

Pet Access League Society

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Our Mission Statement

To enhance, through pet visitation therapy, the quality of life of individuals in need who can benefit from the known value of the human-companion animal bond.

Introduction

Welcome to PALS!

As a PALS volunteer, you should be prepared to:

- Make an honest effort to perform your volunteer activities to the best of your ability;
- Honour the right to privacy of the people you visit, and maintain all information in confidence; and,
- Accept the general goals, philosophy and methods of PALS.

This handbook outlines the requirements and responsibilities of all those involved in the Pet Access League Society "PALS". Its purpose is as a reference and guide to help make visits successful for both the volunteer and the residents.

Volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to communicate any concerns or ideas they may have to make their visits more successful. If you are unsure about anything in this handbook please contact your Team Leader or the PALS Office. Together we can make the program the best it can be.



Happy Visiting.

A Brief History of PALS

PALS is a non-profit, registered, charitable organization, dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of individuals through visits with pets. It began under the auspices of the Calgary SPCA in 1982 and became a separate organization in 1985. It has two paid employees, the Program Co-ordinator and an Administrative Assistant, and is governed by a board of up to 15 directors. PALS is currently funded completely by private donations and by fundraising events such as casinos, raffles and other fundraising activities. Clients receive PALS' services at no charge.

PALS is the largest organization of its kind in North America visiting within one city. Approximately 400 volunteers and their four-legged pets (pure-breeds as well as crossbreeds), visit on a pre-set schedule at 44 facilities, including hospitals, senior's long term care facilities and various specialized programs for children. A Team Leader, and sometimes a facility staff member, directs each team. Visits are up to 1½ hours long, twice a month, and can include both group visits and one-on-one visits.

PALS clients are mostly seniors and cover the range from being mildly physically disabled to being virtually unresponsive. The animals will often evoke a response in these individuals; thus they serve as a bridge for communication between volunteer and client.



A Word About Commitment

Volunteers are vital to the successful operation of any charitable organization. PALS depends upon its volunteers in order for the program to run effectively and efficiently. The program would simply not exist without our volunteers.

The facilities receiving our services also depend upon you. They have specifically incorporated pet visitation into their recreation and therapy programs. If a PALS team is not present at its prearranged time, the facility must replace it with something else, sometimes at the last moment. You have not only let PALS down, but also you have let down all those residents who look forward to our visits. The residents whom you visit are counting on you, you really do make a difference in their lives, and they anticipate and expect your visit.

Volunteering means assuming the obligations and responsibilities you accepted in joining the organization. PALS volunteers affect residents' lives in ways that cannot be trivialized, therefore this requires a high degree of commitment from you.

As no organization can be maintained free of charge, PALS does have a number of fundraising initiatives in order that we may continue the program. We encourage you to participate in these initiatives to help ensure our success.



PALS depends upon the teamwork of its volunteers.

Behaviour During Visits

Visit safety is paramount. Situations can change rapidly and if you are not paying attention to your pet or have allowed them beyond an arms length, you may find yourself in unpleasant circumstances. It only takes a few seconds for an enjoyable visit to turn into a tragedy and very possibly the end of visiting. In addition, your inattention may force your pet to react in ways that you never thought possible and, as a result, you lose trust in your pet. The following policies are necessary to protect you, your pet and the facilities we visit:

- Effective January 2001, all pets must be on a regulation PALS leash. In addition, pets must wear their PALS' scarves and volunteers should wear their nametags as identification.



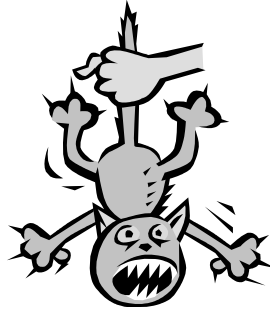
On leash & under control.

- Buckle/snap collars are recommended. For better control of large breed or "playful" dogs, a choke chain, Halti® or Gentle Leader is permitted. Keep in mind that you should provide explanation when using a Halti® or Gentle Leader.
- Pinch Collars, Flexi Leads, and leashes over 6 feet long are **not permitted**. Volunteers who attend a visit with any of these will be asked to leave.
- Harnesses for dogs under twenty (20) pounds are permitted. Do not use a harness on a medium or large breed dog as it only makes it easier to pull.
- As a safety measure, feeding pets during a visit is discouraged.



Feeding during visits is discouraged.

- Full body harnesses and leashes are mandatory for all non-canine pets. A carrier is recommended for transporting the pet to and from the facility. In addition, the carrier will give your pet a "safe haven" to escape to if it becomes tired or stressed.



Without a harness, cats can be difficult to hold on to.

- PALS pets are working animals. Their job is to interact with the residents. During visits, discourage even friendly encounters with other pets and try to keep their focus on human interaction. This is sometimes difficult during the first few visits, however your pet will soon get the idea and quickly learn to enjoy the "work".
- You must be aware of your pet's activity at all times and must never allow someone else to remove your pet from your sight and control. Do not give your leash to anyone else to hold especially a resident. If you visit with a resident who likes to hold the leash, use two leashes. One for the resident and a shorter one for yourself.
- If your pet has an accident inside the facility or on the facility grounds you are responsible for the cleanup. Dispose of all biowaste in an appropriate container.
- Your pet must be clean and groomed for each visit, with nails clipped, sharp edges filed, teeth and ears should be clean. This does not have to be done by a professional groomer.



