



General Assembly

January Session, 2013

**Raised Bill No. 6465**

LCO No. 3522



Referred to Committee on CHILDREN

Introduced by:  
(KID)

***AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2013*) (a) For purposes of this  
2 section, "animal assisted therapy" means goal-directed intervention in  
3 which animals are used as an integral part of the treatment process for  
4 individuals who have experienced mental, physical or emotional  
5 trauma and "animal assisted therapy community" means the local or  
6 regional entities possessing the staff and capabilities to engage in  
7 animal assisted therapy including, but not limited to, the Connecticut  
8 Humane Society, Soul Friends, Inc. and Animal Assisted Therapy  
9 Services, Inc.

10 (b) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children  
11 and Families, within available appropriations, shall develop and  
12 implement training for certain employees of the Department of  
13 Children and Families and mental health care providers, on (1) the  
14 healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of  
15 therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the  
16 benefit of an animal assisted therapy program.

17 (c) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children  
18 and Families, in consultation with the Governor's Prevention  
19 Partnership and the animal assisted therapy community and within  
20 available appropriations, shall develop and operate, or contract for, an  
21 animal assisted therapy program. Such program shall: (1) Provide  
22 animal assisted therapy to children and youths living with trauma and  
23 loss; (2) provide animal assisted therapy to children and youths with  
24 behavioral health needs who are in the custody of the Department of  
25 Children and Families; (3) allow for collaboration with mental health  
26 care providers to incorporate animal assisted therapy into the therapy  
27 plan for youths or children; (4) promote the healing benefits of the  
28 human-animal bond by providing interactive empathetic training  
29 activities with therapy animals; (5) incorporate nonverbal learning into  
30 the formulation of trauma treatment modalities; and (6) demonstrate  
31 positive outcomes for children.

32 (d) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children  
33 and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture  
34 and within available appropriations, shall develop a coordinated  
35 volunteer canine crisis response team. Such team shall consist of  
36 various handlers and canines that have been trained and certified to  
37 provide comfort and relief to individuals during and after traumatic  
38 events. Such team shall operate on a volunteer basis and shall be  
39 available to provide animal assisted therapy within twenty-four hours  
40 of receiving notice to do so.

41 (e) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children  
42 and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture  
43 and the joint standing committee on children, shall develop a results  
44 based accountability assessment of the results of the programs  
45 implemented pursuant to subsections (b) to (d), inclusive, of this  
46 section to (1) determine the effectiveness of animal assisted therapy, (2)  
47 begin the process of identifying curriculum-based animal assisted  
48 therapy as a potential best practice approach, and (3) demonstrate  
49 positive outcome measures in hopefulness, tied to resilience in the

50 literature and other social emotional measures of healthy child  
51 development.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2013</i>	New section

***KID***      *Joint Favorable*