



Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs

Handler & Spotter Orientation

Rebecca Blair, VP, Education, Co-coordinator

GOALS

To provide handlers and spotters an overview of techniques for successful visits in a variety of settings (schools, adult daycares, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, rehab facilities, hospice etc.) r.5/8/26

Visit Orientation Objectives Handlers and Spotters

- To provide a positive distraction, education, comfort and engagement.
- To become familiar with a variety of settings, opportunities and challenges.
- To ensure new members understand the operating rules and practices for HPCD.
- To ensure visits are constructive and appropriate for dog, participant/client and Handler/Spotter.
- To define the partnership role of the Spotter as a “second set of eyes” and the Regional Coordinators.

Who attends On-Boarding Programs?

***All** New Members

*New Members with Dogs

*New Members with Dogs who are
CGC Certified or Not Yet

*New Members without Dogs



Introduction & Welcome

- Introduce yourself and your dog (*fun fact*).
- Share worries or concerns you may have.



Rules & Practices based on Lessons Learned

Insurance Handling

- Dogs must have **CGC** (Canine Good Citizenship) certification to visit. HPCD can supply references.
- Hospitals require therapy certification. HPCD has a relationship with a qualified therapy granting person. Members can receive *therapy certification* from another group so long as they don't become a "member" of that group or "volunteer" for that group.
- Handlers and dogs **are not able to work for two visitation organizations.** They can work for Cape Cod Healthcare's program, "Dogs on Call" and those sessions are known to HPCD but only insured by the hospitals.
- Handlers must participate only on HPCD's scheduled visits (as part of visiting team) and NOT visiting alone or on their own.

Communication, Commitment, Compassion

- **Communication**- if you can't keep the scheduled visit you committed to let Regional Coordinator know.
- **Commitment**- commit to follow all the established rules and practice requirements.
- **Compassion**- provide compassion as a primary goal for both other team members, clients and dogs.



Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs

2026 Handbook Review

- Includes all dog, handler and spotter requirements.
- Includes description of each role.
- Includes visit practices and tips for a successful visit.
- Includes information about the website.
- Includes information about VSP (Volunteer Scheduler Pro).
- All members are **required** to sign attestation form and mail to compliance officer, Sue Bernier (her address is on the form).



Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Welcome to Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs.....	1
Mission statement	1
Canine Good Citizen certification	1
Volunteer organization	1
Chapter 2: Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs Visiting Teams	2
Chapter 3: Dogs.....	3
Vaccinations	3
Illnesses and medications	3
Dog preparation.....	3
Chapter 4: Handlers.....	5
Health and confidentiality requirements.....	5
Handler preparation.....	5
Chapter 5: Spotters.....	8
Chapter 6: Regional Coordinators	9
Chapter 7: Best Practices for Successful Visits	10
Chapter 8: Visitation Sites and Events Overview	11
Visitation sites.....	11
Events.....	11
Volunteer Scheduling Pro software	11
Chapter 9: Best Practices for Member Communication	12
Schedules	12
Meetings	12
Website	12
Chapter 10: Board of Directors.....	13
Chapter 11: Insurance and Liability	15
Chapter 12: Website Overview	16
Appendix: Glossary and Resources.....	17

HPCD CGC and Therapy Certification

- HPCDs, as an organization, does not require Therapy certification.
- Cape Cod Health Care System does require Therapy in addition to CGC (AKC Canine Good Citizenship).
- **Note:** CGC is nationally recognized.
- **Note:** Members have responsibility for time and expense related to therapy training and CGC training/certifications.
- If your dog is a member of HPCD and Therapy certified and works only at locations HPCD has authorized, your ***dog is covered*** by HPCD insurance.
- *Dogs on Call* members, who are also HPCD, are covered for those hospital visits by the CCH, as CCH covers volunteers separately.
- You must wear the *Dogs on Call* ID badge. CCH knows you work for HPCD.
- You will participate in the CCH Volunteer Program Orientation.



Compliance Activities

Annually

- Update your dog's vaccinations.
- Update any new certifications.
- Pay Membership Dues- on anniversary.
- Wear appropriate badges, T-shirts to all events. Same for CGC dogs.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times.
- **HPCD requires active members visit at least 1X a month, unless off Cape, and participate in 2 public events a year. CCH visits do not count meeting this requirement.**

New Member- Next Steps

- Attend member meeting with your dog.
- Attend Orientation.
- Review Handbook & Sign, Submit Attestation.
- In collaboration with **Regional Coordinator**, sign up to “shadow” a location without your dog.



Safety and Unusual Occurrence Reporting Form

Safety Form represents unusual events that
impact dog, client or handler.

Events are not necessarily dramatic

May represent events that could result in a
complaint or harm.

Are completed by Handler or Spotter.

Are sent to **President/Regional Coordinator only.**

Will be managed with utmost discretion.



