

Consent for Animal-Assisted Therapy

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Introduction

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a form of creative therapy that utilizes credentialed therapy animals and handlers (people who manage the animal) to provide goal-directed interventions to individuals of all ages. AAT can be used with various types of psychological, emotional, developmental, cognitive, motivational, or physical impairments. The purpose of this form is to review the policies, procedures, and risks of working with a therapy dog, as well as request your consent for treatment utilizing AAT provided by Dr. Abbate. Please note that this form upholds the agreement of procedural and financial terms as stated in the Consent for Psychological Treatment.

Policies, Procedures, and Risks for Working with Animals in Therapy

Although working with animals, specifically canines, in a therapeutic setting has many benefits, there are risks associated with the intervention. Because AAT utilizes a live animal, it is important to note in advance the policies and procedures needed to maximize the intervention and ensure a safe work environment, both for the dog and the patient.

1. Participation in AAT is not guaranteed and will be based on Dr. Abbate's assessment. If the assessment determines the patient is not a good fit, other treatment options will be discussed and appropriate referrals may be made.
 - a. If a history or indication of animal abuse or other risk factors are present, Dr. Abbate will determine whether participation in AAT is indicated.
 - b. Should a patient become aggressive (hits, kicks, bites, pulls, pinches, etc.) towards the therapy dog during therapy, Dr. Abbate will remove the therapy dog from treatment and determine whether it is appropriate to continue treatment or make the appropriate referrals.
2. Anyone wishing to participate in AAT should be screened for allergies before working with the therapy dog. All allergies must be reported before beginning treatment so the proper precautionary measures can be taken. Should documentation from a medical professional indicate that allergies, skin or respiratory sensitivities, or other medical conditions exist, Dr. Abbate will determine if it is appropriate to continue treatment or make the appropriate referrals. Neither Dr. Abbate, nor the Melmed Center can be held liable for allergic or other physiological reactions to the therapy dog.
3. Any fear of dogs must be reported before treatment commences so the proper precautionary measures can be taken and goodness of fit determined.
4. If sick or injured, the therapy dog will not be able to provide services until the illness or injury subsides or upon veterinary approval, as sickness or injury could negatively impact the animal's behavior.
5. Although the therapy dog will remain current on his/her vaccinations and health screenings, there is always a slight risk of zoonotic disease transmission (i.e., the sharing of diseases between animals and humans) when working with an animal. Every effort will be made by Dr. Abbate to reduce the risk of zoonosis.
6. Direct contact with the animal's urine, stool, and/or blood should be avoided. Every effort will be made by Dr. Abbate to educate/model for the patient and/or guardian appropriate ways to physically engage with the therapy dog.

