Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)

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1st June 2017
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The Team
Animal Assisted Intervention

- Animal Assisted Activities
- Animal Assisted Therapy
- Animal Assisted Education
Definition of AAT

“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” (Pichot, 2012).

Generally, AAT is not provided as a stand-alone therapy but rather is used to augment existing treatment strategies. Animals should enhance the therapy process rather than create a distraction from the healing process/goals of therapy.
Common Mental Health/ Educational Goals of AAT for Students

- Improved socialization and communication skills
- Reduce isolation, boredom and loneliness (Whitaker, 1994)
- Improve memory, recall and process instructions
- Improve self-esteem (Janssen, 1998)
- Decrease manipulative and abusive behaviours
- Improve expressions of feelings and empathy
- Fosters an ability to trust
- Reduced stress, general anxiety and depression
- Improves symptoms of PTSD and attachment disorders (Stable, 1995 & Altschuler, 1999)
- Physiological impact
Benefits of AAT to the Therapeutic Process and School

- Relieves tension and anxiety related to therapy
- Decreases the need for language in therapy
- Calmer Classrooms/ Reduces distractibility
- Boundary and Limit Setting
- Animal is seen as the student’s friend, ally and non judgemental
- Used to curb aggression within the therapeutic set
- Contributes to staff self care
- Increased school and therapeutic engagement
Application of AAT

- Communication Verbal and Non verbal Activities
- Social Participation, Relating to others, Perspective Taking
- Restorative Conversations
- Language Development
- Mindfulness activities
- Literacy
- Reflection/ Mirroring
- Behavioural Intervention
- Self Esteem/ Image
- Fine Motor and Hand Eye Coordination
Knowledge and Skills Requires for AAT/Issues to be aware of?

- Social skills development and obedience training for the pet
- Certification course with Alpha or Delta
- Assessing the appropriateness of AAT with a particular client
- Understanding the social and cultural factors of the client and or agency
- Legal/Insurance
- Safe Interaction
- Animal Stress and fatigue, suitability and strengths
- Strong understanding of your professional scope practice.
Helpful Resources
References


References


References


Thank You

Questions?