"Dogs In Schools" Guidelines

Animal-Assisted Services is an emerging field that is gaining in popularity because of the recognised beneficial effect animals can have on children's health, well-being, and motivation. School can be stressful for some students, especially those with disabilities and learning difficulties (Comartin, 2018). Involving animals in the learning setting can result in a reduction in stress and anxiety for students (Sandt, 2020). The presence of an animal can adjust the classroom dynamics resulting in student engagement and positive learning outcomes (Jalongo, 2005). Because animal-assisted learning can be beneficial for children, Animal Therapies Ltd is endeavouring to advance the understanding, acceptance, and accessibility of animal-assisted services in Australian schools. This information pack is designed to inform teachers and the wider school community on the benefits and considerations of introducing animal-assisted services into the school environment.

This handbook is to be used in conjunction with the Animal Therapies Ltd ATL Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct

Please note the minimum age requirement for animals to be brought into schools – ATL does not recommend that dogs under 12 months should be brought in to schools in any context.

Table of Contents

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

Context

There is a growing interest among learning institutions to introduce animals and often with little information, guidelines and policies publically available, schools feel ill-equipped to make informed decisions, relying on non-professional advice and the limited experience of caring for animals within a household context and naively translating this knowledge to the school environment. Recently there has been a pattern of school staff approaching other schools with dogs to seek their guidance on implementation approaches, despite these arrangements themselves being poorly informed in their development.

In light of the growing concerns for student safety, animal welfare, and an effort to design functional arrangements for dogs in schools, there is a need for the development of guidelines and resources for schools to support the safe and ethical implementation of dog programs for school settings.

Definitions

As schools and learning contexts embrace the benefits of animals on campus, we see the emergence of new approaches in working with animals within these contexts.

With dogs being the most common animal introduced to schools, the terminology previously being used to classify their role has created much confusion, The classification of services depends on the goals of the interactions and the qualifications of the handler. The different interactions can support a range of benefits including learning, engagement, psychological relief, social support or a positive benefit to the school experience.

There is some confusion about the terminology around animal-assisted services. Terms such as animals and assistance animals are sometimes used interchangeably, creating confusion as their roles are very different (Parenti et al. 2013).

- **Assistance animals** (sometimes called service animals) are trained to alleviate the barriers people with disabilities, and mental health issues experience in daily activities. For example, guide dogs are trained to assist the visually impaired (Walker, Aimers & Perry 2015, citing Kruger & Serpell 2006). The training and role of an assistance animal involve the animal assisting an individual and not interacting with a wide range of people when working (RSPCA 2021).
- **Therapy Animals** are assessed as suitable to work alongside their allied health handlers in therapeutic settings with a wide range of people (Compitus 2021).
- **Visitation animals** work alongside humans who do not necessarily hold any qualifications but whose animals are assessed as suitable both from a health and wellness perspective for the animal and from a suitability and safety for the human participants. They are generally brought into a facility or organisation by a handler who does not need to have any formal qualifications. Visitation animals visit with people to provide companionship, reduce stress, distract from chronic pain and enhance wellbeing.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- **School support animal** - used to describe an animal working in learning settings, such as schools, engaging in goal-directed, structured programs or services, with outcomes that are learning in nature. In some cases, such learning may pertain to animal care and welfare, the development of life skills or practices used in the cultivation of wellbeing.
- **Animal-assisted activities** can be relatively informal, including a wide range of activities undertaken with a visitation animal (Compitus 2021) but not necessarily conducted by allied health professionals. For example, animal-assisted activities include visitation dogs visiting aged care facilities and schools with their handlers.
- **Animal-assisted therapy** is a more structured intervention than animal-assisted activities are. Animal-assisted therapy involves specific treatment plans and is goal directed, documented, and evaluated by an allied health professional (Compitus 2021, citing Pet Partners n.d.).
- **Animal-assisted learning**- involves an animal and a facilitator in an 'experiential' learning environment to assist an individual or group to develop skills, tools and strategies to achieve a predetermined goal. Animal-assisted learning practitioners are trained in their field of expertise to facilitate specific learning outcomes (ATL 2021, b)

What are the benefits of the human/animal bond?

