

CHAPTER GUIDELINES

Love on a Leash (LOAL)

The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy (FPPT)

Revised 3.12.2007

THERAPY PETS

What is a Therapy Pet?

A therapy pet's primary function is to brighten someone's day. The majority of our members are involved in this social side of therapy work. Dogs and their owners visit nursing homes, hospitals and schools to provide emotional support. They put a smile on someone's face, make their day a little brighter, or bring back a cherished memory.

We also do physical therapy work. Here dogs and their owners can work with a patient alongside a health-care professional as a team. These teams may involve physical therapists, speech therapists or any other health-care professional. The dogs often motivate patients to work a little harder (who can resist these sweet gentle creatures?). Recently some teams are proving to be beneficial in crisis intervention. The dog helps create a non-threatening environment for those in need.

Therapy dogs are privately owned and visit facilities on a regular basis. We do not raise and train dogs to be service or companion animals. At the end of a visit these animals go home with their owners. For the most part, our therapy pets are dogs; however, occasionally we have certified cats, horses, and other animals that have the temperament to work with people. (Note: Although "dog" is used throughout, this means dog or other therapy pet. "He" and "him" includes "She" and "her".)

What is the difference between Pet Provided Therapy and Pet Assisted Therapy?

The terms *pet provided therapy* and *pet assisted therapy* are sometimes confusing. The purpose of *pet provided therapy* is primarily social. The purpose of *pet assisted therapy*, on the other hand, is to achieve a particular goal. An example would be dogs used in a classroom to encourage autistic children in communication.

What makes a good Therapy Dog?

A therapy dog is a dog of any size, breed, color, shape, sex or age, at least one year of age. The most important factor is the dog's personality. He should be even-tempered, good-natured and able to accept handling by other people. He should be happy to be around people and respond with enthusiasm. A reticent dog might cause someone to feel that the dog doesn't want to visit them because they aren't good enough or lovable enough. The ideal therapy dog should be alert and attentive to what is going on around him, but focused enough to remember what he is supposed to be doing. Therapy dogs must be able to interact with other dogs in a calm, controlled manner.

LOVE ON A LEASH

Who are we?

Love on a Leash (LOAL) -- also known as **The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy (FPPT)** is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization. We operate on a not for profit basis and maintain an all volunteer organization. Currently, there are over 800 human/animal partnerships in 28 states. In many communities, volunteers form Chapters to have the opportunity to visit with others and to share common concerns and strategies.



What is our mission?

The Mission of the **Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy** is to support and encourage the positive interaction between pets and people.

What are the Goals and Objectives of the Foundation?

The **Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy's (LOAL)** Goals and Objectives include:

- Promoting certified therapy pet visits and providing guidance for members with their visits;
- Increasing public awareness of the benefits of pet-provided therapy;
- Providing education to the community and institutions on the value of pet-provided therapy;
- Providing training guidelines, evaluation and certification of therapy pets and owners;
- Developing and maintaining memberships in the national organization;
- Developing promotional/awareness materials;
- Developing programs/projects;
- Developing administrative policies and procedures, and
- Publishing a newsletter on a regular basis.

OUR HISTORY

Who founded Love on a Leash and when were we incorporated?

Liz Palika, a San Diego-based dog trainer and award-winning author founded **Love on a Leash** in 1984. It was incorporated in 1995 as **The Foundation of Pet Provided Therapy**. It is a California non-profit, public benefit corporation and a 501(c) (3) charity. The two names, **Love on a Leash** and **The Foundation of Pet Provided Therapy**, are often used interchangeably. We are staffed entirely by volunteers. Membership dues and local fundraisers cover the annual operating costs of our organization. Our volunteers serve communities throughout the United States.

FORMING A CHAPTER

What is a LOAL Chapter?

A **LOAL** Chapter is simply two or more people who would like to participate, together with their animals, individually or in groups, in making visits. Chapters often set up regular visits at various facilities. Members may then choose to visit with the group or visit on their own. A chapter can be organized very loosely, or be more structured. Either way, keep it simple. **LOAL** was started with the idea of making it possible for people with qualified pets to participate. We try not to over-regulate.

What are the basic requirements to become a LOAL Chapter?

To become a designated **LOAL** Chapter (meaning that you are recognized and included in the membership directory and website), you are required to have a Chapter Leader, a regular visit schedule, and a trainer/certifier.

I know there are a number of therapy pet organizations, why join Love on a Leash?

LOAL makes it as easy as possible for people with qualified pets to participate while still keeping the standards high.

Why form a Chapter?

A chapter provides support, motivation, and social interaction for you and your dog. More teams mean a greater variety of dogs, talents, and interests. Visiting together can also help to relieve the sometimes sad and stressful aspect of the work. Sharing your visit experiences helps to de-stress, and also educates others as to what works and what doesn't. It is good to know someone else will be there when you are unable to complete a visit.



