

# Evaluation and Workshop Safety Guidelines for Volunteer Leaders

Pet Partners recognizes that many communities need the healing power of the human-animal bond, now more than ever. Volunteer leaders will play a critical role in helping new teams serve that need in the coming months. However, Pet Partners also recognizes that the decision to return to volunteering is a personal one. The timing for each volunteer leader to hold events will differ, and we support your decision to resume your volunteer leadership role when it is right for you. First and foremost, always follow local health department guidance regarding safety measures for non-essential gatherings.

If you are able to hold an event within those guidelines, here are some additional considerations.

## Facility

- ▶ If you use a regular location for events, get in touch with your onsite contact and confirm that the space is available. If your usual event space is a healthcare, religious, or educational facility, it may be unavailable for use by outside groups for several months. Please contact us if you need support finding a new facility in which to hold events.
- ▶ Ask your onsite contact about the facility's safety protocols:
  - Is PPE other than a mask required to enter the facility?
  - How is the facility maintaining cleaning standards?
- ▶ If you find a new event space but are required to pay a rental fee, see our [Evaluation and Workshop Fees FAQ](#) or contact us for guidance. As a reminder, companies or organizations that donate their space for Pet Partners events can claim a tax-deductible in-kind donation. For more information, see [the facility space in-kind donation resource](#).

## Health and Safety Requirements

- ▶ Pet Partners requires that every person present at an event—the evaluator, the handler, and assistants—wear a mask. This is based on CDC recommendation. Since evaluations require some proximity, a mask is a reasonable safety measure. Bandanas or similar cloth coverings are acceptable if masks are not available.
  - Volunteer leaders may choose to bring a supply of disposable face masks or inexpensive bandanas to their events for handlers who forget to bring one, but this is not required.
- ▶ Ask all volunteers and participants to wash or sanitize their hands upon entering and leaving the event room. Volunteer leaders should regularly sanitize hands as well.
- ▶ Wipe down all surfaces before and after the event, including door handles, writing surfaces, and equipment.

## Event Scheduling and Logistics

- ▶ While Volunteer Leaders should continue to post their own events, as outlined in the Licensing Agreement, Pet Partners staff can help with changing the date or location of an event. Contact us for assistance.
- ▶ For the remainder of 2020, events can be posted as little as 14 days in advance. This allows time for administrative tasks on the part of the handler, such as accommodations request processing, but gives volunteer leaders appropriate flexibility in booking space as soon as it becomes available.
- ▶ If you would like prospective handlers from canceled events to receive priority at rescheduled events, we suggest giving them advance notice of your event posting. For example, email the handlers from the downloaded roster of the canceled event and let them know the day before you post to the calendar.
- ▶ Allow extra time in your event schedule:
  - So that teams are not crossing paths before or after their evaluations.
  - To account for additional sanitation procedures.
- ▶ Consider temporarily reducing your normal enrollment capacity to allow for extra time and reduce the possibility of unnecessary contact.
- ▶ You should reduce the number of non-essential individuals on site during an event to the minimum required to perform a PPSAT and comply with local guidance on gathering size limits. For an evaluation, you need three assistants and may have a scribe or co-evaluator.
- ▶ Have assistants maintain the same role-playing tasks throughout the evaluation to limit the number of people touching pieces of equipment.

## Evaluation Modifications

- ▶ Social distancing should be practiced at all times when it is possible to do so without impacting the effectiveness of the evaluation. For example:
  - Instead of having volunteer assistants sit near each other while they wait their turns, have them seated in different areas of the room.
  - Eliminate the check-in table or process.
  - Perform your post-evaluation feedback sitting at least six feet apart.
- ▶ There are several points during an evaluation when the evaluator must come within six feet of the handler and when the volunteer assistants will come within six feet of one another and the handler. These exercises cannot be amended to create more distance.
- ▶ Do not shake hands during Exercise 2: Accepting a Friendly Stranger.
- ▶ Assistants may place their seats 6 feet apart during lap exercises.
- ▶ For carried evaluations, barriers are not to be shared between individuals.
- ▶ Create a short script for the beginning of evaluations during which you clarify for the handler any changes, such as the following:

*“While I will keep my distance from you as much as is possible, like I am right now, there are some exercises where I will have to come closer to you. And there are times when you need to touch, comfort, and guide your animal and doing so will bring you closer to me or*

*the volunteer assistants. In general, I don't want to see you, as a handler, staying at the end of your leash just to create distance from me, as that creates too much distance from your animal; but I will move through efficiently and step away as soon as I can. I want to make sure you're comfortable with all of this before we proceed."*

- ▶ If a handler appears to be keeping their distance from their animal as a way to stay distanced from you or the volunteers, you can stop the evaluation, share what you are seeing, and ask if they are comfortable continuing.

## Workshop Suggestions

- ▶ Reduce workshop enrollment size.
- ▶ Allow additional space between participants' seats.
- ▶ Use videos showing evaluation exercises instead of performing an in-person evaluation demonstration. A YouTube playlist of evaluation exercises is located [HERE](#).
- ▶ Mini workshops are an option and may be a safer and easier way to engage new teams. This is because mini workshops are shorter in length, so attendees spend less time in close proximity.

All Pet Partners policies, procedures, and standards already have the highest level of risk mitigation in place. Please continue to follow the procedures in your Team Evaluator Policies & Procedures or Instructor Guide, and reach out with any questions or concerns.