



## Seminar – Step One in Our Client and Handler Training Process

In 2013, paws4people added “seminars” as the first step in the Intervention Transfer Training (ITT) and Handler Training process. Seminar is an intensive introduction to ITT and Handler Training, where Conditional Clients and Conditional Handlers spend 1 day in the classroom learning paws4people academics, handling protocols, and safety protocols required for Conditional Client and Conditional Handler success. Conditional Clients and Conditional Handlers then spend 2 to 3 days training (in retail establishments, indoor and outdoor attractions, restaurants, in professional settings, etc.) for about 10 hours per day. This intensive “bootcamp” intro to leaves Conditional Clients and Conditional Handlers feeling very experienced (and tired!) after their first ITT Session with their Assistance Dogs and Facility Dogs. We have found that by immersing everyone intensely during their first ITT Session, the rest of ITT and Handler Training progresses much more successfully.

Each Conditional Client and each Conditional Handler must attend a Seminar with paws4people in Wilmington (NC).

## Intervention Transfer Training

Within the paws4people and paws4vets programs, the process of a Conditional Client learning to utilize his/her Assistance Dog to mitigate his/her symptoms is known as Intervention Transfer Training (ITT). ITT is conducted by highly experienced and specially trained staff and trainers, as well as peer mentors. Peer mentors are paws4vets Certified Clients who have successfully completed ITT and are now working full-time with their Assistance Dogs to improve and enhance their daily living.

ITT is conducted using the mutual aid model, wherein group members are the providers as well as the recipients of the benefits of the services<sup>1</sup>. During ITT, we recognize that the experiences, strengths, and perspectives of each group member should be drawn upon to help other members of the group. We also draw heavily on the helper-theory principle, similar to Alcoholics Anonymous, wherein helping others helps the helper<sup>2</sup>. ITT is a peer-to-peer activity lead by Assistance Dog experts, not a medical treatment by medical providers or a therapeutic intervention lead by mental health practitioners. We have found that this offers directness and authenticity that often affords our Clients progress they have not been able to find within medical settings, traditional therapy, or other mental health intervention.

The ITT process promote resilience and growth in Clients who are living with life-altering disabilities and who have experienced traumatic events. For each Client, the ITT process helps him/her to build a fuller, more independent life. Each Client is learning to control, regulate, and mitigate his/her symptom set in new environments and while interacting with new people. Each Client is building bonds and deepening connections, decreasing isolation, becoming more social, and increasing self-esteem, confidence, and feelings of self-worth. Each Client inspires and motivates others to find a way forward and to deal with life-altering disabilities.

The ITT process includes family integration programming via the PAWS Family Support Network because it is crucial for the Client's family members to take care of his/her own health and well-being. Family integration programming helps the Client and each family member to be better able to contribute to the overall family functioning.

Staff leaders work with the paws4people Medical Evaluation Team (pMET), which is a volunteer group of consulting medical and mental health professionals. pMET facilitates communication with the Client's medical treatment team, mental healthcare providers, and ancillary health care providers (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist, audiologist, pain management, or prosthetics and orthotics provider) then works with the ITT staff to create training plans. This communication system creates continuity of care and likeness of goals with the Conditional Client's

<sup>1</sup> Gitterman, Alex and Robert Salmon. *Encyclopedia of Social Work with Groups*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Reissman, Frank. (1965). The "helper" therapy principle. *Social Work*, 10(2), 27-32. ISSN 0037-8046.



medical treatment team and mental healthcare providers; ensuring the highest level of safety for all Conditional Clients, while also pushing past existing boundaries to realize real success in symptom control, regulation, and mitigation.

**Staff does not act as medical providers or mental health practitioners, rather as experts in the utilization of Assistance Dogs as assistive medical/behavioral devices/tools in the mitigation of life-altering disabilities, including PTS, TBI, MST, Moral Injury, and other physical and/or psychological conditions.**

**For Clients who are receiving an Assistance Dog to mitigate a physical or non-psychiatric medical diagnosis:** The organization shall provide the Client with ITT which will enable the Client and his/her Dog to perform as an effective working Assistance Dog Team. ITT shall include, but not be limited to, the following: the proper care and maintenance of the Dog, the Dog's Command Set, how to command and work the Dog in public, the laws concerning Assistance Dogs and the Team's rights and limitations as such, and umbilical training. ITT shall be conducted over no less than a 10-calendar day period of time. [Note: These "10" days of ITT may be accomplished over an extended period of time, in order to provide the Client with the best opportunity for success.]