A chapter is usually designated by geographical area where visits will take place. There is no minimum area covered or number of members in a chapter. If the area is large, many Chapter Leaders keep up with visits by having "Visit Captains" who manage the **LOAL** teams at each facility. Visit Captains attend visits, and act as a go between for the facility and the chapter. Chapter Leaders can also assign coordinators for special events.

Serious behavior issues can be handled in a professional manner. Issues like aggression should be turned over to a professional trainer who is qualified to evaluate the particular behavior and work with the dog and handler. (Teams with serious behavior issues are required to stop visits until OK'd by the trainer.)

Can a Chapter be sponsored by a corporation or organization i.e. a private hospital that wants to create its own therapy dog group?

Yes. Another organization may sponsor a **Love on a Leash** chapter. Care must be taken, however, to make certain that there is no co-mingling of funds. One organization can not raise funds for another. No one associated with **Love on a Leash** is to charge for visits or ask for donations from those who are visited. It follows that our organization is not to be used as a fund raising vehicle for another. A hospital could start a therapy program, as an arm of their auxiliary, and have it administered by **LOAL**. An animal rescue group can form a chapter to provide community service and to promote their own agenda. They can not do direct fundraising through **LOAL**.

How do you choose a Chapter name?

Choose a name that explains what you do. You are welcome to use **Love on a Leash**, the national name, but local chapters often pick a name for their specific location. All names must be approved by the national board.

Do the guidelines and rules governing LOAL Chapters vary from area to area?

No. All rules from the National office governing **LOAL** Chapters are the same everywhere.

A Chapter, though unique in personality, should still reflect the purpose and function of **Love on a Leash**: To support and guide Certified Visit Teams and uphold the same high standards and values. The name **Love on a Leash, The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy** should mean something: best of the best, proud, trusted, honorable, responsible, and recognized throughout the US as model Therapy Pets. We are basically self-governing so this becomes each Chapter's responsibility.

How many visits does a chapter have to make to stay active?

At this time, there is no minimum number of visits required.

Are there a minimum number of visits per member?

At this time, there is no minimum number of visits required for individual members.

How Do I Form a New Chapter?

See the Chapter Application Form on our website, www.loveonaleash.org

BECOMING A CHAPTER LEADER

Who can become a Chapter Leader?

Anyone with the desire to serve their community by joining with other teams to make pet therapy visits is encouraged to do so. The requirements and responsibilities of a Chapter Leader are listed below.

What are the requirements of a LOAL Chapter Leader?

We require that all Chapter Leaders be certified by **LOAL** (or be Associate members in good standing).



Chapter Leaders ensure that Visit Teams are properly certified through the National Office. You may, if you wish, impose additional requirements on your own chapter members - however, you must remember to respect other properly certified **Love on a Leash** members that you meet within the community who choose not to join your chapter.

Each Chapter Leader must supply the National Office with an *annual* membership report (The first report is due 6 months after a chapter is formed and then every January 15th.) This report will list the names of the volunteers associated with your Chapter, a brief description of where you visit, the number of visits the chapter has made, and a financial report of donations and expenses received by or incurred by your Chapter.

If you turn over Chapter Leadership to another volunteer, please notify the National Office within 30 days.

If you have an incident that involves written communication between visit sites, members and/or leaders, then the incident is of sufficient importance that the National Office should be told (for insurance purposes).

If there is an incident that could potentially effect a dog's status as a therapy dog, it should be reported to the National Office.

Chapter Leaders may need to formally register as a charity in the state where they reside.

What are the responsibilities of a LOAL Chapter Leader?

Therapy work is a great responsibility. You have a responsibility to your chapter members to set goals, educate, lead, set the example, and be there for them. You have a responsibility to your community to provide quality visit teams for their facilities and programs. You have a responsibility to yourself to insure that each team meets your personal guidelines of "safest visit team" possible.

You are a standard-bearer. You remind your members that therapy pet work is a service -- and in order to provide this service, each team must adhere to certain policies in order to protect those who we visit as well as those who are doing the visiting.

You have the responsibility of ensuring that your visit teams are properly trained and certified. All volunteers, including Chapter Leaders, must abide by the **Love on a Leash Owner/Handler Agreement**.

What is the Love on a Leash Owner/Handler Agreement?

