

## **Community Therapy Dogs Society (CTDS) Safety Policy**

Safety is of paramount importance to the CTDS and the safety policy covers all occasions when dogs interact with people, as well as the interaction of adults with children:

- 1) Dog assessment
- 2) Physical examination
- 3) Listening Tails (LT)
- 4) Visiting Tails (VT)
- 5) Caring Tails (CT)
- 6) Police checks

- 1) **Dog assessment:** dogs being assessed will, **at all times**, be leashed and accompanied by their handler. There will be no occasion when dogs are to be unleashed. All dogs must be clean and well groomed on arrival at the assessment. If any dog is sick or suffering from any form of physical disability, the assessment will be postponed until the dog is considered fit enough to undertake the assessment. CTDS reserves the right not to assess a dog if the assessor feels the dog is not well, fit enough or clean enough to undertake the assessment.

If, during the assessment, any dog becomes sick or shows signs of aggression towards people or other dogs, the assessment will cease forthwith and the dog removed from the facility by the handler.

- 2) **Physical examination: prior to** being admitted into the programs, as well as passing the assessment, handlers will need to have a veterinarian carry out a medical examination of their dog. Chestermere Vet Clinic, Heartland Vet Clinic and Cochrane Animal Clinic provide free medicals to dogs looking to join the CTDS programs. CTDS will need to have received a copy of the positive examination results before any dog enters any of the programs.

- 3) **LT:**

- a. **Chestermere / Airdrie Public Libraries:** At least one hour prior to LT story times beginning, the libraries will put a sign in a prominent place in the library informing the public that CTDS therapy dogs will be on the premises from X to Y. All CTDS dogs are required to wear a CTDS bandana on all occasions when they are representing CTDS so that the general public is aware that therapy dogs are present. Once a dog is wearing the CTDS bandana it must be on leash **at all times** and under the control of the designated handler. Once in the library, the dog and handler will proceed directly to the meeting room where the LT story time is

being held. Dogs should not be allowed to interact together when in the library. The initial contact between the child doing the reading and the dog should happen in the designated room, not in any other part of the library. Only children doing the reading, CTDS dogs and their handlers and a qualified representative from CTDS will be allowed in the meeting room for the duration of the program. “Qualified” implies someone who has had experience in handling dogs and is capable of interpreting a dog’s body language to avoid any issues that may arise. Comfortable seating cushions will be provided for the child, the dog and the handler. On no occasion will dogs be allowed to roam freely in the meeting room and will be expected to stay with their handlers on the mats/ cushions provided. At the end of the reading session, the child should be encouraged to use hand sanitizer and leave the meeting room separately from the dog. Bonding between the dog and child is encouraged whilst in the meeting room but not once the reading session is over. Dogs must leave the meeting room with their handlers separately from other dogs, with adequate spacing between the dogs. On leaving the meeting room the dogs are to remain on leash and exit the library directly. All CTDS dogs are to remain leashed on exiting the library until they are securely in the handler’s vehicle. Once the meeting room has been cleared of dogs and people, the meeting room floor will be vacuumed and the seating cushions cleaned to avoid other children who have an allergy to dogs being adversely affected.

- b. **Schools:** All CTDS dogs are required to wear a CTDS bandana on all occasions when they are representing CTDS so that the general public and school personnel are aware that therapy dogs are present. Once a dog is wearing the CTDS bandana it must be on leash at all times and under the control of the designated handler. Dogs and their handlers must report directly to the school reception to inform the appropriate person of their arrival. Where there is more than one CTDS dog present, there must be no interaction between the dogs. The handler and their dog should not leave the reception area without being escorted by school personnel and must go directly to the room(s) allocated for the LT program. The initial contact between the child doing the reading and the dog should happen in the meeting room, not in any other part of the school. Only children doing the reading, CTDS dogs and their handlers and a qualified representative from CTDS will be allowed in the room for the duration of the program. “Qualified” implies someone who has had experience in handling dogs and is capable of interpreting a dog’s body language to avoid any issues that may arise. Comfortable seating cushions will be provided for the child, the dog and the handler. On no occasion will dogs be allowed to roam freely in the room and will be expected to stay with their handlers on the mats/ cushions provided. Bonding between the dog and child is encouraged whilst in the room but not once the reading session is over. At the

end of the reading session, handlers and their dogs must make their way directly back to the reception area so the appropriate school administrator is made aware that the LT session is over and the dog(s) will be leaving the school premises. On leaving the school building, there should be no interaction between the dogs and the dogs should be taken directly to the handler's vehicle.

- 4) **Visiting Tails:** prior to visiting any facility, the handler must have 1) read the facility's visitation policy and 2) completed and returned to the facility's administrator any paperwork required permitting visitations. A copy of such paperwork must be sent to CTDS to keep on file. During any visit, the dogs must be kept on leash **at all times** whilst inside the facility. All VT dogs are required to wear a CTDS bandana on all occasions when they are representing CTDS so the general public is aware that therapy dogs are present. As the whole idea behind VT is to allow people to interact with the dogs, the handler must be vigilant throughout the visitation that the dogs are not becoming stressed to the point that the dogs are becoming aggressive towards others. At the first sign of negative attitude/ body language, the handler must remove the dogs from the immediate environment and allow the dogs to relax. At this point, the handler will use his/her judgement whether to end the visitation or continue. At any time during the visitation, if the dogs are being inappropriately handled by the visitees, the dogs must be withdrawn and the visitation ended, with a report sent to the facility administrator as well as CTDS. In the case of visiting seniors' facilities or hospitals, the handlers must ensure, to the best of their ability, that the floors are clear of any medication, that the residents/ patients may have inadvertently dropped and that the dogs are not given the opportunity to ingest any medication that may be reachable by the dogs. This point is particularly relevant when visitations are being made and not being accompanied by a member of staff.
- 5) **Caring Tails:** as with LT and VT, all dogs must be on leash at all times and wearing a CTDS bandana so that people understand that the dog is working as a therapy dog. The handler must ensure that any procedural requirements of the facility are met. In addition, the dog must be escorted directly from the reception area to the room set aside for the CT session and, on completion of the session, escorted directly out of the facility. To the best of their ability, handlers must ensure that the environment is safe for the client, the dog and the handler. If safety is compromised, the handler must take immediate action to restore safety, let the supervisor know of the breach and email CTDS at [info@ctds.ca](mailto:info@ctds.ca).
- 6) **Police checks:** all handlers need to have submitted a current Vulnerable Sector police check to CTDS prior to joining the program(s).

If you have safety concerns for any reason, please contact Steve King on 587 581-5571. Whether LT, VT or CT, CTDS wants your experience to be an enjoyable and **safe** one.

Date revised: February 25, 2019