Hearts & Paws Comfort Dogs
Safety & Unusual Occurrence Reporting Form

Incident

Location _____

Date/Time _____

Reporter _____

Dog(s) Involved in Incident

Dog(s) Involved _____

Handler

Name _____

Phone/Email _____

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

Action Taken: _____

Date: _____

Regional Coordinator Initials

2.10.26



Role of the Spotter

HPCDs visit teams include:
Dog, Handler and Spotter



Before the Visit

- Understand who the members of your team are and the dates and time. Visible in VSP. **Spotter is assigned to every two teams.**
- Check-in members of your visiting team when you arrive, on the Kiosk-
<https://www.rotundasoftware.com/volunteer/Heartsandpaws/kiosk>
- Proactively check space for visit with contact person at facility (teacher, administrator etc.).
- Assess numbers of students, adults visiting to maintain calm visit.
- Send a “thank you” to all Handler team members attending the visit.



Role of the Spotter cont.

During the visit

- Observe surroundings, remove dangerous toys, food etc. from the floor or low shelves. Maintain a calm environment.
- Limit conversations, be a strong set of second eyes.
- Proactively attend to potential distractions, for example an overly active adult or child.
- Manage time- visits are usually 45-60 minutes.
- Be prepared to assist handler(s) as requested.



Shadow

As a new member, handler or spotter, “visit” a location new to you to see if that venue is comfortable for you (and your dog) and experience how a typical visit works. **Note: this step is required.**

Some venues are active or some more sedentary.

Options: schools-various ages; rehab facilities; veteran groups/homes; adult overnight care facilities; senior centers; libraries; hospitals-if part of “Dogs on Call;” nursing homes etc.

HPCD **does not go to** private parties, single person visit locations (private home) or events where tricks are to be performed.



Potential Challenges

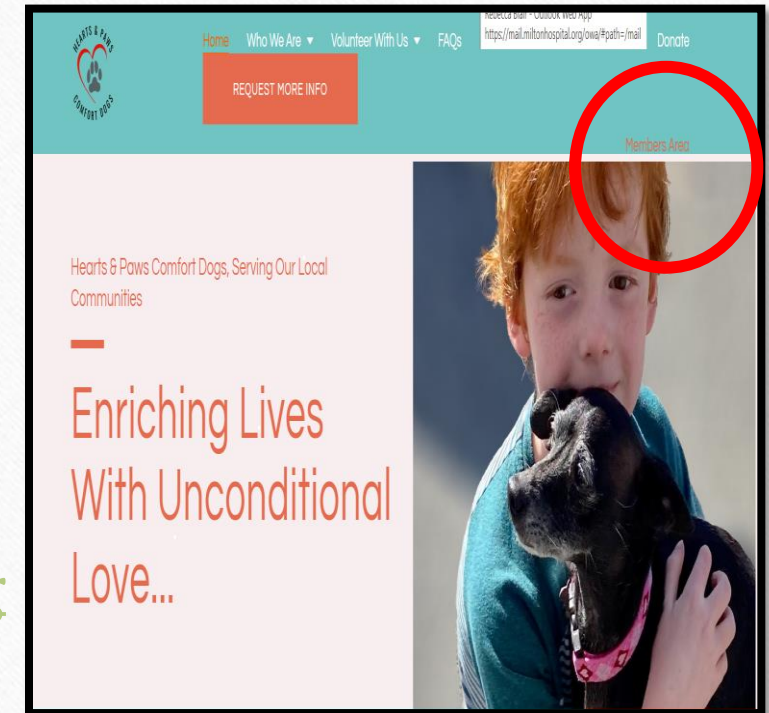
Tactics to use to minimize problems for dog or handler

- **Noise**- *including strange, unusual noises.*
- **Masks**- *does handler need to wear and how does that effect the dog.*
- **Food**- *on the floor/ table.*
- **Fear**- *from participants; Fear*- *from other dogs.*
- **TREATS**- *Team agrees in advance if treats are given or not. Current policy allows if all handlers agree. Handbook-* “Dog treats during visits are not encouraged, although a handler may use treats. Participants are never allowed to give treats to any dog.”
- **Un-anticipated distractions.... Stay calm**