The Love on a Leash Owner/Handler Agreement

1. Owners are responsible for their pet's actions at all times.
2. Owners consider the safety of other people at all times.
3. Owners continue a pet's education by refreshing obedience and teaching special commands.
4. Pets are freshly bathed and/or groomed on each visit and parasite free; healthy and up-to-date on all vaccinations or titers.
5. If at any time the therapy animal can no longer do therapy work due to age, illness, disability or behavior problems, work will be stopped and LOAL notified. (Note: Serious behavior issues like aggression should be handled and /or turned over to a professional trainer who is qualified to evaluate the particular behavior and work with the dog and handler. The team would be required to stop visits until OK'd by the trainer.)
5. Volunteers are to remember that a handler's actions and attitude represents all therapy pets and service animals in the eyes of the public.

Are Chapter Leaders paid?

Chapter Leaders are not to receive any pay or other compensation in their role as a Chapter Leader. They cannot personally make money by virtue of being affiliated with **Love on a Leash** - we are strictly a volunteer-run organization.



NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS

What does the national organization require for individuals to become members of a chapter? (All requirements and forms are listed on our website www.loveonaleash.org.)

There are 3 Basic Requirements:

1) COMPLETE AN EVALUATION. In order to become certified, dogs must pass a **Dog Obedience/Control Evaluation** which can be administered by any professional dog trainer. Prospective members do not have to attend a formal "pet-provided therapy" training class. *Please note: Prospective members can not evaluate their own dog.*

2) COMPLETE 10 SUPERVISED VISIT HOURS. We also require our prospective members to document 10 hours of supervised visits at a facility of their choice and complete a **10 Hour Visit Record**. (For example: A prospective member can request that an activities director in an assisted living facility accompany them and their pet while they make their first few visits.) Prospective members can not sign off their own completed visit list. The **10 Hour Visit Record** must be signed by someone who has observed the prospective member visiting.

3) PROVIDE VACCINATION INFORMATION. Our policy is, with the exception of vaccinations required by state law, that we will accept the vaccination protocol recommended by a volunteer's veterinarian. Many veterinarians are recommending that dog owners stretch out the vaccination interval because of the possible danger to the immune system. Vaccine titers, a test that shows the antibody level a dog has against certain infectious diseases, may be used in lieu of vaccines.

Is there a fee for membership?

Yes and No. There is no fee to become a Chapter. Individual members pay yearly membership dues to the National Organization. After the training and paperwork is completed, each member sends \$20.00 with his application for the first handler and pet (Certified Visit Team), any additional pet or handler is an additional \$10.00. There is a one-time charge for the **LOAL** Visit Vest of \$15.00 per pet (the vest is required of all dogs). In addition to the cost of processing memberships, fees cover the cost of insurance and our newsletter. Local chapters can also charge dues to cover local expenses.

How are memberships defined?

The following definitions are effective May 1, 2006.

1. **Certified Visit Team:** Anyone who will be handling the dog on visits must get certified with that dog. That is, he must pass the **Pet Obedience/Control Evaluation** with the dog and also complete 10 supervised visit hours with that dog. Once his application has been submitted and membership approved, the person and dog are a **Certified Visit Team**.

2. **Additional family members** being certified at the same time must each pass the **Pet Obedience/Control Evaluation** with the dog, but they can concurrently complete visit hours.

3. Anyone who is not certified with that dog cannot handle the dog on a visit.

4. A **Certified Visit Team** consists on one person and one therapy pet. You cannot be the handler for more than one pet on a visit.

5. A **Junior Handler** must pass the **Pet Obedience/Control Evaluation** with his dog and complete 10 supervised visit hours with his dog. A Junior Handler must be accompanied on all visits (both the 10 supervised visit hours and subsequent visits) by a certified adult until the Junior Handler reaches age of 16. *This does not effect Junior Handlers certified before May 1, 2006.*

6. A **Junior Handler's** membership application must be signed by a parent, acknowledging responsibility.



7. An **Associate Member** is a member in good standing who is not currently part of a therapy pet team.
8. **Every additional handler added after the original application for membership has been completed must complete 10 hours of supervised visits and an evaluation.**

How can Chapter Leaders help new chapter members?

Motivation is a big part of being a Chapter Leader. New members need mentors who will take them on visits to different facilities so they can judge which area they are most suited to. Having the ability to help volunteers understand what an asset to the community they could be as a Visit Team is also a big part of leadership.

“Becoming the leader of a well established chapter has meant that much of my job has been to support and guide “newbies”, people looking for training and/or evaluation, and teams who are working toward their first 10 hours before becoming certified. This takes the cooperation of my Visit Captains and facilities that allow us to train under supervision.” **North San Diego County, Chapter Leader, Sheri Wachtstetter**

Please note: You need at least one regular visit location that will allow uncertified volunteers to complete their first 10 hours of visits with the supervision of experienced volunteers or staff.

What are our policies regarding accepting visit experience with other organizations?

