



General Assembly

January Session, 2015

Raised Bill No. 6725

LCO No. 3189



Referred to Committee on COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Introduced by:
(KID)

AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY SERVICES.

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

1 Section 1. Section 17a-22ee of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

3 (a) For purposes of this section: []

4 (1) "Animal-assisted activity" means any activity that involves a
5 team consisting of a registered handler and therapy animal interacting
6 with individuals within the state;

7 (2) ["animal-assisted therapy"] "Animal-assisted therapy" means
8 goal-directed intervention in which [animals are] a team consisting of a
9 registered handler and a therapy animal is used as an integral part of
10 the [crisis] critical incident response process to aid individuals who
11 have experienced mental, physical or emotional trauma;

12 (3) ["animal-assisted therapy community"] "Animal-assisted therapy
13 community" means the local or regional entities capable of engaging in
14 animal-assisted activities or providing animal-assisted therapy to

15 individuals within the state; [and]

16 (4) ["animal-assisted activity organization"] "Animal-assisted
17 activity organization" means any entity involved in training,
18 evaluating [and] or registering members of the animal-assisted therapy
19 community; [.]

20 (5) "Animal-assisted critical incident response team" means a team
21 of registered handlers and therapy animals that have been (A) trained,
22 evaluated and registered by an animal-assisted activity organization,
23 and (B) mobilized by the Department of Children and Families to
24 engage in animal-assisted activities or provide animal-assisted
25 therapy;

26 (6) "Registered handler" means an individual who has been
27 screened, trained and registered by a national animal therapy
28 organization such as Pet Partners, Therapy Dogs International or a
29 similar organization, to engage in animal-assisted activities or provide
30 animal-assisted therapy, or both; and

31 (7) "Therapy animal" means any animal trained to provide comfort
32 to individuals who have (A) experienced mental, physical or emotional
33 trauma, (B) witnessed, or have been a victim of, an act of violence, or
34 (C) behavioral health care needs. "Therapy animal" does not include a
35 "social comfort animal" providing visitation services to aged, infirm or
36 chronically ill individuals or a "service animal" providing task-trained
37 services to disabled individuals.

38 (b) Not later than January 1, [2014] 2016, the Commissioner of
39 Children and Families shall, within available appropriations, develop
40 and implement training for certain employees of the Department of
41 Children and Families and mental health care providers on (1) the
42 healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of
43 therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the
44 [benefit of an] benefits of animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted
45 therapy. [program.]

46 (c) Not later than January 1, [2014] 2016, the Commissioner of
47 Children and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of
48 Agriculture and within available appropriations, shall [identify a
49 coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team. Such team shall
50 consist of various handlers and canines that have been trained,
51 evaluated and registered by an animal-assisted activity organization to
52 provide aid to individuals during and after traumatic events] develop
53 a protocol to identify and mobilize animal-assisted critical incident
54 response teams throughout the state. Such [team] teams shall operate
55 on a volunteer basis and shall be available to engage in animal-assisted
56 activities or to provide animal-assisted therapy, or both, within
57 twenty-four hours of receiving notice to do so.

58 (d) Not later than July 1, [2014] 2016, the Commissioner of Children
59 and Families, in consultation with [the Governor's Prevention
60 Partnership and] the animal-assisted therapy community, shall, within
61 available appropriations, develop [a crisis response program utilizing
62 the services of the coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team
63 identified pursuant to subsection (c) of this section to provide] a
64 protocol to utilize animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted
65 therapy to provide aid to children and youths living with trauma and
66 loss. Such services shall meet all licensing requirements required by
67 the state, and, at a minimum, be directly supervised by a mental health
68 professional, as defined in section 10-76t.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	17a-22ee

Statement of Purpose:

To create more efficiency in the provision of animal-assisted therapy services in the state and to enable the use of therapy animals other than canines.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]