Animal-assisted services is an emerging field because of the beneficial effect animals may have on people's health, well-being, and motivation. The beneficial effects animals may have on humans can be demonstrated across age, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and life condition (Tedeschi, Fitchet & Molidor 2005). Animals have the potential to make humans happier, healthier, and more sociable (Bode 2020, citing Altschiller 2011). Hence, research indicates that humans may derive many benefits from contact with animals, such as:

- Improving ones physical and physiological health (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013).
- Lowering blood pressure (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Allen, Blascovich & Mendes 2002).
- Lowering cholesterol (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Walsh 2009)
- Lowering cortisol levels (Bode 2021).
- Increasing in levels of dopamine (Shena et al. 2018).
- Increasing in endorphins (Bode 2021).
- Increasing in oxytocin (Bode 2021).
- Heightening levels of well-being (Compitus 2021).
- Providing positive mental health outcomes such as: reduced anxiety, depression social isolation (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Friedmann & Tsai 2006).
- Assisting people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, better cope with their disease (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Beck 2005).

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- Developing a protective factor for people who experience various issues such as exposure to trauma or violence (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Castelh, Hart, & Zasloff 2001).
- Mitigating experiences of social isolation due to illness or age (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Castelh, Hart & Zasloff 2001).
- Providing social support for people (Hoy-Gerlach, Delgado & Sloane 2019).

What are the benefits of animal-assisted services in schools?

Animal-Assisted Learning:

There may be numerous benefits to integrating animal-assisted learning into school settings (Chandler 2001). The ability of an animal to change the classroom dynamics resulting in positivity and engagement, has been recognised and harnessed into the development of relevant animal-assisted programs (Jalongo 2005). Animal-assisted learning programs deliver numerous benefits for students including:

- improved learning (Jalongo et al. 2004).
- improved attendance (Putz 2014; Beetz 2013).
- enhanced personal hygiene (Putz 2014).
- improved cooperation (O'Haire 2013; Juríčková et al. 2020).
- improved concentration (Wohlfarth et al. 2013; Juríčková et al. 2020).
- improved social functioning (O'Haire 2013, Kotrschal & Ortbauer 2003, Esteves & Stokes 2008; Funahashi et al. 2014; Tissen et al. 2007).
- improved attitudes regarding school and to learning (Beetz 2013).
- increased empathy (Tissen et al. 2007).
- improved communication with teachers (Juríčková et al. 2020).
- enhanced speech abilities (Baars & Wolf 2011; Gee et al. 2007).
- improved self-esteem (Putz 2014).
- improved confidence (Putz 2014).
- improved self-regulation and self-control (Putz 2014).
- Improved cognitive and emotional skills (Berry & Katsiyannis 2011; Tissen et al. 2007; Anderson & Olson 2006).
- reduced stress, anxiety and difficulties in training programs (Sandt 2020).
- improved mood (Adamle et al. 2009).
- Decreased feelings of loneliness and depression (Adamle et al. 2009).

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

Animal-Assisted Therapy:

In addition to animals being involved in delivering learning programs animals also work in schools assisting in a therapeutic capacity. For students engaged in services with a school counsellor or social worker the presence of a therapy animal may heighten the student's engagement and increase the student's willingness to communicate (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Levinson 1997). Likewise, the presence of a therapy animal may enhance the student's sense of trust and safety within the therapeutic relationship; thus, enabling the student to form a safe attachment to the animal and therapist (Compitus 2021, citing Van Fleet & Faa-Thompson 2017). According to Walker et al. (2015, citing Jackson 2013), animal-assisted therapy may be utilised for various therapeutic purposes. Such as:

- building empathy
- learning to self-regulate
- improving social skills
- reducing isolation
- combating bullying
- enhancing physical and mental health (Compitus 2021).

In addition to benefits to students, the presence of a therapy animal within a school setting may improve staff morale. For people who love animals an animal's presence in the school environment may elevate mood and increase social engagement regardless of whether the relationship is therapeutic or not.

For children who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress or complex trauma, a **trauma informed** animal-assisted therapist should be engaged.

Children with a Disability:

Classrooms can be stressful for some students, especially those with disabilities and learning difficulties (Comartin 2018). Hence, numerous studies have investigated the positive impact animals' have on children with a disability (Friesen 2009; Melson 2003; Kogan et al. 1999; Walsh 2009).

Some students who have a disability may have an assistance dog to assist them in accessing public and personal life. Assistance Animals have legal rights and must be considered separately to the delivery of other animal-assisted services.

Hence, research indicates that children with a disability may derive many benefits from contact with animals, such as:

- improved cooperation with instructors (Katcher & Wilkins 1994).
- engagement special needs students in learning (Katcher & Wilkins 1994).
- improved behavioural control in regular classrooms (Katcher & Wilkins 1994).
- Increased social interactions and engagement of children with autism spectrum disorders (O'Haire et al. 2013).

