

11 Cor. 1:3-5

Comfort Creatures of North Mississippi

"Pets & people honoring Christ by comforting & serving others".

Policies & Procedures

- 1) Comfort Creatures is a non-profit, non-denominational, Christian volunteer group dedicated to serving people in our area by providing AAA/T (Animal Assisted Activities / Therapies) to nursing homes, hospitals, schools, mental health centers, and other facilities in need.
- 2) The purpose of Comfort Creatures is to honor Christ - a) by serving, supporting, and comforting others; b) by sharing God's creatures with others; and c) by demonstrating Christian love, testimony, and leadership to those we serve. Hence, the mission statement is: "Pets & people honoring Christ by comforting & serving others".
- 3) Volunteers must uphold the code of ethics for AAA /AAT and abide by the Policies & Procedures of Comfort Creatures as well as Delta Society's Pet Partners Program Policies & Procedures and Love On A Leash. Delta Society and Love On A Leash are " international, not-for-profit organizations of pet owners, health professional, veterinarians, and other professionals. Delta Society and Love On A Leash promote animals helping people improve their health, independence and quality of life."
- 4) All Comfort Creatures volunteer animal/handler teams must be registered through Delta Society's Pet Partners Program or Love On A Leash. Delta Society's Pet Partner program and Love On A Leash program tests, registers, and provides liability insurance for animal/ handler teams. Proof of Delta Society Pet Partner Registration and/or Love On A Leash registration must be on file with Comfort Creatures prior to visits. Teams registered with Delta Society must be re-evaluated every two years. Teams with Love On A Leash must be re-evaluated every year. Volunteers are responsible for any applicable fees. If you cannot afford these fees, please discuss it with the coordinator or assistant coordinator to see if we can arrange a grant or a sponsor. Comfort Creatures volunteers may engage in fund raising activities to assist with these fees. Also, most costs, including travel expenses, incurred by volunteers

- 5) Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) "provide opportunities for motivational, educational, and/ or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life. AAA are delivered in a variety of environments by a specially trained professional, paraprofessional, and/or volunteer in association with animals that meet specific criteria". Standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Activities & Therapy, (Delta Society, 1996). This is what Comfort Creatures volunteers will be asked to do in the majority of visits.
- 6) Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is "a goal directed intervention in which an animal meeting specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. AAT is delivered and/ or directed by a health or human service provider working within the scope of his/ her profession. AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/ or cognitive functioning. AAT is provided in a variety of settings and maybe group or individual in nature. The process is documented and evaluated". Standards of Practice in Animal-Assisted Activities & Therapy, (Delta Society, 1996). In other words, in order for the visit to be considered "therapy", a licensed professional must be working with the patient, setting individual goals, making a treatment plan, monitoring progress, etc. A Comfort Creatures volunteer and the pet can interact with the patient, but the professional must be supervising the volunteer and completing the documentation.
- 7) Comfort Creatures will not accept monetary reimbursement for any of the services our volunteers provide. Donations to the group are needed and welcomed to offset costs of registrations, postage, etc. All donations must be turned in to the Comfort Creatures Treasurer at the next scheduled meeting or sooner, if possible. Our 501(c) 3 status with the IRS is pending.
- 8) All volunteers must submit a completed Comfort Creatures volunteer application, along with a \$25 commitment donation, and a signed Volunteer Agreement and Release.
- 9) The Comfort Creatures leadership team shall consist of a Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer, and an Advisory Committee (minimum of 3 volunteers). All of these positions shall be for a term of at least 6 months. The Comfort Creatures leadership team reserves the right to amend, with 60% approval or more from the Advisory Committee these Policies and Procedures as needed. There shall be at least one meeting each 6 weeks. The leadership team members are expected to attend. All volunteers are encouraged to attend.
- 10) Delta Society and Love on a Leash provide insurance that protects the people you visit, in the event of an injury or illness, as a result of contact with your pet. This coverage does not protect you or your pet from injury or illness as a result of your participation in Comfort Creature activities. This coverage applies only to "volunteer" pet/ handler teams. If a Comfort Creatures volunteer wishes to take their animal to their place of employment they must do so as a volunteer, and not on paid time. Contact Delta Society and/or Love on a Leash for additional information about insurance.

