

WORKING PARAMETERS

1. Qualifications

- Every handler and dog team must pass the CFTD EVALUATION FOR SUITABILITY to become a potential therapy dog/handler team. The evaluation comprises the KUSA Canine Good Citizen Bronze test, as well as aptitude and situational tests.
- CFTD official trainers and evaluators must have at least 5 years experience in obedience dog training, as well as at least 3 years practical experience as a therapy dog handler. Canine Good Citizen classes may be presented by learner trainers, under supervision of a CFTD trainer.
- The following policies apply for dog/handler teams interested in taking the CFTD Test:
 - Every handler must attend at least 2 visits with a certified CFTD member before being considered for testing. This is to ensure that the handler is willing to commit to the work ahead.
 - The dog must be healthy (see health requirements below)
 - The handler must be of good character and committed to adhere to CFTD Standards.
 - All handlers should have a basic understanding of dog behaviour in order to operate proactively instead of reactively, and to be able to predict and redirect their dog's behaviour
 - A Therapy Dog is not breed-specific but must have a stable, tolerant temperament, free of any signs of aggression/excessive fear towards people or other dogs. Dogs should be interested in people, able to handle a reasonable amount of stress and able to accept loud noises, sudden movements and yelling/shouting.
 - Puppies are encouraged to participate in visits from an early age (after all vaccinations have been administered). These visits will be subject to the health standards as set out below, as well as handler suitability and depends on the facility leader's discretion. Should the puppy undergo behavioural changes during adolescence, it will be restricted from further visits until all qualification standards have been met.
 - Puppies are to be accepted by the evaluators prior to being admitted to puppy visits.
 - Irrespective of possible behavioural changes in puppies, all dogs over the age of 8 months will have to qualify as therapy dog as set out in the standards
 - Each handler must pass a theoretical exam before being admitted to the practical assessment. This exam serves to determine the handler's general knowledge and attitude towards the work and its parameters, as well as the well-being of his dog.
 - Each team must pass the KUSA Canine Good Citizen Bronze test first and will then be exposed to aptitude testing (excluding puppy visits). Until full KUSA certification is obtained, management and evaluators can pass a dog temporarily.
 - Before becoming fully certified with CFTD, each team must complete and pass 5 visits under supervision of an experienced handler. The required form must be signed off by the facility co-ordinator and, upon completion, submitted to the club secretary.
 - The minimum age for handlers is 10 years and handlers under 18 must be accompanied by an adult on visitations and the membership form must be signed by a parent or legal guardian.
 - CFTD Members and/or their dog(s) may not visit, be registered by, or be active under the auspices of another Therapy Dog-related visitation program, organisation, or group other than CFTD, except where CFTD agrees to the standards and ethics of the other organisation
 - CFTD cannot register deaf dogs.
 - Dogs with any attack / Schutzhund training will NOT be admitted as therapy dog, due to security reasons.

2. Health Requirements

- All CFTD Therapy Dogs are required to meet the following health requirements before being registered:
 - Annual Check-up attested to by your Veterinarian within the past year, and every year thereafter, including proof of annual vaccinations by a veterinarian
 - Senior dogs, as classified by breed standards and size, must be specifically certified as being able and healthy for the work
 - Dogs with visible discomfort resulting from e.g. joint diseases, may not attend therapy visits as this can lead to the dog reacting in an unpredictable and/or aggressive manner
 - Proof of protection against internal and external parasites (worms, fleas, ticks, etc). Veterinarian approved products should be used, commercially available products are not recommended. Shampoos and sprays are discouraged as they leave a residue, which may be uncomfortable or even harmful to patients
 - Clean teeth, ears and eyes
 - Dog to be groomed and coat clean prior to every visit. For visits to immune compromised patients, anti-bacterial coat spray is required
 - Toe nails trimmed and filed if necessary
 - Dogs with the following conditions may not attend any visits: skin rashes, lameness, extreme hair shedding, runny nose, change in eating and/or elimination habits, odd smelling ears or breath, vomiting, eye infections, diarrhea and/or bloody stools, sutures (stitches), medications for infections or illness, chronic illness, female in season.

3. Visiting Parameters

It is important to take note of the fact that every facility is being managed by a facility co-ordinator who is appointed by the management committee. This facility co-ordinator is ultimately responsible for the each visit to his/her designated facility, and has the power to appoint and/or remove dogs from visits, at any given time.

Once qualified and registered, each handler and dog team is subjected to the following rules and regulations to attend visits:

- Every dog and handler must be registered with the Association's insurance (this depends on the insurer's requirements) prior to attending any therapy visits and membership payment must be up to date.
- Every qualified handler will receive a CFTD ID badge and each qualified dog a tag, identifying them as valid members of CFTD. These must be carried during all official CFTD events. These identification badges need to be returned to the Association when team membership ceases
- Handlers wanting to join visits with dogs other than their own, must first obtain approval from a CFTD evaluator
- Handlers who pass the assessment without their dogs, may attend visits with another qualified dog, providing that this has been agreed with the facility co-ordinator
- Although it is the facility co-ordinator's responsibility to determine the suitability of any participating dog for a visit, and has the power to remove any dog at any given time, it remains the handler's responsibility to evaluate their dog's health and attitude prior to every visit
- Highly excitable dogs should be duly exercised before entering a facility. Dogs that become unruly or uncontrollable during a visit, are to be taken outside immediately
- Handlers should always carry a cleaning kit, together with proof of vaccinations, tick and

flea treatment and de-worming schedules. Cleaning kit should consist of: Disinfectant, paper towel or cloths and plastic bags. Handlers with dogs on supervised visits have their sign-off sheets signed by a facility co-ordinator on each visit.

