



ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERACTIONS



A Resource Guide

OVERVIEW

This guide is a reference to those interested in learning how to incorporate animals into services, programs and treatments to improve the lives of humans. The first section describes service and support animals, including regulations for certification, identification and training of animals. The remaining sections focus on trained therapy animals and their application. It begins with describing the types of therapy animals, animal-wellness guidelines, types of interventions and methods to incorporate therapy animals into a variety of professions. Further sections explain the three categories of animal-assisted interventions, including animal-assisted education (to improve reading comprehension and empathy in schools), animal-assisted activities (to provide emotional support for crisis victims, and patients in hospitals, nursing homes, colleges, airports and at-risk youth) and animal-assisted therapy (to enhance efficacy of treatment in psychotherapy, social work, physical and occupational therapy, and speech therapy). The final section, describes the use of horses in various types of interventions. It explains how the size, natural movement, and emotional sensitivity of a horse can enhance treatment, including those commonly used to treat victims of trauma, rehabilitation in occupational and physical therapy, developmental disability, and similar animal-assisted activities used with other animals.

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About This Guide

This resource guide was designed as an addendum to a Healthy Pets Healthy Families Forum for Los Angeles County, Veterinary Public Health, on “*Animal-Assisted Therapy: Applications and Strategies*”, presented on October 29, 2019. It can also be used as a general resource on applied animal-assisted interactions and animal-assisted interventions (AAI), for educators, librarians, speech pathologists, mental health professionals (including Mental Health Interns), healthcare professionals, physical and occupational therapists, emergency medical professionals, public health professionals (health educators and program planners) veterinarians (including Veterinary Technicians) and other interested professionals.

It provides an overview of animal-assisted interventions and how the use of therapy animals can enhance programs and treatments in a variety of professions. Animal-assisted interactions includes utilizing an animal to improve the lives of humans. It is a subset of Anthrozoology, the study of interactions and relationships between humans and animals. The human-animal bond helps to reduce anxiety, grief, depression, isolation and blood pressure, designating animals as benefit to humans. The human-animal bond also helps to redirect attention and sensation of pain to help improve therapeutic completion and outcome.

Incorporating animals into educational programs, physical and occupational treatments and mental health interventions is expanding rapidly. While many studies show efficacy, we must take caution and understand the study design. Many studies incorporating animals into programs lack a non-treatment control group; have insufficient number of study subjects; rely on self-reports instead of objective measures; lack long-term follow-up evaluation; no blind observations to control for unconscious bias from researchers; and have not had formal manuals that describe treatment procedures, necessary for standardization and replication (Herzog, 2014). However, more recently, research methodology on the study of AAI’s is beginning to improve. As an example, the Human-Animal Interaction Scale and Manual was developed to improve measurement of human-animal interactions (Fournier, 2016). Some professions are also beginning to incorporate animal-assisted therapy as a standard treatment plan, such as those in Occupational and Physical Therapy. Universities, governmental agencies and professional organizations are continuing to enhance research methods and results are slowly showing benefit of incorporating animals into treatment and programs. Incorporating trained therapy animals into treatment and programs include a wide range of benefits, such as to help those with physical and mental health challenges, helping children to improve reading skills, providing emotional support to patients in hospitals and nursing homes, and to victims of trauma during crisis events. Therapy animals are also used to improve therapeutic outcomes

for those with developmental disability, physical injury rehabilitation, Autism, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), addiction, victims of traumatic experiences, including but not limited to, child abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence, and youth violence.

Trained therapy animals have a wide range of therapeutic applications. As AAI's expand in use, research and application, professionals can learn how to incorporate trained therapy animals into their programs and services to help improve therapeutic outcomes for their patients and clients. Because animal-assisted interventions offer an extensive use of applications to various professions, this guide is designed for potential professionals to educate them on the opportunities and benefits of incorporating animals to improve programs. An opportunity, that can bring benefit to both animals and humans.



The goal of therapy is not to explain things to a patient or client, but to provide them with an opportunity to understand and discover self-awareness.

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Section 1: Assistance Animals (Service & Emotional Support)



Assistance animals, an animal-assisted interaction that includes animals that are either trained to perform a specific task for an individual with disability or are not-trained, but has been designated by a mental health professional, that a specific animal provides emotional support to a specific individual.

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF ASSISTANCE ANIMALS

Service Animal	A dog or miniature horse, “trained” to perform specific tasks for an individual with disability
Emotional Support Animal (ESA)	Any domestic “non-trained” animal, where a licensed mental health professional has designated that the specific animal provides emotional support to a specific individual with disability

1.2 ASSISTANCE ANIMAL REGULATION

	Americans with Disability Act (ADA)	Air Carrier Access Act	Fair Housing Act
Service Animal	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service Animal In-Training	No	No	Yes
Emotional Support Animal	No	Yes	Yes

1.3 ASSISTANCE ANIMALS PERMITTED LOCATION BY REGULATION

	Service Animal	Service Animal In-Training	Emotional Support Animal
Housing	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hotels	Yes	No ¹	No
Airlines	Yes	No ¹	Yes
Public Transit	Yes	No ¹	No
Restaurants	Yes	No ¹	No
Kitchen Food Prep	No	No	No
Sterile Rooms	No	No	No
Jail/Prison Cells	No	No	No
Churches	No	No	No
Private Clubs	No	No	No

¹Can vary depending on company

1.4 ASSISTANCE ANIMAL CERTIFICATION

	Training	Proof of Training	Proof of Certification
Service Animal	Yes ¹	No	No
Emotional Support Animal	No	No	No ²

¹ Trained to perform a specific task for an individual with disability

² Letter from licensed mental health professional designating that the specific animal provides emotional support for a designated individual with disability

1.5 ASSISTANCE ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

	Visible Identification	Verified Paper Identification
Service Animal	None	None
Service Animal In-Training	None	None
Emotional Support Animal	None	Yes ¹

¹ Including a letter from licensed mental health professional designating that the specific animal provides emotional support for a designated individual with disability

1.6 QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE ASKED ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL WITH AN ANIMAL

1	Is the animal required because of a disability?
2	What tasks or functions does the animal provide for you?
3	What has the animal been trained to do?
4	Would you describe how the animal performs this task or function for you?
<p>Note: Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the following questions are not allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can your pet demonstrate these tasks or functions? • What type or severity of disability do you have? 	