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- the improved focus of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder while reading to a dog (Schuck et al. 2015).
- improved academic engagement of students with emotional and behavioural disorders (Bassette and Taber-Doughty 2013).
- reduction in the severity of ADHD symptoms (Juríčková et al. 2020).
- reduced hyperactivity and physical arousal (Juríčková et al. 2020, citing Gabriels et al. 2015).
- improved social interactions (Juríčková et al. 2020, citing Garcia-Gomez et al. 2014).
- reduced impulsive class disruptions (Busch et al. 2016).
- a decrease in agitated and aggressive behaviour (Barker 1999).
- an increase in attention to a teacher (Kotrschal & Ortbauer 2003).
- reduction in anger (Kelly & Cozzolino 2015).
- improved coping skills (Kelly & Cozzolino 2015).

Consideration when bringing animals into school settings?

Animals may visit schools for a variety of purposes. Animals may visit schools to provide a fun animal-assisted activity. Alternatively, animals (generally dogs) can be incorporated into the classroom to assist the teacher in goal-directed activities such as teaching daily living skills or as part of a curriculum such as reading, writing, story time, circle time, etc. An animal can act as the subject for creative writing, reading stories about animals, or participating with children in group activities. The animal is counted as a member of the group (Friesen 2010). Animals may also work alongside school counsellors or social workers and support the psychological needs of students who may have mental health conditions including complex trauma and related behaviours.

When are animal-assisted services needed?

Animal-assisted services are not always appropriate. Before implementing animal-assisted activities, therapy, or learning with a child, it is essential to evaluate their suitability for working alongside an animal (Putz 2014). Schools should consider a range of critical areas that can make animal-assisted services unsuitable, for instance:

- Some children may be afraid of animals (Putz 2014).
- Some children may experience animal allergies (Putz 2014).
- Cultural background may also play a role in determining the children's and parents' attitudes towards animals. Some cultures perceive animals as unclean (Friesen 2010). Such beliefs would make animal-assisted therapy or learning inappropriate (ATL 2021).
- Some children may pose a risk to the physical or emotional well-being of the animal due to issues such as traits of antisocial personality disorder or a previous history of cruelty towards animals (Compitus 2021, citing Van Fleet and Faa-Thompson 2017).

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- When social workers or counsellors are conducting therapy with children that involve the participation of a therapy animal, they need to be aware that some children with severe attachment disruptions may firmly attach to the therapy animal and feel abandoned when treatment ends. For children with insecure attachment styles, animal-assisted therapy should be utilised cautiously. If engaged, the practitioner must continually encourage the child's self-reliance rather than reliance on the therapy animal (Compitus 2021).

What are the necessary traits in an animal suitable for the school environment?

Animal-assisted learning is not a bring your pet to school scheme. Some animals may make lovely companions but have temperaments that are not suited to the animal-assisted services sector. Therefore, all animals must be assessed by an approved by an animal trainer or a behavioural veterinarian (Compitus 2021). These animals need to have a calm temperament and be comfortable with having contact with lots of children without becoming stressed. The animal should be comfortable being touched and groomed by multiple people and not startle easily (Compitus 2021). All animals should be trained and evaluated by a training organisation, such as the ones listed on the Animal Therapies Ltd website. These animals are not trained to do specific tasks (like assistance animals are). Instead, they should be trained in behaviours relative to their role and the demographics they are working with. (Compitus 2021).

What are the rights of the animals?

Schools are complex environments in comparison to many other environments? There are more stakeholders including a high number of children. it is much busier so quiet space and breaks for the dogs is crucial. It can be a highly stressful environment for animals so the right selection of animals is very important.

Benefits for humans participating in animal-assisted services are well documented. However, welfare considerations for animal counterparts are not as well developed. Providers of animal-assisted services have a moral and ethical obligation to extend the "Do No Harm" tenet to the animals with whom they work. Companion animals do not ask or voluntarily sign up to be a part of a therapeutic team, and their natural traits of love and sociability can easily be misinterpreted and exploited (Winkle, Johnson & Mills 2020).

All animals have rights that are encoded in the 'Five Freedoms' of animal welfare. These rights include but are not limited to:

1. **The right to freedom from hunger and thirst:** by access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigour.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

2. **The right to freedom from discomfort:** by providing an appropriate environment, including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury or disease:** by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour:** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's kind.
5. **Freedom from fear and distress:** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering (RSPCA 2021).

