothing, even in a playful manner. No growling or snarling is allowed. Excessive shyness should not be apparent. Dodging should be a judgment call. Sometimes a dog may back away from a situation that may be uncomfortable for him. The intensity of the contact that causes the evasion should be noted and taken into account. A dog that demonstrates excessive shyness should not pass.

### **11. Is aggression apparent towards any person or animal?**

Any dog that shows any type of aggression in any way, must be disqualified. This may include, but is not limited to, growling, showing teeth, hair standing up, taking a stance, or lunging.

### **12. Does the dog show signs of fear, sound sensitivity, or shyness?**

The test for sound sensitivity should consist of:

- ♥ Dropping a dog's stainless-steel food dish or a non-breakable item on a hard surface
- ♥ Flapping a trash bag (an insert for a household trash can)

These should be done no closer than about five feet from the dog.

The dog may react or startle, but may not attack the object, bark, or cower away. He should recover within a couple of seconds.

Does the dog welcome attention and seem to enjoy it? If he tries to evade touch or show signs of stress, such as panting or obsessively licking his lips, he probably is not suitable, at this time, to be a therapy dog. This should be an enjoyable experience for the dog as well as the people he is visiting. If the dog does not pass, the handler should be encouraged to keep exposing the dog to new and different experiences (in a very positive way) and perhaps try again later.





**13. Does the dog or owner appear to have any training difficulties, physical or emotional limitations, or behavior problems that might interfere with its ability to work as a therapy team?**

Are there areas that could use some work? These may be areas that would disqualify or show concern for the dog or handler for therapy dog work or they may just be something that the evaluator feels could be better. You may offer suggestions to help the handler better prepare the dog for therapy work.

## ***Dress Code for Handler and Pet on Visits***

There is no minimum number of visits required for current members.

All visits are to be made with leashes that are 4-foot long or less. Stretchable and extendable leashes may not be used on visits. Off leash work is not permitted during a visit.

Types of collars to be worn on visits: Standard cloth and leather flat collars are acceptable.

***Love on a Leash® prohibits using remote electronic collars, pinch (prong) collars, and choke/slip (chain) collars.*** If you choose to use a martingale or halter-type collar, such as a Gentle Leader®, be prepared to answer questions from those you visit.

***Handler and pet ID membership cards must be visible at all times.*** Teams in training must carry a copy of their completed Control Evaluation and Supervised Visits Log on all supervised visits.

***It is preferred that pets wear a Love on a Leash® vest or a Love on a Leash® bandana during visits.*** This is not a requirement (see following), but we hope members consider it an honor to identify their pet as a Love on a Leash® therapy animal. Any vest or bandana worn must be the official Love on a Leash blue. Occasionally, a hospital or similar facility may require teams to wear a vest or bandana in a color other than our official blue. That is permitted, but a Love on a Leash® patch must be visible on the item as well. ***No one may substitute*** a color and/or design on vests or bandanas in place of the official ones. Holiday or special occasion attire is always permitted as long as it is acceptable with the facility you are visiting. Always check with the Visit Captain first.

Handlers are expected to be clean, neatly groomed, and healthy. Handlers are not required to wear official Love on a Leash® apparel, but are encouraged to wear blue, white, or neutral tops to avoid being mistaken for other pet therapy organizations. Clothing should be clean, appropriate, and tasteful – similar to business attire. Ripped clothing is unacceptable. Undergarments should not be visible. No inappropriate graphics or language on clothing. Clothing from any other therapy pet organization may not be worn on Love on a Leash® visits on either the handler or pet. ***Due to our trademark, neither chapters nor members may create their own Love on a Leash® apparel or merchandise.***

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## Visiting Facilities

Once certified, Love on a Leash® Therapy Pet Teams may 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. Except for in-home visits, all these visit examples are considered appropriate for supervised visits. A team in training is encouraged, but not required, to visit different types of venues such as nursing homes, libraries, schools, etc., to see what your pet enjoys most. All visits must be on a voluntary basis only. No payment may be accepted. **Note:** Hardware stores, pet stores, malls, fairs, festivals, social events, community walks, public events, or similar are not acceptable visits for teams in training.

**No treats** may be given during our visits. Our pets provide this service because they enjoy spending time with those we visit, not because they are expecting rewards. The focus should be on our love and connections rather than treats.

If you would like to offer pet therapy visits to a facility, an “Introduction Letter” and a brochure describing Love on a Leash® may be downloaded from the [Forms/Guides](#) page on the Love on a Leash® website. If the facility requests that you or your chapter sign an agreement as a condition of your visit, the agreement must be sent to [info@loveonaleash.org](mailto:info@loveonaleash.org) for evaluation and approval.

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

If several Love on a Leash® teams visit a facility, a Chapter Leader will choose someone to be a Visit Captain. A Visit Captain is the liaison between the facility and the Love on a Leash® teams. He/She will communicate with team members regarding changes in schedules or other information of interest.

Any Love on a Leash® member, but especially Visit Captains, can help educate the staff of the facility as to “acceptable behavior” towards the Therapy Teams. Every visiting team has a responsibility to ensure the safety of handlers and pets in any situation, even if it means not visiting a particular facility.

A handler’s attention must always be on its pet and the patient/resident, not on outside distractions.

Because a pet therapy team is defined as one handler and one pet, our insurance does not cover members if a guest accompanies them during visits. It is important that our focus during visits be on our pet and the person we are visiting.

## HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 establishes federal standards protecting sensitive health information from disclosure without patient consent. Any information acquired by our volunteers should remain confidential.

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## ***Recommended Items to Carry on a Visit***

- ♥ **Required: Love on a Leash® membership ID cards (or copy of Control Evaluation and Supervised Visit Log)**
- ♥ At least one copy of the Love on a Leash® Incident Report form
- ♥ Poop bags
- ♥ Copy of proof of vaccinations for each certified pet
- ♥ Bookmarks/brochures/business cards (optional)
- ♥ Portable water bowl
- ♥ Copies of Photo Release Forms for Adult and/or Child

## ***Encountering Dogs or Other Pets at Facilities***

Since all visits vary, situations where residents own personal pets (facility pets) will also vary. The decision to approach will depend on your comfort level with the pet that you encounter.

While on an official Love on a Leash® visit, if you encounter a resident with their own dog or pet; you will need to assess how the dogs/pets react to seeing each other. Are they growling, barking or lunging? Are they quiet and have their tails wagging?