1.7 RESOURCES

1. **FAIR HOUSING ACT: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/assistance_animals
2. **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA): U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division** https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm
3. **AIR CARRIERS ACCESS ACT: U.S. Department of Transportation**
 - a. **Service Animals & Emotional Support Animals (ESA) – Includes airlines staff training video** <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/service-animals-including-emotional-support-animals>
 - b. **Service Animal Guidance**
https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/20030509_1.pdfhttps://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/20030509_1.pdf
 - c. **Air Travel With Animals – Brochure (pdf)**
https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/AirTravel_with_ServiceAnimals-TriFold.pdf
4. **ADA INFORMATION & GUIDANCE: Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals**
<https://adata.org/publication/service-animals-booklet>
5. **MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONA’S ROLE IN EVALUATING THE NEED FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS – (video)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0G3L46jpXE&feature=youtu.be>

Section 2: Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI)



Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) are structured and goal-oriented interactions that incorporate therapy animals into health and human services and education, to improve traditional therapy and educational activities. AAI’s differ greatly from assistance animals that are regulated to provide service or emotional. AAI’s include Animal-assisted activities (AAA), Animal-assisted education (AAE), and Animal-assisted therapy (AAT).

2.1 TYPES OF ANIMALS USED FOR AAI’S

Depending on the therapeutic approach, the following domesticated animals are used for AAI’s		
Dogs	Guinea Pigs	Miniature Horses
Cats	Birds	Cows
Rabbits	Rats	Goats
Gerbils	Horses	Chickens
<i>Note:</i> Non-domesticated animals are not well socialized, unpredictable and can cause harm to others, therefor are not recommended for AAI’s		

2.2 GUIDELINES FOR INCORPORATING THERAPY ANIMALS INTO AAI’S¹

Requirements of Animal	Preparation of Animal	Handler Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent Temperament • Calm & gentle around people • Does not react to unusual sights, sounds, smell • Obedient & follows directions • Maintains self-control after play • Ability to sit quietly for extended periods • Navigate through crowded environments • Attentive to handler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification-obedience training • Walk comfortably on leash • Sit, stay, come & lie down on command • Ability to ignore a neutral dog • Maintains self-control • Refrain from aggressive responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect animal • Remove from stressful situations • Provide animal with breaks, walks, play time – with favorite toys, etc. • Have fresh water available at all times • Maintain grooming • Establish a safe space away from stimulation during sessions • Generally, chooses the most appropriate therapy animal for specific client and/or treatment

¹ Training resource: petpartners.org

2.3 ANIMAL WELLNESS – AVMA GUIDELINES FOR AAI’S

Veterinarians play a vital role to ensure the health and well-being of animals and humans involved in AAI’s. Common concerns among veterinarians are zoonotic disease risk and behavioral problems of the animal. For this reason, it is recommended that veterinarians be actively involved in AAI programs to ensure the health and welfare of the animal and humans involved. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) provide strategies for an effective wellness program to provide assurance that animals involved in AAI’s are healthy (reducing bi-directional risk of zoonotic transmission), behaviorally appropriate for the specific AAI program, and protected from being harmed by participating in the AAI program. In part, the AVMA has updated AAI preventive medical and behavioral strategies for animals participating in AAI’s, which can be accessed online at the following link

[<https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Animal-Assisted-Interventions-Guidelines.aspx>].

2.4 PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED WITH LEADING AAI’S

Handler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The human that cares for and leads the animal(s) • Also trained for ensuring the needs of the animal(s)
Therapy Animal Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handler • Trained Animal
Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health professional • Physical or Occupational Therapist • Speech-Language Pathologist • Teacher, Librarian, etc.

2.5 CATEGORIES OF AAI’S

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE)¹	Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)¹	Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal-Assisted Reading Program • Humane Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal-Assisted Crisis Response • Therapy Animal Hospital Visit • Therapy Animal Nursing Home Visit • AAA for At-risk or Delinquent Youth • Stress Reduction – Airports & University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy • Animal-Assisted Social Work • Animal-Assisted Physical Therapy • Animal-Assisted Speech Therapy • Animal-Assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model

⁽¹⁾ Informal activities with trained therapy animals

⁽²⁾ Formal activities with trained therapy animals

2.6 AAI'S APPLIED TO EDUCATION PROFESSION

Incorporating a trained therapy animal in an educational setting such as in a classroom, school activity, or library provides a calming effect among students. It improves academic participation and performance, stress reduction in the classroom, test-taking, listening skills, self-confidence, empathy, and bullying prevention (Daly, 2010; Jalongo, 2004; Thompson, 2003). Similarly, therapy animals in educational settings, reduces blood pressure, anxiety, and depression, and improves interaction among students and teachers. In addition to academics, animals are also used in at the elementary level in classrooms, school assembly and libraries on humane education, regarding empathy and protection of human-animal interaction. There are national training organizations that provide training of animals such as Pet Partners. The National Education Association and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals provide programs and resources. See **Section-3 (Animal-Assisted Reading Program)** and **Section-4 (Humane Education)** for further application.

