

## **Animal Assisted Therapy Consent and Release of Liability Form**

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a type of therapy that strategically incorporates human-animal interactions into a formal therapeutic process. It is considered an adjunct to existing therapy and is guided by a licensed professional who has also been certified as an AAT handler to work with a certified animal. AAT uses the human-animal bond in goal-directed interventions as an integral part of the treatment process.

### **Benefits of AAT:**

Reduction of blood pressure , Stress reduction, Reduction of anxiety (not related to animal phobias), Dementia, Decrease depression, Ability to address grief/loss issues, Emotion recognition, Emotion regulation, Motivation, Self-esteem enhancement, Developmental disorders, Emotional and behavioral problems, Substance abuse, Improved socialization, Improved communication, Opportunity to feel important, Increase engagement, Improve cooperation, Decrease abusive behaviors, Improve ability to trust

### **About Brees:**

Brees is a spayed female Rat Terrier/Dachshund mix that was rescued at 7 months after living in a closet. She was rescued by "All For Animals" pet rescue in 2018 and was adopted by Amanda Rhoades MSW, LCSW in August 2018. She has been a part of Amanda's family ever since. When Brees first came to live with Amanda she was 9 months old and struggled to know how to be a puppy after living in a closet her entire life. It didn't take too long and after following the lead of her BFF Ernie she learned that there was so much more to the world to explore. When Brees first meets someone new she can be a bit shy but never backs away from an opportunity to meet someone. It is also clear that Brees is emotionally attuned to when people are upset. Brees became a certified therapy dog through Therapy Dog International on March 24, 2018 and at the same time, Amanda was certified as an Animal Assisted Therapy Handler. Amanda is also trained in Animal Assisted Therapy using the KADRA Model through the National Institute for Trauma and Loss.

### **Risks Related to AAT:**

Animals have their own natural defenses. While the therapist handler will do everything possible to prevent any injury, it is possible that someone will get scratched or bitten. Animals often use their mouths in play. Therefore, even when playing, it is possible for light biting to occur. Our animal has been certified as a therapy animal and screened by a veterinarian before joining my therapy practice. Since your contact is minimal, this risk is very small.

### **Rules Related to AAT:**

1. The animal has individual rights, just as each client has rights. Therefore, the animal can determine if and when he/she participates with others. While it may be planned to have an animal in session, the animal will never be forced to do so.
2. The animal has his/her own quiet space in the office where he/she can rest, sleep, or just take a quiet break. The animal should not be disturbed when he/she is in this area.