If they are quiet and have their tails wagging and show a genuine interest, you should then ask the resident if their dog is friendly. If you are comfortable approaching, then you may do so. Always watch the body language of both animals, not only yours or theirs. There have been several occasions where facility dogs have socialized with teams and their pets while visiting with other residents. If you are not comfortable doing this, then you do not need to engage with any pet outside of Love on a Leash®.

If the facility animals growl, bark, or lunge, then it is best to steer clear of those animals even if the owner insists its pet is friendly. We NEVER want to put our pets in harm's way. In this type of situation, move on to another area, if there is another area you can visit. If not, then it is best that the visit be terminated for the day. Remember to stay professional and polite to everyone.

Regardless of the situation, the resident should NEVER be told to put their dog away or leave. They live there and pay to live there, and we are guests. Instead, the Visit Captain should reach out to their point of contact for the facility (Activities Director, Manager, etc.) and explain their concerns. During this conversation, options may be discussed. The Facility Coordinator may be able to ask the resident to avoid the area(s) that you visit during your visitation. If not, then visits to the facility should be postponed until such time that our teams' concerns can be resolved. Most, if not all facilities, will try to offer a solution. Facilities would rather have one person avoid the area during a visit, than deprive many of a wonderful visit opportunity with therapy pets.

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## **Visit Evaluator Guidelines for VISIT Evaluation for Dogs**

- ♥ This evaluation is to be filled out by a Visit Captain, or an experienced Love on a Leash® therapy member. If there are no Love on a Leash® teams in your area, an experienced facility employee (i.e. Recreational Therapist or Activities Director, etc.) may substitute as an evaluator who agrees to supervise you for the minimum 10 visit hours. ***You must first contact Love on a Leash® by email to request pre-approval of a substitute supervisor at [info@loveonaleash.org](mailto:info@loveonaleash.org).*** A completed APPROVED substitute form must be included with your application packet for processing. Whenever possible, however, a team in training must pair up with a certified Love on a Leash® team for their supervised visits. ***If you do not seek pre-approval for a substitute, your application packet will be rejected.***
- ♥ All parts of the evaluation must be performed with the dog on a 4-foot leash. Tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable leashes are not permitted. Additionally, no prong, pinch or electronic collars of any kind, may be used.
- ♥ The handler may talk to the dog and encourage them, but ***no treats, calming or anxiety meds, or other incentives*** may be used during the supervised visit.
- ♥ Certified members may not evaluate/supervise their own pets with a candidate for membership, nor pets they share a home with, nor pets they may become certified with. Family members may not evaluate/supervise another family member for certification.
- ♥ Supervised visits may not occur at the handler's place of employment or places they are regularly associated with.
- ♥ Hardware stores, pet stores, malls, fairs, festivals, social events, community walks, public events, or similar are unacceptable supervised visits for teams in training.
- ♥ If the dog shows any aggression towards or injures any person or dog, the evaluation must stop and an Incident Report must be filed with National Love on a Leash®.
- ♥ The recommended ratio of Love on a Leash® supervisors to teams in training is 1 supervisor per 1 team in training, or 1 supervisor per 2 teams in training (without the supervisor's pet present). Non-Love on a Leash® substitute supervisors may only supervise 1 team in training per hour.
- ♥ The Love on a Leash® Visit Evaluation is to evaluate the team and the amount of control the handler has in various situations. These guidelines are meant to give the evaluator objective criteria and to make the evaluation as consistent as possible in all parts of the country.

**\*\*\*The Supervisor/Evaluator at the first supervised visit, must check the Control Evaluation to be sure the date of evaluation is within one year, and the questions are all marked correctly. If they are, then continue to fill out the first visit information on the Supervised Visits Log. This same procedure is to be done by the Supervisor/Evaluator who will be signing the Visit Evaluation form. This is to ensure that the Control Evaluation has been successfully completed and passed within the one-year time frame.\*\*\***



### 1. On how many visits have you observed this therapy team?

In order to sign the Visit Evaluation form, you must have observed the team for at least five (5) of the mandatory ten (10) hours, including their final visit. The Visit Evaluation form may not be signed until the minimum 10 hours of supervised visits have been completed. The 5 minimum visits do not need to be consecutive, as long as the final visit has been with you. That way, you may officially complete and sign the team's Visit Evaluation form.

Additionally, if you do not feel this team is ready to be certified after 10 hours, you may request additional visits under your supervision. Currently, there are three additional blank lines on the Supervised Visit Log (p.7) for this purpose. You may ask the team in training for *more* than three additional visits, if needed. If asking for additional training or supervision, **do not sign** the Visit Evaluation until the team has completed any extra supervised visits and you are satisfied that the team is ready to be certified.

### 2. Does the dog seem to like and relate well to people?

The dog should look relaxed and have a happy presence. The dog's tail (for breeds that have them) should be relaxed, not tucked between their hind legs. A tucked tail may be a sign of fear, lack of confidence, or an indication that the dog is unhappy. If a dog seems to be scared or unhappy during the visit they should be sent home.

### 3. Is the dog under control of the handler when it interacts with others?

The dog should be at the handler's side or just slightly in front of the handler. Additionally, in the event something were to happen, is the handler paying attention to the dog and ready to intervene or correct the dog if needed? ***The handler should never be so engrossed in conversation, that he/she does not know what the dog is doing at all times.***

### 4. Is the dog able to walk on a leash without pulling?

The dog must be on a loose 4-foot leash. If the leash is taut, then the dog is pulling and the handler is being controlled by the dog. The leash should be relaxed, and the dog should be by the handler's side or just slightly in front of the handler, not 4-foot in front.

### 5. Is the handler able to get the dog close enough to people during visits?

No matter what size dog, the handler should be able to get the dog close enough to those in a manual or electric wheelchair, next to walkers, and raised or lowered beds. There are times people will be sitting in corners, or in physical therapy, or rooms that are small and have lots of medical equipment around them. The handler should be able to get the dog close enough for petting in any of these situations. It could be by picking up your dog (smaller breeds), or kindly asking if a walker can be moved for a moment for a visit. If you do move any furniture, be sure to place it in the same position it was in beforehand and sanitize your hands if applicable.

### 6. Is the handler able to initiate conversations with people and stimulate interest in the dog?

It can be difficult at times to strike up a conversation with a complete stranger. However, while doing therapy work this will more than likely occur at each visit. Can the handler walk up to a person and talk to them? Does the handler attempt to converse with those who do not wish to speak or are unable to speak?



**7. Based on your observations, do you feel this team is a good candidate for pet therapy at this time?**

After considering all these questions, does this team appear ready to be on their own without any further supervision? If you do not feel the team is ready, additional visits should be requested by you and under your supervision before you certify them.

