

Tuesday, March 09, 2021
Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs COVID-19 Guidelines

NOTE: For your protection, please review our COVID-19 Guidelines carefully. Share them with the facility where you work or would like to work, along with B&BTD's Guidelines and Health Requirements. Ensure the facility is willing to comply. Ask them to sign the COVID-19 Facility Waiver, and keep a copy of the signed waiver for your files.

The safety of our Bright & Beautiful therapy dog teams is of our utmost concern. These COVID-19 Guidelines provide directions on three phases of therapy dog visitation, dependent on the degree of state and local COVID-19 transmission rates. There is information on permissible types of visits, actions to take before, during and after visits, and general safety guidelines for you and your dog. The Addendum contains further critical information on keeping yourself and your dog healthy during this time; please read it carefully.

The Bright & Beautiful Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines are the minimum standard to complete a therapy dog visit. Handlers should also refer to guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), their state and local authorities, and their facilities (e.g., hospital, nursing home, school, library, etc.) for additional information. If you are uncertain or have questions, call our office at 888-738-5770.

Note: Handlers themselves, or handlers with family members who are elderly, very young or who have an underlying medical condition, should be especially vigilant. Consider putting therapy visits on hold until you feel you feel completely safe making visits.

Regardless of your personal circumstances, **if you don't feel comfortable making therapy dog visits right now, DON'T!** B&BTD has waived the monthly visitation requirement at this time.

Phase One: Virtual Visits, No Contact Outdoor Visits, Preparing Your Dog

During Phase One, three types of activities are permitted: virtual visits, no contact outdoor visits, and preparing your dog to return to work safely during the COVID-19 atmosphere.

-Virtual visits are visits where the handler and facility are using Zoom, Skype, Facetime, or any video technology to allow patient/children to see the dog virtually.

- Reach out to your contact at facilities you visited with your dog and ask if they are permitting virtual visits. The individual being visited or the facility need to have mobile devices that enable virtual calls, e.g., cell phones or tablets. Coordinate with the facility to schedule the virtual visit with patients or children.
- Prior to the virtual visit, you may wish to send a card with your dog's picture and a message: "We miss you: we'll see you soon!" This may also be a good idea, without the virtual visit.

No Contact Outdoor Visits - Some handlers are participating in **no contact outdoor visits** (where geographically possible), which include visits where a handler and dog stand outside the facility and wave to their favorite patients/children. Also permissible are "doggie parades" where handlers and dogs drive around in cars and wave to patients/children.

- Note: **no one should touch the dog during these kinds of visits.** Should facility staff come outside to greet the dog, be sure to maintain appropriate social distance and do not let them touch or play with the dog.

-Prepare your dog to return to work during the COVID-19 era – use this time to prepare your dog for safe and healthy therapy dog visits in the COVID-19 environment. Here are recommendations:

- Train your dog to be handled by you, wearing a mask and gloves.
- Let others, wearing gloves and masks, work with your dog.
- Teach your dog the command: NO LICK. This is accomplished by teaching your dog to Lick only you and then NO LICK (big reward). Licks and 'kisses' are not allowed, so this is an important command.
- Teach your dog two tricks so when actual visits are resumed, your dog can entertain without physical contact.
- Do NOT place any type of mask or face covering on your dog; it will be harmful.

Phase Two: Outdoor visits

During Phase Two, outdoor visits are permissible, where outdoor visitation space is available and weather permitting. There also needs to be access to the outdoor space without going through the indoor facility.

Handlers may only make one therapy dog visit per week. If a Handler wishes to visit multiple facilities, it still remains one visit per week.

B&BTD Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines are the minimum standard to complete a therapy visit. For example, if a facility states you do

not need a mask, you must wear a mask to comply with B&BTD Guidelines. Any handler who does not follow all B&BTD Guidelines is not covered by our insurance and may be suspended.

Prior to your visit:

- Obtain the facility's approval to conduct outdoor visits. Review B&BTD Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines with the facility to ensure compliance and to verify there is an appropriate outdoor space.
- Ensure that all handlers, staff and patients/children wear a mask and either use gloves or hand sanitizer. Facilities should provide masks and hand sanitizer to their patients/children; B&BTD members must provide their own masks and hand sanitizer.
- Facilities must check the temperature of all participants (both patients/children and handlers) and screen for signs of upper or lower respiratory disease. Anyone with a fever or respiratory symptoms should be excluded from the visit. Facilities should not permit patients/children with COVID-19 exposure to participate.