Your pet must be clean.

PALS Organizational Structure

Board of Directors

A board of 8 - 15 directors who are elected to a two-year term governs PALS. The board meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for policy, financial accountability and long term planning. In addition they are actively involved in areas such as pet screening, interviewing, bingo, fundraising and special events. The board presently consists of both visiting and non-visiting volunteers who possess a wide range of skills.

The Office Staff

Currently PALS has a Program Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant on staff. Both share the many responsibilities that ensure the smooth day-to-day operations of the organization. Here is a brief list of some of the areas of responsibility:

- Overall running of the day-to-day office functions;
- Recruitment - sending and accepting applications;
- Coordination of new volunteer interview schedule;
- Arranging pet screenings;
- Arranging new volunteer orientation;
- Volunteer facility placements;
- Coordinating teams and Team Leaders;
- Follow up on concerns of volunteers;
- Arranging special visits;
- Accounting/General Clerical;
- Monthly meetings with the Board of Directors.

The office staff plays a vital role in the success of the PALS program. We appreciate your co-operation and support of these people.



The Team Leader

Every PALS visiting volunteer team has a Team Leader. The Team Leaders are vital to the success of PALS. Team Leaders are responsible for the following:

- Reporting to the PALS office on a monthly basis, the members who visited. A message may be left on the answering machine, or visit reports may be faxed, or emailed to the PALS Office. **Reporting is critical, as this is the only way the office can monitor individual teams.**
- Informing the PALS office of specific needs of their team, such as the need for additional volunteers.
- Reminding each team member of upcoming scheduled visits to ensure all team members are present.
- Arranging for a temporary Team Leader to assume their duties when the Team Leader is absent.
- Informing the facility's Recreation Therapist when the team will be visiting and how many volunteers will be attending. The therapists need to prepare for the team's visit. They must determine the number of residents receiving a group visit, and who will receive one-on-one visits. (Process varies from facility to facility).
- Arranging to meet as a team 5 - 10 minutes before each visit to ensure all volunteers are present and discuss any issues or concerns the team may have.
- Accompanying a new team member on their visit. New volunteers may feel uncomfortable or awkward, and may require the support of their Team Leader.
- Dealing with team member and/or that member's pet if either's conduct does not comply with PALS policies.
- Discussing any ongoing concerns about a team member or their pet with that volunteer, and communicating the concerns to the PALS Office if the problem cannot be resolved.
- Arranging a short 5 - 10 minute "debriefing" after the visit to receive any feedback regarding comments or concerns of the team. This is particularly important so that problems can be addressed promptly.
-
- Communicating with team members regarding any upcoming PALS events.

Note: If at any time a Team Leader is unable to carry out these responsibilities, then he or she should contact the PALS office and recommend a replacement. Team leading is a vitally important but not particularly difficult or demanding responsibility. PALS sincerely hopes that former Team Leaders will continue on the team as a visitor.

