



Windwalker Humane Coalition for Professional Pet Assisted Therapy

Windwalker Credentialing Guidelines

Vision, Mission and Philosophy

The vision of the Windwalker Humane Coalition for Professional Pet Assisted Therapy [**Windwalker**] is to build a better world for people and animals through the profession of pet assisted therapy. Windwalker's mission is to build the profession of pet assisted therapy that is widely integrated into health care, rehabilitation, social services, and education at all levels (from pre-school to university and beyond) and to advocate for the well being of animals and humans. Windwalker's philosophy is two faceted: Our therapy pets must be family members and their eagerness and spontaneity is our guide in the profession and that pet assisted therapy facilitators (PATF's)/guardians must be educated in pet assisted therapy within a college or university environment, just as other professionals.

Windwalker credentialed teams, a Guardian/Professional Pet Assisted Therapy Facilitator [PPATF] and his/her family therapy pet(s), are educated, evaluated, and expected to maintain professional standards. Windwalker's credentialing of a pet assisted therapy team means that the team has met Windwalker's education, training and family therapy pet temperament standards.

Credentialing also requires that each Guardian/PPATF actively maintains liability insurance, and agrees, through signature, to adhere to the ethics of the profession. A team must hold professional liability insurance if payment for PPAT services is requested or received. Only pro-Bono programs may use "Home Owners" insurance for liability protection while providing services. Any team receiving payment for services is required to purchase professional liability insurance and send confirmation to Windwalker.

Windwalker's position is that each PPATF/Guardian is working in the community as an independent contractor/provider and that the PPATF/Guardian assumes full responsibility for any event that may occur while working. Windwalker does not assume responsibility or liability when a team is working in the field. Windwalker credentialing criteria are described below.

Code of Ethics and Best Practices:

Guardian/PPATF's must abide by *The Code of Ethics for PPATF's* and *Best Practices of the Windwalker Humane Coalition for Professional Pet Assisted Therapy*.

Education in Professional Pet Assisted Therapy:

PPATF's who are applying for Windwalker credentialing must have an educational background in Pet Assisted Therapy at the college or university level. Minimum educational requirements are: academic course work in theory, philosophy and ethics; family pet /guardian team training in pet assisted therapy skills; professional development seminars/lectures; and an internship generally supervised by a credentialed PPATF.

Applicants must provide documentation that they have completed a course of study in Pet Assisted Therapy (the DJ Pet Assisted Therapy University Certificate Program ,or another college program that is similar in ethics and philosophy) and that all criteria were met. To maintain credentialing status, PPATF's must participate in ongoing professional development.

Screening of Family Therapy Pets:

PPATF's applying for, or renewing, current team credentialing, or credentialing another family pet, must meet the criteria set in the application form. Each family pet member of a team must go through Course 2 of the DJ Pet Assisted Therapy University Certificate program, or a similar educational program [in philosophy and ethics] within a college or university setting, that prepares the Guardian/PPATF and his/her family pet to work together as a PPAT team.

Insurance Requirements [Professional Liability or General Liability]:

PPATF's must maintain professional liability insurance coverage for themselves and their therapy pets and proof of such insurance must be available for identification whenever engaging in paid professional pet assisted therapy programs. Pet Assisted Therapy Facilitators who are providing pro-Bono pet assisted therapy services may be covered for liability through their current insurance company. They must provide written documentation from the insurance company that they are covered to provide pet assisted therapy services. If the PPATF requests or receives payment for services he/she is required to purchase professional liability insurance and provide proof to WW. As insurance is renewed annually the confirmation of renewal is sent to WW for record.

Windwalker Membership:

PPATF's who are applying for, or renewing, their credentialing as a professional pet assisted therapy team must maintain an active membership in Windwalker. In addition to yearly dues, active membership status can be achieved through: attendance at Windwalker meetings, engaging in outreach activities, participation in professional development activities, and/or participating on Windwalker committees. Windwalker members will be requested to periodically provide information as to how he/she has been actively involved in building the profession and participating in Windwalker projects.

To achieve our mission Windwalker members actively work to:

- ≡ Gain national recognition for the profession of pet assisted therapy;
- ≡ Continue to develop and monitor the highest standards in professional pet assisted therapy ethics, guidelines, and curriculum;
- ≡ Provide a network of shared experiences, learning, and mentoring for individuals studying, practicing, or advocating in the field;
- ≡ Collaborate with like-minded people to build a better world for all living things through social reform initiatives, public policy legislation, and speaking out against violence toward animals and people;
- ≡ Inspire the development of PPAT treatment programs for individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities, as well as individuals who are elderly, abused, or incarcerated;
- ≡ Promote the development of PPAT education programs at all levels from preschool to university and beyond;
- ≡ Enhance public awareness of the tragic link of abuse between humans and animals and to provide education in order to prevent the ongoing cycle;
- ≡ Honor every pet as family;
- ≡ Honor and respect all of our family therapy pets as family first;
- ≡ Embrace the philosophy that we are their guardians rather than owners;
- ≡ Honor the memory of our family therapy pets who remain in our hearts forever and remember that their very contribution to our profession, through the beautiful gift of their love, was given so freely and unconditionally.