2.7 AAI'S APPLIED TO SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PROFESSION

Incorporating a trained therapy animal into traditional speech and language therapy improves participation and motivation of the client. Animal-assisted speech therapy is planned, goal-oriented and evaluated. It is provided by a licensed speech-language pathologist, to help improve a patient's treatment plan. Sometimes they are used to reduce anxiety of the client, sometimes used to be part of the treatment strategy, such as speaking a command to the animal, where the animal has been trained to respond with correct speech. Incorporating animals into speech therapy has been shown to enhance traditional speech and language therapies (Macauley, 2006). See **Section-5 (Animal-Assisted Speech Therapy and Animal-Assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model)** for further application.

2.8 AAI'S APPLIED TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSICAL THERAPY PROFESSIONS

Animals are incorporated into occupational therapy and physical therapy treatment plans through AAT, as discussed in Section-5 and Section-6. Incorporating animals into therapy, is becoming more common due to its ability to improve treatment outcomes. Both the American Occupational Therapy Association (ATOA) and the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) recognize Animal-assisted interactions and interventions as a formal method of treatment. Trained animals are incorporated into therapy by a certified Occupational Therapist or certified Physical Therapist. It is shown that trained therapy animals help to improve motivation of the patient to participate in treatment and rehabilitation from disability or injury (Braun, 2009). See **Section-5 (Animal-assisted Physical Therapy and Animal-assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model)** and **Section-6 (Equine-assisted Interactions)** for further application.

2.9 AAI'S APPLIED TO MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSION

Incorporating trained therapy animals into traditional psychotherapy is shown to enhance traditional therapy strategies. The trained therapy animal is part of the clinical mental health treatment session. Licensed mental health professionals (Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, etc.) work directly with the client, the trained therapy-animal, and the animal handler. The human-animal bond helps to divert attention, reduce stress and anxiety, and improve self-regulation and personal boundaries. It is beneficial for individual and group therapy, where one or more animals can be used to improve treatment outcomes. It has been shown to improve treatment outcome for those for clients with depression, addiction, schizophrenia, autism, other behavioral issues and victims of abuse and trauma (Kamioka, 2014; Fine, 2010; Stewart, 2016; Steward, 2013). Mental health professionals are also involved in animal-assisted interactions, with animal-assisted social work, where licensed mental health professionals provide pet loss and grief counseling and human-animal abuse prevention and reporting. It also provides veterinarian hospital staff with therapy to reduce compassion fatigue in workplace wellness, and also to promote health and overall wellness to those who work at animal hospitals and clinics. To establish certification training, the Animal-assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model provides training for graduate students studying social work, and marriage and family therapy, in the mental health professions. See **Section-5 (Animal-assisted Psychotherapy and Animal-assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model)** and **Section-6 (Equine-assisted Interactions)** for further application.

2.10 AAI'S APPLIED TO HEALTHCARE PROFESSION (other than Occupational and Physical Therapy)

Trained therapy animals are used in AAA, where animal handlers bring a trained therapy animal to hospitals, both inpatient and outpatient, hospice and nursing homes. This is planned and goal oriented, where trained therapy animals provide an informal interaction with patients. It is coordinated with the animal handler and healthcare professional or other service provider. When the therapy animal visits a hospital or nursing home, it helps to reduce anxiety and blood pressure, pain and emotional stress (especially for surgical patients), and improves feelings of overall wellness (Kathie, 2007; Marcus, 2012; Sarpell, 2010). See **Section-4 (Animal-assisted Activities)** for further application.

2.11 AAI'S APPLIED TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES/FIRST RESPONDERS PROFESSIONS

As part of AAA, trained therapy animals are taken, by their handlers to victims of trauma to help provide comfort and emotional support to victims and responders (Chandler, 2012). Animal handlers are also trained and then recruited by organizations to provide service. Many therapy animal handlers provide service directly to local emergency medical services, such as fire, law enforcement and other local, state and federal agencies. Because therapy animals help to reduce anxiety and blood pressure, as well as emotional stress, these are helpful to victims of trauma, including fire, school shooting, suicide, natural disasters, relationship or family violence, and other community crises (Graham, 2009; Eaton-Stull, 2015). Animals and their handler are trained accordingly to handle working in crisis situations to cope with stressful environments, while ensuring safety of the animal and handler (National Standards Committee for Animal-assisted Crisis Response, 2010). See **Section-4 (Animal-assisted Activities)** for further application.

2.12 AAI'S APPLIED TO PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSION

The efficacy of the human-animal bond provides the public health profession with a method to improve public health prevention interventions. While public health is population based, AAA can be a beneficial strategy for health educators, program planners and epidemiologists to incorporate into levels of prevention strategies, including but not limited to injury and violence prevention programs (youth and school violence, suicide, drugs and addiction, etc.), to unintentional injury program education (Kamioka, 2014; Fine, 2010). The human-animal bond offers a range of opportunity to improve public health interventions and planning, as incorporating animals can help divert attention, reduce stress and anxiety, improve self-regulation, and self-confidence and boundaries. It also provides a benefit to community wellness, school-based programs, violence prevention, and health education program planning. In addition, trained therapy animals can also be incorporated into workplace wellness programs, including both private and public agencies, to help reduce stress and sick-days, and improve moral, productivity and overall wellness in the workplace. Animal-assisted therapy, can also be applied to the development of public health interventions, research, and evaluation, especially in the area of intentional injury, such as youth and school violence, drugs, addiction, etc. (Van Der Kolk, 2014; Thompson, 2003; Yorke, 2008). See **Section-4 (Animal-assisted Activities)**, **Section-5 (Animal-assisted Therapy)** and **Section-6 (Equine assisted Interactions)** for further application.