**8. Is there any behavior you would like them to work on that would not disqualify this team for therapy work?**

Some examples could be, but are not limited to:

- ♥ The dog or handler is a bit shy and could use more training.
- ♥ The dog is fine around a manual wheelchair but is a bit uncertain around electric wheelchairs.
- ♥ The handler is still working on certain sound or flooring sensitivity issues.

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## **Visit Evaluator Guidelines for VISIT Evaluation for Cats or Rabbits**

- ♥ This evaluation is to be filled out by a Visit Captain, or an experienced Love on a Leash® therapy member. If there are no Love on a Leash® teams in your area, an experienced facility employee (i.e. Recreational Therapist or Activities Director, etc.) may substitute as an evaluator who agrees to supervise you for the minimum 10 visit hours. ***You must first contact Love on a Leash® by email to request pre-approval of a substitute supervisor at [info@loveonaleash.org](mailto:info@loveonaleash.org).*** A completed APPROVED substitute form must be included with your application packet for processing. Whenever possible, however, a team in training must pair up with a certified Love on a Leash® team for their supervised visits. ***If you do not seek pre-approval for a substitute, your application packet will be rejected.***
- ♥ All parts of the evaluation must be performed with the cat or rabbit on a 4-foot leash. Tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable leashes are not permitted. Additionally, no prong, pinch or electronic collars, of any kind, may be used.
- ♥ The handler may talk to the cat or rabbit and encourage them, but ***no treats, calming or anxiety meds, or other incentives*** may be used during the supervised visit.
- ♥ Certified members may not evaluate/supervise their own pets with a candidate for membership, nor pets they share a home with, nor pets they may become certified with. Family members may not evaluate/supervise another family member for certification.
- ♥ Supervised visits may not occur at the handler's place of employment or places they are regularly associated with.
- ♥ Hardware stores, pet stores, malls, fairs, festivals, social events, community walks, public events, or similar are unacceptable supervised visits for teams in training.
- ♥ If the cat or rabbit shows any aggression towards or injures any person or animal (including swiping or swatting), the evaluation must stop and an Incident Report must be filed with National Love on a Leash®.
- ♥ The recommended ratio of Love on a Leash® supervisors to teams in training is 1 supervisor per 1 team in training, or 1 supervisor per 2 teams in training (without the supervisor's pet present). Non-Love on a Leash® substitute supervisors may only supervise 1 team in training per hour.
- ♥ The Love on a Leash® Visit Evaluation is to evaluate the team and the amount of control the handler has in various situations. These guidelines are meant to give the evaluator objective criteria and to make the evaluation as consistent as possible in all parts of the country.

**\*\*\*The Supervisor/Evaluator at the first supervised visit, must check the Control Evaluation to be sure the date of evaluation is within one year, and the questions are all marked correctly. If they are, then continue to fill out the first visit information on the Supervised Visits Log. This same procedure is to be done by the Supervisor/Evaluator who will be signing the Visit Evaluation form. This is to ensure that the Control Evaluation has been successfully completed and passed within the one-year time frame.\*\*\***



### 1. On how many visits have you observed this therapy team?

In order to sign the Visit Evaluation form, you must have observed the team for at least five (5) of the mandatory ten (10) hours, including their final visit. The Visit Evaluation form may not be signed until the minimum 10 hours of supervised visits have been completed. The 5 minimum visits do not need to be consecutive, as long as the final visit has been with you. That way, you may officially complete and sign the team's Visit Evaluation form.

Additionally, if you do not feel this team is ready to be certified after 10 hours, you may request additional visits under your supervision. Currently, there are three additional blank lines on the Supervised Visit Log (p.6) for this purpose. You may ask the team in training for *more* than three additional visits, if needed. If asking for additional training or supervision, **do not sign** the Visit Evaluation until the team has completed any extra supervised visits and you are satisfied that the team is ready to be certified.

### 2. Does the cat or rabbit seem to like people and relate well to people?

**Cats** should look relaxed and have a happy demeanor. They should not be stiff or tense or aggressively flicking their tails. Cats should have 'soft' eyes – their eyes should blink slowly and not be wide-eyed or alert which can denote fearfulness. Cats may sit down and tuck their paws underneath themselves, a sign of relaxation. Cats should not hiss, growl, swipe, swat, or spit. Relaxed and happy cats may purr.

**Rabbits** show their mood largely through the position of their ears. Relaxed rabbits have their ears straight up and close together, facing outward or forward. Ears that are back or pinned against the head may indicate anxiety. The rabbit's entire body language should also be monitored. Relaxed rabbits will lay down and look restful. Relaxed rabbits may sprawl out with their rear legs out to one side and their front feet bucked forward. Rabbits are also known to make sounds when they are happy. Purring or sighing are signs of a content rabbit. An agitated or fearful rabbit may ignore you, flick their feet at you, or be perched ready to hop away.

### 3. Is the cat or rabbit under control of the handler when it interacts with others?

As with our dog therapy members, both cats and rabbits must be on a 4-foot leash at all times when on a visit. They may use a harness or a collar that attaches the leash to the cat or rabbit. Handlers may carry their cats or rabbits in their arms. Some handlers use a pet stroller to carry and contain their therapy cat or rabbit while on a visit, in addition to the harness/collar and leash. Be sure the stroller is not too big or bulky – the location must be able to accommodate it. ***The handler should never be so engrossed in conversation that he/she does not know what their cat or rabbit is doing at all times.***

### 4. Is the handler able to get the pet close enough to people during visits?

It is a good idea to carry a lap blanket or towel for those who wish to hold their cat or rabbit, to protect against scratches should the animal become spooked. The handler should be right there with their pet and paying attention to them while conversing.

### 5. Is the handler able to initiate conversations with people & stimulate interest in their cat or rabbit?

It can be difficult at times to strike up a conversation with a complete stranger. However, while doing therapy work this will more than likely occur at each visit. Can the handler walk up to a





person and talk to them? Does the handler attempt to converse with those who do not wish to speak or are unable to speak? Does the handler present their cat or rabbit in a positive and happy manner?

**6. Does the handler relate well with people in general?**

Does the handler enjoy talking to people and seem genuinely interested in those they are visiting? Does the handler check before approaching to ensure there are no allergy issues?

**7. Based on your observations, do you feel this team is a good candidate for pet therapy at this time?**

Considering all of these questions, does this team appear ready to be on their own without any further supervision? If you do not feel the team is ready, additional visits should be requested by you and under your supervision.