- 11) Comfort Creatures expects volunteer pet/handler teams to commit to a minimum of 12 visits per year (approximately 2 hours per month). Each volunteer will be assigned to a facility according to availability and his or her expressed interest.
- 12) Pet handlers must carry a current Delta Society or Love on a Leash identification badge as proof of membership in good standing and their animals must wear their Delta Society or Love on a Leash ID tag. During visits all volunteers are encouraged, but not required, to wear a scrub style jacket (or vest) with the following designation embroidered or sewn on the upper left front of the jacket:

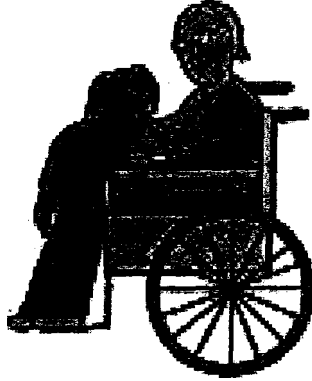
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The purpose of this is to establish and maintain consistency in regards to identity, purpose, and goals of our group. It should also provide protection of the volunteers' clothing in the event of "accidents", spills, etc.

- 13) While participating in visits, volunteers should be clean, neat and dressed appropriately. Please abide by the dress code of the facility you are visiting. Volunteers must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs at any time during visits. Violations will result in immediate and permanent termination of visiting privileges. Volunteers should be prompt for all visits, courteous at all times, and AVOID the use of cell phones and/ or pagers during visits.
- 14) Testing is mandatory and available for animal/ handler teams through registered Pet Partners evaluators. Training for your dog can be obtained locally through Comfort Creatures of North Mississippi. A small donation fee for training materials may apply. The American Kennel Club also offers a Canine Good Citizen test. If your dog can pass the CGC test, it is likely that he/ she can pass the Pet Partners test. (www.akc.org).
- 15) The minimum age to be a Comfort Creatures volunteer is 12; however, those under the age of 18 must have written parental consent and be accompanied by an adult volunteer. The minor may handle the pet and engage in the activity, but the adult volunteer must be there to supervise the minor volunteer and his/ her pet. You do not have to own a pet to be a volunteer nor do you have to become a handler. There is a need for volunteers to assist with prayer, fund raising, training exercises, clerical tasks, and facility visits with Pet Partner teams, and more!
- 16) Comfort Creature pets must be at least one year old and must be removed from any visitation when they show signs of physical or mental distress during visits. Pets must not have any wounds, recent surgeries, or injuries. Female pets may not be "in season" during visits. Maternity leave is required for pregnant animals (8 weeks post whelping). Any animal with a disability must be approved by Delta Society Pet Partners program.

- 17) Comfort Creature pets must be clean and well groomed. This includes trimmed/ filed nails, clean teeth, free of internal & external parasites, and in overall good health. They must have an annual physical examination by a veterinarian, including a fecal check. They must be current on all vaccinations, specifically rabies and any others advised and attested by their veterinarian. Pets visiting acute care hospitals and facilities with immune suppressed individuals should be bathed with hypoallergenic shampoo within 24 hours prior to visit.
- 18) Comfort Creature pet/volunteer teams **MUST** abide by the rules and regulations in each facility. If you are uncertain or uncomfortable, ask the designated staff member at the facility or a Comfort Creatures coordinator for assistance. Always check in and/ or sign in and out at each visit. Volunteers cannot give patients food or water unless approved by a facility staff member. It is recommended that volunteers refrain from this activity as different patients may have special dietary needs. **DO NOT RELY ON THE PATIENT TO TELL YOU THE CORRECT INFORMATION.** For example, a patient with dementia could ask for water despite his/her dietary restrictions of thickened liquids only. This policy is for your protection!
- 19) Animals must be kept on a 6 foot or shorter leash when visiting a facility except when performing formal obedience or trick demonstrations. Equipment that is not allowed includes retractable and chain leads as well as pinch, prong, spiked, or electronic collars, or any other item prohibited by the Pet Partner Program.
- 20) **Volunteers MUST clean up after their pets inside and outside the facility and be responsible at all times for the animal.** They must allow the animal time to exercise and eliminate. Please bring water and a water bowl for your animal. Handlers may visit with only one animal at a time. Handlers shall only visit with animals registered with the Pet Partners Program.
- 21) Volunteers must observe all rules of privacy and confidentiality. Failure to do so may result in loss of visiting privileges.
- 22) Pets may **NOT** be tied to people, equipment, or furniture while visiting! Pets are not allowed to jump onto a bed of any resident, nor should they be placed in an occupied chair or wheelchair unless that resident or a facility staff member has given permission.
- 23) If an injury occurs during a Comfort Creatures visit:
 - a) notify a facility supervisor immediately
 - b) document the incident
 - c) Notify Delta Society and/ or Love on a Leash immediately
 - d) notify the coordinator or assistant coordinator ASAP

24) Finally, but most importantly, Comfort Creatures encourages prayer before each visit.
You never know what kind of impact your visits will have!



"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."

2 Corinthians 1:3 - 5