

PET THERAPY VOLUNTEER

Pet Therapy is an evidence-based practice that motivates patients to better deal with their health problems, stimulating them to overcome depression and recover faster.

To be part of Pet Therapy program in this hospital, the handler and dog must have completed a Pet Therapy certification program approved by SMH standards (*Alliance of Therapy Dogs* or *Therapy Dogs International*). Handlers are required to become SMH volunteers and to complete the volunteer orientation program. Also, SMH Volunteer Services establishes guidelines to ensure that the dogs are in good health, clean, vaccinated, and well behaved.

The handlers and dogs will visit pre-assigned areas to facilitate the relaxation and stress reduction process for all those they interact with. Our Pet Therapy volunteers represent the hospital as valuable team members and community liaisons.

It's important to emphasize that therapy dogs are not defined as "service dogs". While therapy dogs are trained to interact with patients providing physical and emotional benefits, service animals are working dogs trained to help owners who have disabilities.