2.13 AAI'S APPLIED TO VETERINARY PROFESSION

The human-animal bond can benefit the veterinary profession in several areas where veterinarians, veterinary technicians and animal-hospital staff might not have specific training to provide. First, among Animal-assisted Social Work, provides pet loss and grief counseling to animal owners at animal hospitals and clinics. It can also assist with human-animal abuse and reporting. Animal-assisted Social Work, can also help veterinarians and animal hospital staff by helping to address compassion fatigue and promote overall health and wellness of the clinic and administrative staff (Stewart, 2013; Fine, 2010). Secondly, the Animal-assisted Paraprofessional Service Model, provides professional certification training for veterinarian technician and assistants. It provides an opportunity for those in training to learn of the efficacy and services of Animal-assisted Therapy and Animal-assisted Interventions (Fine, 2010). See **Section-5 (Animal-assisted Therapy)** for further application.

2.14 PROFESSION BY APPLICATION, PURPOSE AND TYPE OF AAI

PROFESSION	APPLICATION	PURPOSE	TYPE	AAI SUB-CATEGORY
Education	School Assembly (Elementary) • Classroom • Library	Improves: • Reading ability • Comprehension • Empathy	AAE ¹	Animal-Assisted Reading Program
	University	Stress reduction		Humane Education
Speech Pathology	School (Elementary)	• Improves speech therapy • Reduces anxiety	AAT ³	Animal-Assisted Speech Therapy
	Professional Training - University	Speech-Language Pathologist Certificate Training	AAT ³	Animal-Assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model
Physical & Occupational Therapy (PT/OT)	Hospital/Clinic Based	• Enhances PT & OT Therapy • Reduces sensation of pain	AAT ³	Animal-Assisted Physical Therapy
	Professional Technical Level Training - University	PT/OT Certificate Training		Animal-Assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model
Mental Health	Clinical Practice • Mental Health • Social Work	• Enhances traditional therapy • Improves self-worth, communication, self-regulation, socialization, trust, boundaries • Reduces anxiety, stress & diverts attention	AAT ³	Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy Animal-Assisted Social Work
	Professional Training - University	Certificate Training • Psychology Intern • MFT Intern • Social Work Intern		Animal-Assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model
Healthcare (other than PT & OT)	• Hospital/Clinic • Inpatient/outpatient • Hospice • Nursing Home	• Reduces blood pressure & anxiety • Improves feelings of wellness • Reduction of pain & emotional stress for surgery (pre-post)	AAA ²	Animal-Assisted Hospital Visit Animal-Assisted Nursing Home Visit
	Emergency Medical Services	Community Crisis-Benefits: • Victims • Responders		AAA ²
Public Health	Workplace Wellness Programs	Reduces stress & sick-days Improves moral, productivity & overall wellness	AAA ²	Stress Reduction
	Injury & Violence Prevention & Education Programs (Youth/school violence, suicide, etc.)	• Community wellness • School/community programs • Violence prevention • Program application		AAA for At-Risk or Delinquent Youth
Veterinary	Veterinary Hospital-Service	• Pet Loss & Grief Counseling • Human-Animal Abuse	AAT ³	Animal-Assisted Social Work
	Veterinary Hospital – Medical & Staff	• Compassion fatigue • Promote health & wellness		
	Professional Technical Level Training - University	Certificate – Veterinary Technician/Assistant Training Certificate		Animal-Assisted Paraprofessional AAT Service Model

¹ AAE (Animal-Assisted Education)

² AAA (Animal-Assisted Activities)

³ AAT (Animal-Assisted Therapy)

Section 3: Animal-Assisted Education (AAE)



Animal-assisted education (AAE) is a goal-oriented, planned and structured intervention, incorporating therapy animals into education. AAE's are delivered by an educational or service professional. Progress is measured and documented. The purpose of AAE's are to improve academic goals, social skills and cognitive functioning. AAE's include Animal-Assisted Reading Program and Humane Education.

3.1 AVMA DEFINITION FOR AAE'S

The AVMA provides the following definition:

“Animal-assisted education (AAE) is a planned and structured intervention directed and/or delivered by an educational and related service professional with specific academic or educational goals.” (American Veterinary Medical Association, 2019).

3.2 ANIMAL-ASSISTED READING PROGRAM

Animal-assisted reading program, incorporates a trained therapy dog into a reading activity, where a child practices reading skills by reading either to the animal or reads with the animal by their side. The animal is first introduced to the student(s) before the program begins. These programs are provided at libraries, classrooms (usually elementary), and after-school programs. It can be individual or small group. The purpose of the reading program is to improve reading fluency and comprehension.

3.3 READING PROGRAM – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Animal Health Foundation	https://www.animalhealthfoundation.net/how-we-help/read.html
High Desert Obedience Club	http://highdesertobediencelub.org/
Orange County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	http://www.ocspca.com/
Paws To Heal	http://pawstoheal.com/
Intermountain Therapy Animals	http://therapyanimals.org/Home.html

Programs & Resources	Website
Reading Educational Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.)	http://therapyanimals.org/California.html
Canine Literacy Program (OCSPCA)	http://www.ocspca.com/program/canine-literacy-program/
Read With Me	https://petpartners.org/read-with-me

3.4 HUMANE EDUCATION

Humane education, teaches people to understand the consequences of their behavior and encourages the value of all living animals. These programs are presented to groups at schools, assembly, libraries, community centers, and community events. The purpose is to enhance empathy and build respect for all animals.