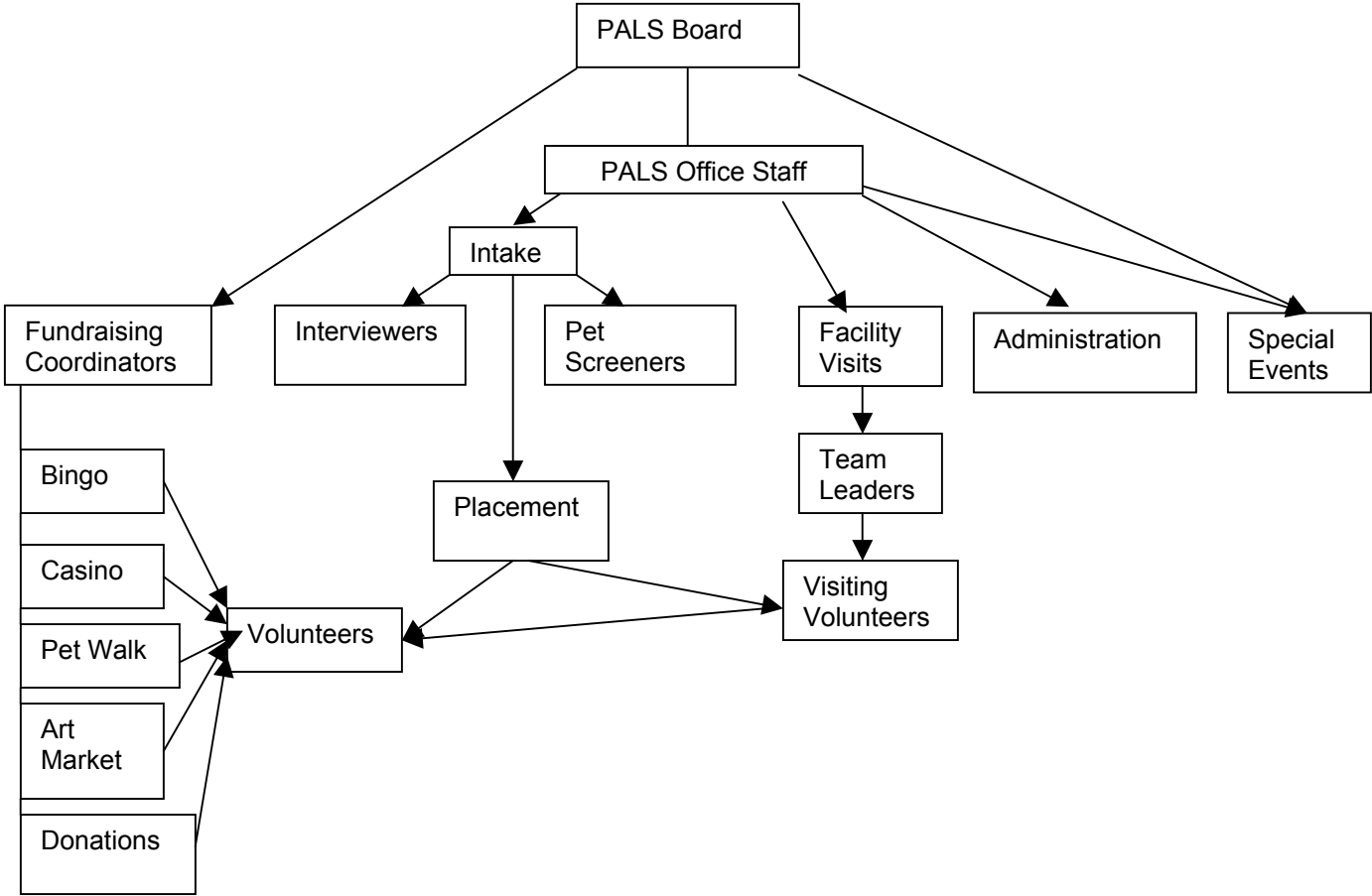
Fundraising

Fundraising efforts throughout the year require a great deal of preparation and volunteers, who donate both their time and skills. The Art Market alone requires over 100 volunteers. We ask that you make their job a little easier by returning messages, even if it is to say "no". If you find yourself placed on a list as "willing" to do something and you are not interested in helping with that particular type of event, please contact the PALS office and ask that your name be removed from the list. This gives the volunteer coordinating or a specific event, an accurate list to work from when recruiting volunteers.



Coordinating events takes a lot of work.

PALS Organizational Chart



Membership

Volunteers who joined PALS after January 1995 are required to pay annual membership dues. Membership dues are payable on January 1st of each year and are \$20 for single and \$30 for family. This entitles the member to voting privileges at the AGM.

Note: All current visiting volunteers are required to be a member in good standing in order to visit. Any volunteer whose membership remains unpaid may be suspended until paid in full.



Fundraising

As a PALS volunteer you are asked to participate in at least one fundraising activity per year in addition to your facility visits. PALS is a non-profit organization and relies on fundraising activities and corporate donations to keep the program running. The following is a list of the areas where you can help out in:

- **Casino:** PALS holds one casino every 18 months and the location depends on facility availability. We require people who can work the day shift from about 11:30 am to 7:30 pm and the evening shift that ends about 2:30 am to 3:30 am depending on the position. The late shift is a great test for boomers who want to see if they are still able to do what they did 25+ years ago.
- **Art Market:** In mid-November of each year PALS takes part in the Calgary Convention Centre's Artisan and Craft Show. We raise money in three ways. 1) By providing booth relief to the Artisans of the show; 2) By soliciting donations to our donation barrel at our public relations booth, and 3) by selling PALS Calendars at the public relations booth. Volunteers are asked to do a 3 hour shift and the market runs Thursday through Sunday. This is a fun event and by volunteering you get to attend the show for free.
- **PALS Annual Christmas Raffle:** In Mid December of each year the PALS pets descend on Eaton's Centre to attract crowds of office workers and shoppers who are pleasantly surprised to see dogs in the corporate centre of Calgary. We give them a warm fuzzy break and they buy tickets for a chance to win some great prizes. Volunteers with their pets do a 3-hour shift at the busiest location in the core. Lots of fun



Fundraising is important to PALS.

- **Corporate Donations:** Many companies recognize the personal donations that their employees make by providing matching donations to the charity. Other corporations have donation policies based on volunteer hours or some other similar criteria. Check with your employer to see if your company has any of these programs.
- **Personal Donations:** Donations can be made directly to PALS. We are a registered charity so you will receive a receipt for tax purposes.
- **United Way Donor's Choice:** You can allocate your United Way donations to PALS by requesting that your donation be directed to PALS.
- **Memorial tributes** are a wonderful way to honour people and pets that have made a difference in the lives of others. PALS will provide you with a charitable receipt and send a letter of acknowledgment to the family.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Special Visits

On occasion PALS receives a request from a group that would like a one-time visit. These visits are usually either daytime or evening visits during the week and usually involve a seniors' group or children's program. The most efficient way to inform PALS volunteers of these visits and to determine who is available to meet the volunteer needs for the special visit is to send out a "mass email" to all of the volunteers who have provided the office with their email contact information. If you are interested in helping out on a special visit, please contact the PALS office in a timely manner. However, if you are not available, please don't feel that it is necessary to explain your unavailability.



Visiting special children.

Public Relations/Special Events

PALS participates in a number of public relations events each year and we are always looking for people and their pets to join in the fun. Special events usually happen on the weekend and usually require about 1½ hours of your time.