**8. Would you like this cat or rabbit and its handler to continue visiting this facility?**

This answer should be YES. If not, please mark NO on the Visit Evaluation and note the reason. The Visit Evaluation should not be signed off at this point. If extra visits may help, please request them. If not, let the team know you are not comfortable signing them off due to the issue(s) present.

**9. Is there any behavior you would like them to work on that would not disqualify this team for therapy work?**

Some examples could be, but are not limited to:

- ♥ The cat, rabbit, or handler is a bit shy and could use more training.
- ♥ The cat or rabbit is exhibiting concern, but is not reacting to types of hospital equipment such as wheelchairs or a walker, etc.
- ♥ The handler is still working on specific sound sensitivity issues.

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## ***Manners and Helpful Tips for Visits***

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

### **General:**

- ♥ Your pet must be groomed and tidy – pay special attention that nails are trimmed and smooth.
- ♥ We recommend your pet wear their vest or bandana on all visits. It identifies your pet as a certified therapy pet and is an honor to wear. Members are required to display both their ID and their pet's ID on their person.
- ♥ Handlers are expected to be clean, neatly groomed, and healthy. Handlers are not required to wear official Love on a Leash® apparel, but are encouraged to wear blue, white, or neutral tops to avoid being mistaken for other pet therapy organizations.
- ♥ “Meet and greet” other teams before you go into a visit. Be sensitive to new pets and keep sensitive pets apart.
- ♥ Any pet that appears “out of control” (lunging, pulling, snarling, growling, barking, etc.) should be sent home before a facility is entered for a visit.
- ♥ Know your pet and be alert for signs of discomfort, stress, or fatigue. If your pet shows signs of being tired or irritable, simply excuse yourself and notify the Visit Captain or another team on a visit that you are leaving. Never force your pet to enter a room or visit someone if your pet is resisting.
- ♥ Facilities use chemicals for cleaning. It is recommended that you wipe down your pet's feet at the conclusion of your visit.
- ♥ Visits may be social, but you must maintain control of your pet and know what your pet is doing at all times. Pay extra attention to long wagging tails. Never drop, let go, or hand-off the leash during your visit. Keep all conversations appropriate. Personal conversations between visiting teams should be kept to a minimum. Remember, we are there to visit patients/residents, not each other.
- ♥ Treats are not allowed during a visit. Plan ahead how you will handle your pet being offered treats by those we are visiting. We must politely decline or accept the treat and save it until after the visit is complete. Our pets are there to share love with those we visit, not to perform for treats.
- ♥ Some people may be afraid of pets. Respect them and do not force your pet on them.
- ♥ Be prepared to clean up after your pet. Take potty breaks away from activity. Pick up waste and dispose of it properly. (Stress levels can be high – especially for the first few visits.) If cleanup inside is required, notify staff immediately.
- ♥ Remember that the staff in the places you visit like to be visited, too.

### **Visiting with Children:**

- ♥ It is important that members of Love on a Leash® maintain a safe and controlled environment when visiting children.





- ♥ Many children do not know animal safety and may have preconceived ideas that are false or even dangerous.
- ♥ Media tends to humanize animals through commercials, etc. Many people have unrealistic expectations about animal behavior.
- ♥ Children may believe it is perfectly natural for pets to accept close face to face contact or a hug. Many pets, however, may view this as a threatening gesture, especially from a stranger. The result may be avoidance, a snarl, or worse.
- ♥ Does your pet 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.
- ♥ As much as you might want to visit children, if your pet has **ever** shown aggression towards children, he is not a good candidate for this work.
- ♥ In a classroom situation, discuss your visit ahead of time with the teacher or adult in charge.
  - How many students are in the class?
  - Are they mainstream children or are there any special needs?
  - Do any of the children have allergies?
  - How long do they want the visit to be?
  - At no time should the children be permitted to run up to the pets as a group or individually.
- ♥ For all visits with children the visit should be controlled and organized. A teacher or parent must be present. Remember, treats are not permitted on visits.
- ♥ Never let more than a few children surround a pet at the same time, and always have them approach slowly. Divide a larger group of children into smaller groups.
- ♥ Pets must be on their leashes (4-foot or less) at all times. You must be free to give the guideline "gentle" to children regardless of disability. Simple direct communication usually works best, such as "gentle hands" and "hands down". Please remember under no circumstances should your pet be subjected to improper treatment by anyone.
- ♥ Often children want to "walk" a dog. Depending on the situation, and the safety of the dog and child, this may be permitted, however, the handler must always maintain control of the dog. Use two leashes, one to hand to the child and the other for the handler.

### **Visiting with Seniors:**

- ♥ Ask permission before entering a person's room or before bringing your pet close to someone. Ask, "*Would you like a visit?*" If someone doesn't like your pet, realize it's not personal.
- ♥ Be aware of what you are asking. Instead of "how are you today?" you can ask "how is today treating you?" ***Never disclose personal information you learn. Never ask why a client is there or what is wrong with them.***
- ♥ When visiting a room that has multiple patients, watch the volume of your voice. Be respectful of those sleeping or who may be on the phone, etc.



- ♥ When you introduce your pet, don't let the person you are visiting put their face right up to your pet or vice versa. Remember - Not everyone likes to be kissed by a pet.
- ♥ Take extra care with these patients when your pet has any physical contact because of the delicate condition of their health. Pay attention to how your dog is interacting with the client. With the client's permission, use caution when placing dogs on their laps or on their beds.
- ♥ Respect the client's space and belongings. Ask permission before moving anything, such as a bedside table or wheelchair (Never move a wheelchair someone is sitting in), and be sure to replace the object in its original position at the end of the visit.
- ♥ We are not medical personnel. We are there to visit! We may not move medical equipment or push wheelchairs. We may not adjust pillows or beds. We may not offer, or help clients with beverages or food. ***Requests from the clients should be passed on to the appropriate staff at the facility.***
- ♥ The facilities you visit are staffed with professionals. Report anything out of the ordinary.
- ♥ Watch out for the shy people in the corner. Make an effort to include them.
- ♥ Don't talk down to people because they are old or disabled.
- ♥ Listen. Many of these people have wonderful stories to tell.

#### **Visiting Hospice/Palliative Care Patients:**

- ♥ The "patient" has been diagnosed by a medical doctor as terminal.
- ♥ The interaction with the patient is usually one-on-one and lasts anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours each visit.
- ♥ Being a hospice volunteer requires exceptional listening skills, patience, respect, and empathy.
- ♥ With our pets we can provide social interaction and expression of grief.
- ♥ Never rush a visit; this may be the patient's last time to visit with an animal.
- ♥ Keep in mind when visiting with hospice patients, family and friends are often present and can benefit from pet therapy as well.