3.5 HUMANE EDUCATION – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Pet Partners	https://petpartners.org/
Inland empire Pet Partners	http://hssbv.org/inland_empire_pet_partners
Orange County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	http://www.ocspca.com/

Programs & Resources	Website
Pet Classroom	http://petclassroom.com/
OCSPCA Humane Education Program	http://www.ocspca.com/program/canine-literacy-program/
National Education Association	http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/pets-in-the-classroom.html

Section 4: Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)



Animal-assisted activities (AAA) are informal interventions that incorporates visitation of a trained therapy animals to improve motivation, education and/or recreation to enhance quality of life. It is hosted in a variety of environments, delivered by trained professionals, paraprofessionals or volunteers. AAA's include Animal-Assisted Crisis Response, Therapy Animal Hospital Visit, Therapy Animal Nursing Home Visit, AAA for At-risk or Delinquent Youth, and Stress Reduction at Airports and University.

4.1 AVMA DEFINITION FOR AAA'S

The AVMA provides the following definition:

“Animal-assisted activities (AAA) provide opportunities for motivation, education, or recreation to enhance quality of life. Animal assisted activities are delivered in a variety of environments by specially trained professionals, paraprofessionals, or volunteers in association with animals that meet specific criteria.” (American Veterinary Medical Association, 2019).

4.2 ANIMAL-ASSISTED CRISIS RESPONSE



Animal-assisted crisis response, provides visitation of a trained therapy animal to provide comfort, stress-relief and emotional support to individuals in crisis. This can include community trauma, natural disasters, suicide, to family or relationship violence. The therapy animal provides stress relief and emotional support to both victims and responders. Purdue University provides a descriptive [video](#) describing animal-assisted crisis response.

4.3 ANIMAL-ASSISTED CRISIS RESPONSE – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
National Crisis Response Canines	http://www.crisisresponsecanines.org/
HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response	https://www.hopeaacr.org/
Pet Partners – Animal Assisted Crisis Response	https://petpartners.org/act/aacr
National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster	https://www.nvoad.org/
Therapy Dogs International	https://tdi-dog.org/OurPrograms.aspx?Page=DSRD+(Disaster+Stress+Relief+Dogs)

Programs & Resources	Website
Mini Therapy Horses	https://www.minitherapyhorses.com
Animal-Assisted Crisis Response National Standards	https://www.hopeaacr.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/AACRNationalStandards7Mar10.pdf
A Beginner’s Guide to Comfort Dogs (FEMA)	https://www.fema.gov/blog/2016-03-22/beginners-guide-comfort-dogs

4.4 ANIMAL-ASSISTED ANIMAL HOSPITAL VISIT



Animal-assisted animal hospital visit, provides visitation of a trained therapy animal at general and children’s hospitals, inpatient and outpatient services and hospice (Marcus, 2012b). The therapy animal provides stress-relief, emotional support and improves overall well-being in the hospital environment. More and more hospitals are incorporating therapy animals into the hospital environment for various purposes. This [video](#) describes how Children’s Hospital Los Angeles incorporates therapy dogs as an example.

4.5 RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR ANIMALS IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) provides facility management (hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, etc.) with recommendations for AAA's, Service Animals, Personal Pets, and Research Animals at healthcare facilities. It also includes tables of commonly transmitted diseases and recommendations. Approved by SHEA, the [Animals in Healthcare Facilities GUIDELINES Pocket Guide](#), is available in electronic or hard copy formats. It can be ordered at the following link:

<https://www.guidelinecentral.com/shop/animals-in-healthcare-facilities-guidelines-pocket-card/>

4.6 ANIMAL-ASSISTED HOSPITAL VISIT – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Pet Partners	<u>https://petpartners.org/</u>
Alliance of Therapy Dogs	<u>https://www.therapydogs.com/</u>
Therapy Dogs International	<u>https://tdi-dog.org/</u>
Programs & Resources	Website
Mini Therapy Horses	<u>https://www.minitherapyhorses.com</u>
Love On 4 Paws	<u>https://www.loveon4paws.org/</u>

4.7 ANIMAL-ASSISTED NURSING HOME VISIT



Animal-assisted nursing home visit, provides visitation of a trained therapy animal at nursing homes. These are provided at various times, often weekly or on a regular basis, which provides interactive and stimulating activity. The display of affection raises spirits among residents. The petting and playing with the animal increase physical activity and improves participation among residents, especially among those with limited mobility.

4.8 ANIMAL-ASSISTED NURSING HOME VISIT – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Pet Partners	https://petpartners.org/
Alliance of Therapy Dogs	https://www.therapydogs.com/
Therapy Dogs International	https://tdi-dog.org/

Programs & Resources	Website
Love on a Leash Angeles Valley Foothill Chapter	http://www.loveonaleash.org/Who-We-Are/
Mini Therapy Horses	https://www.minitherapyhorses.com
Love On 4 Paws	https://www.loveon4paws.org/

4.9 AAA FOR AT-RISK OR DELINQUENT YOUTH



AAA for at-risk or delinquent youth utilizes trained therapy animals to help build a closer connection between the teen and animal, where the human-animal bond helps to provide an opportunity for behavior change. Animals are non-judgmental and compassionate. It is common among youth, that adults have failed them or violated their personal boundaries. The therapy animal helps to encourage the youth to express their feelings and improves the opportunity for clinical treatment. It also helps to engage youth through animal welfare education and social-emotional learning. Animals are brought to a youth facility or sometimes the youth are taken to a farm. When youth spend time with animals, it decreases stress and hyper-arousal, antisocial behavior, while building trust in self and others, improving empathy and compassion and boundary control.

