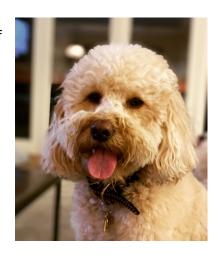
# Animal-Assisted Therapy on a Special Treatment Program

Cindy Reyes, OTR/L, BCMH; Emily Morton, OTS March 7, 2020

### Summary

Over the course of 12 weeks, animalassisted therapy (AAT) was implemented on a special treatment program. The primary populations served were people with schizophrenia, schizoaffective



disorder, and other severe and persistent mental health conditions. Therapeutic activities surrounding Tucker, the therapy dog, focused on social skills, life skills, stress management and other meaningful activities. The impact of having a therapy dog on the unit was measured through observation, a three-question survey, and unstructured interview with the residents.

## Life Skills Related to AAT

- Social engagement with peers and staff
- Reduction of depression levels (Riccarrdellli et. al. 2017)
- Mindfulness and stress management
- Encouraged participation in therapeutic activity
- Increased confidence
- Overcoming fears
- Saying goodbye and coping with loss

## **Key Terms**

- Animal assisted therapy- "Animalassisted therapy is a therapeutic intervention that incorporates animals, such as horses, dogs, cats, pigs, and birds, into the treatment plan. It is used to enhance and complement the benefits of traditional therapy" (Psychology Today)
- Service Dog- "dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities" (Guide to California Service Dog Law, 2020)

- Special Treatment Program- "serve patients
  who have a chronic psychiatric impairment and
  whose adaptive functioning is moderately
  impaired. Special treatment program services
  are those therapeutic services, including
  prevocational preparation and prerelease
  planning, provided to mentally disordered
  persons having special needs in one or more of
  the following general areas: self-help skills,
  behavior adjustment, interpersonal
  relationships" (Barclays California Code of
  Regulations Title 22 Section 72443 and
  72445
- Therapy Dog- "dog trained to provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, people with learning difficulties, and stressful situations, such as disaster areas" (Weiss, 2019)

### References

Chu, C.-I., Liu, C.-Y., Sun, C.-T., & Lin, J. (2009). The Effect of Animal-Assisted Activity on Inpatients with Schizophrenia. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 47(12), 42–48. doi: 10.3928/02793695-20091103-96

Nathans-Barel, I., Feldman, P., Berger, B., Modai, I., & Silver, H. (2004). Animal-Assisted Therapy Ameliorates Anhedonia in Schizophrenia Patients. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 74(1), 31–35. doi: 10.1159/000082024

Nepps, P., Stewart, C. N., & Bruckno, S. R. (2014). Animal-Assisted Activity: Effects of a Complementary Intervention Program on Psychological and Physiological Variables. Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine, 19(3), 211–

215. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156587214533570

O'Haire, M. E., & Rodriguez, K. E. (2018). Preliminary efficacy of service dogs as a complementary treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder in military members and veterans. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 86(2), 179-188

Ricciardelli, M., Henner, K., & Mcdade, K. (2017). Effects of Dogs on Depression Levels of Cancer Patients. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 71(4\_Supplement\_1). doi: 10.5014/ajot.2017.71s1-po5053 Weiss, T. C. (2019, January 12). What is a Therapy Dog. Retrieved from https://www.disabled-

world.com/disability/serviceanimals/therapy-dogs.php Winkle, M., & Ni, K. (2019, January 22). Animal-Assisted Intervention 101. Retrieved from https://www.aota.org/Publications-News/otp/Archive/2019/animal-assisted.aspx.

Zimolag, U., & Krupa, T. (2009). Pet ownership as a meaningful community occupation for people with serious mental illness. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 63, 126–137. Barclays California Code of Regulations Title 22 Section 72443 and 72445 Special Treatment Program

Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA. (2015, July). Retrieved from

https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service\_animal\_qa.html GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA SERVICE DOG LAWS. (2020). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from https://superdog.com/service-dog-law/