**For Clients who are receiving an Assistance Dog for mitigation of psychiatric diagnosis:** The organization shall provide the Client with ITT which will enable the Client and his/her Dog to perform as an effective working Assistance Dog Team. ITT shall include, but not be limited to, the following: the proper care and maintenance of the Dog, the Dog's Command Set, how to command and work the Dog in public, the laws concerning Assistance Dogs and the Team's rights and limitations as such, and umbilical training. ITT shall be conducted over no less than a 15-calendar day period of time. [Note: These "15" days of ITT may be accomplished over an extended period of time, in order to provide the Client with the best opportunity for success and recovery from their psychological/emotional diagnoses.]

paws4people believes that this individualized approach to transferring the Assistance Dogs to their Conditional Clients leads to much more successful team performance for their working careers than a standardized 1 or 2 week team training approach. As always, paws4people continues to focus on quality over quantity in our Teams

Each Assistance Dog Conditional Client must pass a Public Access Test (PAT) during his/her final ITT Session. This allows him/her to go home with "black vest status" (training vest) until his/her final PAT is scheduled (usually at the next paws4people Annual Reunion). Once this final PAT is passed, the Assistance Dog receives his/her custom "red vest" and the Team is official!

## **Handler Training**

Handler Training is the process whereby Conditional Handlers of all types of Facility Dogs learn to utilize and integrate their Facility Dogs in the Handler's profession, workplace setting(s), and animal assisted intervention into the services that the Handler provides to individuals and/or his/her clientele, and to meet the needs of the Handler, workplace setting(s), staff, Facility Dog, clientele, and program requirements.

The organization shall provide the Handler with Handler Training which will enable the Handler and his/her Dog to perform as an effective working Facility Dog Team. Handler Training shall include, but not be limited to, the following: the proper care and maintenance of the Dog, the Dog's Command Set, the laws concerning Facility Dogs and the Team's rights and limitations as such, and umbilical training. Handler Training shall be conducted over no less than a 10-calendar day period of time. [Note: These "10" days of Handler Training may be accomplished over an extended period of time, in order to provide the Handler with the best opportunity for success.]

The duration of Handler Training and the decision as to when a Conditional Handler is ready to work independently with his/her Facility Dog is made at the sole discretion of the training staff.



paws4people believes that this individualized approach to transferring the Facility Dogs to their Conditional Handlers leads to much more successful team performance for their careers than a standardized 1 or 2 week team training approach. As always, paws4people continues to focus on quality over quantity in our team.

### **Secondary Handler Training**

A minimum of six months after he/she "Red Vests" with his/her Assistance Dog, a Certified Client can request to have a Secondary Handler trained unless otherwise approved by the Executive Committee.

A minimum of six months after he/she "Green Vests" with his/her Facility Dog, a Certified Handler can request to have a Secondary Handler trained unless otherwise approved by the Executive Committee.

Each Secondary Handler of an Assistance Dog or Facility Dog, as applicable, is required to attend a Seminar with paws4people in Wilmington (NC). Each Secondary Handler must attend ITT or Handler Training, as applicable, conducted over no less than a 3-calendar day period of time.

Each Secondary Handler of an Assistance Dog must pass a PAT during his/her final ITT Session. Each Secondary Handler of a Facility Dog must pass a Facility Observation Test during his/her final Handler Training Session.

### **Contact and Care**

Each Client and Handler is welcomed into our growing family and supported as he/she learns and grows with his/her Assistance Dog or Facility Dog.

Advocates will communicate with Clients and Handlers on the following schedule *at a minimum* and document each contact within their email archives and/or in the Client's or Handler's digital file:

- acceptance as a Potential Client or Potential Handler to Bump: every 2 weeks
- Bump to Seminar: every 2 weeks
- Seminar to Black Vest: every 2 weeks
- Black Vest: within 48 hours of taking home the Assistance Dog In-Training or Facility Dog In-Training
- Black Vest to Red Vest/Green Vest: weekly
- Red Vest/Green Vest: within 48 hours
- first 6 months on Red Vest/Green Vest: every 2 weeks
- after 6 months - Dog's retirement: monthly

Advocates are available to their Clients and Handlers each and every day.

We support each other during paws4people events and fundraisers, and most especially at our Annual Reunion. We all come together at least once a year for graduations to celebrate and to get to know each other better, thus forming stronger relationships.



Each Client or Handler must provide his/her Advocate with the contact information for his/her veterinarian, and provide proof of a new-patient check up with this vet within 30 days of transfer of a Dog's custody. At the first recertification Public Access Test (annual Facility Dog Observation Test), vet records must be submitted to prove the Assistance Dog or Facility Dog is being seen regularly by his/her veterinarian.

Certified Clients and Certified Handlers have the right to ask for follow-up assistance and receive on-going training assistance to remediate unwanted behaviors, add new skills, or provide refresher training on an as-needed basis at the Client's or Handler's request.

Each Certified Handler and Secondary Handler is required to attend 10 hours of continuing education annually specific to the Facility Dog's placement.

Any cost incurred for follow-up training, training in addition to and beyond the normal paws4people processes (i.e., if special travel is needed), and annual continuing education will be the responsibility of the Client, Handler, or Secondary Handler.

**paws4people reserves the right to terminate follow-up or additional training if paws4people believes that the Client or Handler is not adequately maintaining the Dog's use and practicing the skills taught by the trainers.**

**Annual Recertification**

paws4people Assistance Dogs with public access are required to be re-certified annually, to include a temperament test, obedience test, Public Access Test, general health check, and any other evaluation deemed necessary by paws4people staff.