We have members who have membership in other pet therapy organizations. We require that they pass the **LOAL** Evaluation in order to be certified by **LOAL** and do their supervised visits using **LOAL** documentation. For the purpose of Advanced Therapy Dog Degrees (see Forms), documented visits are accepted from other organizations.

CHAPTER LEADERS: ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

What is the primary responsibility of a Chapter Leader?

The primary responsibility of a chapter leader is to encourage and support members as they make visits.

As a Chapter Leader, what is the relationship between the dogs, the clients and the chapter members?

In summary, here is the order of priority:

#1 - DOGS: Safety, comfort and relationship. It is your relationship with your dog that makes Pet Therapy work. Your pet trusts you. You should always consider your pet first.

#2 - CLIENTS: Safety, caring, sharing, respect, and consistency.

#3 - MEMBERS: Inform, motivate, encourage, educate, respect, and let go of ego. A leader is the bridge between the client/facility and the teams. A leader should always set the example. When a problem arises, a leader helps members decide to train more, take a break, or retire. Serious behavior issues like aggression should be handled and /or turned over to a professional trainer who is qualified to evaluate the particular behavior and work with the dog and handler. The team would be required to stop visits until re-evaluated by the trainer and chapter leader.

How do I build good feelings within the chapter members?

To support your volunteers, you may want to have routine obedience/socialization meetings, award luncheons to recognize outstanding member volunteers, and a chapter newsletter to keep the group informed.



You are a motivator. You motivate teams to visit facilities. You give your teams the support and confidence they need to make their visits. Gathering for training, or fun events, and giving recognition can motivate not only the recipient but everyone.

How can you recruit members and keep them interested in continuing to make visits?

Promote your activities through the facilities that you work with. Contact your local newspaper and other media outlets to run features on your group. Sometimes local newspapers welcome the invitation to photograph your group working. Pertinent group information and invitations for evaluation and training can be made through the article which contains contact information.

Place information in your veterinarian's and dog groomer's office. Tell a friend to tell two friends.

Big communities demand a bigger team effort and more team members. The basic question is: How many ACTIVE members will it take to make a chapter work well? You have to have involved members who care and actually do more than visit one place a year or month.

NEW CHAPTERS

What is the basic structure of a chapter?

A chapter may structure itself in any number of ways.

Our largest and original chapter, in North San Diego County, California, is loosely organized. It does have a regular schedule of organized visits, but members visit as their schedule permits and there are no regularly required meetings. They offer an obedience class one night per week. Participation is not required but it does offer an opportunity for members to socialize, brush up on their obedience work and learn more advanced skills. North San Diego County California has a chapter leader who keeps the whole thing together and communicates, via e-mail, regarding any schedule changes or activities. They also have their own checking account and do a limited amount of fund raising.

Other chapters have more structure. Chapters may have a President (or Chapter Leader), Vice President and Treasurer. They may have periodic meetings as well as a requirement for a minimum number of monthly or annual visits. FPPT has put together an outline and training video for a therapy class, for dogs and handlers. Many chapters require that prospective members take a class based on that outline. Some of the chapters require additional obedience skills and ongoing training. Just remember to continue making participation as easy as possible for qualified individuals.

What is a Visit Captain?

The Visit Captain organizes and oversees the visits to a particular facility, communicates with team members regarding changes in schedules or other information of interest.

Is there a maximum size for the number of members in a chapter?

Word spreads when the community begins to see therapy dogs at work. One facility hears about the benefits and fun and wants a program for their facility. Pet owners hear about pet therapy or see a team at work. The local papers and TV stations like to share the "feel good story" on the news. Depending on the community, as a chapter grows outward it makes sense to become two neighboring chapters. Each Chapter has a regular visit schedule and shares resources when there is a larger event like a Fair. Chapters keep in contact with each other and share each other's news when appropriate. It would be against our purpose and philosophy to become cliquish or selective in chapter formation. Any qualified team should be welcomed and encouraged.

Chapter Leaders have the right and responsibility to "un-invite" a team from any visit or activity due to any disruptive behavior on the part of either member, human or canine, of the Team.



What forms does a new chapter need to be aware of?

All forms that new members need, including the application for new Chapters, can be found on the *Love on a Leash* website at www.loveonaleash.org. Forms include Chapter Application, Membership Checklist, Membership Application, Obedience Evaluation, and Visit Evaluation. *Please note: Vaccination information forms are obtained from veterinarians.*

Does LOAL carry insurance for official visits?

Yes. Membership fees cover the cost of insurance.

As a volunteer with *Love on a Leash*, you are covered by two kinds of insurance. The first covers personal injuries that your pet causes to third persons (anyone not a member of *Love on a Leash*). Remember you are always financially responsible for your pet so if there is other primary insurance coverage (such as a homeowner's policy) that other insurance company or companies will likely be asked to contribute equal shares.

