

## Covenant HealthCare Canine Therapy Dog Team

Dogs offer their amazing ability to capitalize on the human-animal bond and bring comfort to patients while they are in a hospital environment. Dogs are non-judgmental and offer unconditional love and acceptance to patients with no pressure on the patient to do or say anything. Patients who interact with dogs as therapy pets have been known to have positive emotional and physical changes during their hospital stay. If you would like to bring this kind of comfort to a patient at Covenant HealthCare and are a dog therapy handler team, read on to become a volunteer.

### What Exactly Do the Dogs Do at Covenant HealthCare?

Certified therapy dogs accepted into our program offer interested patients, who are not immune suppressed, a dog visit or what is referred to as a “meet and greet.” The handler brings the dog into the patient’s room, right up to the bedside or chair where the patient can enjoy the opportunity to pet, love, hug or just look at one of our amazing volunteer dogs.

### Requirements of Therapy Dog

- Minimum age 1 year, both purebred and mixed breeds of all sizes accepted
- Graduate of Certified Pet Therapy Agency or like organization
- Proof of current vaccinations and examination by a veterinarian within the past three months for initial visit and annually thereafter
- Pet must be clean and free from obvious infection and skin disruptions
- People friendly, calm, confident, well mannered, know basic obedience skills, and love attention and affection from strangers
- Needs to be quiet and relaxed around crowds and comfortable around unusual surrounding and sounds
- Walk loosely on a leash without pulling, even when excited
- Able to perform required commands without treats



### Requirements of Therapy Dog Handler

- Must be 18 years or older
- Screened, interviewed and oriented/trained by Volunteer Services
- Need to be comfortable talking with strangers, patients and hospital settings
- Need to control their dog in the hospital setting and follow all protocols
- Commit to routine volunteering weekly or biweekly, approximately a two-hour shift
- Responsible for all costs associated with certifications and vaccinations
- Annual evaluation and Employee Health Compliance

### How Do I Apply for Covenant’s K-9 Therapy Dog Program?

- Visit [www.covenanthealthcare.com](http://www.covenanthealthcare.com) to fill out an online volunteer application
- Gather needed proof of Pet Therapy Certification and vaccinations including rabies
- Upon receiving your application, Volunteer Services will contact you regarding next steps
- Questions or to learn more about this exciting opportunity contact Manager of Volunteer Services, Sarah Knochel at 989-583-6048 or [sknochel@chs-mi.com](mailto:sknochel@chs-mi.com)



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OUR PATIENTS

## ***Is Your Dog Ready for Pet Therapy Visits?***

There are examinations to determine if a dog is ready to work as a therapy dog. As a dog owner, you are ultimately responsible for your dog's conduct. How do you know that you and your dog are ready? You know your dog better than any trainer or evaluator. Make your own evaluation by taking the following test.

- Yes  No **Have you and your dog had any formal training?**  
Have you attended at least a beginner training class? Do you still practice at home?
- Yes  No **Is your dog well socialized?**  
Is he accustomed to many kinds of situations, people and other dogs?
- Yes  No **Does your dog like children?**  
Does he wag his tail and want to gently play? Does he know not to jump up on children?

If you answered YES to these questions, please proceed.

- Yes  No **Does your dog jump up on people? Does your dog lunge at people's faces?**  
I don't permit this conduct. I use a sharp correction.
- Yes  No **Do people cringe at the sight your dog?  
Do neighbors cross the street when you approach with your dog?**  
No, they smile and pet him fondly.
- Yes  No **Does your dog growl at strangers, children or anyone else (mailman, delivery drivers)?**
- Yes  No **Do unfamiliar places and noises stress out your dog?**  
Dogs under stress may shake, cower, snap, nip, growl, bark, vomit, and/or urinate.
- Yes  No **Does your dog ever bark incessantly?**  
I don't permit this conduct. He stops barking when I tell him to do so.
- Yes  No **Are you surprised when your dog does put his best paw forward?**  
No, I trained him well and I expect him to behave.
- Yes  No **Does your dog have any health problems?**  
My dog has regular vet appointments, is up to date on vaccinations and I check him regularly for lumps and sensitive areas.
- Yes  No **Does your dog consume any Raw Animal Protein in their diet?**  
Raw meat is not sterile, and may contain E. coli, Salmonella and Campylobacter, which can be shed by the dog, presenting a higher infection risk to humans.

If you answered NO to these questions, please proceed.

- Agree **How does your dog behave when he is bumped, ears are pulled, at the Vet and Groomer?**  
He compliantly accepts the treatment.
- Agree **How does your dog react to rolling objects:  
wheelchairs, walkers, carts, bikes, roller blades, skateboards?**  
He calmly watches with curiosity as they move past.
- Agree **What happens when your dog sees another dog?**  
He exhibits mild curiosity and wags his tail.
- Agree **How does your dog accept a treat?**  
He sits and waits until given the signal, then gently takes it from my hand.

Do these behaviors describe your dog? Then you are ready to take the Canine Good Citizen test. ALL questions should be answered as indicated. If you did not, then you might want to consider taking a training course before venturing out to do therapy work with your dog.