#### **Visiting Adults/Children with Special Needs:**

- ♥ While each facility may be different, it is generally noticed there are more caregivers/staff with children than with adults.
- ♥ Be extra vigilant for the safety of your pet when visiting. Some of the clients/patients may be unaware of their own strength and are not mentally or physically capable of understanding the proper technique for petting or visiting with an animal.
- ♥ When visiting special needs children, prior to the first visit, speak with the teacher in charge to discuss the goals of the visits. Special needs teachers have specific training. Ask them the best way to approach each child.

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## Owner/Handler Agreement

Reaffirmed annually during renewal. As the therapy pet's 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 and pets at all times.
- ♥ I shall continue my pet's education, refreshing obedience commands, and teaching special commands.
- ♥ My pet and I shall be clean, neatly groomed, and healthy on each visit. My pet shall be parasite-free and up to date on all state required vaccinations.
- ♥ I will remember at all times that my pet and its actions as well as my behavior, actions, and attitude represent all therapy teams in the eyes of the public.
- ♥ I agree to abide by all of Love on a Leash® policies and procedures, including any revisions.
- ♥ I understand that all therapy teams are volunteers. I understand that Love on a Leash® is not affiliated with any for profit entities. Therefore, Love on a Leash® trademarks or apparel may not be utilized during any activity that involves payment of any kind. If, as a handler of a therapy pet, I am at work or working in any capacity with my pet, then Love on a Leash® trademarks, IDs, and apparel must be removed from the pet and myself until our therapy team activity is clearly volunteer only.
- ♥ If at any time my pet and/or I are no longer able to visit due to age, illness, disability or behavior problems, I will stop visiting and will notify Love on a Leash®. The Love on a Leash® Board of Directors reserves the right to make a determination on whether my pet and/or I are suitable to continue visiting.
- ♥ I understand and agree that the Love on a Leash® Board of Directors has the complete discretion to disallow my pet or me to continue as a participating member.
- ♥ I agree that if I do not or cannot abide by Love on a Leash® policies, procedures, and guidelines (including any revisions), my membership may be terminated at the discretion of the Love on a Leash® Board of Directors.
- ♥ 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.
- ♥ ***I have read and agree to abide by the Owner/Handler Agreement.***
- ♥ ***I have read the Membership Guidelines.***

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## **Annual Renewal Information**

**Your membership expires each year and must be renewed.** Our most current fee table is available on our [website](#). Your certification expiration date can be found on both your ID card and your pet's ID card. On both ID cards, it is located at the bottom, right side of the ID, in red.

***If your membership has expired please bear in mind you may not go on any visits and you are not insured until you have renewed and received your updated ID cards with the new expiration dates.***

National Love on a Leash® will attempt to notify you before your membership expires. However, ***it is your responsibility to renew before your expiration date.***

There are two ways to renew. You may renew online or by mail. National Love on a Leash® will attempt to send you a Renewal reminder by email or mail. It will have instructions on how to renew. You may renew online by visiting the National website at [www.loveonaleash.org](http://www.loveonaleash.org). Go to "Member Login" at the top of the home page and login. The "Membership Renewal" link is located in the left margin. Click and follow the instructions.

A late fee of \$15 will be charged to anyone renewing ***greater than 1 month*** past their expiration date.

Any Love on a Leash® member who allows their membership to lapse for ***1 year*** or more will be required to complete the entire membership process again including the Control Evaluation, Supervised Visits, and Visit Evaluation, in order to re-activate their membership. This is for safety and insurance purposes.

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## Insurance Coverage

Love on a Leash® carries two insurance policies that provide coverage for our members while attending organized Love on a Leash® pet therapy events. **Note:** *Love on a Leash® does not allow Wolf or Coyote hybrids as our insurance does not cover them.*

### **GENERAL LIABILITY POLICY**

- ♥ Covers members during any organized pet therapy event during the policy period.
- ♥ Covers third parties only for property damage/bodily injury due to negligence. Does not cover Love on a Leash® members for their own injuries [see SPECIAL RISK ACCIDENT POLICY].
- ♥ Pet owners are responsible for the actions of their pet at all times. In the highly unlikely event that a claim is filed after an incident occurs during a Love on a Leash® visit, our insurance company's adjuster must assess the claim, and will be obligated to contact the pet owner's insurance company. How much the owner's insurance company becomes involved will depend on the incident and the nature of the claim. Regardless of the claim, Love on a Leash® insurance would represent the member during such a claim. If a member does not have their own insurance (homeowners/renters policy), Love on a Leash® would still represent the member in the event of a claim.
- ♥ Coverage does not apply if the pet is with the member at work or uses the pet as part of their work.
- ♥ Coverage of \$2,000,000 aggregate and \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
- ♥ **CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE** will be provided if an organization or event requests Love on a Leash® show Proof of Insurance to attend an event. Contact Love on a Leash® National to request a copy or access it in the Member Area online.
- ♥ **ADDITIONAL INSURED ENDORSEMENT** is an optional endorsement that an organization may request. It grants the additional insured access to Love on a Leash's policy and allows them to file a claim under our policy instead of their own, should they be presented with a third party claim that occurred during official Love on a Leash® activities. The cost is \$50 and must be paid by the requesting organization. The endorsement is good for the remainder of our policy term, and must be renewed annually to maintain the endorsement. An additional insured endorsement and a certificate of insurance with the organization listed as a certificate holder will be issued. Please allow 3-5 business days for processing.

### **SPECIAL RISK ACCIDENT POLICY**

- ♥ Provides accident insurance for our members while attending a sponsored event.
- ♥ Policy also covers travel directly and uninterruptedly to or from the event.
- ♥ Medical expenses are a maximum of \$100,000.
- ♥ \$10,000 accidental death and dismemberment benefit.

#### **Insurance will be in effect if the following conditions have been met:**

- ♥ Member and pet are current on dues at the time of the incident.



- ♥ Member is acting on behalf of, and within the scope of, our principal objectives as a pet therapy organization, and abiding by all Love on a Leash® Guidelines.
- ♥ Members are attending an organized Love on a Leash® pet therapy event.
- ♥ Member's pet is on a 4-foot leash (not tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable) and in the member's control at all times.
- ♥ All state required vaccinations are current at time of incident.
- ♥ Member is following all the rules and regulations of the facility/organization they are visiting.