The second covers personal injuries that your pet causes to another volunteer of *Love on a Leash*. This policy is a secondary liability policy only, your own personal insurance will be used up first.

When does the insurance coverage begin?

Insurance will be in effect if the following conditions are met:

- 1) You are a member and or a volunteer of *Love on a Leash* while acting on behalf of and within the scope of our principal objectives.
- 2) You are following all of the rules and regulations of the place that you are visiting and our own rules and regulations.
- 3) You are participating in the activity on a strictly volunteer basis. This means that you won't be covered if you have your pet with you while you are at work or use your pet as part of your work. You can't receive pay of any kind.

Example 1: You are a physical therapist at a hospital. You take your dog to work to help one of your patients exercise by throwing a tennis ball 100 times in 15 minutes. Your patient is scratched by your dog. Our insurance policy will not cover the injury.

Example 2: You are a physical therapist at a hospital. You take your dog to your work after-hours to visit patients in the rehab unit as part of a hospital-run therapy pet program. You are not required to participate in this program as part of your work. You are not paid for time spent at the hospital. The patient throws the ball 100 times. The dog scratches the patient. You are covered by our insurance policy.

What makes a good Chapter?

Here are some of the factors you may want to consider:

“Coordination;

Good organizers and a good organization;

Desire of team members to "help" service the community and make a difference;

Talent of the Chapter Leaders to make team members feel important by noticing their efforts (we do Certificates of Achievement, Gift Certificates for lunch, etc.);

Ability of Chapter Leaders to give credit to all the teams and recognize that the entire team is responsible for the effort becoming a reality;

Good newspaper coverage and someone who has great contacts in that area;

Good T.V. and radio coverage;

Friends who tell friends and so forth. We did it by e-mail and word-of-mouth;

Letting your vets know;



*Letting dog groomers know;
Letting facilities in your area know, and taking your best Visit Team members to "impress"
them and pass out literature;
Educating your community over and over and over and over!"
- California, Fallbrook/Temecula Chapter Leader, Nancy Makowski and Liz Norris*

TRAINING

What are the training policies of LOAL?

LOAL does not endorse a particular training style, assuming the training is structured to foster a positive, loving bond between the dog and his handler.

How do I choose a trainer to work with the member volunteers?

Any qualified dog trainer can help you complete the membership process. The trainer does not have to be a **LOAL** member. Training can be done through a local trainer or organization, humane society classes, or obedience club. The trainer should be someone you trust and can recommend to interested pet owners, and members who might need a brush up of obedience skills and/or problem solving.

Can the chapter leader be the one who profits from the training?

Yes. But chapter leaders can not exclude others who would otherwise qualify to be **Love on a Leash** volunteers but have completed their training elsewhere.

Who can be an evaluator?

Any dog trainer qualified to administer the AKC (American Kennel Club) Canine Good Citizen Test.

How do I find an evaluator in my area?

You may get a list of CGC testers in your area from the AKC. If there is not a qualified CGC tester in your area, have the trainer you choose write a brief letter to our national office explaining their qualifications. Please have them include a phone number, address and email address.

What do you do if a member of your group does not meet the requirements for visits as a result of animal behavior?

Chapter Leaders have the responsibility of deciding which team members might need their certifications revoked by National because of inappropriate behavior (either from the dog or owner or both). Whenever possible, it is the policy that a team is given additional training with the hope of returning to the group.

Chapters should be inclusive not exclusive. Our purpose is to bring pet therapy to the community. If there is a team that meets the basic requirements of being friendly and well behaved, they should be welcomed and invited to regular visits, facilities, community functions (once they are certified).

If a team is "uninvited" because of training issues, disruptive behavior, attitude, problems with a facility or activity director, or even breed discrimination, they should be kindly informed, dealt with in a respectful way, and if possible given help to overcome the problem.

Serious behavior issues like aggression should be handled and /or turned over to a professional trainer who is qualified to evaluate the particular behavior and work with the dog and handler. The team would be required to stop visits until OK'd by the trainer.

Is there a policy on training collars?

We have no formal policy on the type of collars that may be worn on visits. If you choose to use a chain, pinch or halter type collar, be prepared to answer questions from those you visit. People may think that "Halties™" or "Gentle Leaders™" are muzzles and that prong collars are unusually cruel. You may need to explain the necessity. Chapters may have their own policies regarding collars.



Is there a policy on leashes?

YES. All visits are to be made with leashes that are 4-foot or less. Extendable leashes are not to be used for visits. Dogs should be under much closer control than is allowed by an extendable leash. Leashes should be leather or fabric. Metal or chain leashes are unacceptable. Chapter Leaders and/or Visit Captains may want to have an extra appropriate 4-foot leash in their car for emergencies.