Each paws4people Facility Dog (without dual Certification and Public Access) is required to be re-certified annually, to include a temperament test, obedience test, Facility Observation Test, general health check, and any other evaluation deemed necessary by paws4people.

Emotional Support Dogs do not have public access and do not require certification or annual re-certification.

| Type of Certification             | Assessments/Req @ Cert                              | Assessments @ Re-Cert                                  | ADA Public Access Re-Cert Frequency | Facility Observation Test Re-Cert Frequency |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Assistance Dogs:                  |   |  |                                     |   |
| Physical or Neurological AD (PND) | Temp/AO, PAT, ITT                                   | Temp/AO, PAT   | Annual                              | N/A   |
| Medical Alert AD (MED)            | Temp/AO, PAT, ITT                                   | Temp/AO, PAT   | Annual                              | N/A   |
| Facility Dogs:                    |   |  |                                     |   |
| Rehabilitative FD (RFD)           | Temp/AO, FD Checklist, 1 Facility Observation Test; | FD Checklist w/ 1 Facility Observation Test; CE 10 Hrs | N/A                                 | Annual                                      |
| Psychiatric FD (PFD)              | Temp/AO, FD Checklist, 1 Facility Observation Test  | FD Checklist w/ 1 Facility Observation Test; CE 10 Hrs | N/A                                 | Annual                                      |



|                                 |  |  |     |        |
|---------------------------------|--|--|-----|--------|
| Scent Detection (SCT)           | Applicable Third Party Certification               | Applicable Third Party Certification                   | N/A | Annual |
| Crisis Response (CRD)           | Temp/AO, FD Checklist 1 Facility Observation Test  | FD Checklist w/ 1 Facility Observation Test; CE 10 Hrs | N/A | Annual |
| Canine-Assisted Education (CAE) | Temp/AO, FD Checklist, 3 Facility Observation Test | FD Checklist w/ 1 Facility Observation Test; CE 10 Hrs | N/A | Annual |
| Therapeutic Facility Dog (TFD)  | Temp/AO, FD Checklist 3 Facility Observation Test  | FD Checklist w/ 1 Facility Observation Test; CE 10 Hrs | N/A | Annual |
| Emotional Support Dogs:         |  |  |     |        |
| All Emotional Support Dogs      | Temp/AO  | N/A  | N/A | N/A    |

Annual Recertification Logistics

All Public Access Tests and/or Facility Observation Tests must be scheduled and completed during the fourth quarter of each calendar year. Upon successful passing, an ID card will be issued for January 1-December 31 of the subsequent calendar year. Any Tests taken during any other quarter of the year, for any reason, shall result in certification only through December 31 of that calendar year. A new Test must then be taken during the fourth quarter.

It is the Client's responsibility to schedule his/her annual Public Access Test. It is the Handler's responsibility to schedule his/her annual Facility Observation Test. It is the Secondary Handler's responsibility to schedule his/her annual PAT or annual Facility Observation Test, as applicable.

Each Client or Handler must contact his/her Advocate who will coordinate with paws4people Certified Public Access Test Evaluators or Facility Observation Test Evaluators to schedule an annual Test for the Client or Handler and his/her Secondary Handler. If an Evaluator's time cannot be conveniently scheduled in the Client's, Handler's, or Secondary Handler's geographical area, the Client, Handler, or Secondary Handler will be required to travel to the nearest certified Evaluator.

If the Client or Handler fails to make this scheduling request within reasonable time and a Test date is not available during the 4th quarter, the Dog shall become de-certified as of January 1 until such time an annual Test is scheduled.

Expired Certification

If certification is allowed to expire for any reason, de-certification shall be effective immediately. Each Client or Handler and Secondary Handler shall be notified both by email and mail of de-certification. Re-certification may be obtained by scheduling the applicable Test, as detailed above, within 60 calendar days of expiration.

If certification is expired for more than 60 days, in order to obtain re-certification, the Team must complete, at a minimum: attendance of a Seminar, ITT Sessions or Handler Training Sessions, temperament test, advanced obedience test, and Public Access Test and/or Facility Observation Test, as applicable.

*Additional evaluations, retraining, and/or the number of ITT Sessions or Handler Training Sessions is determined by the Executive Committee on a case-by-case basis.*



### Retirement

paws4people controls the decision about when a Dog retires from active service. A Client or Handler may then be considered for placement of a Successor Dog per the Successor Dog Policy.

**paws4people reserves the right to deny, revoke, and/or otherwise modify Client, Handler, or Secondary Handler status at any time, for any reason, and in its sole discretion when determined to be in the best interest of the organization. An action deemed necessary and in the best interests of the organization will be communicated in writing (via email or letter) from the Executive Committee of paws4people and/or its CGC. In the case of an immediate termination of physical custody and immediate removal of a Dog, written communication may follow removal.**