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ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY(AAT) and INFORMED CONSENT

AAT is a goal intervention, in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. This intervention will include a professional working within their scope of competency. According to Delta Society, "AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning".

Introduction

Carol Cochrane Bass, LMFT and her dog, Jumbo (Goldendoodle) may utilize AAT, on a case by case basis depending upon an analysis of the risks and benefits for each specific client. As a young therapy dog in training, Jumbo's training is focused on socialization, learning basic commands and impulse control.

Risks and Benefits

Although every client is different, some clients who have participated in AAT have experienced the following benefits:

- Animals help improve motivation and engagement in therapy.
- Animals help build trust and provide a sense of security.
- Animals offer unconditional acceptance.
- Animals can act as symbols and metaphors the client's life.
- Animals help in the areas of focus and attention.
- Animals act as agents of de-arousal as they help clients learn soothing and calming skills.
- Animals can be a source of social and emotional support.
- Animals can act as objects of attachment.
- Animals can be instruments of learning.
- Clients may project their own problems onto the animal.
- Animals offer humor and fun in the session as they help facilitate play.
- Animals help promote the character traits that include: caring, cooperation, compassion, empathy, gratitude, humanity, nurturance, patience, perseverance, respect, responsibility, self-control, self-esteem and service.

Although AAT comes with many benefits and working with therapy animals in training, there are risks involved in utilizing this method of therapy. For example: dogs may nibble, accidentally scratch, lick, lean up against a client and/or cause light bruising. These actions are not aggression but rather the dog's way of interacting with the client. In addition, if the client is allergic to dogs or is unaware of an allergy, the client may suffer from an allergic reaction.

Policies and Procedures

1. Participation in AAT is not guaranteed and will be based on assessment.
2. Anyone wishing to participate in AAT should be aware of allergies or medical concerns.
3. Any fear of dogs must be reported to therapist to determine level of intervention and goodness of fit for AAT.
4. If sick or injured, Jumbo will not be able to provide services and will obtain veterinary approval before returning to therapy. If client is sick or injured, Jumbo will not be able to provide services in order to keep him healthy.
5. Although Jumbo will be kept current on his vaccinations and health screenings, there is a slight risk of zoonotic disease transmission (i.e., the sharing of diseases between animals and humans) when working with an animal.
6. All clients must either wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer before and after touching Jumbo.
7. Jumbo may only engage clients when Carol is present. No other mental health professional may conduct a session with Jumbo. Clients will never be left alone with Jumbo.
8. There is a designated space in Carol's office for Jumbo. This is his space to rest and/or take a break without interruption or intrusion.
9. If at any time, Jumbo shows signs of distress, irritation, fear or behaves in a negative manner, he will be allowed to take a break and to return to session as determined by therapist.
10. If Carol and the client agree, Jumbo may work off leash.

I _____ understand and agree to the policies, procedures and risks associated with the use of Animal Assisted Therapy in psychotherapy. Thus, I hereby consent to receive therapeutic services utilizing Jumbo and accept full liability in the event that Jumbo causes injury to me in any way throughout the course of treatment. Furthermore, I am not aware of any fear, allergy, skin or respiratory sensitivity, or medical condition I have that would render physical interaction (i.e., touching, handling) with or close proximity to a therapy dog potentially harmful to my health.

Dog's name: Jumbo
Handler's name: Carol Cochrane Bass, LMFT #43343

Date: _____

Client Name (Print)	Client Signature	Date

Client Name (Print)	Client Signature	Date

Minor Name (Print) (when applicable)	Minor Signature	Date