What obedience socialization skills should be reviewed from time to time?

The following are the skills that therapy pets should continue to practice:

1. "Wait" (at doors, on steps, stairways, stairwells, gates, car doors in/out and for food).
2. "Leave it" (leave alone food, dogs, cats, people, kids, strange objects on the floor, etc.)
3. "Off" (means get off of anything, anyone, etc.).
4. "Paws Up" (for dogs that need to come up on beds, etc., when invited only).
5. "Jump" (allowed only on command).
6. "Sit" (for petting by strangers).
7. "Relax", "Settle", or "Easy" (for dogs that tense up or get nervous).
8. "Sit/Wait", "Sit/Down", "Sit/Stand" (combination commands).
9. "Wait" and "Stay" (dog knows the difference)
10. "Give" (anything the dog has in its mouth).
11. Dog is comfortable being left alone with a stranger for 3 minutes.
12. Dog is comfortable being touched.
13. Dog has good vet exam skills (can calmly show teeth, paws, ears, eyes, etc.).

FUNDRAISING

What do I need to know about fundraising?

There are times when chapters will want to do a limited amount of fundraising. **FPPT** is a California based, 501(c) (3) tax exempt corporation. We do not want to do anything that might jeopardize that status. The national organization has no paid officers or directors and has a limited need for funds. We do, occasionally, have projects, such as the training video, that need to be funded. One of our chapters had donations from a private individual, which were used to fund bookmarks, with pictures of our dogs, which we handed out on visits. A chapter might also need funds for a newsletter or educational material. *We may never charge, or ask for donations, for our visits.* All income and expenses must be reported to FPPT National, on an annual basis. *Before starting any project, please check with National for approval.*

Remember that our focus should be on making visits and that doesn't require fundraising.

Do I need to register as a Foreign Corporation?

FPPT is a California based, Tax Exempt Corporation. Many chapters, operating outside of California, must register, with their Secretary of State, as a Foreign Corporation. This is especially true if there is any fundraising involved. It is nothing to worry about. All it usually involves is keeping your state updated on the official mailing address of **LOAL** and listing primary officers. The National President can usually handle this. The notice will generally go to the Chapter, so you must be sure to forward it to National.



RESOURCES

What are some of the resources available to LOAL chapters?

LOAL Training Tape (VHS or DVD)
Chapter Guidelines
Other Chapter Leaders (list follows)
National Officers (list follows)
The National Newsletter (stories about visits etc.)
Websites (www.loveonaleash.org and those of local chapters).
Bumper Stickers and others products available through the National Office

COMMUNICATION

How do I communicate with chapter members?

The Chapter Leader must be a member of **LOAL** and available to members for questions, problems and support. Chapter Leaders keep teams informed by email (being careful to save emails pertinent to **LOAL** news, business, visits, and members), or phone. Visit schedule changes, special events, opportunities for visits and/or continued training, and news of interest should be provided to chapter members in a timely manner.

"A mailed newsletter is welcomed but might not be quick enough. For example, I was recently told just a couple of days in advance that the Wild Animal Park would be doing a special program for the residents of one of our regular visits -- at the same time of our normally scheduled visit. I needed to let all of the regular teams and "newbies" know quickly because the program included birds and a wallaby. No dogs allowed!" **North San Diego County, California, Chapter Leader, Sheri Wachtstetter**

What about newsletters?

FPPT National publishes a newsletter. We request Chapter Leaders communicate with our newsletter editor so that your Chapter's activities can be included. Chapters can also publish their own local newsletters via mail or email. There is also a Yahoo **LOAL** Group.

Have a designated Communications person.

The Chapter Leader may use Chapter Co-Leaders or Visit Captains; this is left to the discretion of the Chapter Leader. However, at all times, there should be a designated person to receive communications from chapter members and from the National Office. There should also be a contact for serious behavior issues. Serious behavior issues like aggression should be handled and /or turned over to a professional trainer who is qualified to evaluate the particular behavior and work with the dog and handler.

CHAPTER MARKETING

How do I get the chapter noticed in the community?

Get coverage in your local newspaper;
Get visits covered by TV and radio stations;
Tell your friends -- by email and word-of-mouth;
Tell veterinarians and dog groomers;
Go to dog parks and other public places where dog lovers congregate;
Meet with potential visit facilities. Make a Visit Team and pass out literature;
Educate your community over and over and over and over!

Does Love on a Leash have a website?

Yes. The address is www.loveonaleash.org. All members are also encouraged to join the YAHOO **LOAL** group at this address: LOAL_national-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



If a chapter has a website, can it be linked to the FPPT website?