During your visit:

- Do not use your regular B&BTD leash for these visits (they are four-foot long). Instead, switch to a six-foot leash so you can maintain appropriate social distance from patients/children and staff.
- Use a leash, collar, vest and harness for your dog that is able to withstand machine washing in hot water with detergent.
- Handler should wear clothes and an ID lanyard that is machine washable with detergent and hot water.

After your visit:

- Wash all dog equipment (e.g., leash) and handler clothes. Put them in the dryer or in the sun to dry.
- Spray the B&BTD ID card with antiseptic spray and wipe it off. If possible, before you enter your home, remove your shoes and spray them with disinfectant.
- Take a shower or bath and bathe your dog with a wet or dry shampoo. Wipe the dog's face, nose and paws with a dog safe product. The mechanics of brushing and towel off the dog is most important, as this will help dislodge loose particles to aid in the decontamination process.

Phase Three: Indoor Facility Visits

The ability to conduct safe indoor facility visits is uncertain at this time. Stay in touch with your local and state authorities and follow their guidance.

Since state requirements vary, contact your state Board of Health to ensure compliance with state guidelines.

B&BTD Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines are the minimum standard to complete a therapy visit. For example, if a facility states you do not need a mask, you must wear a mask to comply with B&BTD Guidelines. Any handler who does not follow all B&BTD Guidelines is not covered by our insurance and may be suspended.

Handlers may make only one therapy dog visit per week. If a Handler wishes to visit multiple facilities, it still remains one visit per week.

Before you visit:

Before restarting visits, communicate with your facility and make sure you are comfortable with their level of precautions. Take special precaution with long-term care facilities, especially nursing homes, given their immune-compromised populations.

- Prior to each visit, you must check with your facility contact to confirm that there are no known cases of patients/children with COVID-19 at this facility. This must be confirmed every time you plan to visit. If there are any patients/children at the facility who have tested positive for COVID-19, **DO NOT VISIT**.
- Ensure that all handlers, staff and patients/children wear a mask and either use gloves or hand sanitizer. Facilities should provide masks and hand sanitizer to the patients/children; B&BTD members must provide their own masks and hand sanitizer.
- Facilities must check the temperature of all participants (both patients/children and handlers) and screen for signs of upper or lower respiratory disease. Anyone with a fever or respiratory symptoms should be excluded from the visit. Facilities should not permit patients/children with COVID-19 exposure to participate.

During your visit:

- Do not use your regular B&BTD leash for these visits (they are four-foot long). Instead, switch to a six-foot leash so you can maintain appropriate social distance from patients/children and staff.

- Use a leash, collar, vest and harness for your dog that is able to withstand machine washing in hot water with detergent.
- Handler should also wear clothes and an ID lanyard that is machine washable with detergent and hot water.
- Keep a log of all visits including: facility names, visit dates and times, room numbers, etc. This information will be required for contact tracing if you or a patient/child you visited tests positive for COVID-19.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after each interaction. Ask your facility to provide hand wipes for the patients/children and staff to be used *in your presence* before and after any animal interactions.
- Be sure to keep your dog clean, as per B&BTD Guidelines. Disinfect your dog and his/her face, nose and paws after the visit, and between each person if you are visiting multiple people at a facility. Use a disinfectant pet wipe product to wipe the pet between patients and when you get home. *DOUXO® Mousse* for dogs and cats is being used in hospitals.
- Per B&BTD Guidelines, do not feed your dog or provide treats during visits.
- Clients are not allowed to feed the dogs.
- Chux (disposable under-pads) should be placed on the bed in each room for the dog to lie on or place his/her paws at the edge of the bed (paws up).

After your visit:

- Wash all dog equipment (e.g., leash) and handler clothes. Put them in the dryer or in the sun to dry.
- Spray the B&BTD ID card with antiseptic spray and wipe it off. If possible, before you enter your home, remove your shoes and spray them with disinfectant.
- Take a shower or bath and bathe your dog with a wet or dry shampoo. Wipe the dog's face, nose and paws with a dog safe product. The mechanics of brushing and towel off the dog will help dislodge loose particles to aid in the decontamination process.

ADDENDUM: PLEASE READ!

Additional Guidance for Handlers of Therapy Dogs

We are still learning about the virus that causes COVID-19, but it appears that the virus can spread from people to animals in some situations. The CDC is aware of a small number of pets, including dogs, to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people infected with COVID-19. All but two dogs have recovered. The dogs that did not survive were very ill and very elderly.

