



Evaluator News

from Canine Good Citizen



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Three Steps to Making Your Dog a Therapy Dog

It's one of the most frequent calls to the AKC Canine Good Citizen department: *"I want my dog to be a therapy dog. My dog is great with people — where do I start?"*

1. Basic Training: The AKC's Canine Good Citizen Test

All therapy dogs need to be under control and have basic training. Some therapy groups require that the dog pass the Canine Good Citizen test before taking the group's therapy test. CGC is a great starting point for all potential therapy dogs because your dog will learn basic good manners in CGC including come, sit, stay, down, and how to respond appropriately around other dogs.

[Learn about CGC and see a list of the 10 items on the test.](#)

[Find a CGC trainer/ evaluator in your area.](#)

2. Do Your Homework About Therapy Dog Organizations

When you join a local therapy dog group, you'll meet experienced therapy dog handlers who can teach you the skills that *you* need when volunteering in therapy settings. Therapy organizations also provide members with the necessary liability insurance for when they are volunteering.

[See a list of therapy dog organizations and their requirements.](#)

In addition to looking at the AKC Therapy Dog web page, there are some other things you can do.

- a. **Contact a local facility.** If you are thinking about volunteering in a

particular school, hospital, etc. in your town, call and ask to speak to the person who handles volunteers. Ask the volunteer coordinator if there is a therapy dog program. You may find out that the therapy dog group at the facility you choose registers all of its therapy dogs through one organization. You can save yourself some time if you know this early on. You could also ask if you can visit and watch the therapy dogs before your dog is registered with a group. If you do this, you'll make the visit without your dog.

- b. **Contact an AKC Club.** If you don't know of a facility in your town where you'd like to work, you can contact your local AKC club and ask if any of the club members are doing therapy dog work. Local dog trainers are usually aware of the local therapy dog groups and activities.

[Find an AKC club near you.](#)

3. Register with A Therapy Organization

Now that you have selected a therapy dog organization, you're ready to get the application (from their web page) and complete the application requirements.

We hope that you and your dog enjoy volunteering in an animal-assisted therapy setting to improve the lives of others. After you've made 10 visits, you can [apply for your dog's first AKC Therapy Dog title](#), the THDN - AKC Therapy Dog Novice.

For more information, contact akctherapydog@akc.org.

