

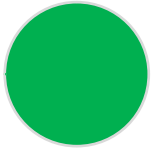
VSys Voices

Pet Visitation Programs



Target Audience for Today's Webinar

SKILL LEVEL



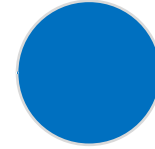
Minimal Knowledge

Looking for some basic information, key principles and “how-to’s” on the subject.



Working Knowledge

Integrated practices and moving beyond basic concepts. Looking for breadth and depth on a topic



Authoritative Knowledge

Looking for advanced knowledge, integration and concepts that are innovative and cutting edge.



Learning Objectives



Share an overview of three pet visitation programs



Discuss what works well vs challenges



Share best practices (include audience ideas!)



VSys Voices Panelists



Ashley Gelleny is the Manager, Volunteer Resources/Human Resources at the Hospital for Sick Kids in Toronto (SickKids).

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Lisa Serad, MSOD, C-AAIS
Is the Pet Therapy Program Manager at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)

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Kat Connelly, CVA is a Coordinator of Volunteer Services at Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital (NY Presbyterian)

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SickKids - Overview

- 453 bed Academic Medical Center
- Over 25 volunteer programs
- 1400+ volunteers
- Using VSys since 2012



Pet Therapy Program started over 30 years ago!
*“Gold standard” for hospitals in light of its comprehensive scope and reach ~
PetSmart Canada*



SickKids: PAWS for Hope

- Staff and Patient Pet Therapy Programs
- Teams agree to a one-year initial commitment:
 - Weekly one-hour visit to in-patient/out-patient unit
 - Monthly staff pet-therapy drop-in session
 - As able, special visit requests



SickKids: PAWS for Hope



10 Teams integrated into 15+ clinical areas including:

- Inpatient units
- Ambulatory clinics
- Neonatal intensive care unit
- Family Resource Centre
- Psychiatry & Mental health
- MRI Program
- In the process of preparing for a pilot on the Burns & Plastics Unit and Hematology & Oncology Unit (*formerly restricted areas*)



Hospital for Sick Children: PAWS for Hope

To optimize its benefits, SickKids sought to expand the program in three ways:

- (1) spread to more clinical areas,
- (2) offer pet therapy as a stress reduction strategy for the families of patients and staff, and
- (3) establish the Canine Reading Program.



SickKids: Requirements for PAWS for Hope

- Child-friendly certification and registered member with St. John's Ambulance (SJA) or Therapeutic Pets of Canada (TPOC)
 - Includes medical assessment & vaccines
 - One year of adult visits prior to assessment
- Dogs must be over the age of two and cannot be on a raw food diet
- Interview with SickKids
- Volunteer Onboarding for handler (VSC, TB & Immunization, agreements, etc.)
- Volunteer Orientation & 1-2 monitored initial visits and annual monitored visit
- Teams always accompanied by SickKids staff or in special circumstances SickKids Volunteer



PAWS The good, the bad...

Positives:

- Incredible therapeutic benefit to patients
- Dogs bring joy and encouragement to so many by their mere presence
- Working with partner organizations, risk is shared and teams come trained



Challenges:

- Recruitment: Drop-off in teams post-covid → reliant on partner agency recruitment
- Interest and need within organization outpaces resources
- Handler personalities & matching placements
- Coordination between partner agency, handlers, and internal stakeholders.



Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

- 800-1299 active volunteers with 50-75 doing Pet Therapy.
- Three hospital locations served
- Gerald B. Shreiber Pet Therapy Program at CHOP
- Pet Therapy Advisory Committee
- Using VSys since 2013



Gerald B. Shreiber Pet Therapy Program at CHOP Requirements

- Must be 18 or over
- Dog must be 1-10 years old (to start)
- Current registration with Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Comfort Caring Canines or Pet Partners
- Minimum one 2-hour shift month
- In person interview



CHOP: Right handler, Right animal, Right unit



Positives and Challenges

Positives

- Endowment
- 2 dedicated FT staff
- 3 hospital locations
- 15 units at main hospital
- Staff support requests
- Compliance team support
- Partnership with University of PA Veterinary school/hospital

Challenges

- Communication
- Ensuring that the extensive requirements are understood
- Traffic and parking
- Disproportionate volunteers in suburban location



New York Presbyterian: Paws for Patients

- Eleven hospital healthcare system in NYC
- Pet Therapy programs all locations
- 4000+ beds across the system
- Over 3 dozen different volunteer programs
- Using VSys since 2011



<https://www.nyp.org/volunteer/therapy-dog-program>



New York Presbyterian: Paws for Patients

Must be certified by either:

- Pet Partners
- Good Dog Foundation
- Volunteers must be 18+ years old
- Commit to at least two visits a month
- Dogs must be bathed within 24 hours of visit



Positives and Challenges

Positives

- Therapeutic benefit to both children and adults
- 11 locations
- Special Palliative Requests
- Staff support Requests
- Volunteer Services staff member to manage program at each location

Challenges

- Accommodating staff requests
- Psychiatric Units. How to manage their special needs?
- Cost of getting approved as a therapy animal.
- Keeping up with the high demand for dogs



Discussion / Idea sharing / Addressing challenges



Accepted Therapy Dog Registries

- **Alliance of Therapy Dogs:** <https://www.therapydogs.com/>
- **Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs:** <https://golden-dogs.org/>
- **Comfort Caring Canines:** <https://www.comfortcaringcanines.org/>
- **Pet Partners:** <https://petpartners.org/>
- **Good Dogs:** <https://thegooddogfoundation.org/>
- **Therapeutic Pets of Canada:** <https://tpoc.ca/>
- **St. John's Ambulance:** <https://sja.ca/en/st-john-ambulance-therapy-dog-program>



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SAVE THE DATE OR SUBMIT A PROPOSAL: Friday, December 11, 2026

8th Annual

**The National Dog Show
Therapy Dog Symposium
of Rowan University**

Friday, December 11, 2026

Hosted by:



 **QUESTIONS? ASK SUSAN**



Thank You For Joining Us