ATL (2021) asserts that the wellbeing of animals working in the animal-assisted services sector must extend beyond the 'Five Freedoms' of animal welfare. For instance:

- Animal welfare should be the concern of all persons associated with an animal-assisted service (ATL 2021).
- Formal oversight of the animal's health and well-being must be designated to a single person (most often, the handler or carer). For facility animals, a clear assignment of this role is imperative (ATL 2021).
- Training methods for animals engaged in animal-assisted services must not rely on force, aversion, dominance, fear, intimidation, or physical punishment (ATL 2021).
- Training methods should be based on instincts and positive reinforcement, using current scientifically validated methods (ATL 2021).
- Equipment used with the animal should not cause pain, distress or risk to the animal. For example, training collars that utilise prongs, spikes, choke, pinch, slip or electric shock should not be used (ATL 2021).
- Animals can be at risk of being overfed or fed inappropriate foods by students and other staff members. The animal's handler/carer must ensure that this does not occur (Bode 2020).
- Animals should have the right to determine when they want to work and when they need to take a break, and the therapeutic space should be set up to accommodate this (Compitus 2021, citing Barber & Mellen 2013).
- The animal should not be overworked. It is essential to provide regular exercise breaks for the animal (Friesen 2010) and not schedule the animal for too many work hours a day. ATL (2021) asserts that where canines and felines are actively engaged within a session (as opposed to mere presence), a maximum of 2 hours of work per day is recommended. Total visitation or active work should be limited to 7 hours per week. At least 1 hour of rest should be given before taking part in the next session of the day. At least 24 hours of rest should follow a full working day. For visitation animals, session length should be limited to 30-45 minutes duration.
- Animals should have the right to stop working entirely if required. The animal should be regularly assessed to ensure it is still happy to work as a therapy animal. Animals can experience changes in temperament due to age or illness. Animals must be regularly re-evaluated to determine when it is appropriate for them to retire (Winkle, Johnson & Mills 2020).
- Animals should have the right to be able to choose the level of interaction they have with clients; thus, the handler needs to:

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- o Monitor the animal to ensure the animal is not uncomfortable or distressed (such as yawning, ears back, or trying to leave the room) (Compitus 2021).
- o Have a plan for situations when the therapy animal needs to leave the session before the session is over (Compitus 2021, citing VanFleet & Faa-Thompson 2015).
- o Have a separate space or a covered animal crate for the animal to retreat to (Compitus 2021).
- o Advise the child/children if the animal needs a break to self-regulate and convey that this is not a reflection of the child/children (Compitus 2021).

What are the responsibilities of the animal's handler/carer?

ATL does not support facility dogs as a general concept. Dogs should be under the care of their primary carer and taken home with their carer when leaving the school environment.

Animal handlers/carers:

- should be trained and assessed by an accredited body or a suitably qualified person before undertaking that role (ATL 2021).
- should seek registration with a national or international animal-assisted services organisation. Furthermore, handlers must hold insurance policies relevant to their practice (ATL 2021).
- must not allow other persons to work with their animals in their absence (ATL 2021).
- Should only allow at most one other person to act as a handler for their animal. Both people should be over 18 years of age and trained as animal handlers (ATL 2021).
- must have specific knowledge of their animals': species, breed, and individual character traits; body language; signs of stress, discomfort, fear, illness, injury, and ageing; and responsiveness, reactivity, and flexibility to a variety of situations, allowing handlers to make appropriate decisions concerning their animals' initial and ongoing suitability for participation in animal-assisted services (ATL 2021).
- must demonstrate responsible, humane, and respectful animal ownership at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of adequate: housing, nutrition, transportation, preventative and responsive veterinary care, exercise, environmental enrichment, rest and recreation, and companionship (both animal and human where relevant). These requirements are above and beyond those represented by the Five Freedoms (ATL 2021).
- should advocate for the health and well-being of animals engaged in animal-assisted services. The animals must not be viewed as mere tools of the service that can be exploited for human gain but should be considered living, sentient beings whose well-being, including the right to flourish, is of paramount concern (ATL 2021).
- must not engage in or permit any rough or abusive handling of their animals, including, but not limited to, during the training process and before, during, and post animal-assisted service sessions (ATL 2021).

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- must abide by all federal and relevant state/territory legislation about animals and animal welfare (ATL 2021).
- must always practice animal-assisted services within the scope of their professional identity and within the limits of their learning, training, qualifications, and experience (ATL 2021).

What is the process for setting up an animal-assisted service?

