

Animal Assisted Therapy

“AAT is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. AAT is directed and/or delivered by a health/human service professional with specialized expertise, and within the scope of practice of his/her profession”.

AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning [cognitive functioning refers to thinking and intellectual skills]. AAT is provided in a variety of settings and may be group or individual in nature. This process is documented and evaluated." [*Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Activities and Therapy*](#)." (The Delta Society, 1996).

Therapists providing any mode of AAT are expected to abide by available standards of practice, training, and certification requirements in addition to those put forth by the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies.

I. Admission Criteria

All of the following criteria are necessary:

- A. Individual presents with psychological symptomology consistent with a covered DSM-IV-TR (Axis I-V) which requires and is likely to respond to therapeutic intervention.
- B. The consumer has agreed to and understands their choice in the use of AAT vs. a traditional mode of therapy.

II. Exclusion Criteria

ANY of the following criteria are sufficient for exclusion from this type of care:

- A. If a client is actively dangerous to self or others, or after AAT has begun, increasingly demonstrates dangerous and/or overly aggressive, unsafe behaviors with the animal(s) and others. This can include runaway behaviors, disassociative or psychotic symptomology, or is currently using drugs or alcohol.
- B. If the consumer has allergies or a medical condition that will put them at risk.
- C. A primary diagnosis of Substance abuse, Delirium, Dementia, or other Cognitive disorder.

III. Continuing Stay Criteria

ALL of the following criteria are necessary for continuing treatment at this level of care:

- A. The service plan clearly defines the expected goal(s) and time frame for completion.
- B. The consumer is verbalizing and demonstrating benefit from AAT and, this is reflected in the associated clinical documentation.

References

Definition: Animal Assisted Therapy(AAT) <http://archive.deltasociety.org/AnimalsAAAAbout.htm#aat> [01-04-2009 11:30 PM].

<http://www.deltasociety.org> Website with extensive information, resources related to improving human health through service and therapy animals. Articles, abstracts and bibliographies related to all age groups and specific health issues.

<http://www.eagala.org> Website for the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association; standards of excellence in EAP/ethics, certification program, education, resources, links.

Fine, A. H. (Editor), 2000 *Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice*. Academic Press: San Diego

<http://narha.org>. Website for the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, which includes the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association. Equine Facilitated Therapy (EFT) and Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL); workshops, certifications, resources, standards.

<http://pawsitivetherapy.com> Website for the Pets for Vets/PAWSitive Therapy

<http://www.pan-inc.org> Website for People, Animals and Nature, Inc. Info on Animals in Healing Environments: (AAI) Animal Assisted Intervention certification program. Resources, links, workshops.

<http://tdi-dog.org> Website of Therapy Dogs International. Volunteer organization dedicated to regulating, testing and registration of therapy dogs and their handlers for the purpose of visiting nursing homes, hospitals, other institutions or wherever therapy dogs might be needed.