## ***Contracts and Agreements***

**Chapters and members are not permitted to sign contracts or agreements on behalf of Love on a Leash®.** For example, a chapter may not sign a vendor agreement or insurance document in the name of Love on a Leash® or your chapter. Some facilities may request a Chapter to sign an agreement before visiting. This is not permitted.

**If a facility or individual requests that you or your Chapter sign an agreement or take other action which may create an obligation for Love on a Leash®, you must forward it to [info@loveonaleash.org](mailto:info@loveonaleash.org) for review.**

## ***Finances and Donations***

Love on a Leash® members and chapters are prohibited from charging for visits, soliciting, fundraising, or accepting donations from individuals, or locations that are the subject of a visit. If you or your chapter is presented with a donation, contact National Love on a Leash® for direction on how to manage the donation.

**Chapters are not permitted to sign agreements or open accounts on behalf of Love on a Leash®.** For example, a chapter may not apply for a credit card, or open a checking account, or savings account under their chapter name or Love on a Leash, Inc.

If you have any questions about what may or may not be a violation of this policy, please err on the side of caution and contact the National Love on a Leash® Treasurer or the National Board.

**Donation Policy:** Unsolicited donations and bequests should be made to the National Love on a Leash® organization, as an unrestricted gift to be used toward its mission. Checks should be made out to "Love on a Leash" and must be forwarded to:

Attn: Treasurer  
Love on a Leash, Inc.  
PO Box 4548  
Oceanside, CA 92052-4548

All donations made to Love on a Leash® are made available for both National and Chapter expenses at the discretion of the Board of Directors and in compliance with the Organization's mission. No donation may be stipulated to any individual chapter or purpose. For any questions or to obtain a list of approved expenses, send an email to [info@loveonaleash.org](mailto:info@loveonaleash.org).

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## Incident Reports

### What is an incident?

An incident can cover a wide range of events. Examples may include, but are not limited to, a dog barks and startles a patient who stumbles or falls. A dog growls or lunges at another dog or person. A dog accidentally bumps or scratches a person while doing a paws up on the side of a bed or wheelchair. A dog shows aggression to another pet. In any instance, if you have any doubt, submit an Incident Report.

### In the Event of an Incident:

- ♥ Remain calm.
- ♥ If the incident involves an injury, keep control of your pet, get help for the injured person(s). Never leave or tie your pet to furniture or equipment. Volunteers should never move or give medical aid to an injured person. Only facility staff should provide medical treatment to the injured person(s), even if the treatment is as simple as applying a Band-Aid.
- ♥ Before leaving, report the incident to your facility contact person so the injury can be documented. Most facilities have accident or incident report forms. You will need to fill out all facility required paperwork, as well as the required Love on a Leash® Incident Report.
- ♥ To report the incident, and if you have any questions, call (760) 740-2326.
- ♥ Every Incident Report will be evaluated by the National Board of Directors for Love on a Leash®. The Board reserves the right to take any appropriate measures as needed including, but not limited to, termination of membership.
- ♥ **In the case of pet aggression or injury, the involved parties may not go on any Love on a Leash® visits until National Love on a Leash® provides a written resolution.**

The following information must be documented. Even if an incident appears minor, it should be documented in the event it becomes more serious in the future, such as an infection from a scratch. All of the information below is also listed on the Incident Report form that is available for download in the [Member area](#) of the National Love on a Leash® website.

- ♥ Date of the report
- ♥ Date and Time of Incident
- ♥ Name of facility where the incident took place (incl. address and phone number)
- ♥ Pet's name(s), breed(s) and age(s)
- ♥ Names, home addresses and phone numbers of those involved
- ♥ What took place?
- ♥ What action was taken? Any medical attention needed? If so, who administered and what was done?
- ♥ Signatures of the Love on a Leash® member, ID Number, Phone number, Email address, and Home address
- ♥ Immediately notify: facility contact person, Visit Captain, Chapter Leader, and Love on a Leash® National President
- ♥ As soon as possible, **email** the Incident Report to the Visit Captain, Chapter Leader, and National Love on a Leash® President. Include photos if available.

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## What is a Chapter?

A Love on a Leash® Chapter consists of a Chapter Leader who has been a member for a minimum of one year, and at least four (4) other certified teams, who would like to participate, individually or in groups, in making visits. Chapters often establish regular visits at various facilities. Members may then choose to visit with the group or visit on their own. Love on a Leash® was started with the idea of making it possible for people with qualified pets to participate.

### ***Starting a Chapter***

A Love on a Leash® Chapter needs:

- ♥ A Chapter Leader who has been a member of Love on a Leash® for a minimum of one year in good standing.
- ♥ Four (4) or more certified Love on a Leash® teams. The Chapter Leader may be included as one of the five.
- ♥ A minimum of one regularly established visit.

To apply to form a new chapter, visit the Chapter Information tab in the [Member area](#) on the Love on a Leash website and click on “New Chapter Application”. Complete and submit the form for review.

A Chapter, though unique in personality, should reflect the purpose and function of Love on a Leash® to support and guide certified Therapy Teams to uphold high standards and values.

There is no fee to become a Chapter, and a chapter may not charge additional dues to their members. Individual members pay annual membership dues to the National Organization.

Remember to continue making participation as easy as possible for qualified individuals.

Because Love on a Leash® 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.

It is preferred that pets wear a Love on a Leash® bandana or a Love on a Leash® vest during visits. This is not a requirement, but we hope members consider it an honor to identify their pet as a Love on a Leash® therapy animal. Occasionally, a hospital or similar facility may require teams to wear a vest or bandana in a color other than our official blue. That is permitted, but a Love on a Leash® patch must be visible on the item as well. **Chapters may not substitute** a “chapter color and/or design” on vests or bandanas in place of the official ones. Holiday or special occasion attire is always permitted as long as it is acceptable with the facility you are visiting. Always check with the Visit Captain first. ***Handler and pet ID membership cards must be visible at all times.***

Depending on the community, as a chapter grows 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 to join a chapter. Membership in multiple chapters is permitted.





## ***Benefits of Joining a Chapter***

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 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 if you are unable to attend a scheduled visit.

Word spreads when the community begins to see therapy pets 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. Local papers and TV stations like to share "feel good stories" on the news.

## ***Non-Chapter Members***

Belonging to a chapter is not a requirement, but recommended if there is a chapter near you. A Love on a Leash® team who does not belong to a chapter is held to all of the same rules and guidelines as other teams.

If there is a chapter near you, you are still welcome to contact the Chapter Leader with any questions or concerns, or you may contact National Love on a Leash® directly.

