



**Canine Partners
In Education**

Revised April 2018

NOR'WESTER THERAPY DOGS CANINE PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

~HANDLER/VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES~

- ❖ Handler/Volunteers should wear their personal Therapy Dog Team ID on every visit. These are provided by your certifying organization.
- ❖ Handler/Volunteers should dress professionally and neatly. You are a representative of Nor'wester Therapy Dogs.
- ❖ Handler/Volunteers may NOT bring friends or additional visitors without first getting permission from the classroom teacher and/or principal and notifying the directors.
- ❖ Handler/Volunteers should never do a visit while under the influence of drugs or alcohol that may impair judgment or safety.
- ❖ Cell phones and pagers may not be used and must be turned off during your visit to a classroom. If the use of a cell phone becomes necessary, handlers are expected to excuse themselves and their dogs temporarily and complete the call outside the facility.
- ❖ Always clean up after your dog, inside or outside the facility, and dispose of waste appropriately, even if it means taking it home.
- ❖ Only approved and certified therapy dogs are eligible to participate in Nor'wester Therapy Dogs. They must wear an approved collar and be on a leash at all times. (Flexi-leads and prong collars are not acceptable for visits.) Handlers will abide by their governing therapy dog organization rules and regulation.
- ❖ It is suggested that you be accompanied to and from the classroom by a school employee.
- ❖ Please provide a copy of your visitation schedule to the Directors when it has been determined. Sometimes visits need to be cancelled for any number of reasons; please work with your teacher to handle alterations in the schedule. Remember - the children and teacher are depending on you. If you feel you cannot commit to regular visits, reconsider the commitment.
- ❖ In case of inclement weather, go to the school district website for school closing information. A district calendar is also on that site for holidays and in-service days.

- ❖ Before every visit be certain your dogs are:
 1. Clean and well groomed with nails trimmed
 2. Allowed to exercise and eliminate
 3. Allowed a minimum of 48 hours after the use of products like Frontline which require time to dissipate into a dog's coat

- ❖ Stay with your dog and encourage, but do not force, interaction with the children, nor with other therapy dogs which may be visiting at the same time.

- ❖ Encourage students to behave appropriately in the presence of a therapy dog. They should be urged to lower their voices, sit down, and be gentle during a visitation. These expectations should be set at the first visit. (Taking a collective, long, deep breath before a session begins helps the children relax and sets the tone.)

- ❖ Children should not be encouraged or permitted to PLAY with a working therapy dog.

- ❖ Children or other school personnel are not permitted to FEED a working therapy dog.

- ❖ Visit only the classroom to which you are assigned unless you have been invited by a teacher or administrator to stop and visit elsewhere. Protect your dog from groups that may tend to "swamp" him/her. Visits are designed to be calming for everyone, including the dog.

- ❖ Handlers MAY NOT start visiting new classrooms unless the request has been cleared with the Nor'wester organization.

- ❖ DO NOT post any photographs or videos of children and/or classes with whom you and your dog work on Facebook, personal websites, Twitter, and other social media sites. Parents are requested to check specific items for publicity, but only for selective NWR use, not handler use.

- ❖ If a dog develops a disability, a serious illness and/or accident during its career, the owner must notify the Directors before the next visit. Dogs SHOULD NOT visit if they have been ill within the last 24 hours with:
 1. Vomiting/diarrhea
 2. Open wounds, recent surgery, or injury
 3. Female dogs may not visit while in "season"

- ❖ Remove your dog IMMEDIATELY if he/she is stressed by a crowd or situation. Signs of stress include:
 1. Excessive panting, yawning, or change in facial expression
 2. Jumping or climbing onto the handler for security
 3. Trying to hide or looking to escape
 4. Body or leg shaking/tremors
 5. Pressing ears and tail close to the body

6. Refusing to socialize

- ❖ If your dog does not do well in the heat, find out if the school you are visiting is air conditioned and be cautious when visiting on extremely hot days. You can always reschedule.
- ❖ Two or three visits are usually necessary before things start to run smoothly. If you need ideas, assistance, or encouragement, contact another handler/volunteer or one of the Directors. Our teams love to talk to each other!

REMEMBER*

Nor'Wester Therapy Dog teams are privileged to be invited into the classroom, and it is a privilege for the schools to benefit from the impact of therapy dogs working with students. We are working in a wonderful environment of mutual respect where we will develop heartwarming relationships with both staff members and students. We are facilitators of the interaction between our dogs and the students.

You, as a volunteer, are a special person sharing your special skills and dogs. Never forget that your time, abilities, and commitment are highly valued and that the schools have placed their trust in us.