



PROSPECTIVE AND ACTIVE MEMBER GUIDES



PROSPECTIVE MEMBER GUIDE

We are so pleased you have interest in becoming a therapy dog team with Invisible Paw Prints Inc. (IPP)!

IPP is an American Kennel Club (AKC) recognized therapy dog organization led by compassionate volunteers who use their canine companions to provide heartwarming visits in support of local community organizations. We are a 100% volunteer organization; no one is paid a penny!

We hope you and your pup will join us in this rewarding journey! Please find below more information about IPP's testing and membership requirements and how to get started!

Canine Requirements

- Minimum of one (1) year old
- Up-to-date on all vaccines and negative fecal results
- Possess basic obedience skills
 - Sit calmly and be touched
 - Listen and obey commands from handler
 - Walk on a leash without excessive pulling
 - Must not growl or excessively bark at other dogs or people
 - Not lick excessively
 - Must not have history of aggression or biting (if there is a history, please explain)
- Well-groomed
- Enjoy meeting and interacting with people

Handler Requirements

- Minimum of 18 years of age
 - IPP permits junior handlers ages 16 -17 if accompanied by an approved IPP adult
- No felony records
- Be the primary owner or handler of the canine companion
 - The handler/owner who tests with the canine is the only person permitted to conduct visits on behalf of IPP.
 - Exceptions may apply on a case by case basis with IPP Board approval
- Must provide canine's health records signed by a veterinarian
 - Including vaccinations, annual physical, and negative fecal test
- Must pass the IPP handlers' [written \(open book\) exam](#) prior to team evaluation
- Review and sign Liability Release (which will be provided to you during the team evaluation)

Other

- Electronic collars, prong collars, and retractable leashes are NOT permitted.
- While treats may be permitted while conducting visits as an active IPP member, treats are NOT allowed during the team evaluation.



Application/Testing Process

If you meet the foregoing requirements and are ready to get started, please fill out the application on our website- invisiblepawprints.org.

Once your application is complete, you will be advised of upcoming team evaluation dates and location in the Charlotte, NC area. You will also be sent the link to complete the [open book quiz](#).

There is no cost to test with IPP! The team evaluation is a pass or fail exam and typically takes less than one hour. If your canine companion does not pass, the evaluator will advise you of the specific areas to work on prior to testing again. Once you are ready to test again, you may reach out to schedule a new team evaluation date. You can find out more information about the test in [the evaluator's guide](#).

If you are transferring from another AKC therapy dog program:

In addition to completing the online application, you will need to submit the following documents:

- 1) Certificate from your current therapy dog program (membership must be in good standing)
- 2) [Completed open book quiz](#)
- 3) Submit membership fee to IPP

Upon successful completion of the IPP membership requirements set forth above, you will become a “registered” IPP therapy dog team¹ and are ready to begin!

¹ Please keep in mind that a *registered* therapy dog and a *certified* service dog are two very different things. A service dog is an assistance animal specially trained to support a specific individual. A therapy dog offers emotional support and comfort to others. Not only is it a violation of IPP for you to present your dog as a certified service animal but it is against federal law.

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ACTIVE MEMBER GUIDE

Getting Started

Once you become a registered IPP therapy dog team, your first step will be to purchase an IPP-approved canine vest; a link will be sent to you for you to order. IPP will provide you with “Invisible Paw Prints” and “Therapy Dog” Velcro tabs for the vest (if needed), as well as ID tags for both you and your canine companion. **The vest and ID tags must be worn at all times during IPP visits (unless volunteer organization requires specific attire/identification); wearing the vest and ID tags outside of IPP visits or events is prohibited.**



The next step will be to decide where you and your canine will start spreading joy! Check the [TrackItForward app](#) for a list of potential locations. If an organization you would like to volunteer with is not listed, please fill out the [Notification of Therapy Dog Team Facility Choice](#) and submit it to invisiblepawprints2016@gmail.com. Someone from IPP will contact the organization and provide any additional information which may be required, e.g., verification of liability insurance.

Keep in mind many organizations and facilities have their own volunteer guidelines and policies and procedures. Some may require a separate volunteer application and/or orientation process. Please make sure you understand and comply with the guidelines, and policies and procedures of your selected organization.



Membership Requirements and Coverage

To maintain your membership with IPP, the following is required:

- 1) Conduct a *minimum* of 6 hours (preferably over at least 3 visits) during the membership year
 - a. The recommended length of a therapy dog visit is 1-1.5 hours
- 2) Log volunteer hours using the [TrackItForward app](#)
- 3) Pay annual membership dues (currently \$45/year)
 - a. Failure to renew your membership within 30 days of the expiration date will require retesting
- 4) Review IPP's current membership guide as a refresher prior to renewal
- 5) Keep canine up-to-date on all vaccinations (this is on the honor system; you do not have to submit unless requested)
- 6) Keep canine well-groomed

IPP maintains liability insurance coverage for incidents involving injuries to others and property damages in connection with your canine's visit. It does not cover incidents occurring outside of valid IPP therapy dog visits/events. Failure to comply with any of the membership guidelines set forth above negates liability coverage.

If an incident occurs, you must notify IPP immediately (305-588-2945 or by email at invisiblepawprints2016@gmail.com). Failure to timely report any incident may also jeopardize insurance coverage.

IPP Visit Checklists

DOs

- 1) Carry the following items with you to each visit:
 - a. Water/bowl
 - b. Towels/paper towels for cleanup if needed
 - c. Vaccination records (if not already on file with the organization)
 - d. Vest with patches*
 - e. ID badges – handler and canine*
 - f. Poop bags**must be carried with you; the remainder can be left in your vehicle
- 2) Arrive with sufficient time to give your canine the opportunity to potty prior to entering into any facility. Keep in mind your therapy dog visit begins when you park your vehicle and ends when you leave the parking lot.
- 3) Keep your dog 5 feet away from other dogs. Under certain circumstances, the distance may be reduced such as in a small elevator or other confined space; in those circumstances, use good common sense.

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- 4) Stay with your canine at all times and keep your canine harnessed and on a leash. The only time your canine can be off-leash is during a trick routine but the handler must be in control all of the time.
- 5) You must tend the leash at all times, even if you must use the restroom. Anyone not registered as the canine's IPP handler, including family members, is prohibited from tending the leash during IPP visits.
- 6) Towels, blankets or lap pillows are to be used whenever an animal is placed in someone's lap on or a bed. These items should be provided by the facility or patient. Small dogs (14 pounds or less) should be able to lie quietly in someone's lap without wiggling. Medium sized dogs (49 pounds or less) may be permitted on a chair or bed only if facility permits.
- 7) Be on time. If you are tardy, it is a reflection on IPP in the eyes of the staff and people you visit. If you know you will be late, notify your point of contact as soon as possible.
- 8) Have fun!

DON'Ts

- 1) Bringing multiple therapy dogs to an organization is not permitted without prior approval from IPP and the organization.
- 2) Never enter a room that has posted "contact precautions" or similar language indicating that the patient is at risk of contracting sickness from others and may require additional preventative attire to be worn to enter. If you are unsure, ask staff.
- 3) Do not take photos without consent (verbal consent is okay if the individual is over the age of 18; if under 18, consent must be in writing from a parent/guardian; see IPP Photo Release Form).
- 4) Do not go to an organization if you or your pet is ill.
- 5) Talking on the phone or texting during visits is prohibited.