

Animal Assisted Therapy at Gillette

What is Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

AAT is an intervention in which an animal meeting specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. Animal-assisted therapy is delivered and/or directed by health or human service providers working within the scope of their profession. Animal-assisted therapy is designed to promote improvement in physical, social, emotional, or cognitive function.

Animal-Assisted Therapy at Gillette consists of a team that includes your child's occupational, physical or speech therapist, a volunteer/dog handler and a therapy dog. Your child's therapist will skillfully choose to use a therapy dog to increase participation in therapy and help your child achieve their goals.

Who benefits from Animal-Assisted Therapy?

Gillette's AAT program benefits children and young adults of all ages and diagnoses. Animal-Assisted Therapy can be especially beneficial for children/young adults who:

- Are nervous about physical movement after surgery
- Are experiencing pain or discomfort
- Are working on new and challenging rehabilitation goals
- Love animals and may (or may not) have a pet at home
- Need a source of comfort or a reduction in stress
- Need a motivator to better participate in therapy

What can I expect from an AAT session at Gillette?

Before your child participates in an Animal-Assisted Therapy session, we will ask that you first sign the AAT consent form. This consent form will inform you of the risks associated with AAT and provide the necessary consent in order to include a therapy dog in your child's rehabilitation program.

- Strict infection control guidelines will be followed by all staff members, including everyone in the therapy session washing hands before and after touching the therapy dog.
- There is no additional cost to families; you will only be billed for your regularly scheduled OT, PT or Speech therapy session.
- Your therapist will do their best to choose a therapy dog that best meets your child's needs.
- Your child's therapist will discuss your child's rehabilitative goals with the volunteer prior to the session so everyone on the team can work together.

- A therapy dog may or may not be used in each of your child's rehab sessions.
- Your child may work with the same therapy dog team each week or they may work with a variety of teams depending on your child's needs.
- The safety of your child and the therapy dog will be closely monitored at all times.
- The volunteer will respect your child's privacy and will adhere to HIPPA policies.
- All therapy dogs at Gillette are certified and have undergone significant training.

If you have any questions about the Animal-Assisted Therapy program, please contact Emily DeBreto, occupational therapist, at emilydebreto@gillettechildrens.com.

[Make An Appointment](#) [651-290-8707](tel:651-290-8707)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](tel:651-229-3890).