

Therapy Dog Registration

We've received several questions regarding pet therapy. We are still working on perfecting our process, but we are getting a good system developed.

Q: What is Therapy Dogs Incorporated?

A: Therapy Dogs Incorporated (TDInc.) is an organization that registers therapy dogs. (Note: They don't certify therapy dogs; there is a difference. The correct terminology is "Fluffy is a registered therapy dog.") While it is not the only national therapy dog organization in existence, it is the one in which we have local testers/observers. Therapy dogs are NOT service dogs and do not receive the same rights and privileges under ADA as service dogs do.

Q: Why do I need to have my dog registered? The local nursing homes don't require it.

A: Completing the therapy dog registration process allows the team to receive insurance for therapy dog visits. While the nursing homes aren't requiring teams to be registered, TCKC is requiring our therapy group members to be registered. That means, if you want to participate in TCKC therapy dog visits, your dog must be a registered therapy dog.

Q: What do I have to do to get started?

A: First step is to decide if therapy dog work is right for you and your dog. It is neither for every dog nor every person. Your dog must be able to handle being in medical facilities (where there are unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells) and be very used to being handled by strangers, including unexpected grabs to the ears and tail. Also be aware of the time commitment. TDInc. requires teams to complete a minimum of four visits per year. This is not a means to earn an additional title on your dog – this is a service commitment. Next step is to complete the test portion. It is very similar to the Canine Good Citizen test. TCKC will be holding TDInc. tests the same night we do the CGC tests. Your dog does not have to be a CGC, but it doesn't hurt to have both. After successfully completing the test, the team is required to complete three actual therapy dog visits under the observation of a TDInc. tester/observer. The observations must be a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of one hour in duration. (A tester/observer may ask that a fourth observation be completed, if necessary.) Upon successful completion of the observations, the tester/observer will make their recommendation to TDInc. Final decision on therapy dog registration lies with TDInc. and not with the tester/observer. The handler is required to submit their paperwork to TDInc. and if all goes well, the team will receive a membership card and a TDInc. dog tag. Additionally, bandanas, leashes, collars and vests are available for purchase, but are not required.

Q: Where can I get more information on Therapy Dogs Incorporated?

A: Visit their website at www.therapydogs.com.

Q: How can I sign up to be tested?

A: Email Sue McKinney at mckinney@hughes.net to get the most recent schedule for testing.