Interviewing

PALS receives in excess of 200 applications each year and the majority of these people need to be interviewed. This is one of those great jobs if you enjoy meeting new people who unquestionably love their pets. In addition, interviewing is one of those "must have" skills even if you will only use it to hire sitters and lawn maintenance people. No experience is required, as two people work together. Interviews are conducted in the evenings and on

Saturdays and you can commit to as many or as few sessions as you like. Each interview session is two hours long. Interviewing candidates is a crucial first step in our intake process. It would be virtually impossible for the office staff to complete this vital job.

Pet Screening

This is a very special job for people who do not mind giving up a few Sunday mornings per year, who will travel on any type of road conditions and who can remain 100% objective even when people's feelings are involved. If you have experience working with animals and are interested in helping with pet screening, please contact the PALS office.

Second Language

If you speak a second language, please tell the staff at your facility. Some seniors may not be able to speak English. However they may be able to converse in another language and this could be an opportunity for you to form a very special friendship.



Special friendships can be formed.

If you are interested in helping out in any of these areas, please contact the PALS office.

Clearances and Insurance

Insurance

PALS carries a \$2 million dollar liability policy that covers our volunteers during all PALS activities. If you or your pet are injured or cause injury during a visit, please contact the PALS office immediately. After hours or

on weekends, please leave a message with a number where you can be reached during weekdays.

Police Clearance

In January 1998 the "Persons in Care Protection Act" came into effect. This resulted in the need for all new volunteers to undergo a police security check. In addition, any pre-1998 volunteer who wishes to transfer to another facility must be cleared before they can begin visiting at the new facility. Calgary residents are cleared through the Calgary Police Service and, persons who live outside the Calgary area, are cleared through their local RCMP detachment. Volunteers must provide the Calgary Police Service or local RCMP detachment with the necessary documentation to obtain a Security clearance. When your Security Clearance is returned to you, please forward it to the PALS office at your earliest convenience. A letter indicating the results of the clearance is sent to the facility and a copy of the letter along with a copy of your Clearance is sent to you. The original clearance is kept in your file.

Child Welfare Clearance

Volunteers who visit facilities that care for children will be required to complete a Child Welfare Record Check. The PALS office will supply the necessary forms. However, you will be responsible for completing them, sending them to Alberta Social Services, and forwarding the completed clearance to the PALS Office. A letter indicating the results of the clearance is sent to the facility. The original clearance is kept in your file.



Volunteer Information

Visiting Volunteer Responsibilities

- Visiting your assigned facility twice each month, with each visit lasting 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.
- Arriving 5-10 minutes in advance of the visit to confer with your team.
- Informing the Team Leader if you are unable to attend the next visit. If you cannot reach your Team Leader please contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- Communicating any concerns to your Team Leader, the Volunteer Co-ordinator, or the Board of Directors.
- Informing the PALS office and your team leader if you no longer wish to be a PALS Visiting Volunteer.
- Participating in at least one fundraising activity per year.

What to Wear

First rule of thumb: It may be -40° outside but, rest assured, it will be very warm in the facility so dress accordingly. Layering works well.



Facilities can be very warm.

Clothes should be comfortable and allow you freedom to move and bend without revealing body parts that you wouldn't show to your parents. Kakis, jeans, cotton shirts and comfortable shoes are great. Also, please remember to honour generational differences. Seniors were young during a time when apparel was much more conservative than it is today.

Placement

Your placement is based on a number of factors. Location, hours you are available and PALS/Facility needs. If your schedule changes or you move to another community and you need to be transferred to another facility, please do not hesitate to call the PALS office.

Transfers to Another Facility

Volunteers may request a transfer to a different team and/or facility. The request should be made directly to the PALS office staff. The volunteer is required to continue to visit with their current team until a transfer can be made. If the request is for placement into a facility that works with children, please understand that you may be placed on a waiting list. For volunteers who joined PALS before January 1998: you will be required to complete a Security Clearance before transferring.

Please Note: While every attempt will be made to accommodate a request for a facility change, there is a lot of time and paperwork involved in processing a change request and volunteers should have a valid reason for the change.

LOA

If you need to take a leave of absence please contact the office. A leave can be granted for up to three months. An extended leave may be granted; however, please be aware that you will have to have your pet rescreened if the LOA is greater than 3 months.

Retiring

If, for any reason, you are unable to continue volunteering, it is necessary that you let both the PALS office and your Team Leader know. We know that it is difficult for some people to put closure to things but it is important that everyone know you can no longer visit so your spot can be filled by a new volunteer. We have many eager new volunteers and by letting us know you are no longer able to visit, the office has the opportunity to fill your spot right away. Retiring from visiting does not necessarily mean you are no longer a PALS member as there are other areas in which you can remain active if you wish.

Additional Visits

If you would like to increase the number of visits you and your pet make, please contact the office. This is the type of phone call we most enjoy getting because it tells us that you and your pet are really enjoying volunteering with PALS.

Illness

The majority of people we visit have compromised immune systems and are therefore more susceptible to infection. In addition, a secondary complication such as pneumonia may develop. Pneumonia is a leading cause of death among seniors so please keep your "bugs" at home. We know that we have written in depth about commitment and attending visits but seriously we do not want any of you to be responsible for making a resident ill. Please contact your Team Leader prior to the scheduled visit to let them know you are sick and will not be attending that day's visit.



Please do not visit when you are ill.

