

Frequently Asked Questions – Your First Visit

Congratulations on completing the Pet Partners® Therapy Animal Handler Course and passing your evaluation! After you have completed your shadow visit (observing a current member team on a visit, without your animal) and mentored visits with your animal companion, you are ready to go on your first solo visit. Since you may still have some questions of what to expect when going to visit on your own, we have collected some frequently asked questions from new Pet Partner® teams and addressed them here. Please feel free to contact your mentor at any time with further questions or concerns as you continue your visits, and most of all, enjoy!

What should I do to prepare for my first solo visit?

It is always helpful to review the Pet Partners® and Tufts Paws for People policies before visiting. Within these policies are reminders to properly groom your pet within 24 hours of all visits, gather and bring all necessary paperwork (including ID badges and health certifications), and prepare a supply bag for your visitation. Be sure you have the full name and phone number for your contact at the facility you are visiting in case of any questions or last-minute concerns (directions, unexpected illness, etc.).

What should I bring with me on visits?

Pet Partners® advises you to bring a supply bag to cover all your and your pet's needs during a visit, including unexpected emergencies. Your supply bag should include:

- copy of Pet Partners® ID
- copy of rabies vaccinations and health certificates
- Tufts Paws for People bandana for your pet or visit bag or a handler shirt
- hand sanitizer
- soft brush appropriate for people to use to interact with your animal
- treats for your animal companion for after the visit is completed
- water bowl and water
- waste bags
- clean up materials (paper towels, wipes, etc.)

How should I structure my first solo visit?

Set up a contact at the facility to meet you and be with you during your visitation. Prepare your contact for expectations of the first visit which should include limiting your visit to 20 to 30 minutes to not overwhelm your pet (or yourself). Remember that your visit starts as soon as you put on your identification, which includes time in the parking lot or entering and leaving the facility. Our policies always apply when visiting on behalf of Pet Partners® and Tufts Paws for People. Please keep Tufts Paws for People updated about your visits (location, frequency, etc.).

What should I do if others approach me to ask questions?

Many people are not aware of animal assisted interventions, what we do, or the policies behind our work. Introducing yourself as a Pet Partners® team and explaining the program can help increase awareness. Some Pet Partners® teams like to bring handouts from Tufts Paws for People. Be cautious of patient confidentiality whenever you visit, and remember a positive attitude is always well received.

Anything else I should be thinking about before visiting?

Reach out if you have any further questions or concerns about a facility or any aspect of visiting. Tufts Paws for People and your mentor are happy to help with whatever you need. You are always welcome to have additional mentored visits!

As handlers become more experienced, some may feel too comfortable and may become less stringent in following the policies of Pet Partners® and Tufts Paws for People. We highly encourage everyone to be diligent about policies and procedures at every visit. Accidents can happen at any time that are beyond your control and it is best to be prepared. Similarly, not all facilities and visitations are the same and you may find different challenges or benefits at each. We encourage anyone with questions to seek additional mentorship if considering another type of visitation with their pet.