

The Child Life Pet Therapy Program at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital has been present for over a decade bringing a piece of comfort from home into a hospital environment for pediatric patients. For those with brief or extended stays, pet therapy is a beneficial tool that provides patients and their families with a sense of normalcy despite the unfamiliar hospital setting.

Some benefits of pediatric pet therapy are:

- Making children smile!
- Having a comfortable and familiar pet in the hospital room
- Lowering stress and anxiety of children and their families
- Distraction from pain or unfamiliar stimuli
- Touching, seeing, and hearing new things
- Jumpstarting conversation
- ... and many more!

If you are interested in pursuing participation in our Pediatric Pet Therapy Program, the first step is to have your dog registered with one of the following therapy dog organizations:

- Therapy Dogs Incorporated (TDInc.)
- Keystone Pet Enhanced Therapy Services (KPETS)
- American Red Cross Serving Central PA
- Pet Partners

In addition, prospective teams are required to have a minimum of 30 hours of pet therapy visits in nursing homes or hospitals along with 15 hours of documented visits with children prior to applying for the our Pediatric Pet Therapy Program. Documentation will be requested.

Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital Pet Therapy Program is a popular volunteer opportunity and positions for new dog/handler teams are not always available. Please contact Megan Blashford, mblashford@hmc.psu.edu, or Tiff Horner, thorner@hmc.psu.edu, for additional information. **At this time, there are no open slots for the Child Life Pet Therapy Program.**