- **The animal** needs to be evaluated and trained to ensure that it is suited to filling the role of an animal working in the animal-assisted services sector (Compitus 2021). Refer to the ATL website for training organisations who have agreed to abide by the ATL Code of Ethics and implement the ATL Code of Conduct:
- **The handler** must have an established relationship with the animal, refer to ATL Code of Conduct; and be trained to ensure that they have appropriate knowledge in animal handling, animal welfare and therapeutic techniques that involve working alongside an animal (Bode 2020). Refer to the ATL website for training courses that agree to abide by the ATL Code of Ethics and implement the ATL Code of Conduct:
- **The school** where the handler intends to work or volunteer needs to be evaluated for animal-assisted services appropriateness. The school's regulations need to be understood and adhered to. If policies for the presence of an animal in the workplace do not exist, they will need to be created (Compitus 2021). Policies may include areas such as informed consent for students to work with animals, risk assessment and management and ethics. Some states are setting aside funding for animal-assisted services and incorporating frameworks and programs to assist schools in upskilling to offer animal-assisted learning and therapy. For example, in Victoria, funding is available to help schools introduce a dog into schools to support mental health and well-being.
- **The student accessing animal-assisted services** must be assessed to determine their suitability. Informed consent must be sought from students and parents. Students should receive training in how to interact with the animals (Sandt 2020).

What are the barriers to Animals in Schools?

It is important for all schools to make an informed decision prior to introducing animals into schools. Many factors in need to be considered and policies and procedures developed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all concerned.

- Animal-assisted services, except assistance animals, are currently largely unregulated in Australia (Jones et al. 2018). More work needs to be done to ensure that those animal-assisted services are conducted in ways that ensure accountability, efficacy and ethical conduct that does not harm animals or humans involved (Evans & Gray 2012). ATL has developed a code of conduct for the animal-assisted services sector to self-regulate and enhance practice.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

- There is a shortage of courses offered that teach practitioners how to work with a animals in the animal-assisted services sector. For people wishing to upskill to include animal-assisted practice, [refer to the ATL website for more information](#).
- Training an animal for the animal-assisted services sector is a highly involved and expensive process that requires a significant level of commitment on the part of the handler/carer for the animal (Compitus 2021). People wishing to upskill in this area must commit a great deal of time, money, and energy to upskilling and caring for the animal that will work alongside them. However, this process can be rewarding both professionally and personally.
- Working with animals in professional settings can be a liability risk. Comartin (2018) recommends proactively planning and addressing safety and liability issues before beginning any program.

Organisations that do not already have animals working alongside staff generally do not have the appropriate policies in place to include animal-assisted services. However, these policies can be developed (Compitus 2021). When creating policies and procedures for animal-assisted services, they must comply with federal and state/territory requirements to prevent, identify, detect, and respond to risks to the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults (ATL 2021). Best practice for incorporating a dog into a classroom requires establishing clear classroom policies and procedures to ensure the safety of both the children and the animal.

These policies should include guidelines for how children will be instructed to interact with the dog, including when the dog is sleeping, eating, has objects in its mouth, is taken outside of the classroom, and needs to eliminate. Policies must address any students who are unsafe or physically abusive with the dog and a clear plan for any behavioural crises. Policies should also establish a clear protocol for the event of an injury (e.g., scratch or bite), including parent and administrator notification, proper incident reporting, and which situations require consultation with the school nurse and contacting emergency services (Comartin 2018).

- Animal-assisted services are still developing fields of practice in Australia. There is still a limited body of research into their efficacy. ATL is addressing this through their annual conference that bridges animal-assisted practice with research. As a result, the community and organisations may not know what animal-assisted teachers and allied health professionals do or incorporate these services into practice (Smith & Dale 2016).
- Because animal-assisted services are still emerging fields, it can be challenging to attract funding for programs.
- There is a lack of risk assessment tools that have been developed for animal-assisted services across different community settings. There is only one available in Australia that's just been designed for schools.
- Animal rights may not be considered within existing codes of ethics. There is a need for learning departments codes of ethics to expand to include animal welfare and human welfare to practice ethically when working alongside animals. This issue can be addressed by building animal rights into organisations existing ethics codes or by becoming familiar with, agreeing to and complying with ATL's code of ethics and codes of conduct.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

What are the risk factors for animal-assisted services?

Animals working alongside humans are at risk of experiencing health and welfare issues (Bode 2020). The animal needs to be protected from being over-fed and/or overworked by its handler (Bode 2020). Additionally, animals can experience stress when working alongside humans and interacting with students and highly stressful school environments, affecting their behaviour and negatively impacting their well-being. Therefore, handlers must develop the ability to read the animal's emotions and respond appropriately to situations to maintain a safe environment for their animal and students (Evans & Gray, 2012). This issue can be addressed by undertaking training in working alongside animals. Hence, appropriate training can train the practitioner to read and respond appropriately to the animal's body language (Evans & Gray 2012). Regular breaks, exercise, toileting, and nutrition also need to be considered (Evans & Gray 2012). No dog in a school environment should be working full time.

