Assistance Animals in Action: A 4-H Project Book Curriculum

A project presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science

degree in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

Autumn Converse

The Ohio State University

April 2022

Master's Degree Project

Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership

College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

Graduate Examination Committee:

Dr. Brian Raison, Advisor

Dr. Jeff King

Table of Contents

Abstract

Assistance animals serve as great aid to help humans mitigate the effects of disabilities and mental health conditions. Due to a general lack of understanding about the differences between the three types of assistance animals, service dogs and their handlers often face challenges when working in public settings. Comprehensive assistance animal education could help to alleviate some of the challenges that assistance animal teams experience and provide clarity about the purpose or job of each type of assistance animal. The purpose of this project is to develop a 4-H youth curriculum guide for self-directed learning about recognizing and understanding assistance animals.

Introduction

Assistance animals perform tasks or provide support for the benefit of people with a variety of disabilities (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). There are three types of assistance animals: service animals, therapy animals, and emotional support animals. These animals all have different purposes. For example, service animals (dogs and, in rare instances, miniature horses) perform tasks like alerting their person to an oncoming seizure or serving as a blind person's eyes. Emotional support animals provide companionship to qualifying individuals with mental illnesses when prescribed by a physician or psychiatrist. Individuals without disabilities can also reap the benefits of assistance animals, too, by visiting with or spending time with a therapy animal in clinical settings like hospitals or schools (Reisen, 2021). It appears as though assistance animals can benefit everyone. Due to a general lack of understanding of assistance animals and common misconceptions about their work, this

project researched and outlined a potential new 4-H project book curriculum to guide youth in learning the basics about assistance animals.

Definitions

"An assistance animal is an animal that works, provides assistance to, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or that provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified effects of a person's disability. An assistance animal is not a pet" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). "Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities" (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2010). Therapy animals provide comfort and support to multiple people, usually in group settings. "While Emotional Support Animals...are often used as part of a medical treatment plan as [comfort] animals, they are not considered service animals under Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities" (ADA National Network, 2014).

Background

It is common for Ohioans to have at least one experience with an assistance animal at some point in their lives because there are several service and therapy animal organizations within the state of Ohio. These organizations either train and place service dogs or certify therapy animals. Under Ohio law, trainers of service dogs-in-training have the same public access rights as handlers of fully trained, working service dogs when their dog is with them (Ohio Revised Code 955.43, 2006). Therapy animals

can interact with people in places like hospitals, nursing homes, or schools when invited by the facility. Emotional support animals are not formally trained by a particular organization but rather provide companionship to their owners within the home.

The handlers of these animals, primarily those of service animals, often experience hindrances from the general public due to the common misconceptions and the lack of education surrounding these animals (Cordova, 2020). For example, emotional support animals do not have the same public access rights as service dogs in terms of visiting stores that do not allow animals since providing companionship does not qualify as task performance. A common misconception is that any vested dog can visit places that do not typically allow animals. Buying a vest online for a non-service dog to wear is misrepresentation and is not legal. Misrepresentation can have serious implications for legitimate service dog teams, too, as the misrepresented animal is often untrained, which can lead to harm to the service dog by way of attacks and, thus, harm to the service dog's owner if the dog is rendered unable to perform its job (Canine Companions, n.d.). Another moment when a lack of education about service dogs is evident is when a passersby pets a working dog without asking; such a simple thoughtless act can also be dangerous for service dog teams. Distractions like this can cause the animal to miss lifesaving cues for conditions like epilepsy or diabetes, for example. This lack of education can have serious implications for the individuals who rely on these animals to keep them safe.

Education surrounding assistance animals is something that OSU Extension already has a start in via the 4-H PetPALS program. The focus of the 4-H PetPALS program is for 4-H members to visit senior care facilities with their animals to provide

intergenerational animal-assisted interactions. This program covers therapy animals only, though, leaving room for a more comprehensive educational program and potential action. I have outlined a new curriculum to share factual information on all three types of assistance animals. It includes topics such as:

- federal and state laws

- rights of the animals and their handlers

- training for each type (if applicable)

- socialization, commands, possible tasks and jobs of service animals

- etiquette when you spot one "in the wild"

- service dog misrepresentation.

While it is intended for use in self-directed 4-H project learning, this new curriculum can also be used as a basis for 4-H School Enrichment programs, teen leadership programs, community development programs, or other programs in which Extension professionals see fit

Purpose, Need, and Objectives

According to Schoenfeld-Tacher (2017), the use of [assistance] animals is becoming more popular; with this growth should come education surrounding the three types of assistance animals, including the differences between the three types, their jobs, their training, and their rights. A lack of education about this topic can manifest as service animal misrepresentation, which poses a challenge – and in some instances, danger – to these animals and their handlers when they are working in public settings. According to Canine Companions, an organization that raises service dogs for individuals with disabilities, eighty-eight percent of their graduated handlers "have had a

dog interfere with, vocalize at, bite, or growl at their service dog" and ninety-three percent "have encountered an uncontrolled dog in public where pet dogs are not allowed." Comprehensive assistance animal education could help to alleviate some of the challenges that assistance animal teams experience and provide clarity about the purpose or job of each type of assistance animal. The purpose of this project is to develop a 4-H youth curriculum guide for self-directed learning about recognizing and understanding assistance animals.

Literature Review

Use of Assistance Animals.

"The use of animals is becoming more popular as the human-animal bond continues to strengthen and grow" (Schoenfeld-Tacher et. al., 2017). In a 2009 study, Fairman and Huebner found that service animals helped their handlers with a variety of twenty-eight functional tasks, in addition to making them feel safe and increasing their independence by lessening their reliance on assistance from others. Therapy animals and emotional support animals provide therapeutic emotional support within their communities and for their owners, respectively.

