**Indianapolis Public Library**

**Paws to Read – Procedures**

**Definition:** The Indianapolis Public Library Paws to Read program is designed to provide school-age children, who are reluctant readers, with a non-judgmental certified therapy animal to listen to them read. The program improves children’s reading skills and boosts confidence.

Therapy animals and their Handlers are members of a Pet Therapy organization which has provided training and authorization for the Team. Paws to Read dogs have been trained, certified, and tested for health, safety and suitability with the public. They work as a team with a trained handler who facilitates a relaxed and fun reading experience.

**Purpose of these Procedures:**

The goal of the procedures outlined within this document is to enable Teams to quickly and smoothly become volunteers for the IndyPL system as a whole, not just one branch. By doing this, a Team is welcome to schedule volunteer shifts at any branch that has an opening or special event without requiring additional volunteer screening or paperwork.

**Pet Therapy Organizations:**

IndyPL Volunteer Resources has researched and approved pet theory organizations in the Indianapolis Area. Those that were selected to work with IndyPL maintain training and certification standards that fit within the Library’s safety and risk management guidelines. These organizations are:

* Paws & Think, Inc. - Program: Paws to R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dog)
* Therapy Dogs International Program: Tail Waggin’ Tutors

**One-time Test Visit and Shadowing:**

Test Visit:

Although the Teams have been through extensive training with their certifying organization, there is still the question about the animal’s ability/desire to fulfill the demands of a Library Paws to Read listener. Therefore a registered Team is permitted to visit a Library branch one time as a “test visit” to determine if the Therapy dog is a suitable match for The Library’s program. The Team may participate with another team, or with a representative from their certifying organization. They may not visit on their own. The Paperwork required for this one-time visit is:

1. Proof of completed and current pet therapy training. (Certificate, Badge, Letter, etc.)
2. Completed IndyPL Short Term Volunteer Application

Shadowing:

Team handlers, without the therapy dog, are permitted to shadow other Teams at any time. No volunteer paperwork is required for the handler to shadow without the therapy dog.

**Volunteer Application Process for a Team:**

Paws to Read volunteers are vetted by a Pet Therapy organization. Therefore, IndyPL does NOT require that a formal volunteer screening interview be conducted. It is recommended that the branch staff have an informal conversation with the volunteer to discuss the Paws to Read program goals and guidelines, IndyPL Paws to Read Volunteer Description, scheduling and volunteer procedures, such as how to log hours and where to put their personal items when volunteering.

Paperwork that is NOT needed for Paws to Read volunteers:

1. A formal screening interview and corresponding (yellow) form
2. Commitment Agreement Statement

Documents that are required before a team can begin on-going volunteer activity with IndyPL:

1. IndyPL Volunteer Application
2. Signed Limited Criminal Background Check / Waiver signed
3. Proof of Liability Insurance
	1. The Handler and Therapy Dog may be insured through current membership in an approved therapy dog program that carries an insurance policy covering its members. Paw & Think and Therapy Dogs International provide insurance coverage.

OR

* 1. Personal Homeowners Policy
1. Current animal vaccination records
2. Photo of Therapy Animal
3. Photo copy of completed and current pet therapy training / membership. (Certificate, Badge, Letter, etc.)

**Team Renewal Process:**

Annual:

Each April Support Programs & Volunteer Resources (SPVR) will contact each team requesting updated vaccination records. Additionally proof of insurance coverage will also be verified (through current membership in an organization or home owners). Vaccinations required are: Rabies, Adenovirus Bordetella (respiratory viruses), Distemper, Leptospirosis, and Parvovirus. A negative fecal exam within the last 12 months is also required.

Every Two Years:

IndyPL requests that each Team provide proof of recertification with their member organization every two years. By requiring a biennial update, the Handler and Therapy Dog are providing evidence that they are still prepared for and interested in participating in the IndyPL Paws to Read program.

**Paw to Read Team List:**

Support Programs & Volunteer Resources will maintain a list of current, and approved, Paws to Read teams on the shared library drive. Branch Volunteer Coordinators and Managers should check this list prior to bringing any new Teams into their branch.

**Branch Responsibilities:**

**Hosting a Paws to Read Team**

Provide a safe and enjoyable experience for the volunteer Handler, Therapy Dog, patrons and staff.

1. Explain the Paws to Read program to parents of interested children
2. Have a sign-up for readers, or some other defined protocol to support one-on-one interaction, noting the length of time the child will have with the Team. The sign-up process must include permission from the reader’s parent/guardian to participate in the Library Paws to Read program which involves interaction with a Therapy Dog.
3. Provide a secure area for the Team’s belongings during their shift.
4. Remind the Handler to sign-in/out for their shift.
5. Locate the program in a quiet area for the Team to meet with our young patrons that is within eye sight and, if possible, hearing of a designated staff member.
6. Keep other patrons from interfering with a reader’s designated time with the Team.
7. Keep an eye on the Team and the interaction. Be on hand to answer any questions or to intervene when appropriate.
8. Check-in with the Handler on a regular basis before or after the session to determine if there are any issues, concerns or ways to improve the experience.

**Communication with Support Programs & Volunteer Resources**

1. Immediately communicate any issues or concerns involving a Team, patron or Handler complaint, injured animal, multiple cancelations, etc. to the branch manager or Person in Charge (PIC) and Support Programs and Volunteer Resources. Remind the Handler to report back to their organization’s liaison any occurrences.
2. Notify SPVR when there is a change in a Team’s status; the Therapy dog retires/passes away, the team moves, you no longer offer the program, and so forth.

**IndyPL Volunteer Resources responsibility for Paws to Read:**

1. Process and hold all Paws to Read Team information (applications, background checks, insurance verification, etc.) regardless of authorizing organization.
2. Annually collect vaccination and insurance information for all Teams/ Organizations.
3. Include Paws to Read volunteers in annual recognition activities.
4. Support Branch staff and Team as the need arises.
5. Maintain current Therapy Dog photos, vaccination and insurance information for all Team/Organizations on K:\Paws to Read. These documents can be used by staff to verify therapy dog team participation.

**Paws & Think Volunteer Responsibility to IndyPL:**

1. If a volunteer team knows in advance that they cannot attend a session at a branch, they will communicate their absence to the Paws & Think liaison. The liaison will work with Paws & Think to find a replacement team.
2. If a volunteer team has to cancel within 48 hours of the scheduled session, they will communicate their absence to the volunteer coordinator at Paws & Think and the Paws & Think liaison. The volunteer coordinator and liaison will work to find a replacement team if possible. The Paws & Think volunteer coordinator will contact the branch to confirm if they have found a new team.

**2017 Paws & Think, Inc. Liaison:**

Paws & Think, Inc. is presently the Library’s primary Paws to Read pet therapy organization, although we do have Teams from other organizations. In an effort to streamline the relationship with the Library, Paws & Think has provided a dedicated volunteer as our liaison. The role of the liaison includes:

1. Point person for Paws & Think volunteers who engage with IndyPL
2. Answer any questions from the Paws & Think Teams regarding the IndyPL Paws to Read program procedures
3. Assist IndyPL Volunteer Resources with team placement within the branches
4. Track all Paws & Think Teams engaged in the IndyPL Paws to Read program
5. Notify IndyPL Volunteer Resources of any change in status with a Team
6. Coordinate with Volunteer Resources the collection of a new Paws & Think Team’s IndyPL volunteer paperwork. Ensuring that all of the necessary paperwork is complete prior to submission to IndyPL Volunteer Resources.