Introducing a School Therapy Dog Program

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Goals

- Support efficacy of therapy dog programs in schools
- Define important terminology
- Aspects of successful programs & barriers to success
- Training, preparation involved
- Help you advocate for similar program in your school
- Share resources
WHY?
Improve community life

- Increase social supports
- Reduce stress & anxiety
- Opportunities to engage
- Promote prosocial behavior
- Benefit school culture
- Bring students, faculty/staff together

Anderson & Olsen, 2006
Henry & Crowley, 2015
Hergovich, Monshi, Semmler & Zeiglmayer, 2002
McConnel, Brown, Shoda, Stayton & Martin, 2011
Messent, 1984
Serpell, 2015
Motivate students

- Young people benefit from animals in learning environments
- Increasing optimism/hope
- Teachers report improved attention, enhanced psychological well-being, & reduction of disruptive behaviors
- Capture & hold students’ attention

Endenburg & van Lith, 2011
Katcher & Wilkins, 1997
Martin & Farnum, 2002
Rud & Beck, 2003
Wu, Niedra, Pendergast, McCrindle, 2002
Zasloff, Hart & DeArmond, 1999
Improve health & well-being

- Reduce heart rate, blood pressure levels
- Changes in oxytocin levels
- Attenuated cardiovascular stress response to reading aloud

Braun, Stangler, Narveson & Pettingell, 2009
Cole, Gawlinski, Steers & Kotlerman, 2007
Friedmann, Heesook, Son & Mudasir Saleem, 2015
Friedmann, Locker, & Lockwood, 1993
Nagasawa, Kikusui, Onaka & Ohta, 2009
Somervill, Kruglikova, Robertson, Hanson & MacLin, 2008
Sugawara et al., 2012
Tsai, Friedmann & Thomas, 2010
As adjunct to counselor’s work

- Important therapy tool
- Build rapport quickly
- Decreasing stigma
- Increasing retention
- Tool for mindfulness training
- Help with goals
- Provide additional resource in times of community trauma

Chandler, 2011
Fine, 2000
Gammonley et al., 1997
Hart & Yamamoto, 2017
Henry & Crowley, 2015
Nimer & Lundahl, 2007
Animal-Assisted Interventions

A-A Activities
A-A Crisis Response
Therapy Animal Hospital Visit
Therapy Animal Nursing Home Visit

Animal-Assisted Therapy
A-A Psychotherapy
A-A Physical Therapy
A-A Speech Therapy

A-A Education
A-A Reading Program
Humane Education

Adapted from Fine, Tedeschi, Elvoie (2015)
Animal-Assisted Therapy

- Goal-oriented, planned, and structured
- Focuses on enhancing physical, cognitive, behavioral, and/or socioemotional functioning

Jegatheesen et al., 2014
A Service Dog is a dog that is trained to work with people with disabilities.

*Person specific

ADA Service Dog Requirements, 2010
A Therapy Dog is a dog trained to provide affection and comfort to many people in many different settings.

Assistance Dogs International, 2019
A facility dog is a specially trained dog that “works” full-time at a specific facility under the care and supervision of a trained staff member.

*works with staff to achieve specific goals through AAT

Assistance Dogs International, 2019; Hero Dogs, 2019
Training involved

- Already had through almost 2 years of training before my involvement
- Basics: vocab, clicker training, basic care, “rules to live by”
- Behavior
- Body language
- Dog at home
- Dog at work
- Training day for colleagues
- Follow-up sessions 1x/month

- Consider looking at Assistance Dogs International, Alliance of Therapy Dogs, or Therapy Dogs International
Barriers

- Why would anyone want a dog at school?
- Tradition
- Will the dog bite someone?
- Allergies
- Dirtiness factor
- Fears
- Won’t everyone want to bring their dog now?
Policy development

- Look at what others are doing
- Identify concerns & offer responses
- Specify “off limits” spaces
- Name main responsible person + others who can manage dog in their absence
- Confirm vaccines, disclose where records will be kept
Our Policy

- Dog owned by me/Hero Dogs
- Intensive training before starting program
- “On the job” whenever on campus
- Wears STA Therapy Dog vest at all times
- Under my control at all times
  - 3 colleagues trained as well
- Up to date on vaccines & grooming
  - Vaccine records on file in my office + in vest
- Dog first aid kid in office, emergency vet info posted on inside of door
- Allowed all around school except kitchen, refectory, chapel
  - Everyone agrees before dog comes into classroom, office etc.
  - Ok in my locked office during lunch etc.
What makes a dog a good candidate for this type of work?

- Clarify the purpose of your work to help identify best characteristics
- Capacity (resilience, recovery, **sociability**, engagement)
- Responsiveness (reactivity, flexibility, behavioral cues)
- Skills (response to verbal commands, gestures, novel things, equipment, cue interpretation)
- Attributes (breed, appearance, size, vocalizations)

McNamara, Moga & Pachel, 2015
What makes a human a good candidate for this type of work?

- Willing to put in the time
- Love the work
- Be patient & accept your dog for who they are
- Open to feedback
- Willing to give feedback
- Recognize what’s working and acknowledge what isn’t
Questions?

Please feel free to contact me with questions or feedback → cfriend@stalbansschool.org
References


(Note: all photos in this presentation are my own or used with permission from Hero Dogs, Inc.)