

“ I love puppy dogs, they are so soft and cuddly ”

Sometimes it's really hard for kids to feel safe enough to talk with grown ups and having a dog in the room can make all the difference.

Kids have told us that when a friendly, safe dog is in the room, they feel more relaxed.

A therapy dog can also help kids learn a lot about safe relationships, managing their feelings, and healing from hard times.



About Relationships Australia SA

Relationships Australia South Australia is a leading provider of family relationship support services. Our aim is to support all Australians to achieve positive and respectful relationships.

Outreach Service

Together 4 Kids is a metropolitan-wide service. We primarily provide group or individual therapeutic services at homelessness, domestic violence services, at schools or child oriented community venues. Children's therapeutic services can be provided from Relationships Australia SA sites where possible.



Together 4 Kids work on Aboriginal land and respects your culture, wherever you're from.

Contact us

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Therapeutic Service for Children
utilising a Trained Therapy Dog

Information for Service Providers



Information for Service Providers in
Specialist Homelessness and Domestic and
Family Violence Services

Relationships Australia
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

What is Animal Assisted Therapy?

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a goal-directed, individualised therapeutic intervention that utilises a trained and certified therapy animal to assist towards outcomes. Many animals can be used including dogs, cats, horses, reptiles and small animals such as rabbits and mice. It has been used effectively across many clinical and professional applications including psychology, occupational therapy, counselling, as well as in hospitals, nursing homes and in school classrooms.

How are dogs used in AAT?

Simply the dog's presence in a therapeutic setting can have a calming effect on children, acting as an 'ice-breaker' that is comforting and increases engagement. Children have said that they find it easier to talk to dogs or with a dog present; and much social and emotional learning can occur through this relationship with the dog. The dog can also be actively involved in the therapy, either physically through interactive activities or hypothetically in conversational exercises..

Who might benefit from AAT?

Any child, young person or family who is receptive to interacting with a dog could benefit from therapeutic interventions incorporating AAT. It has been shown to be particularly effective working within the following areas:

- Social skill development
- Emotional identification and regulation difficulties
- Trauma related issues
- Sensory/physical needs
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Self-esteem and self-confidence
- Selective Mutism
- Phobia/fear of dogs



How does it work?

There are a number of guidelines and policies in place to keep both the child and the therapy dog safe. Informed consent is provided by the child's parent or guardian, and is also given by the child themselves throughout interactions with the therapy dog. The therapy dog is the responsibility of the therapist at all times, and has been trained and certified to be under control, and to be well mannered and friendly with people. The therapy dog is subject to grooming and healthcare standards to ensure that any risk of infection is highly reduced. It is also the responsibility of the therapist to ensure that any risks are identified and managed appropriately, and that any signs of stress or discomfort are easily identified by the therapist so that the welfare and rights of the dog is considered at all times.