4.10 AAA FOR AT-RISK OR DELINQUENT YOUTH – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations, Programs & Resources	Website
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles (spcaLA)	http://spcala.com/programs-services/humane-education/about-humane-education/
Coalition for At-Risk-Restoring Youth (CARRY)	http://foratriskyouth.org/program-descriptions
Therapy Animals Supporting Kids (TASK) Program	http://www.americanhumane.org/app/uploads/2016/08/therapy-animals-supporting-kids.pdf
Mini Therapy Horses	https://www.minitherapyhorses.com

4.11 STRESS REDUCTION - AIRPORTS & UNIVERSITY



Trained therapy animals are utilized to help reduce stress during exam week, as well as depression on college campuses. Some colleges have their own trained therapy animal that they also use throughout the year in clinical and other settings. Similarly, therapy animals are also utilized at airports to help reduce stress and enhance the airport experience for passengers.

Video Resource: <https://www.airportfoundation.org>

4.12 STRESS REDUCTION – AIRPORTS & UNIVERSITY – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Pet Partners	https://petpartners.org/
Alliance of Therapy Dogs	https://www.therapydogs.com/
Airport Foundation	http://airportfoundation.org/

Section 5: Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)



Animal-assisted therapy is a formal, planned and goal-oriented, where a trained therapy animal is part of the therapeutic treatment. The animal enhances traditional treatment. AAT is delivered by a health or human service provider, ranging from a mental health professional, Speech-Language Pathologist, Physical or Occupational Therapist, Health Educator or another paraprofessional. AAT is provided to individuals as well as in a group setting. AAT helps to enhance existing treatment by promoting physical, social emotional and cognitive functioning. Categories includes Animal-assisted psychotherapy, Animal-assisted social work, Animal-assisted physical therapy, Animal-assisted speech therapy and Animal-assisted paraprofessional AAT service model.

5.1 AVMA DEFINITION FOR AAT'S

The AVMA provides the following definition:

“Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is a goal directed intervention in which an animal meeting specific criterion is an integral part of the treatment process. Animal-assisted therapy is delivered and/or directed by health or human service providers working within the scope of their profession. Animal-assisted therapy is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, or cognitive function. Animal-assisted therapy is provided in a variety of settings, and may be group or individual in nature. The process is documented and evaluated.” (American Veterinary Medical Association, 2019).¹

5.2 ANIMAL-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY



Trained therapy animals are incorporated into counseling sessions to help enhance traditional forms of psychotherapy. Sessions include the client, therapy animal, the handler and a licensed mental health professional.

Incorporating trained therapy animals into mental health treatments, help to motivate the client and improve therapy outcomes. Animals are non-judgmental, empathetic and affectionate, which is helpful for clients who have had traumatic experiences in their life. Animals provide the ability for one to recognize one's own anxiety and social skills, and how their behaviors

can affect others. They can help motivate the client to express their own feelings. Animals are incorporated individually or with a group of animals (trained dogs, horses and miniature horses, etc.). Animals can also be matched with a specific client. For example, a client who have had personal boundary violations, is paired with an animal who has been rescued or physically abused. This improves the ability of the client to relate to the animal. Animals also help to reduce the physiological and psychological stress of talking about trauma. They can lower heart rates, helping the client to be less anxious during the session. Animals also increases social interactions and self-esteem, as well as building trust in self and others.

Therapy animals can be beneficial when treating the effects of traumatic experiences, among victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), youth violence, child abuse and neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and other boundary violations that often result in traumatic stress disorder PTSD, anxiety, substance abuse and addiction, depression, re-traumatization, suicidal ideation, need to improve self-esteem and social skills, etc.

Therapy animals can be incorporated in many ways depending on the therapeutic approach. These can include: 1) a client cuddling or petting an animal, while talking about their trauma or when simply talking to the therapist; 2) doing artwork about their experiences with the animal at their side; 3) spending time with an animal or haltering and/or walking a horse, helping the client to reduce anxiety; 4) executing an obstacle course with an animal, where the client tries to lead the animal across an object that is defined as an emotional barrier for the client; 5) watching animals interact, such as a group of horses while discussing body language and non-verbal communication; 6) creating play scenarios with the animal; or 7) teaching the animal a new trick or skill to help empower a client.

5.3 ANIMAL-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY – ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Society for Psychotherapy	https://societyforpsychotherapy.org/
The National Psychologist	https://nationalpsychologist.com/
Special Spirit, Inc. Equine Therapy Center	https://www.specialspirit.org/

5.4 ANIMAL-ASSISTED SOCIAL WORK



Animal-assisted social work is a two-client system: the human client and the veterinary medical and support staff. Social workers or other mental health professionals with certification in animal-assisted therapy, can contribute to 1) the human-animal bond relationship by providing pet-loss and grief counseling/advance directive planning for pet handlers and owners; 2) the link between human-animal abuse (such as animal abuse, intimate partner violence, child abuse, elder maltreatment, etc.); 3) promoting health and wellness to the human and animal; and 4) providing veterinary medical and support staff with emotional support to reduce compassion fatigue as well as improving moral within staff development of the veterinary staff.

In addition, because mental health professionals have been trained on how to identify and treat emotional trauma, they are also trained in knowing how to approach and even report animal abuse and child abuse. This type of training and experience can also provide a benefit to veterinary staff regarding how to handle pet-loss and grief. Mental health professionals can obtain animal-assisted certification, in addition to their traditional professional licensure in counseling. The University of Tennessee provides a [video](#) describing animal-assisted social work and related certification.

