

# **Being a Therapy Dog is a Job**

It requires:

- \* Good visiting manners
- \* Being well bonded with a human partner they look to for direction
- \* A patient willingness to hang out with its human while the human visits
- \* A sustained interest in visiting with numerous humans

Dogs who can be described with many of the words below are likely to be good candidates for pet therapy work:

Calm, mellow, gentle, friendly  
Laid back, tolerant, steady  
Well behaved, well mannered, well socialized with people and dogs

## **Top Reasons Why Dogs May be Unsuitable**

### **The dog is too young**

This manifests in a variety of ways, most commonly as excitement when meeting the team dogs, wanting to play, not sitting still for petting, displaying way too much energy and being easily distracted. A young dog may not have the attention span needed to visit.

Dogs under two years old may not be mature enough yet for this work. Additionally, some very active breeds don't "mellow out" until they are 6 or 7.

### **The dog is very active by nature**

Sitting around being petted is simply not its idea of a good time. The dog would rather be out on a walk or romping at the dog park.

### **The dog is unable to exhibit the calm and mellow demeanor we need to see**

Excited, not able to sit still for long, wiggly, bouncy, distracted. The dog may be nervous or feeling stressed.

### **The dog does not have a sustained interest in visiting**

The dog is a drive-by visitor. It is friendly, curious, momentarily interested in saying hi but pulls away, distracted, and wants to move on.

### **The dog is hard for the handler to control in a relaxed manner**

The dog is straining, pulling, tugging. The handler gives the impression of needing to keep a tight leash and is constantly reining the dog in.

### **The dog is stressed, fearful, timid and distracted**

The dog is uncomfortable in the facility, exhibiting signs of stress such as pacing, yawning, licking its lips, whimpering, looking away from owner, looking at the door, reluctant to be petted.