

Greetings,

The pet therapy program at Longs Peak Hospital has a mission to provide comfort and companionship for our patients, families, visitors and staff at Longs Peak Hospital. Pet therapy aims to reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure and increase patient communication. We serve to enhance the positive emotional and physiological effects of human-animal interactions.

Therapy dogs are trained dogs who partner with a facilitator working in a health care, visitation or education setting in order to motivate and inspire patients/clients with special medical/emotional needs.

Behaviorally and medically qualified animal/owner teams commit their time, training and effort to make rounds to consenting and eligible patients for the goal of providing the following rehabilitation benefits to the patient:

- The reduction of hospitalization stress and anxiety due to the change in hospital routine and procedures.
- The providing of unique sensory stimuli and strengthen motor skills and rehabilitation.
- The increase of social interaction and communication (both verbal and non-verbal).
- The promotion of a sense of responsibility and purpose.
- The opportunity to experience unconditional friendship and affection.

We are looking for the following traits in a dog:

1. A dog that is very calm and not distracted by unexpected noises or objects,
2. A dog that is obedient and looks to you for direction, and
3. A dog that consistently loves to be petted by a variety of people in a variety of situations: i.e., the first person to interact with the dog is as important and receives as much affection as the 10th.

Dogs must be at least 2 years of age and handlers must be 14 years of age to join the program. If you are 14 through 17 years old, then you must be accompanied by someone 18 years or older who has also completed the volunteer process for the hospital.

Successful completion of a basic obedience program, while not required, is highly recommended. Therapy dogs must be able to walk calmly on a loose lead. It is essential that your dog know basic commands (sit, stay, come, down) and be “comfortably controlled” by you in a variety of settings (in class, in a room with a few people, in a crowd, walking with you in an unfamiliar environment, around other dogs, etc.).

Exclusions: Animals that have been fed any raw or dehydrated (but otherwise raw) foods, chews, or treats of animal origin (such as pig ears) within the past 90 days will not be able to participate in the program until their pet has been off of the raw or dehydrated food for at least 90 days and continues to stay off of the raw or dehydrated food while participating in the program.



Therapy Dog Registration: This is required in order to participate in our program; you and your dog must be registered with one of the three national organizations that are recognized by Longs Peak Hospital.

- Pet Partners: www.petpartners.org
- Therapy Dogs International (TDI): www.tdi-dog.org
- Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD): www.therapydogs.com

If you are not currently registered with one of these organizations, please do your research and complete the registration process while you are on the wait list. As stated earlier, you must be registered before you can attend a class.

Therapy Dog Classes: A class is offered a few times a year for potential handlers. Handlers learn what makes a great therapy dog, what a therapy dog does, how to 'read' a dog along with what a great visit consists of. The cost of the class is \$50, payable to the hospital, which covers materials (including you and your dogs' vest) and helps support the program.

Following the class, you will need to complete the hospital volunteer process which includes some lab work, a background check and meet with the hospital's Manager of Volunteer Services.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Longs Peak Hospital is a drug free workplace including the use of medicinal marijuana products.
2. Volunteers and staff are required to get a flu shot each year. If you choose not to get a flu shot you will not be allowed to volunteer in this program. Our patients' safety and well-being are very important to us at Longs Peak Hospital. There are no exceptions to this policy.

After the class is complete, your dog will meet with a designated volunteer veterinarian at no cost to you and be evaluated for his/her health and temperament. At the hospital, an average session of pet therapy visits will run 1 ½ to 2 hours. Pet Therapy teams may visit an average of 6 to 10 patients in their hospital rooms during a session. Teams also visit the waiting rooms and the staff (they are as delighted to see the dogs as the patients). Volunteer Services works with the Pet Therapy teams to assign a day and time for their visits. A typical schedule is one day a week. Some teams work every other week.

IT IS A HOSPITAL REQUIREMENT THAT YOU MUST COMMIT TO VISITING AT LEAST TWICE A MONTH.

Is your dog a good fit for therapy dog work?

There is an excellent article by Patricia B. McConnell, PhD, entitled "[Dog Assisted Therapy: Is Your Dog a Good Fit?](#)" We highly recommend you read [this article](#) before submitting your application for therapy dog work.

If you are interested in volunteering to be a therapy dog team at Longs Peak Hospital in Longmont, CO., please fill out the Longs Peak Hospital Therapy Program Application. After it is received you will receive an email with a confirmation and more details about our program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at LPHVolunteers@uchealth.org .