5.5 ANIMAL-ASSISTED SOCIAL WORK - ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Pet Loss Support Directory	http://aplb.org/support/groups/california.html
Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement	https://www.aplb.org/
The International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care	https://www.iaahpc.org/
Animals & Society Institute (Degrees, certificates & specializations on human-animal studies)	https://www.animalsandsociety.org/human-animal-studies/degree-programs/

5.6 ANIMAL-ASSISTED PHYSICAL THERAPY



Trained therapy animals are incorporated into physical therapy as well as occupational therapy to improve existing treatment and rehabilitation from injury, developmental disability, or mental health challenges. Various types of therapy animals can be incorporated into a variety of settings to meet individual patient needs.

Animals provide a benefit that enhances treatment to improve neuromusculoskeletal abilities (strength, endurance, range of motion), motor skills (fine and gross muscles movements), cognitive skills (multitasking, problem-solving, attention span), sensory functioning (visual, audio-perception, smell, taste, peripheral sensation), perceptual processing skills (spatial relations, body awareness, depth perception), respiratory functioning (positioning, blowing, diaphragm strength), communication skills, balance, and weight-bearing. Incorporating therapy animals into treatment has shown to improve rehabilitation and treatment outcomes. Studies have shown that the use of animals in treatment, releases of beta-endorphins and lymphocytes, contributing to generating positive feelings and reducing the perception of pain (Braun, Stangler, Narveson, & Pettingell, 2009). The Intermountain Therapy Animals provides a [video example](#) of how animal-assisted physical therapy is incorporated into rehabilitation of motor vehicle related injury of a child.

5.7 ANIMAL-ASSISTED PHYSICAL THERAPY - ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
American Occupational Therapy Association	https://www.aota.org/
American Physical Therapy Association	http://www.apta.org/
Mini Therapy Horses	https://www.minitherapyhorses.com/

5.8 ANIMAL-ASSISTED SPEECH THERAPY



Incorporating trained therapy animals into speech therapy is not a separate type of therapy or service, but incorporates the animal into part of the clinical treatment plan. This is delivered by a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP). While dogs are mostly used, other animals can include rabbits, cats, horses, donkeys, sheep, goats and chickens.

Depending on the need, the animal can be used to calm a child down who might be anxious during a session. It can also be incorporated as part of the treatment as the client speaks to the animal by providing commands. Whereas the trained animal responds only with proper speech. Sometimes the animal is used to gain interest to those who might not be interested in the session. The animal can also carry a saddle-pack with speech therapy cards which is then incorporated in various ways. Animal-assisted therapy is generally individual, with individual trained therapy animals. However, an SLP might also take the client to a farm or barn with various animals, which motivates the client to speak of their experiences, while the SLP incorporates therapy accordingly. Animals increase motivation, participation of speech therapy sessions, and builds confidence of the client. An SLP, at Pawsitive Friendships, provides a [video](#), describing how trained therapy animals are incorporated into speech therapy treatment plans and sessions.

5.9 ANIMAL-ASSISTED SPEECH THERAPY - ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Organizations	Website
Therapy Dogs International	https://tdi-dog.org
Pet Partners	https://petpartners.org/
Intermountain Therapy Animals	http://therapyanimals.org/Home.html

5.10 ANIMAL-ASSISTED PARAPROFESSIONAL AAT SERVICE MODEL



The Animal-assisted paraprofessional AAT service model focuses on paraprofessionals such as Veterinary Assistant/Technicians, Teacher Assistants, and Mental Health Interns (Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapist). The service model provides an opportunity for professional trainees who are interested in certification, to incorporate animal-assisted therapy into their profession.

Section 6: Equine-Assisted Interactions



Equine-assisted interactions, incorporates horses into various types of interventions. Interactions with horses can also be applied similarly to those discussed with other animals, such as AAA's with Therapy animal hospital visit, AAA for at-risk or delinquent youth; Animal-assisted therapy (AAT), including Animal-assisted psychotherapy, Animal-assisted physical (and Occupational) therapy; and Animal-assisted speech therapy. The therapeutic value of interacting with horses in animal interventions, is their *size, movement and emotional connection*. Horses can be incorporated into a wide range of animal interventions, including equine-assisted activities (EAA), equine-assisted therapies (EAT), Hippotherapy (HPOT), equine-facilitates/assisted psychotherapy (EEP/EAP), equine-assisted/facilitates learning, eherapeutic carriage driving (TCD), and therapeutic vaulting (TV).

6.1 EQUINE-ASSISTED INTERACTIONS – PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION ORGANIZATIONS

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH)

[The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International \(PATH\)](#) is a global authority, resource, advocate and certifying organization for equine-assisted activities and therapies. It promotes safety among equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with physical and emotional challenges and those with special needs. With PATH activities and therapies, the client is on the horse. It utilizes the motion of the horse as part of the therapeutic treatment among both physical and occupational therapies, in collaboration with a PATH Certified Equine Specialist.

American Hippotherapy Association

[The American Hippotherapy Association](#) provides educational resources and education for those in physical and occupational therapy, and speech language pathology, who incorporate the equine movement and equine environment to improve and enhance traditional treatment. The term hippotherapy refers to how physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology professionals apply evidenced-based practice and clinical reasoning that utilizes the movement of the horse as a therapy tool. It engages sensory, neuromotor and cognitive systems to enhance functional outcomes and treatment. Hippotherapy is highly regarded as a therapy tool by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA),

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), and the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA). The term “Hippotherapy” is not always used however. It might be named “animal-therapy” or similar. In general, licensed professionals, such as Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Speech-Language Pathologists, refer to incorporating equine movement into their plans of care as a therapy tool.