Risks include:

- There is a risk of a student being injured by an animal if the animal becomes overly stressed or has a temperament unsuited to working as a therapy animal. People and especially children, can inadvertently behave in ways towards animals that animals find threatening or stressful. Human-animal interaction etiquette training for students is highly recommended before any therapy animal visits (Sandt 2020). The handler and the animal also need to be adequately trained, and the animals' temperament should be assessed for suitability (Evans & Gray 2012).
- There is a risk of animals being harmed by a student displaying aggressive or antisocial behaviours. Students need to be assessed and monitored to ensure they treat the animals working alongside them well (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013).
- There is a risk of zoonosis in animal/human interactions. Students and staff are at risk of contracting certain infectious diseases from animals. This risk can be mitigated through good hygiene practices such as regular grooming of the animal, regular worming and vaccinations (as evidenced by veterinary certificates) and frequent handwashing for the students and staff if they have contact with the animal (Friesen 2010).
- There is a risk of allergic reaction to an animal. This risk can be minimised by carefully selecting an animal that sheds minimally and is groomed regularly (Friesen 2010).
- There is a risk that a school will be sued if a student is injured by an animal or becomes ill due to engaging with an animal. This risk can be mitigated through insurance and by providing parents with a process of informed consent. In order to give consent of an informed nature, parents must be provided with adequate information regarding the nature, risks, and chances of benefit associated with the service, and it should be confirmed that the provided information has been understood (ATL 2021).
- There is a risk of accident or injury due to students not wanting to follow protocol. Schools can be busy places. Teachers, students, and the therapy animal will encounter

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

each other on school grounds. Due to the likelihood of a student wanting to interact with an animal on campus, consideration for parent permission protocols should be made.

- There is a risk that through existing school programs incorporating programs that lack well thought out formal procedures, a mishap or accident may cause animal-assisted services to receive bad publicity and the learning department to consider animal-assisted services to be too risky to offer in schools. Many schools are running programs that are lacking in formality. There is a lack of consistent policies and procedures for animal-assisted services. Some animals are trained and registered with a national organisation; some are not. Some schools are adhering to the idea of one handler per animal. Other schools are allowing anyone to handle the animal. Some schools are sensitive to animal welfare issues, and other schools are not. Some schools have liability insurance, and some do not (Haggerty & Mueller 2017). ATL is currently working to implement codes of conduct for the animal-assisted services industry to regulate and enhance practice. ATL may move towards becoming an accredited body over the next five years.

Assistance Animals – some important points

Assistance Animals (often dogs "AD")

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (DDA) in Section 9, sets out the legal definition of an assistance animal as a dog or other animal that:

(a) is accredited under a State or Territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of disability; or

(b) is accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed in the regulations; or

(c) is trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

Assistance animals have a legal right to access public places and are not to be patted or distracted as they are working animals. They support people in accessing various aspects of personal and public life. They can be trained in tasks to alert their handler of an oncoming medical episode or to assist with everyday tasks. An assistance animal must meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place. Please do not ask the handler of an assistance animal about their condition.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

Some important points to remember:

🐾 Assistance animals assist a person with a disability alleviate the effect of the disability. Many disabilities are invisible. Do not ask a handler what their disability is.

🐾 Assistance animals must meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place. You can ask a handler to leave your premises if they don't meet these requirements.

🐾 Talk to the handler not the animal and do not distract the animal from their job.

🐾 Assistance dogs can be any breed that is not a breed banned in the dangerous dog act.

🐾 An assistance animal can't go into food preparation and infection control areas.

🐾 You can ask a handler to provide evidence that their animal is an assistance animal; or trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place. Evidence may include: ID card, training log, Public Access Test, veterinary report, assistance animal trainer report, doctors certificate and more.

🐾 You may refuse access to a person claiming to have an assistance animal if the animal is not under control, if the animal has an infectious disease or if the person does not produce evidence to show they are an assistance animal.

🐾 If you refuse entry to an assistance animal handler to your premises, a complaint can be brought against you in the Human Rights Commission.

For more information visit **www.animaltherapies.org.au**

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

References

Adamle, KN, Riley, TA & Carlson, T 2009, 'Evaluating College Student Interest in Pet Therapy', *Journal of American college health*, vol. 57, no. 5, pp. 545–548.