Absences

If you are unable to attend your scheduled visit, please contact your Team Leader and inform her/him of your absence. Acceptable reasons include vacations, work related activities and occasional personal plans that cannot be carried out at another time. The latter would include, for example, anniversary dinners, year-end dance recitals, but does not include things like regular classes. If you find that you have a regular scheduling conflict you might be better off visiting at another time or, for a temporary scheduling problem, taking a leave of absence.

Summer is always a difficult time for PALS teams. Volunteers take vacations and it is camping season for many. In addition, we have the Stampede and that curious Canadian ritual called "patio" or "deck". However, please remember that the residents still expect the PALS volunteers so

please make every effort to attend your visits. It's only a short time for you, but it means the world to the people who are waiting to see you.



Vacation time!

Children

Children under the age of 16 are not allowed on visits. Liability issues aside, even the best-behaved children are a distraction and that means you are not able to focus on what is happening with your pet. This could mean that your pet could get into a situation that might have serious consequences. For example, while you are explaining to your children that the fish are not piranhas, Muffy could have his tail run over by a speeding wheelchair or Mrs. Brown could decide that the easiest way to get the dog outside is with a broom. Then again Muffy could decide that the goodies on the senior's lap are "fair game". The possibilities are endless.

You are responsible for the actions of your pet at all times. The PALS visits are set up for the facility residents to have an opportunity to bond with the pets, if you want to visit with your children, contact the facility to see if they have any volunteer programs that offer this type of service.



Even perfectly behaved children can distract you.

Guests

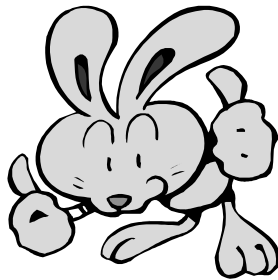
If you have someone over the age of 16 who wishes to accompany you on a visit, you must clear it with the facility, the team leader and the PALS office. PALS will require your guest to sign a waiver so please allow time for processing, faxing, mailing, etc.

It is important to remember that when we enter a facility we are, in effect entering someone's home so it is important that you obtain permission from both your Team Leader and the facility prior to inviting a guest. Some facilities cannot allow guests to attend for security reasons.

Pets

Acceptance

Acceptable pets for the PALS program include dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, miniature horses and ferrets. The minimum age for a visiting pet is 12 months.



All pets must be at least 1 year old.

All pets must pass a PALS' screening test prior to visiting. A volunteer must NEVER take an unscreened or failed pet to a facility or PALS' event.

It is also vital that you visit only with a pet that you have been screened with as animals can behave very differently with another person. For example, if your dog passes with you but not your husband, he cannot visit with that pet.

A volunteer is welcome to screen with a pet other than his or her own, but a screened pet can only visit with the people with whom it was screened. More than one volunteer may visit with the same pet at different visits, but the volunteer who is handling the pet must have been screened with that pet. A volunteer may have up to five pets screened and accepted into the program, but may visit with only one animal at a time. Each pet must visit regularly; otherwise it will be dropped from the program, and will require rescreening prior to re-entry.

Vaccination

As part of our agreement with the facilities, all cats, dogs, ferrets and horses must provide proof of protection against rabies. In addition horses must be vaccinated against West Nile Virus. You will be asked to provide proof of vaccination. If you do not wish to have your pet vaccinated against rabies, PALS will accept a letter of proof that a titre count has been done

and the results show that the animal has sufficient protection from the disease. The PALS office will advise you when vaccination records are due and the correct forms will be sent to you.

PALS requires that all new pets coming into the program go through a veterinary health certification. In addition all PALS pets must undergo an annual examination and submit a General Health Assessment that has been completed and signed by your veterinarian. The appropriate PALS forms will be forwarded to you.

Failure to comply with our health and vaccination policies will result in your pet being removed from visiting.

While PALS does not have a specific policy regarding other vaccinations, please be aware that not having your pet fully protected puts their health in jeopardy. Your dog may never go to parks or dog shows but they may come into contact with PALS animals that do and some viruses, such as Parvo, have adapted quite nicely to surviving until they can find a susceptible host. Unvaccinated cats are particularly prone to getting an entire array of quite deadly diseases so even your indoor cat should be vaccinated.

Please Note: We would like to state that not vaccinating your pet can have serious and expensive consequences and the decision to not vaccinate should only be made following consultation with your veterinarian.



Unvaccinated pets are prone to disease.

Rescreening

PALS policy requires that every pet under ten years of age must be re-screened every five years. Pets ten years and older must be rescreened every year and have approval from their veterinarian that the animal is physically fit enough to continue to visit. The PALS office staff will advise volunteers when their pets are due for a rescreening. Pets rejoining the program after a leave of absence longer than 3 months must also be re-screened.

Senior Pets

A 10 year old cat is in its prime, whereas, the life expectancy for some of the giant breed dogs is less than ten years. For rescreening purposes PALS considers any pet over the age of 10 a senior. This was an arbitrary decision and does not reflect breed or species differences. The PALS office will contact you regarding your pet's rescreening date and supply you with the proper forms.



Senior pets generally need more care.