Yes. All chapters with websites are automatically linked to the **FPPT** website. (Chapters need to notify the National Office so the link can be made.)

What are the restrictions for the use of the FPPT and LOAL logos?

FPPT and **LOAL** logos can only be used in conjunction with therapy dog work. Camera ready copies of the logo are available to Chapter Leaders upon request. Please note: The **FPPT** or **LOAL** logos can not be used to endorse any product or service without the written consent of the National Office.

PLANNING VISITS

Where can you visit?

LOAL Therapy Pet Teams can visit any place they have been invited. Therapy Teams visit hospitals, retirement homes, Alzheimer care facilities, day care centers, libraries, preschools, grade schools, and homes. They also do community education presentations.

How do I find places to visit?

If you are looking to expand your group's visit schedule, you might assess your community's needs and activities. For example, you may see if your local schools would benefit by a mentoring program; whether visits to hospitals, retirement homes, or skilled nursing facilities would be desired. (Remember, though, our pets are not trained service dogs, and unless further qualified, are not suitable for other work.) Once opportunities in the community are identified, the Chapter Leader would coordinate visiting dates and hours for the group.

Is there an "Intro" letter I could send?

Yes. A copy is enclosed in the "Resources" section at the back of this binder.

What are the leader's responsibilities during a visit?

You have a responsibility to your team members--volunteers and dogs-- to insure that the facilities are aware of "acceptable behavior" towards the Visit Teams. You have a responsibility to insure the safety of your team members in any situation, even if it means not visiting a particular facility. In addition, you must be sure that team members handle situations responsibly.

How important is the LOAL Visit Vest?

It is an honor to wear the **LOAL** vest. You've earned it. It sets you and your pet apart. There is only one "official" **LOAL** vest. It is not mandatory to wear it to all visits, but the dog's ID and membership card should always be readily available.

Do some facilities have additional policies?

Yes, be sure to check with the contact for any visit site to make sure you are aware of any special restrictions or guidelines for their facility. Some facilities ask for a copy of each dog's vaccination records to have on file. Be aware of pets that live at the location you are visiting. Ask them to be put up.

Does each Chapter need a visit schedule?

It is important to keep an up to date schedule of facilities and other details. A copy of the schedule used by our North County San Diego Chapter can be found in the "Resources" section. If members wish to make unscheduled visits, they should always contact the facility directly.

How do you manage a large group of visit sites?

It depends on the personal preferences of the chapter leader and the size of the chapter if she/he decides to incorporate the use of Chapter Co-Leaders, Visit Captains and/or Coordinators. These helpers can be utilized by the Chapter Leader to help facilitate a larger group when the leader is unable to physically visit all facilities serviced by the Chapter.



Is there a list of manners for visits?

Yes! The following list of visit manners was created by a group of seasoned volunteers.

1. Your dog should be groomed and tidy.
2. "Meet and greet" other teams before you go in to a visit. Be sensitive to new dogs.
3. Stay with your dog. Visits can be social but you must know what your dog is doing at all times.
4. Maintain control of your dog at all times.
5. Ask permission before bringing your dog close to someone. Ask, "Would you like a visit?".
6. When you introduce your dog, don't let the person you are visiting put their face right up to your dog or vice versa.
7. Don't touch a wheelchair or walker without asking.
8. Think ahead of time how you will handle your dog being offered treats by others.
9. Get permission to give treats to other dogs.
10. Be prepared to clean up after your dog. (Stress levels can be high – especially for the first few visits.) If clean up is required, notify staff immediately.
11. The facilities you visit are staffed with professionals. Report anything out of the ordinary.
12. Respect the client's space. If someone doesn't like dogs realize it's not personal.
13. Take potty breaks away from activity. Be discreet and pick-up waste and dispose of it discretely. If your dog needs to leave it's OK. Excuse yourself and come back when you are done.
14. Remember that the staff in the places you visit like to be visited, too.
15. We recommend your dog wear his vest/scarf at all visits. It is an honor to be able to wear it. Always carry ID for both you and your dog.
16. Keep sensitive dogs apart from each other.
17. Remember: Not everyone likes to be kissed by a dog (even if they like dogs).
18. Allow those you visit their privacy. Never disclose personal information you learn with anyone outside of the facility. Knock or announce yourself before entering a room.
19. Don't talk down to people just because they are old or disabled.
20. Always try to leave people feeling better about themselves.
21. Listen. Some of these people have wonderful stories to tell.
22. Watch out for the shy people in the corner. Make an effort to include them.
23. Know your dog. If he shows signs of being tired or irritable, simply excuse yourself and make plans to return at another time.