- No metal choke collars, metal collars and/or metal leashes may be used on the dogs – this can cause injuries to especially older patients. Only soft or leather collars and/or harnesses are permitted, as well as halti-style collars. Be aware that patients might associate the latter with muzzles. Martingale collars are permitted
- Should a handler wish to take more than one dog to a facility or official event, prior approval must be obtained from an evaluator, to ensure that the handler is knowledgeable and capable enough to focus on multiple dogs
- The handler should also be able to produce the necessary documentation as listed above, on request, during any visit.
- All handlers are expected to wear their uniform in order to be identified as members of CFTD. Those handlers awaiting their uniforms, should wear a green t-shirt if possible. All handlers are groomed and neat in order to project professionalism and respect for the patients.
- Handlers should avoid using perfumes, colognes and other scented oils on both themselves and their dogs (except the prescribed anti-bacterial spray), as some individuals may have severe allergies to these products.
- For health and safety reasons, as well as out of courtesy for the patients, the use of cell phones during pet therapy visits is not allowed and the use of pagers is strongly discouraged.
- While visiting with dogs in a facility, handlers should be certain of the areas where they are allowed and welcomed. It is recommended to check in at the nurse's station so everyone is aware of the visiting animals
- It is advisable that dog/handler teams stay in calling distance from each other during group visits, especially in larger facilities such as old age homes. The facility co-ordinator will determine the size of visiting teams
- Handlers should be focused on the patients and their dogs and not on each other – visits are not there to fulfill a handler's need to catch up on the latest gossip.
- Handlers should always ask permission before taking photographs of patients. Patients and/or their families might object, especially if the photos are intended for publication purposes. Written permission from the patients must be obtained if photos are intended for publication
- A therapy dog visit is not a dog show or a place to for showing off our pets. T dogs are supposed to bring joy and healing to the patients and not compete against each other.
- Handlers are required to always clean up after their dogs, inside or outside the facility. They should ask where a safe, outside location is where dogs may be walked or rested
- Dogs must never be left alone with staff, patients, or visitors.
- Handlers should always place the safety and well-being of their animals first. Water should be freely available at any visit and handlers should be aware of their dog's body language and any signs of stress
- There is always a possibility that some facilities have their own pets or may allow visiting family pets. Residents may have their own pets as well. These animals may not behave in the same manner as a therapy dog and handlers should be aware of this.
- All handlers should always be aware of their partner team's space requirements. Dogs should not be allowed to approach a person's lap or bed when another dog is already there. Extra precautions are required in doorways, elevators or any small confined areas.
- A dog should never be forced to interact with a patient or any patient to interact with a dog. This should be a pleasant experience for handlers, dogs, and the patient or resident.
- Only handlers may pick up their dogs. Therapy dogs are not allowed to jump onto any occupied bed, chair or wheelchair unless that resident and a facility staff member have given

permission. Injuries could occur if the dog steps on a patient or resident.

- Any incident occurring during a visit must be immediately reported to the facility coordinator. Incidents could include inappropriate elimination in the facility, injury to patient, dog or handler, or damage to facility property.
- Common courtesy dictates that handlers notify the facility and/or fellow handlers well in advance should they be unable to attend a visit. Please remember that the patients have expectations of seeing “their” dogs. Your fellow handlers also rely on your assistance and support.

4. How to maintain Qualification Status

- Membership fees have to be paid up at all times
- Dogs have to attend at least one therapy dog visit per month in order to maintain their therapy dog status
- Any dog displaying character and/or training deviations during his work in the program, will be required to withdraw from any visits until the respective issues are fully resolved. Any decision in this regard will be formally agreed upon in writing by the evaluators / trainers, who may decide that the dog should re-evaluated.
- Weekly training sessions with other teams of the association are strongly recommended to facilitate communication and interaction between the animals. Any weaknesses and/or issues can then be discussed and resolved.
- Every dog / handler team is required to attend at least one situational training session in a two-month period, to ensure that the dogs remain social and interactive with each other.
- Should any team not be able to attend at least one training session within any 2-month period, approval from an evaluator must be obtained before commencing any visitation program again. This is to ensure stability of dog and handler after a period of absence.
- All handlers are expected to actively be involved in CFTD group activities, such as social functions, fund raisers, etc
- Handlers that do not meet these requirements and/or are unable to maintain their active qualification status, will automatically be classified as passive members until such time that they and their dogs are re-evaluated to become active again

5. Insurance

- All active handler/dog teams are covered under the Association’s liability insurance during officially scheduled CFTD actions, such as visits, situational training sessions and other scheduled activities with dogs (e.g. CANSA Relay for Life)
- Weekly training sessions at the training school are excluded from CFTD liability insurance and handlers partake at their own risk
- Passive members are covered under the liability insurance at such activities without their dogs until such time that they have obtained their qualification status again
- Dogs and handlers in training (prior to being fully qualified as therapy dog teams) may attend official activities and be covered by the liability insurance with special permission from the management committee or an evaluator