Pets, like humans, need more maintenance as they get older. The "Teflon", two baths per year coat of a two-year-old dog is gradually replaced by a senior's coat. The aging teeth may develop tartar deposits, gum disease and even abscesses and, in certain breeds, the ears can become increasingly prone to infections and wax accumulation. In other words the low maintenance pet becomes a high maintenance senior. As owners, it is our responsibility to ensure that our pets are kept clean, not only for visits, but also at all times. PALS animals have spent a huge portion of their lives seeking out the company of people and their love for humans will probably not change as they get older. What may change is how the human reacts to

them. It would be so sad to be pushed away because of smelly ears, breath or fur when they know they still have so much love to give. Aesthetics aside, gum disease and abscesses do have a detrimental effect on your pet's general health and are particularly harmful to the major internal organs. Please give PALS seniors the consideration and care that they deserve.

Intact Pets

Female pets **cannot** visit while they are in season. In addition to being messy, it is very distracting to all of the other animals on the team. Hormonal changes may also make your female "moody" and she may react differently.



Hormonal changes may make your female moody.

PALS does not restrict the inclusion of intact males, however, as owners we ask that you take special care when visiting. Intact males are more likely to attempt to mark territory so you'll have to be a bit more watchful. In addition, watch for undue interest in intact females as they may be approaching their heat cycle. If there is more than one intact male on the team, do not attempt to try and get the boys to be friends. They may be fine with each other on one visit but, just when you think that everything is great between them, some undetectable-to-human factor will change things.



Don't expect intact boys to be friends.

If your female is expecting a litter it is probably best to put her on an LOA during gestation. Visits can be stressful and exhausting and you may inadvertently endanger both the mother and the litter. Following whelping the mother should only return to visiting after the pups have had their second set of shots or moved to their new homes. This would give the mom some time to recover from the birth and nursing and eliminate the chance that the mom might bring a disease back to her litter.



Expecting & nursing moms go on LOA.

Acute Medical Conditions

If your PALS pet is undergoing veterinary treatment or is not feeling well, please keep him or her home from their PALS visit.

If your pet is/has:

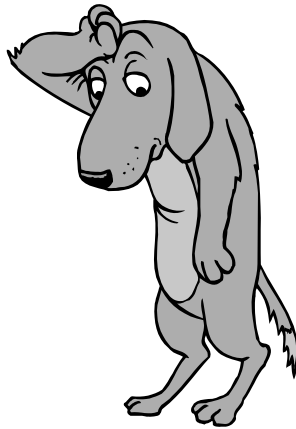
- Coughing, sneezing, runny eyes or runny nose;
- Vomiting or diarrhea;
- A skin condition that makes it itchy or uncomfortable;
- Fleas, ticks or other parasites;
- Any lameness or soreness;
- Infected, smelly wounds or ears;
- Sutures, drains or bandages.
- Immune compromised

Please keep him or her home from their visits until you and your veterinarian are certain he or she is feeling better.

We are very concerned about the pets not enjoying their visits while they are not feeling well, and about the chance of spreading the problem to the other pets on your team. In addition, we must consider the health of the

people that we visit and your pet's health. Sometimes animal diseases can be spread to humans and sometimes human diseases can be spread to pets especially if their health is compromised from disease or injury.

If your pet has had a recent medical or surgical treatment, please check with your veterinarian before resuming your PALS visits. If your veterinarian is unsure of what is involved in a PALS visit and how stressful it can be, please have him or her contact the PALS office for guidelines.



Keep ill pets at home.

Chronic Medical Conditions

If your PALS pet has developed a chronic medical condition, it could affect its ability to continue to enjoy his or her visits and it is important that you discuss with your veterinarian, the advisability of continuing PALS visits. Many illnesses such as mild arthritis can be treated quite nicely. However stressful environments can actually aggravate other conditions, such as colitis. As such, we require your veterinarian to okay your pets' continuing participation in PALS.



Visiting could affect chronic conditions.

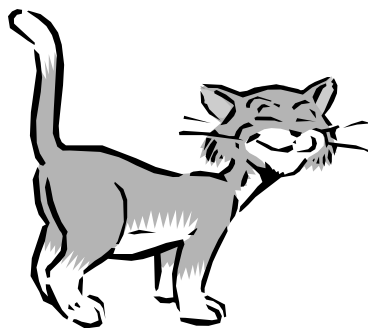
Feline Visitors

Cats generally have difficulty passing the pet screening. First they are taken for a car ride only to discover their destination is a room full of dogs and then, to add insult to injury, they are flipped over onto their backs and expected to submit to a tummy rub. The percentage of cats that are accepted into the program is quite low; so, when they do pass, it is really disheartening to have them develop a dislike for visiting, and leave the program. Unfortunately, this occasionally happens, and once a cat has made up its mind about something, it won't change it - ever!

In an effort to prevent our cat volunteers from developing a dislike towards visiting, we have put together a few suggestions for cat owners as well as other team members.

Cat Owners:

- Please be especially attuned to your cat's body language during the first several visits and leave at the first sign that the cat has had enough. Your cat will develop its own style of visiting but it is up to you to interpret what your cat likes and dislikes. Your cat may accept walking on a leash or prefer to be carried. Some individuals have adopted more unique methods of transportation such as carts or wheelchairs.
- Many cats like something they are familiar with such as their own blanket, pillow, or basket. Some cats like food treats while others respond to favourite toys or grooming. You may have to try several things before discovering something that works best for your cat.
- Also remember if your cat is not allowed on the table or beds at home, do not expect it to be comfortable doing this at the facility.