A Special Word about Visiting Children

It is important that members of LOAL maintain a safe and controlled environment when visiting children. Many children have not had an education related to dog safety and may have pre-conceived ideas that are false or even dangerous. Because the media tends to anthropomorphize dogs through commercials, shows and animation, many of us have unrealistic expectations as to dog behavior. There are children, for example, that believe it is perfectly natural for a dog to accept close face to face contact or a hug from a child. Many dogs, however, may view this as a threatening gesture, especially from a stranger. The result may be avoidance, a snarl or worse.

As an organization, we visit hundreds or maybe thousands of children each year. The odds of a mishap during any one visit are small. However, one or two dog related injuries can put our very existence at risk. We rely on our liability insurance and if that insurance were to be cancelled, we would cease to exist as an organization.

Are there any special guidelines for visiting children?

Yes. The following are guidelines for visiting children ages 5 to 12. (We do not recommend visits with children less than five years old.) As always, dogs should be on a leash 4 feet or shorter.

- 1. Remember, visiting children is not the same as visiting adults.** Children are often unpredictable, particularly those with physical challenges that might result in jerky motions, or mental challenges that might result in misunderstanding. As much as you might want to visit school age children, if your dog has ever shown aggression to children he is probably not a good candidate for this work.
- 2. Know your animal.** Does he genuinely seem to like children? If a dog merely tolerates children, he is better suited to more adult situations. Dogs must be steady, not easily upset, and highly tolerant of noise and quick moves.
- 3. Plan ahead.** Discuss your visit ahead of time with the teacher or adult in charge. Ask what their goal is for the visit. Is it just a “meet and greet” or is there a more specific purpose for the visit? Be sure to ask the following questions so you know what to expect: How many students are in the class? Are they mainstream children or are there special needs? What is the layout of the room? Do any of the children have allergies? What are the goals of the visit? Where will the dog(s) be located in the room? How long do they want the visit to be? (We recommend no longer than 45 minutes.)
- 4. Make your expectations clear.** Let the school know that children must be seated when you arrive. Children must be told ahead of time to be calm and move slowly around the dogs. At no time should the children be permitted to run up to the dog(s) as a group or individually. The visit must be controlled and organized. Teachers should be present. You are the only one who should give treats to your dog.
- 5. Prepare the dogs.** Be sure the dogs in your group are comfortable together. If visiting with more than one dog, it is particularly important that the dogs greet one another before you enter a classroom. If there is any sign of aggression between dogs, remove them immediately from the situation. Any dog that appears “out-of-control” (lunging, pulling or barking etc.) should be asked to leave before you enter the classroom.
- 6. Be observant.** Watch your dog for signs of stress. If your dog turns his back to the children, tries to walk away, hides under furniture or otherwise tries to disconnect, remove him from the room and give him a break. Remember – dogs can get overwhelmed and over-stimulated by too many hands and react poorly. We want the visit to be positive for the children but of course we want the experience to be positive for the dogs also.
- 7. Smaller groups are better.** Never let more than a few children surround a dog at the same time, and always have them approach slowly. Often, when visiting with several dogs, you can divide a larger group of children up into smaller groups and rotate the different dogs between the groups (having the children stay in place).



8. **Safety first.** Dogs should be on their leashes (4 feet or less) at all times. Children should be given instruction on how to safely approach a dog. Please remember under no circumstances should your dog (or any animal) be subjected to improper treatment by children. You must be free to give the guideline “gentle” to children regardless of disability. If a child truly can not understand the concept of “gentle” he is not a good candidate for visits. Also, children should not put their face in the face of any dog.

9. **Have fun!** There are few visits more rewarding than an eager group of children. If your dog knows any tricks, now is the time to let him perform. Be aware that children will often ask if they can give the dog a command (like “shake”).

Here are a few other recommendations for specific circumstances:

→ For *reading programs* a dog needs to be able to lay relaxed next to a child as they read. If your dog can not do this, do not volunteer for a reading program.

→ When visiting *specific needs children* (autism, Down syndrome, muscular dystrophy, etc.) have a pre-meeting (without dogs) with the teacher in charge to discuss the goals of the visits. Specific needs teachers have special training. Ask them the best way to approach each child.

→ Often children want to “walk” a dog. Depending on the situation, and the safety to the dog and child, this may be permitted but never without the human partner of the dog present. NEVER leave your dog alone with a child during a visit. Some volunteers use two leashes; one to hand to the child and the other to actually maintain control of the dog.

→ Remember that some children may be afraid of dogs. It may be because they have had a negative experience or they have no experience with dogs at all. Either way, respect the child and do not force the dog on them. In most circumstances, children who are fearful warm up to dogs after repeated visits. Take your lead from the adult responsible for the children you are visiting.

