



**NIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT) FACT SHEET
(also known as Pet-Assisted Therapy PAT)**

What is Animal-Assisted Therapy?

Animal-Assisted Therapy is a therapeutic tool that utilizes animals as catalysts to meet specific therapeutic goals. The professional who delivers or directs AAT is a health/human service provider with expertise in integrating animals as a treatment modality, and is knowledgeable about animals and behavior. The AAT Specialist is licensed and/or recognized by a separate professional discipline. This individual complies with the legal and ethical requirements of his/her profession; as well as local, state and federal laws relating to this work.

Who can benefit?

Animal-Assisted Therapy benefits a wide spectrum of populations, including individuals physical, physiological and psychological issues.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AAT?

Physiological:

- Animals can contribute to the patient's recovery from an illness.
- The presence of animals has been found to facilitate lower blood pressure.
- Caring for animals may increase a person's self-care skills.

Psychological, Therapeutic and Social:

- Engaging the client in conversation
- Building rapport & trust with the client
- Good for emotional well-being

- Aids the therapists in treatment objectives with the client: Tasks, Goals, Responsibilities and Contract.
- Motivational factors enhance cognitive behavioral change & successful task completion.
- Socializing through collaborative team efforts using the animal as a catalyst to normalize the setting and break down barriers of communications.
- Self-Management and Monitoring of

- emotional & behavioral changes by client & therapist through writing / drawing / observations of verbal and non-verbal language.
- Sparks the spirit of cooperation & interaction
- Social Phobias
- Overcome fear
- Unconditional positive regard
- Companionship
- A reason for living
- Increased self esteem / confidence mastery / empowerment
- Increased problem solving skills
- Increased attention span
- Increased ability to organize
- Increased ability to concentrate
- Facilitates expression of feelings
- Opportunity for nurturance
- Increasing perceptual skills
- Improved attitude about life
- Makes people smile
- Develops understanding & sensitivity in relationships
- Provides Humor: Laughter & Humor are evolutionary developments that help us to survive.

- Mental stimulation: Visiting dogs cause a chain reaction of laughs & conversation among clients, staff, and family members.
- People from dramatically different cultures & lifestyles can talk about their dogs (the therapy dog). The common experiences allow people to initiate conversation, share moments, laugh & cry.

Physical:

- Increased balance
- Increased endurance, stamina, energy
- Increased mobility, flexibility
- Increased use of affected extremities
- Increased strength & coordination
- Increased fine & gross motor skills

Speech and Language:

- Initiates speech
- Improve description skills
- Improve auditory memory skills
- Improve articulation skills, voice quality, fluency

Animal-Assisted Therapy can be applied in different settings and with different forms of therapy. Animals can be used in the following treatment settings: psychotherapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreational therapy, speech and language therapy, in hospitals, prisons, rehabs, mental health clinics, private practice, nursing facilities.

For more information, contact one of these organizations for additional information and a list of evaluators / dates / times and places of evaluations in your area:

[New England Pet Partners](#)

[Delta Society](#)

[Therapy Animals](#)® Reading Education Assistance Dogs).