Cats develop their own style of visiting.

Team Leaders:

- When introducing a new cat onto a team, meet with the Recreational Therapist and the cat owner. If the cat owner is a little shy about speaking up, this is your opportunity to let the RT know that the cat is going to take it easy until it settles in. Some RTs, in their excitement over having a cat, whip the animal all over the facility, overwhelming not only the cat, but also its owner.

Team Members:

- Eventually the cat will feel secure and let the canines know who is really running the team but, until then, give the cat its space. We know that your dog wants only to be friends but overwhelming the cat may increase the cat's stress levels and, when combined with everything else, may tip the cart. Cats and dogs may eventually get along but it is very unlikely that two cats will become friendly. They are, by nature solitary and very territorial but some will coexist with other felines if they don't have to acknowledge the other's presence. This is quite impossible if owners insist upon putting them face-to-face.



Dogs and cats may eventually get along.

Incident Reporting

The Board of Directors reviews all contact incidents. In all but exceptional cases the review would take place at the next regularly scheduled meeting. It is important that you understand that until a final decision is made, all pets involved in the altercation are on LOA and cannot attend any PALS visits or activities.

If your pet is involved in any aggressive or retaliatory incident that includes contact, either animal-to-animal or animal-to-human it must be immediately

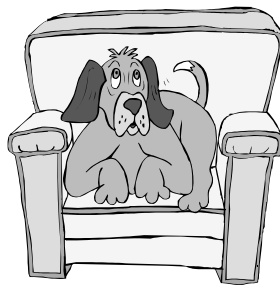
reported to the Team Leader. If this is not possible, make the report directly to the PALS office.

Incidents that do not involve contact are a warning that something is not right. To ignore them or explain them away could result in a serious situation later on. There are some options available to you but they all begin with discussing the problem with your team leader. As many of them are trainers, breeders or do obedience work they may have some good advice. If they are at a loss themselves, the PALS office can arrange for an onsite evaluation by one of our screeners.

It can't be stressed enough that incidents are often a direct result of human failure to control the pet or the disregard of warning signals. For example, your pet's body language will tell you when they have reached their limit and that it is TIME TO LEAVE. Remember, not all visits must be for the scheduled duration and if your pet tells you that the visit is over, leave. When we disregard warnings, ignore communication, become complacent, distracted or careless, trouble will inevitably happen.

Resident Animals

As the Eden Alternative¹ gains momentum we expect to see an increase in the number of resident pets. Already, there have been a number of incidents generally involving the resident cats going after our dogs and, while we do ask that facilities that we know have resident pets co-operate by locking them up during PALS visits, we should always understand that people forget.



Resident animals are not always locked up.

¹ Program that enhances the environment in long-term care facilities with the introduction of children's programs, plants, pets.

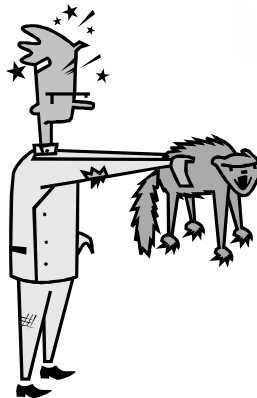
There are two things that are really important to remember when dealing with resident animals: 1) You are in their territory, and 2) You and your pet have everything to lose if there is an altercation. Therefore, ensure that your pet is under control and, if possible, go to a different area. This is particularly important if this is the first time you've seen the animal. Please bring any encounter you have to the attention of your Team Leader as he/she can talk to the facility staff and, if further action is warranted, bring it to the attention of the PALS office.



Remember you are in their territory.

Non-PALS Animals

Over the past several years many of the facilities in Calgary have started allowing families to bring the family pet for a visit. Most of these animals are simply family pets, NOT PALS pets. They may not be up to date on vaccinations nor like or even tolerate anyone who is not family. And, singularly the most important factor: they might be very aggressive or fearful of other animals. The point is you don't know so don't risk it unless you are willing to lose your visiting privileges if there is an altercation.



Non-PALS animals may not be friendly.

Communicating With Special Needs Persons

When we think of communicating, we usually think of the exchange between two people via language. In special needs cases (e.g., Alzheimer's, congenital or accidental brain damage or hearing loss), language as a means of communicating becomes less effective. Communication with these individuals requires (a) the belief that every person, regardless of disabilities, maintains a core of self that can be reached; (b) creativity in expressing both your feelings and your message; (c) understanding the effect of the disease/disability on communication; (d) the patience to slow down, listen, watch, wait for a response, repeat a phrase; and (e) the skills to convey messages or feelings effectively both verbally and nonverbally. Following are some suggestions to follow when attempting to communicate with a special needs person.



The spoken language is not the only way to communicate.

Set the stage - Where possible, make sure that there are minimal distractions.

Get his/her attention - Approach the person slowly and from the front. Gently touch a hand or an arm to help get their attention, if necessary. Wait until he/she seems ready to listen before talking. Be careful not to startle the person; *do not get their attention from behind*. Speak directly to the person, call them by name, and identify yourself. For Example: "Good evening Mrs. Smith, I'm Jane. Rather than "Hi Mrs. Smith, do you remember me?"

Make eye contact - If possible, stand, sit or crouch in front of him/her so that your head is at their eye level. Keeping eye contact will help the person

know who is speaking and may assist the person in concentrating on the message.

