

**Tuesday, June 08, 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 safe therapy dog visitation. There is information on actions to take before, during and after visits, and general safety guidelines for you and your dog in the Addendum. Please read everything thoroughly.

**Note:** Handlers themselves, or handlers with family members who are elderly, very young or who have an underlying medical condition, should be 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.

### **Ensuring Your Therapy Dog Visits are Safe (Indoor or Outdoor)**

**B&BTD is permitting both outdoor and indoor visits, provided the member follows the B&BTD Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines.** These Guidelines and Requirements are the minimum standard to complete a therapy visit.

Since our members typically visit adults and/or children who may be immune-compromised, not vaccinated, carrying COVID-19 germs unknowingly, or not yet eligible to be vaccinated, we want B&BTD members to err on the side of caution. For example, if a facility states you do not need a mask, we strongly urge you to continue wearing one due to the nature of the population you are visiting. We also strongly urge all our members to be vaccinated.

Any handler who does not follow all B&BTD Guidelines is not covered by our insurance and may be suspended. **Note that this has always been our policy and is not a change from our normal operations.**

### **Prior to your visit:**

- Before resuming visits, communicate with your facility and make sure you are comfortable with their level of precautions. Take special precaution with hospitals and long-term care facilities, especially nursing homes, given their immune-compromised populations.
- Obtain the facility's approval to conduct visits. Review B&BTD Guidelines and Health Requirements and COVID-19 Guidelines with the facility to ensure compliance and to verify you will be visiting areas where no one is infected with COVID-19 or who tested positive.
- Prior to each visit, check with your facility contact to confirm that nothing has changed since the last visit and that there are no known cases of patients or children with COVID-19 at the facility. Verify that anyone with COVID-19 exposure or a fever or respiratory symptoms will be excluded from the visit. 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, or who have respiratory issues, **DO NOT VISIT**.
- Check with your facility on their policy for wearing masks. Be sure to comply if they require wearing masks. Even if facility does not require a mask, we strongly urge you to do so given the nature of the populations there.
- B&BTD members must bring their own masks and hand sanitizer to the visit.
- Do not visit more than one facility per day.

### **During your visit:**

- Keep a log of all visits, including: facility names, visit dates and times, room numbers, etc. This information may be required for contact tracing if you or a patient/child you visited tests positive for COVID-19.
- If the facility requires it, ensure that staff and patients/children are wearing masks.
- Ask your facility to provide hand sanitizer or hand wipes to patients/adults, to be used *in your presence* before and after touching your dog. Anyone who refuses to do so should not touch your dog.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after each interaction.
- 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. [Refer to Appendix for more information].

- Do not feed your dog or provide treats during visits, per B&BTD Guidelines. Clients are not allowed to feed the dogs.
- Do not allow therapy dogs to lick or give 'kisses'.
- 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).
- 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 are 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 toweling off the dog is most important, as this will help dislodge loose particles to aid in the decontamination process. [Refer to Appendix for more information].

## **APPENDIX: 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 still 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 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 if required by the facility, and use 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*<sup>®</sup> *Mousse* to be helpful. *DOUXO*<sup>®</sup> *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 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**

**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:

- Wear a face mask properly when required. Be sure to cover your nose and mouth.
- 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.

## 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.

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