Anderson, KL & Olson, MR 2006, 'The value of a dog in a classroom of children with severe emotional disorders', *Anthrozoös*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 35–49.

ATL 2021, *Animal Therapies Limited Code of Conduct*, viewed 21st October 2021
< https://animaltherapies.org.au/>.

ATL 2021 (b), Animal Therapies Limited Website, viewed 14th October 2021,
<https://animaltherapies.org.au/animals-helping-humans/>.

Barker, SB 1999, 'Therapeutic aspects of the human-companion animal interaction', *Psychiatric Times*, vol.16 no. 2, pp. 45-45.

Baars, S & Wolf, F 2011, 'Tiergestützte Therapie bei Kognitions-und Sprachstörungen', *Nervenheilkunde*, vol. 30, no. 12, pp. 961–966.

Bassette, LA & Taber-Doughty, T 2013, 'The Effects of a Dog Reading Visitation Program on Academic Engagement Behaviour in Three Elementary Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disabilities: A Single Case Design', *Child & youth care forum*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 239–256.

Beetz, A 2013, 'Socio-emotional correlates of a school dog-teacher-team in the classroom', *Frontiers in psychology*, vol. 4, pp. 886–886.

Berry, J & Katsiyannis, A 2012, 'Service Animals for Students with Disabilities Under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973', Intervention in school and clinic, vol. 47, no. 5, pp. 312–315.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

Brelsford, VL, Meints, K, Gee, NR & Pfeffer, K 2017, 'Animal-Assisted Interventions in the Classroom-A Systematic Review', *International journal of environmental research and public health*, vol. 14, no. 7, p. 669–.

Bode, A 2020, 'Animal-assisted Therapy: The expansion of Social Work Practice' viewed 28th September 2021, < https://core.ac.uk/display/323394503>.

Busch, C, Tucha, L, Talarovicova, A, Fuermaier, ABM, Lewis-Evans, B & Tucha, O 2016, 'Animal-Assisted Interventions for Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Theoretical Review and Consideration of Future Research Directions', *Psychological reports*, vol. 118, no. 1, pp. 292–331.

Chandler, C 2001, Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counselling and School Settings. ERIC/CASS Digest, RIC Clearinghouse on Counselling and Student Services Greensboro NC.

Comartin, KP 2018, 'Is Man's Best Friend a Best Practice in Public Learning? Animal-Assisted Interventions in Classrooms and School-Based Therapeutic Settings',Proquest.

Compitus, K 2021, 'The Process of Integrating Animal-Assisted Therapy into Clinical Social Work Practice', Clinical Social Work Journal, vol. 49, pp.1–9.

Esteves, SW & Stokes, T 2008, 'Social Effects of a Dog's Presence on Children with Disabilities', *Anthrozoös*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 5–15.

Evans, N & Gray, C 2012, 'The practice and ethics of animal-assisted therapy with children and young people: Is it enough that we don't eat our co-workers?', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 42, pp. 600-617.

Friesen, L 2010, 'Exploring Animal-Assisted Programs with Children in School and Therapeutic Contexts', *Early childhood learning journal*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 261–267.

Funahashi, A, Gruebler, A, Aoki, T, Kadone, H & Suzuki, K 2014, 'Brief Report: The Smiles of a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder During an Animal-assisted Activity May Facilitate Social Positive Behaviors—Quantitative Analysis with Smile-detecting Interface', *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 685–693.

Gee, NR, Belcher, JM, Grabski, JL, DeJesus, M & Riley, W 2012, 'The Presence of a Dog Results in Improved Object Recognition Performance in Preschool Children', *Anthrozoös*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 289–300.

Gee, NR, Harris, SL & Johnson, KL 2007, 'The Role of Dogs in Speed and Accuracy to Complete Motor Skills Tasks for Preschool Children', *Anthrozoös*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 375–386.

Haggerty, JM & Mueller, MK 2017, 'Animal-assisted Stress Reduction Programs in Higher Learning', *Innovative higher learning*, vol. 42, no. 5, pp. 379–389.

Hoy-Gerlach, J, Delgado, M & Sloane, H 2019 'Rediscovering connections between animal welfare and human welfare: Creating social work internships at a humane society', *Journal of Social Work*, vol. 19, pp. 216–232.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

Jalongo, MR, Astorino, T & Bomboy, N 2004, 'Canine Visitors: The Influence of Dogs on Young Children's Learning and Well-Being in Classrooms and Hospitals', *Early childhood learning journal*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 9–16.

Jones, MG, Rice, SM, & Cotton, SM 2018, 'Who let the dogs out? Dogs in clinical practice', *Australasian Psychiatry, vol. 26*2, pp. 196-199.