Speak slowly and clearly - Speak naturally and clearly in a low-pitched voice. Do not shout, mumble, and speak too softly or quickly. If the person has hearing problems, changing the pitch of your voice and the rapidity of speech helps more often than increasing the volume.

Give one message at a time - Use simple, familiar words and short sentences. Too many thoughts or ideas at one time can be confusing. In more severe cases limiting conversation to questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" is preferable to open-ended questions. Avoid common expressions or slang that can be interpreted literally and figuratively. You say, "hop into the van" and the person responds, "I can't hop."

Pay attention - The person's reaction to what you say can give you some idea of how much is understood. Watch facial expressions, body movements, and respond to moods and emotions, even when the words do not make sense, or are inappropriate. Do not make fun of the listening or speaking errors made by the individual.



Approach slowly & from the front.

Take time - Allow the individual time to respond. If you are uncertain the message was understood the first time, repeat it using exactly the same words. As attention spans are often short, take turns frequently in conversation with the person. If you are speaking and the person interrupts you, stop what you are saying and let the person speak. Conversely, allow the person to finish what he or she is saying. Do not interrupt. This shows

respect, and gives the participant a feeling of self worth, and can encourage further communication.

Show and talk - If it is evident that verbal communication is ineffective, use gestures and actions as well as words. As well, the use of non-verbal praise such as smiling, patting, nodding will enhance the rapport you are trying to establish. Touching gets through to the brain-damaged and hearing impaired better than words. It prevents feelings of rejection, loneliness, and the person knows you care and you are paying attention. This may be one of the few times they are talked to or touched by someone who is not only attending to their physical needs. Kneeling down lower than the person lessens their sense of loss of power.

Always remember - (a) feelings remain despite hearing and memory loss - feelings may be the only way an individual understands what's going on; (b) we all communicate by emotion, expression and touch - holding a hand, or smiling when talking can convey more than any words; (c) to be aware of your body and facial expressions - harsh glances can be just as negative as harsh words; and (d) to include the individual, either in a group setting or sitting alone in the hall - it is painful to be ignored because of your difficulties in communicating.

Helpful Hints for Visits

- Always approach a resident you do not know slowly - never surprise them. Even though you may think the resident remembers you, they may not.



Never just place your pet on someone.

- Always ask first - "would you like to see the dog/cat?" Never just place your pet on someone's lap or bed. There are still many people who are frightened by dogs and cats. From visit to visit a resident may react differently to your pet - one week they may want to pet them and then the next they may be very frightened.
- Always introduce yourself and your pet, and tell the resident a little about him or her. Call the resident by name, you can usually find it on a wrist tag, wheelchair, or door.
- If your pet is small enough to lift, and the resident is bedridden, lift your pet up to eye level so the resident can see and touch the pet. Many facilities will allow pets on the beds. Your Team Leader will advise you.
- Try as much as possible to be on the same level as the person you are visiting - that is, sit or kneel when visiting someone in a wheelchair. Lift your pet when possible.
- Keep a close eye on your pet around wheelchairs. Make certain he/she does not get its tail under the wheels, or behind the chair. Do not let your pet feel cornered.
- Do be patient; older people may be slow in comprehension or movement.
- Talk to the resident, not at them. Relate to him/her as an adult. Never talk over a resident as if they were not there.
- Be aware of how you are communicating your reactions to the resident through body language and facial expressions.
- Remember to have fun. If you are enjoying your visit, so will your pet and the facility residents!



Enjoy your visit.

Other Suggestions for Staying Out of Trouble

- Do not take photographs during your visit without obtaining permission from the facility or Team Leader.
- Do not loosen or remove a restraint on a patient.
- Do not give advice on treatment or provide any medication to a patient.
- Do not do any shopping for a resident without clearing it with the facility staff first.
- Do not accept monetary gifts from residents. They may be grateful for your visits and attempt to pay you.
- Do not attempt to move or turn a bedridden patient, or assist with a transfer to/from a wheelchair. Call a staff member. Similarly, do not attempt to move a patient or resident who has tripped or fallen down. Reassure them, and call a staff member to help.
- Do not tamper with hospital/extended care equipment, i.e. oxygen, I.V's, etc.
- Do not make personal phone calls for a resident without first checking with staff.
- Do not push a wheelchair before asking the owner if it is all right. Always ensure that brakes are engaged before leaving a resident in a wheelchair.
- Do not move canes, walkers or crutches of seated residents out of their reach.
- Do not provide any items such as food, water, tobacco, alcohol, matches etc. to a resident without checking first with the facility staff.
- Do not engage in controversial subjects, such as religion or politics. You must respect the beliefs of the residents, even though you may not agree with them.
- Do not talk about your problems with a resident; you are there to visit with them.
- Do not discuss decline in health, or the death of a resident with other residents.
- Do not discuss the merits of the facility with the residents.
- Do not automatically assume that if a resident is in a wheelchair or is elderly, that he or she is also deaf.



Note: If you have any questions or concerns at all during a visit, contact a staff member, your Team Leader, or the PALS office

Conclusion

This handbook was developed as a reference guide to help make your visits safe and enjoyable. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this handbook or the PALS program, please talk to your Team Leader or contact the PALS office.

We hope you find this information helpful and thank you for being part of this worthwhile organization.



HAPPY VISITING.