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA)

The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) is an organization that provides resources, education and certification of the EAGALA model. The Model is a team approach that includes the EAGALA Certified Equine Specialist, that works closely with a Licensed Mental Health Professional with the client, within the environment of the horse. With EAGALA, the program is grounded, where the client is never on the horse. It can include one horse or several horses depending on the clients need. It enhances specific treatment, including a range of problem solving, including emotional issues, anxiety, etc.

6.2 EQUINE-ASSISTED ACTIVITIES



Equine-assisted activities (EAA) include clients, volunteers, participants, instructors and horses. The types of activities can include therapeutic vaulting (TV), mounted (on-horse) or ground (off-horse), demonstrations, horse shows or parades, stable management or horsemanship skills. The objectives include social, emotional, physical or cognitive well-being. It is shown to improve balance, muscle strength, range of motion, sensorimotor integration social skills and lowering blood pressure.

6.3 EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY (EAT)



Equine-assisted therapy (EAT) incorporates horses and/or their environment to improve rehabilitation due to injury and disability. Treatment is performed by a medical professional. Rehabilitation goals are based on the needs of the patient. Treatment provides benefit to motor skills and balance, sensory functioning and neuromusculoskeletal ability, such as range of motion, strength and endurance.

6.4 HIPPO THERAPY (HPOT)



Hippotherapy (HPOT), utilizes the natural movement of the horse to improve traditional treatments for physical or occupational therapy, or speech therapy. While similar to (EAT), HPOT incorporates physical, occupational or speech therapy as part of an integrated program which is shown to increase physical mobility of the client. HPOT is performed by a licensed physical, occupational or speech therapist. It generally prescribed by a physician and is a common form

of treatment recognized by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), similarly as discussed in Section 5.7 (Animal-assisted physical therapy). Differently than animal-assisted physical therapy with other animals, with Hippotherapy, horses take advantage of the size and movement of the horse to improve healing processes. It engages sensory, neuromotor and cognitive systems, and promotes functional outcomes of traditional therapy. It provides benefit to muscle strength, motor coordination, posture and flexibility, socialization, communication, concentration and improves self-confidence and control of the client.

6.5 EQUINE-FACILITATED/ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY



Trained horses are incorporated into the counseling session to improve traditional forms of psychotherapy. This is similar to the discussion in Section 5.2 (Animal-assisted psychotherapy), also conducted by a licensed mental health professional (clinical psychologist, licensed social worker, licensed marriage and family therapist), with emphasis on psychosocial and behavioral interaction, but with a horse, as part of a traditional behavior-based treatment plan. When incorporating a horse into psychotherapy, the client is within the environment or the horse, not on-the horse, riding.

The use of a horse, versus other type of therapy-animal in psychotherapy, takes advantage of the intimidating size the animal, which allows clients to gain trust in the animal as well as builds self-confidence. Using a horse, also and most significantly, takes advantage of the it's emotional perception from being a prey animal. The horse helps to “ground” a client in the moment. Not worrying about yesterday, trauma, or tomorrow, but rather helps to ground the client into the moment with the horse. The horse also provides immediate feedback, such as if the client is tense or anxious, the horse will mirror how the client feels, through its body language (Birke, 2011; Krueger, 2011; Lentini, 2008). The horse will also respond based on body language. This biofeedback from the horse, helps the client learn about their own feeling and reactions. An opportunity for the therapist to provide discussion and intervention accordingly.

Incorporating a horse, or horses, into psychotherapy can improve treatments for Autism, developmental delay or disability, learning disorders, emotional or behavioral challenges, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, addiction, terminal illness, eating disorders, at-risk youth, etc.

6.6 EQUINE-FACILITATED/ASSISTED LEARNING



Equine-Facilitates/Assisted Learning incorporates treatment activities within the horse's environment (not riding). It is a goal-oriented approach, experiential, that promotes the development of life skills, including educational, professional and personal goals. Being experiential, the client learns by interacting with the horse or horses, which they receive immediate, physical, and observable feedback as part of the learning process. It helps to improve personal growth, trust, personal boundaries, problem-solving skills, self-confidence, communication, empathy, self-esteem, teamwork, interpersonal relationships, tolerance for stress, etc.

6.7 THERAPEUTIC CARRIAGE DRIVING (TCD)



Therapeutic carriage driving (TCD) provides an opportunity for clients with physical, cognitive, emotional or sensory challenges, or other physical, balance or other limitations, to connect, communicate and control the horse while driving from a carriage seat or wheelchair within a modified carriage. This offers an alternative to a riding approach. It provides improved coordination, strength, posture, visual perception, cause and effect relationships and communication.

6.8 THERAPEUTIC VAULTING (TV)



Therapeutic vaulting (TV) utilizes the horse as a method where the client performs movements on and around the horse. Movements are often provided with the client on the horse, with assistance depending on disability, while the horse handler, maintains control of the horse. Depending on the needs of the client, TV activities can include sitting on the horse with arms outward, kneeling or standing on the horse, sitting on the horse forward or backward, or mounting and dismounting. The natural movement of the horse, helps to improve strength and flexibility, focus, coordination, balance, self-confidence and motor skills. These improvements can benefit those with sensory processing challenges, developmental disabilities, perceptual disorders, Autism, learning disabilities, physical challenges (i.e. neurological, motor skills), etc. Qualifications for TV programs include training and certification by PATH International and through the American Vaulting Association.



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- International Society for Anthrozoology <http://www.isaz.net>
- Animal Assisted Intervention International (AAII) <https://aai-int.org/>
- Human Animal Bond Research Institute <https://habri.org/>
- Human Animal Bond Association <https://humananimalbond.net/>
- Animals & Society Institute <https://www.animalsandsociety.org/>
- Pet Partners <https://petpartners.org/>