## ***Role of a Chapter Leader***

We require that all Chapter Leaders be certified members of Love on a Leash® for a minimum of one year (or be Continuing Members in good standing). The National office of Love on a Leash® must be notified of any change in chapter leadership within 30 days. (An online form is available for leadership change notification on our website in the [Member area](#) under Chapter Information.) Chapter Leaders may not 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. A Chapter Leader who is a Continuing Member due to their pet's retirement or passing, may continue as Chapter Leader as long as their goal is to obtain a subsequent pet suitable for therapy work and stay actively involved in visiting.

The primary responsibility of a Chapter Leader is to encourage and support members as they make visits. Chapter Leaders ensure that therapy teams in their chapter are properly certified through the National organization. Chapter Leaders have a responsibility to their community to provide quality Therapy Teams to facilities and programs and ensure that each team adheres to Love on a Leash® guidelines.

Chapter Leaders establish and maintain scheduled visits. The frequency of a visit will be determined when the visit is established. The visit can be weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc. It should be determined how many certified teams may visit at one time, and in the event you have a certified cat or rabbit team, it should also be determined whether a cat or rabbit may visit, in case of allergy issues.

Chapter Leaders are responsible for deciding which members are suitable to be a Visit Captain. Chapter members may be designated a Visit Captain at the Chapter Leader's discretion.



Therapy work is a great responsibility. Chapter Leaders educate, lead, and set an example for chapter members and teams in training. Chapter Leaders remind members that therapy pet work is a service. In order to provide this service, each team must adhere to the Membership Guidelines, as well as the requirements of individual facilities to protect those whom we visit, as well as our members. Chapter Leaders will also assist National Love on a Leash® with dissemination of any updates and communication to their roster of certified members in a timely manner.

Chapter Leaders must follow the Membership Guidelines set by the National Love on a Leash® Board of Directors. Chapter Leaders may not ask members in their areas to undergo any additional processes such as CGC testing or pay chapter dues, etc. Some facilities, such as schools, libraries, court systems, jails, and prisons, may require a background check prior to visiting. Those types of facilities will be responsible for background check payments. Under no circumstance should a background check be requested by a chapter.

## ***Role of a Visit Captain***

If several Love on a Leash® teams visit a facility, the Chapter Leader will ask someone to become a Visit Captain. A Visit Captain is the liaison between the facility and our Love on a Leash® teams.

The responsibilities of a Visit Captain include but are not limited to:

- ♥ Checking that Love on a Leash® ID cards are visible and current. If an ID card has expired, the member is ineligible to visit and may not visit until their membership has been renewed and they have received their new ID cards.
- ♥ Checking that the pet is on a 4-foot leash. Tied, looped, stretchable, or retractable leashes are not permitted. If using anything longer than a 4-foot leash, the team must be sent home.
- ♥ Checking the Control Evaluation of each team in training to be sure it is valid (not a fail), and is signed and dated by the Evaluator. It must be dated within one year of the date of the Control Evaluation. Be sure the most current application form is being used (located on National's website [www.loveonaleash.org](http://www.loveonaleash.org)).
- ♥ Being present at each visit or arranging for another certified team member to be in charge as a substitute.
- ♥ Coordinating with the facility representative in charge of the visits to:
  - Exchange contact information
  - Establish time and day of week for visiting
  - Arrange what the visit will entail and where in the facility the visit will take place
  - Be aware of any regulations specific to the facility
- ♥ Coordinating with the Love on a Leash teams to:
  - Arrange supervisors for teams in training to do their supervised visit hours. The allowed ratio of supervisors to teams in training is one supervisor per one team in training, or one supervisor without their pet per two teams in training.



- Maintain a complete list of handler/pet teams that visit the facility (name, phone, email, etc.)
  - Notify teams if a visit is canceled.
  - Notify teams of special events.
  - Ensure that unfamiliar teams joining the visit are certified Love on a Leash® members or teams in training with proper paperwork. Teams in training without proper paperwork or teams without current Love on a Leash® ID cards may not visit under any circumstances.
- ♥ Having a copy of the current Love on a Leash® Incident Report available in case of an incident and immediately reporting any incident:
- To the facility contact person
  - To the chapter leader
  - To the National Love on a Leash® President
- ♥ Uninviting a Love on a Leash® team from any visit or activity due to disruptive behavior (see [page 5 "Behavior"](#)). **Note:** any member may file an Incident Report (available in the [Member Area](#) of our website) if they witness members or pets violating Love on a Leash® Guidelines.

## ***Chapter Names and Use of Logo***

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

- ♥ We require all chapters to use the name **Love on a Leash®**, which is a registered trademark of Love on a Leash, Inc.
- ♥ The Love on a Leash® official color is **medium blue**.
- ♥ The Love on a Leash® official logo is a **paw print within a heart** with **Love on a Leash®** written at the top.
- ♥ Keep in mind that "Love on a Leash®" must be **foremost** on all literature and press releases.
- ♥ Officially approved Love on a Leash® merchandise may be purchased through National Love on a Leash® member portals. Merchandise may be custom-ordered with a chapter specific name. Merchandise is for certified teams only. Teams in training are not eligible to purchase merchandise.
- ♥ **Due to our registered trademark, neither chapters nor members may create their own apparel or merchandise.**

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



## Chapter Social Media Pages

While having social media pages is not required, the following guidelines have been issued by the Love on a Leash® National Board of Directors in an effort to ensure Love on a Leash® is accurately and appropriately represented in order to protect the organization. These guidelines will help promote a consistently branded look among all chapter social media pages, which will help represent the organization in a uniform and professional manner. **In the interest of consistency and providing the most current information, chapters may not maintain their own websites.** Chapter social media pages (e.g. Facebook pages or Instagram accounts) must comply with our guidelines.

- ♥ **Chapter Representation** - The only social media pages that may be listed on National's website and be used to represent any Love on a Leash® Chapter, must be dedicated Love on a Leash® Chapter pages. Training companies or other organizations owned or operated by chapter leaders may not be listed or represented as Love on a Leash® chapter sites.
- ♥ **Keep Social Media Content Current** - Please ensure the "About Us" description and content is accurate and up-to-date. You will always find the most current information on the National website at [www.loveonaleash.org/who-we-are/](http://www.loveonaleash.org/who-we-are/). Additionally, please ensure all page links are public, active and working.
- ♥ **Photos** - Please do not feature photos showing faces of persons or patients on therapy visits unless you have signed photo releases.
- ♥ **Chapter Contact Information** - Please include your chapter contact information in the "About" section of the social media account. Additionally, please include a link to the National website for all forms and guidelines, rather than including forms and guidelines on the chapter social media page. This will help prevent outdated forms from being used.
- ♥ **Product & Service Endorsements** - No products, services, businesses, or training companies should be featured, endorsed, or sold on Love on a Leash® chapter social media pages. Love on a Leash® is a non-profit pet-provided therapy organization and it is outside the organization's mission to sell or endorse products or services.