Juríčková, V, Bozděchová, A, Machova, K & Vadroňová, M 2020, 'Effect of Animal Assisted Learning with a Dog Within Children with ADHD in the Classroom: A Case Study', Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal vol. 37, pp. 677–684.

Katcher, A & Wilkins, GG 1994, 'The use of animal assisted therapy and learning with Attention Deficit Hyperactive and Conduct Disorders', *Interaction*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 1-6.

Kelly, MA & Cozzolino, CA 2015, 'Helping at-risk youth overcome trauma and substance abuse through animal-assisted therapy', *Contemporary justice review : CJR*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 421–434.

Kogan, LR, Granger, BP, Fitchett, JA, Helmer, KA & Young, KJ 1999, 'The Human-Animal Team Approach for Children with Emotional Disorders: Two Case Studies', *Child & youth care forum*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 105–121.

Kotrschal, K & Ortbauer, B 2003, 'Behavioural effects of the presence of a dog in a classroom', *Anthrozoös*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 147–159.

Melson, GF 2003, 'Child Development and the Human-Companion Animal Bond', The American behavioural scientist (Beverly Hills), vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 31–39.

O'Haire, ME, McKenzie, SJ, Beck, AM & Slaughter, V 2013, 'Social behaviors increase in children with autism in the presence of animals compared to toys', *PloS one*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. e57010–e57010.

Parenti, L, Foreman, A, Meade, BJ & Wirth, O 2013, 'A revised taxonomy of assistance animals', *Journal of rehabilitation research and development*, vol. 50, no. 6, pp. 745–756.

Putz, JN 2014, *Animal-Assisted therapy and its effects on children in schools*, viewed 21st October 2021 <https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/379>.

Risley-Curtiss, C, Rogge, M & Kawam, E 2013, 'Factors Affecting Social Workers' Inclusion of Animals in Practice, Social Work, vol. 58.

RSPCA 2021, 'What is an assistance animal?' *RSPCA Knowledge Base,* viewed 28th September 2021, <Thhttps://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-an-assistance-animal/>.

Sandt, DD 2020, 'Effective Implementation of Animal Assisted Learning Interventions in the Inclusive Early Childhood Learning Classroom', *Early childhood learning journal*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 103–115.

Schuck, SEB, Emmerson, NA, Fine, AH & Lakes, KD 2015, 'Canine-Assisted Therapy for Children With ADHD: Preliminary Findings From The Positive Assertive Cooperative Kids Study', Journal of attention disorders, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 125–137.

Shena, RZ, Xionga, P, Choua ,UI & Halla, BJ 2018, '"We need them as much as they need us": A

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans

systematic review of the qualitative evidence for possible mechanisms of effectiveness of animal-assisted intervention (AAI)', *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, vol 41, pp. 203-207.

Smith, BP & Dale, AA 2016, 'Integrating animals in the classroom: The attitudes and experiences of Australian school teachers toward animal-assisted interventions for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder', *Pet Behaviour Science*, vol.1, pp. 13 – 22.

Tedeschi, P, Fitchet, J & Molidor CE 2005, 'The Incorporation of Animal-Assisted Interventions in Social Work Learning', *Journal of Family Social Work*, vol. 9, pp. 59-77.

Tissen, I, Hergovich, A & Spiel, C 2007, 'School-Based Social Training with and without Dogs: Evaluation of Their Effectiveness', Anthrozoös, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 365–373.

Walsh, F 2009, 'Human-Animal Bonds II: The Role of Pets in Family Systems and Family Therapy', *Family process*, vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 481–499.

Walker, P, Aimers, J & Perry, C 2015, 'Animals and social work: An emerging field of practice for Aotearoa New Zealand', *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Issue*, vol. 27.

Whalen, CN & Case-Smith, J 2012, 'Therapeutic Effects of Horseback Riding Therapy on Gross Motor Function in Children with Cerebral Palsy: A Systematic Review', *Physical & occupational therapy in paediatrics*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 229–242.

Winkle, M, Johnson, A & Mills, D 2020, 'Dog Welfare, Well-Being and Behavior: Considerations for Selection, Evaluation and Suitability for Animal-Assisted ', Animals.

Wohlfarth, R, Mutschler, B, Beetz, A, Kreuser, F & Korsten-Reck, U 2013, 'Dogs motivate obese children for physical activity: key elements of a motivational theory of animal-assisted interventions', *Frontiers in psychology*, vol. 4, pp. 796–796.

ANIMAL THERAPIES LTD
Animals Helping Humans