



Thank you for your interest in the Touch Program offered through Duo! Enclosed is pertinent information regarding the Touch Program. It contains criteria for participation, answers to frequently asked questions, and an application. If you are interested in participation, please complete the application and return to Duo at your convenience. Your application will be held for the next scheduled temperament evaluation.

Once we receive the required application and documentation (see below), we will contact you to schedule a specific time for you to come during the next scheduled evaluation. The evaluations will test your dog's overall temperament, obedience level, and their reaction to noise and sound stimuli often encountered in facilities. We will also evaluate your dog's willingness to be touched, as well as how you and your dog work together.

**General traits we are looking for in potential Touch Therapy Dogs:**

- Confident
- Calm
- Comfortable in new environments
- Obedient

**Dogs that display the following traits do not have the appropriate temperament for pet therapy, and our evaluators will explain why your dog cannot continue in our Touch Program:**

- Any aggressive behavior, toward people or another dog, which includes lunging, growling, snarling, biting, and/or excessive barking
- Reactions of extreme fear or physical dominance
- Submissive urination, marking behavior of any kind, or defecation

You must be able to attend classes on a weekly basis for the entire session. Should you be unable to attend the classes, your name will be held for the next scheduled class. Evaluations are good for one year from the date performed.

**Prior to scheduling your temperament evaluation, your dog needs to meet the following criteria.**

- Must have completed a 6 week *adult* basic obedience course/group class with you as the handler – **submit proof of completion with application** (a copy is fine)
- Must have been in the care and possession of the owner for at least one year
- Must be between 2 and 10 years of age at the time of evaluation
- Must have received **no protection training** or other types of training designed to illicit aggressive behavior
- Must not be certified as an assistance/service/support dog

Should you have any questions, please call me at (314) 997-2325 ext. 3121 or email me at [pferland@duodogs.org](mailto:pferland@duodogs.org).

Sincerely,

Patrick Ferland  
Coordinator of Touch Therapy & Obedience Programs  
[pferland@duodogs.org](mailto:pferland@duodogs.org)



## **Program Descriptions, Criteria, and Information**

The guidelines of the program have been established for the well-being and safety of the dog, handler, and all those that receive visits. In addition, by having these guidelines in place, each team will have more confidence, success, and fun while participating in the program!

### **What is the Touch Program?**

Touch is a volunteer-based program, which involves people and their personal canine pets (dogs). After receiving training and certification through Duo, Touch teams are able to visit hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation units, day programs, special schools, and various other types of healthcare facilities.

Started in 1989, the Touch Program reaches thousands of patients/residents each month in multiple sites in the St. Louis Metropolitan area (including Illinois). While Duo has over 280 active teams, there is always a need for more.

Only dogs that are accepting of people and other dogs, are calm and stable, and have predictable behavior in a variety of circumstances can participate.

*All dogs must have completed a formal adult basic obedience course with you (puppy classes do not satisfy this requirement).* Dogs benefit from the experience of the formal class setting because not only do they learn how to work effectively with their handler, they learn how to focus on their handler in high distraction environments, and they receive the experience of being around other dogs in a formal (non-recreational) setting. This experience is necessary since Touch teams work with each other in a limited space in class, as well as in certain facilities.

The program is not breed, size, or gender specific. Dogs are chosen based on their temperament, personality, obedience skills and willingness to work with their handlers in sometimes awkward and stressful situations.

### **The temperament/obedience evaluation**

Not all dogs are suited to work in pet therapy. Duo administers an evaluation to determine the dog's suitability for the Touch Program.

To participate in the evaluation, the handler will be required to provide proof of vaccinations, pertinent health information, and proof of adult obedience training – please submit with application. The staff will review this information to ensure the dog is medically sound before they begin the evaluation. The evaluation will gauge how well the handler and dog work together as a team, the level of obedience skills, the dog's confidence level, reactions to sight and sound distractions, as well as the dog's acceptance of being handled from head to tail. The evaluation is designed to test the dog's reactions in situations that could sometimes be stressful and uncomfortable. It is acceptable for the dog to react, but the dog needs to recover from the stimuli and not completely shut down. Once the dog passes, the handler and dog will be scheduled to begin our Touch Therapy classes.



**The Instructional Course, Funding and Expenses - See "Course Breakdown and Fees" page**

Classes are held at the Duo facility and are held throughout the year. Evening classes and morning classes are offered to accommodate work/personal schedules. Additional classes may be added to accommodate larger class sizes. Handlers choose which class best suits their schedule. Class size will be limited to 8 dogs, and are filled on a first come first served basis.

Handlers will receive instruction on visitation policies and procedures, dog handling guidelines, infection control, grooming requirements, and canine stress identification and management. The segmented course also includes advanced obedience skills, distraction training, management and control skills, food aversion, patient scenarios, and exposure and techniques in working around certain medical equipment. The handler will be required to make observation visits and hand in weekly homework during the course. The entirety of the course is designed to prepare the dog and handler for as many different situations and facilities as possible so they will be comfortable once they start visiting on their own.

Handlers must complete all requirements of the class to graduate.

Duo asks for a program fee per segment/class, which covers the cost of the training, materials, and equipment needed for each class. Funding for the program comes from private and corporate donations, as well as the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

**Handler Requirements**

All handlers must be over 18-years-of-age and willing to abide by the rules and guidelines established to provide a safe and pleasant visiting experience for everyone involved.

Handlers must agree to participate in at least two visits per month to retain active status. Handlers must agree to the Volunteer Code of Ethics, Confidentiality, and Visitation Guidelines to be considered for the program. Some facilities require additional training or have special requests of volunteers. Volunteers will be notified of these if they plan on visiting that particular facility.