Welcome to HPCDs Website

<https://www.heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org>



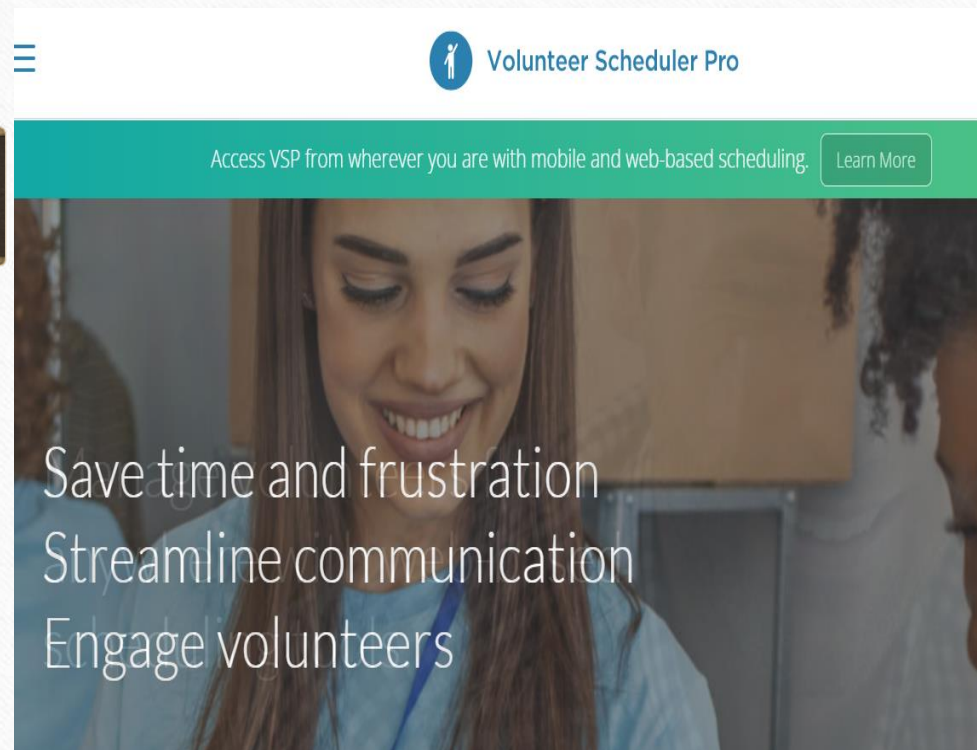
Once you are a paid member you should have received the member log-in from Donna, the webmaster at info@heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org
Note: HPCDs uses three online sites: HPCD website; VSP;
Sign-in Kiosk for Spotters.



Volunteer Scheduler Pro & Sign-In Kiosk

*(1)VSP is used to identify places you wish to visit. (2)VSP will remind you of your upcoming visits
AND (3)you may request a Sub.*

(4)Contact your Regional Coordinator for upcoming visits you wish to have.



VSP is an app. Download from APP Store.
<https://volunteerschedulerpro.com/organization-lookup> and bookmark it.

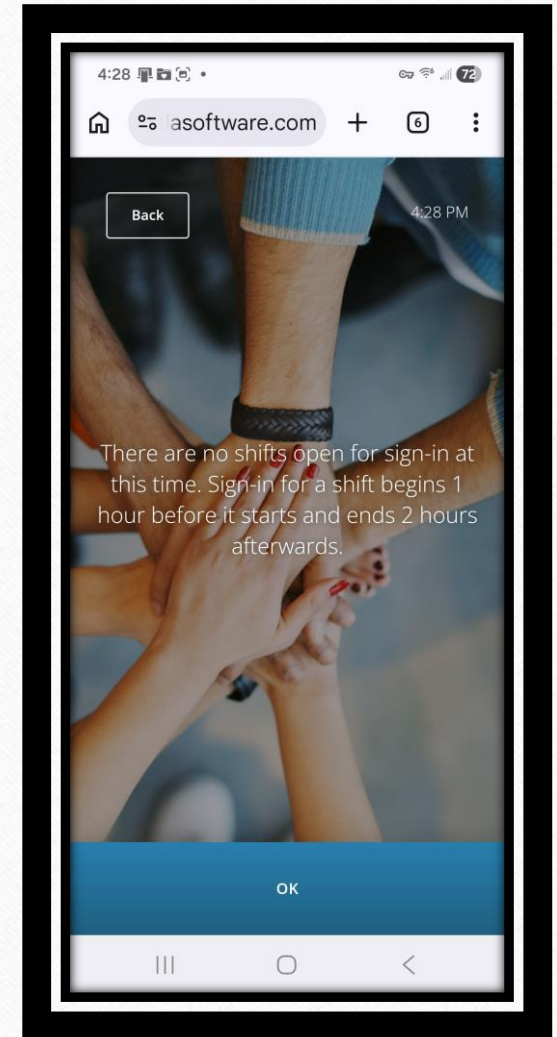
Save to your PC/Mac desktop and your phone.





***Sign-In Kiosk:** Spotters are required to sign in all participants at each visit. If more than one team/ Spotter, one Spotter can sign in members of all teams.*

1. On your phone or mobile device, open your web browser (Safari works best) and type in **heartsandpawscomfortdogs.org/kiosk**.
2. You will get the start page
Https://rotundasoftware.com/volunteer/HeartsandPaws/kiosk.
3. At the bottom of the screen touch the square with the arrow pointing up.
4. Scroll down to “add to Home Screen.”
5. Click on “add to Home Screen.”
6. That will put the widget on your phone or device that you can now use to access the HPCDs sign-in Kiosk, if you plan to be a Spotter.



Thank You for joining HPCD