Ways to Protect Therapy Dogs

Facilities that normally use therapy dogs may not allow them at this time because people in many of these settings are at higher risk for serious illness with COVID-19. Follow local guidance and facility protocols for social distancing, masks, and other ways to prevent COVID-19 from spreading. Note that B&BTD Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines should always be the minimum standard.

If therapy dogs are invited to a facility or other setting, follow the steps below.

- Therapy dog visits require some level of contact between patients/children and the therapy dog team. When possible, keep dogs at least 6 feet away from people and animals not participating in the visit. Handlers and patients/children should wear masks during the visit and either use masks or hand sanitizer.
- Do not take therapy dogs to visits if the dogs are sick or have tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19.
- People with symptoms of COVID-19 should not touch, be close to, or interact with therapy dogs. If someone was sick with COVID-19, they should NOT interact with therapy dogs until they are fully recovered.
- Before and after every contact, the handler and anyone petting or having contact with the dog should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Do not use items that multiple people handle, particularly if items are brought to multiple facilities between therapy visits (e.g., leashes, harnesses, toys, or blankets). If items like leashes must be brought between facilities, disinfect them after each use or facility.
- Do not allow therapy dogs to lick or give 'kisses'.
- Do not let other people handle items that go into the dog's mouth, such as toys and treats.
- Disinfect items such as toys, collars, leashes, harnesses, therapy vests and scarves, and food/water bowls frequently.
- Do not put masks on therapy dogs. Covering a dog's face could harm the dog.
- Patients must not feed the dogs.

After the visit

- We have discovered the use of antibacterial dog products such as *DOUXO*[®] *Mousse* to be helpful. *DOUXO*[®] *Mousse* or similar products contain many of the

same active ingredients as shampoo products. The Mousse is a leave-on formulation, so no rinsing is required. The active ingredients also stay in contact with your dog's skin longer than shampoo because they are not rinsed off.

- Once the skin is cleaned with a shampoo, you can replace 2 shampoos with DOUXO® Mousse or similar product and you'll receive the same benefits. The products have been clinically proven by veterinarians.
- Do not wipe or bathe therapy dogs with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any products not approved for animal use. There is currently no evidence that the virus can spread to people from the skin, fur, or hair of pets.

Health of the Handler and Dog

If your **therapy dog gets sick** after contact with a person with COVID-19, call your veterinarian. If the dog tests positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, follow your veterinarian's recommendations. Do not make any therapy dog visits.

If a handler has symptoms or gets sick with COVID-19, follow your doctor's advice for care and quarantine requirements. Follow recommendations for protecting your pets.

If a handler has traveled out of their state to an area with a higher COVID-19 transmission rate, upon return he/she should refrain from making therapy visits for two weeks.

Follow Everyday Health Habits

Your personal actions day-to-day can impact the health and safety of the patients/children you will visit with your therapy dog. Follow the CDC guidance:

- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Wear a face mask properly when in public. Be sure to cover your nose and mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds each time.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean or paper towel or air dry them.

Use Hand Sanitizer When You Cannot Use Soap and Water

If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Look at the product label to tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol.

FDA policy allows for ethanol or isopropyl to be used as the active ingredient in ABHR (alcohol-based hand sanitizer) manufactured by entities that are not currently registered with the FDA to manufacture drugs.

Consumers who have products with potential methanol or 1-propanol contamination should immediately stop using the product and dispose of them, ideally in a hazardous waste container. Do not use these products on yourself or your dog.

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However:

- Sanitizers do **not** get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

Wear Masks Correctly So They are Effective

Masks are an additional step to help slow the spread of COVID-19 when combined with every day preventive actions and social distancing in public settings.

Putting On the Mask

- Wash your hands before putting on your mask
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily

Taking Off the Mask

- Take the mask off carefully – when you get home
- Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties
- Fold outside corners together
- Place mask in the washing machine (see below for How to Wash Masks).
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing. Wash hands immediately after removing.

How to Wash Masks

Masks should be washed after each use, either by washing machine or by hand.

- You can include your mask with your regular laundry.
- Use regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask.
- If washing by hand, soak the mask for at least five minutes with detergent. Rub the mask briskly on both sides and rinse well in cool water. Hang in the sun to dry.

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