Successful completion of each segment determines the facilities and types of patients/residents that a team will be able to visit. *All certified handlers must realize that any damage or harm caused by the dog during a visit or other scheduled event for Duo is the responsibility of the handler, not Duo.*



### **The Paws for Reading Program**

Many applicants to the Touch Program and to Duo are interested in participating in the Paws for Reading Program – a program that places dogs in the classrooms or libraries to help children read, increasing their reading levels, their interest in reading, and overall self-esteem.

To be certified for the Paws for Reading Program, applicants will need to successfully complete the Child classes. Once the team is certified, they will be eligible to take the dog into select schools and libraries in the area where this program has been established.

- Volunteers take their dogs into the schools once a week or once every other week, depending on the needs of the school. Dogs typically spend an hour in the classroom, having the children read to the dog, journal about the dog, or participate in other activities under the guidance of the teacher. The schools in the program typically have a population that strongly benefits from the program because of student demographics. There may be opportunities for participation in area libraries and in facilities other than schools throughout the year.

Volunteers need to have daytime availability, as well as flexibility to travel within 25 miles from their home to participate in the Paws for Reading Program. This program typically runs in schools from September through May, to coincide with most school schedules, and libraries will have special events and programs throughout the year.



## Touch and Paws For Reading Program Course Breakdown and Fees

Touch and Paws For Reading Courses		
Course	Time Requirement	Fee
<b>Touch Prep</b> <i>Required for all Touch certifications</i>	4 weeks	\$50
<b>Adult Certification</b> <i>Required for all participants for initial Touch certification</i>	5 weeks	\$75
<b>Child and Acute Care Certification</b>	5 weeks	\$75

### **Required for all Program participants**

Touch Prep – 4 weeks

- Review, polish and perfect existing obedience skills
- Advanced obedience skills pertinent to program

### **Courses specific to Touch Program Certification**

Adult Certification Course – 5 weeks

#### ***Required for all participants for initial Touch certification***

- Skills pertinent to program
- Greetings
- Distractions
- Role Playing
- On-site observations

Child and Acute Care Certification Course (Optional) – 5 weeks

- Review all existing skills
- New skills pertinent to working with children and acute care
- Discussion/resolve of scenarios specific to target population
- Extensive role playing
- On-site observations (optional)



**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS  
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE ADDRESS ABOVE**

**IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TOUCH PROGRAM**

- Dogs at least 2 years of age and less than 10 years of age may apply to be evaluated for entry into the Touch Program.
- The dog must have been in your home under your care for at least one year. Handler's for dogs in either program must be 18 years of age or older.
- All applicants for the Touch Programs are required to have completed at least a six week basic adult obedience training group class with their dog (CGC certificate, puppy classes/STAR puppy do not count toward this requirement) **ATTACH copy of certification of completion to this** application.
- Dogs must be current on the following inoculations: Rabies, Distemper/Parvo combo and Bordetella – **ATTACH proof of vaccination to this application**

***If you do not currently meet these requirements, we ask that you wait to apply until such time as the requirements are satisfied.***

All dogs are required to pass a Temperament/Obedience Evaluation, conducted by Duo prior to acceptance into any class. This evaluation screens for appropriate personality and temperament traits as well as level of obedience and how well the handler/dog work together. We strive to make this program safe for the dog, the handler and the client that will be visited.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner/Handler Name (person attending class) \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/other phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any medical/physical limitations which might be a concern during class? \_\_\_\_\_

Dog name: \_\_\_\_\_ Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dog's DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M or F

Dog acquired from: \_\_\_\_\_ How long dog has lived with you: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your dog currently being treated or on medication? YES NO If yes, please explain and list medication: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your dog have any allergies or special needs or limitations that we would need to know about for classes and/or visits?  
\_\_\_\_\_

List any obedience classes, titles or other type of training you have taken with your dog, please include month/year of completion:  
\_\_\_\_\_



Is your dog completely housebroken? YES NO      Is your dog allowed in the house? YES NO      On the furniture? YES NO

Can you take food/toys away from your dog? YES NO      Does your dog object to grooming or having nails trimmed? YES NO

Has your dog ever been considered, registered, presented or labeled as a: Service, support or assistance dog? YES NO

How does your dog react to the following? :

Loud noises like fireworks or thunderstorms: \_\_\_\_\_ A group of children approaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Other animals in yard or house: \_\_\_\_\_ Strangers in yard or house: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your dog ever nipped, bitten or attempted to bite anyone? YES NO      If yes, please describe what happened: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you or your dog have experience around medical equipment? YES NO      What type?: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have experience working with children, elderly, ill or other special needs OUTSIDE of your own home? YES NO

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your dog been exposed to children, elderly, ill or other special needs OUTSIDE of your own home? YES NO

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have difficulty speaking with someone who is very young, elderly and/or disabled? YES NO

What age group would you prefer to work with? \_\_\_All ages \_\_\_Seniors \_\_\_Adults \_\_\_Adolescents \_\_\_Young Children

Why do you think your dog would be good for this program? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your dog? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Duo? \_\_\_\_\_

Note: The visits at any given facility are set by the facility as far as day/time and frequency.

Touch Therapy program: Multiple classes may be required depending on the facility that you may want to visit. These visits are generally once or twice a month depending on the facility that we have an agreement with.

Paws for Reading: These are primarily performed at schools (during the school year) the visits are about an hour long during the school day and happen weekly.

**>> Please remember to submit proof of vaccinations and obedience completion to this form <<**