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## Media Guidelines

As Love on a Leash® grows, we are garnering more attention from the media and that's a good thing! It helps shine a light on all the positive work our teams are doing in their communities.

It also means we have to be mindful about how Love on a Leash® is being portrayed to ensure our organization is being represented accurately and in the best light possible.

To help us with this effort, the Board of Directors has created the following media guidelines. Should you be contacted by someone in the media, please use these guidelines to help you determine the best way to respond and cooperate with them.

### General Guidelines

If you are contacted or approached by a member of the media who wants to interview you, or shoot a video story about you, your therapy pet, or Love on a Leash®, please follow these guidelines to ensure you are representing the organization as accurately and professionally as possible.

#### **If the media is requesting an interview or television or video shoot:**

- ♥ If you are a member of a Love on a Leash® Chapter, please refer the media to your Chapter Leader.
- ♥ If you are not a member of a chapter, please refer the media contact to the Love on a Leash® National website: [www.loveonaleash.org/media-information/](http://www.loveonaleash.org/media-information/) and have them contact the National office.
- ♥ If the media wants to shoot video or a television story at one of your visit sites, you must receive approval from the facility director first. Not all facilities welcome this kind of exposure, and HIPAA and privacy laws may preclude some facilities from participating. If the facility does not want to be included, suggest a different facility to the media (one that you do have approval for).
- ♥ Keep in mind, signed photo releases must be on file for any person that is featured in media stories or video. Some facilities maintain photo releases that may suffice (check with the facility director first to find out). If the facility does not have signed releases on file, please download the Love on a Leash® photo release forms from our website (in the [Member area](#)), and have anyone included in the story or video sign a copy. Please retain a copy of all releases in your or your chapter's files.

#### **If you are participating in an interview, television, or photo shoot, or if you are contacted while on a visit and there is no time to contact your chapter leader or refer the media to the National office:**

- ♥ Ideally, wear official Love on a Leash® attire, and ensure your pet is wearing its Love on a Leash® vest or bandana, and per member guidelines is clean and freshly groomed.
- ♥ Please refer to the Love on a Leash® National website at [www.loveonaleash.org](http://www.loveonaleash.org), for the definition of a therapy pet, the difference between therapy pets and service animals, and more. Take time to become familiar with this information prior to your interview (or print it out and take it with you) so you can be a good interviewee. Feel free to refer members of the media to the website for this information as well.



♥ Additionally, please make sure you are following all other member guidelines. Remember you are representing the entire organization; you want to set a great example!

**If you are asked questions about Love on a Leash® and you do not know the answer:**

Please refer the media to the National website at [www.loveonaleash.org](http://www.loveonaleash.org) for the latest, most accurate information, and ask them to contact the National office.

## ***Photo Releases***

Love on a Leash has two (2) Photo Release Forms available to members on the National Love on a Leash website in the [Member area](#). There is a Photo Release for a child and one for an adult.

Love on a Leash Photo Release Forms are to be used for educational and/or inspirational purposes only and you understand that no payment will be accepted for the use of the photo(s).

If you have not gained permission from an individual, be sure you have taken the picture using a side shot or a picture from behind that does not show the person's face or any distinguishing marks that may identify that person.

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## Advanced Therapy Degrees

Certified Love on a Leash® teams may be awarded an Advanced Therapy Pet Degree (ThD), including a patch, designation, certificate, and recognition in our newsletter, after completing a minimum of 50 volunteer HOURS in ONE of the specialty fields listed below. Members may apply for multiple degrees. Applications are available to download on our website in the [Member area](#).

- ♥ Only certified Love on a Leash® volunteer hours may be counted towards the 50 hours required (Team in training hours do not count).
- ♥ ONE application per team, per degree. If applying for more than one degree, please submit two applications. Include separate essays to address each degree; one check may be submitted to cover multiple degrees, if mailing simultaneously).
- ♥ A number of advanced degrees are available. You will be asked to select ONE from the list below. If you are unsure which field to select, please contact Love on a Leash® to inquire.
  - ❑ ThD (e:sv) **Elderly: Social Visits**  
(incl. memory care, dementia, Alzheimer's, skilled nursing, assisted living, etc)
  - ❑ ThD (c:rp) **Children: Reading Programs** (libraries, schools)
  - ❑ ThD (ht) **Hospital Therapy**  
(all ages, incl. rehab facilities, adult daycare centers, family support houses, etc)
  - ❑ ThD (hcv) **Hospice Care Visits** (palliative, all ages)
  - ❑ ThD (vt) **Veteran Therapy** (incl. active duty military, all branches)
  - ❑ ThD (sev) **Special Education Visits**  
(all ages, incl. special needs centers/homes for adults)
  - ❑ ThD (tcs:sr) **Teenage/College Students: Stress Relief**
  - ❑ ThD (cdt) **Court Dog Therapy**
  - ❑ ThD (jv) **Jail Visits** (incl. juvenile detention, halfway houses)
  - ❑ ThD (cr) **Crisis Response**  
(incl. shelters, temporary & emergency housing, post-trauma visits, etc)

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## Recognition Patches

Sandi Stewart was a long-time Love on a Leash® member (2007-2018) and Board Member (2009-2015). She was instrumental in bringing rabbits into the Love on a Leash® program, and her visits with Sprout, a Holland Lop Rabbit, as well as her beloved Cockapoo, Katie, are still missed. Sandi's generosity and example allow us to offer this program in her honor, recognizing our pets' selfless service bringing love and comfort to those in need in our communities.

- ♥ Love on a Leash® welcomes active, certified members to apply for a Pet Recognition Patch after completing at least 100, 250, or 500 volunteer VISITS with their certified pet (regardless of how long each visit lasted).
- ♥ If your pet is, or was, certified and active with more than one member, all visits with each handler are eligible to be retroactively counted toward this patch.
- ♥ Posthumous/Retired pet patches may be applied for; visit logs must also be submitted for consideration.
- ♥ For active pets, additional applications may be submitted as each VISIT milestone is reached (e.g. 1,000 visits would be represented by 2 x 500 visit patches).
- ♥ To apply for a Recognition Patch, please complete either an online application form or a printed paper application. Both are located in the Member Area.
- ♥ Submit completed application to Love on a Leash® with a \$5 fee to cover shipping & handling.

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