Public Perception.

In 2017, Schoenfeld-Tacher et. al. conducted a study exploring public perceptions of assistance animals. The results showed that a majority of people fall under the "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" categories for perceived confidence in their own ability to define the three types of assistance animals. The participants' accuracy in providing such definitions was not discussed. The authors concluded, "Assistance animals are governed by a complex, and often overlapping,

series of laws and regulations, which only helps to fuel confusion and lack of understanding of the tasks and work performed by each type. Having a more in-depth understanding of the perceptions and opinions held by a sample of adult members of the public regarding assistance dogs can help us to address the need for a standardization in language and definition for these types of animals." This study demonstrates that the average person believes they know the definitions of the types of assistance animals; however, the lack of standardized language and definition often makes it difficult to know the difference between them.

Education.

Research has been conducted about the use of therapy dogs in Animal Assisted Therapy in classrooms and therapeutic settings. "Because social engagement and verbal communication is desirable in both classroom and therapeutic settings, research in AAT (Animal Assisted Therapy) indicates that interaction with therapy dogs may support and encourage social risk-taking in these environments, particularly for children who are otherwise either unwilling or reluctant to engage socially" (Friesen, 2010). These findings offer evidence that the integration of animals into Extension programming could benefit the participants and make for a more interactive learning experience.

An Animal Law article entitled "Criminalizing Fake Service Dogs: Helping or Hurting Legitimate Handlers?" (Lee, 2017) discusses the reasons for which individuals use fake service animals. Lee found that people who illegally pass their animals off as service dogs usually do not have malicious intentions but are rather misinformed about the laws, task training, and ADA requirements surrounding legitimate, legally recognized

service animals. "The Article proposes alternative approaches to address the problem of fraudulent service animal use [instead of passing laws criminalizing the use of fraudulent service animals], recommending an increase in legislative clarity and improved public education" (Lee, 2017). These "illegitimate" animals are the largest threat to service animals and their handlers, as the illegitimate animals are often times not trained and can either distract or harm working service animals. Education that compares the rights, training, laws, and ADA requirements of service dogs to those (or lack thereof) of therapy and emotional support animals could help to lessen this imminent threat.

Lastly, there are some educational references regarding assistance animals that can be found in internet searches. These suggest that information about assistance animal access rights (for example, on retail farms and agritourism sites) is available to the public through Rutgers University Extension, and guidance on service animals at 4-H camp is available internally to Ohio 4-H professionals. The 4-H PetPALS program exists to teach 4-H members about therapy animals and to provide them with opportunities to share their dogs with members of their communities. Still, no curriculum is available to 4-H or other Extension program participants who are interested in learning about all three types of assistance animals.

Links to Positive Youth Development (PYD)

A 2015 article from Promoting Positive Youth Development discussed the link between human-animal interaction (HAI) and Positive Youth Development (PYD) as a means for promoting hope (Callina et. al., 2015). The use of human-animal interaction is increasingly prevalent in youth development programs. "Interacting with animals

promotes hope by providing youth with opportunities to practice intentional self-regulation (ISR) skills, to think positively about their futures, and to develop a sense of connectedness… The example of human-animal interaction as a context for promoting hope illustrates how youth development programs can capitalize on the interests—or "sparks"—of young people and create opportunities within the program to foster positive future expectations, ISR, and connectedness" (Callina et. al., 2015). This analysis gives hope for the goals of this project. Youth are often more likely to advocate for causes they feel a sense of connectedness toward. This curriculum will provide youth with an eagerness to learn about assistance animals the opportunity to build a foundation of knowledge about them and to advocate for them.

At The Ohio State University, the Center for Human Animal Interactions Research and Education (CHAIRE) has recognized the positive benefits of the human-animal bond. CHAIRE focuses on developing guidelines to improve human-animal interactions and promote positive welfare for all through education, outreach, and research in the areas of welfare and behavior, conservation, and companionship and zooeyia (or the positive health benefits associated with interactions with animals). According to CHAIRE's website (n.d.), animals play a large role in humans' lives on a continuous basis: "They provide not only a social benefit but aid those with disabilities and service the country through their work. Youth have opportunities for interactions through programs such as 4-H and the Ohio State Fair… Further research of human-companion animal interactions is necessary to expand the positive benefits the relationship brings to those with challenges such as mental and behavioral health." This curriculum allows youth to explore zooeyia in *Activity 1: What is Zooeyia?* and explains

that zooeyia is the reason we are able to utilize animals to assist with disabilities and mental health conditions.

Procedures

This section will outline the process used during the development of the curriculum. Information includes the scope and target audience, the curriculum development process, knowledge acquisition process, and the components included in each lesson.

The target audience for this material is youth ages eleven to nineteen who participate in 4-H Youth Development programming, and it is intended for youth with some experience in working with animals. The final project could also be utilized by other youth organizations outside of 4-H. By the end of this project, the learner will know what an assistance animal is, the process animals go through to become assistance animals, ways to interact with service animals, and contemporary issues.

Information Gathering Process

To help determine the format of the curriculum, a brief online pulse survey was shared via email with all OSU Extension professionals (N = approx. 800) in April 2021 to gauge their interest in this curriculum and find out how they might utilize a curriculum like this within their programming. A Likert-type scale allowed respondents (n = 95) to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- There are 4-H members in my county who would likely be interested in taking a self-directed project to learn about assistance animals.
- I have adult clientele who would be interested in a self-directed project to learn about assistance animals.

- I would utilize leader-directed activities about assistance animals in my programming if a curriculum were available.

Respondents were also given a list of options for program areas in which they would utilize leader-directed activities, including 4-H school enrichment, teen leadership, 4-H club meetings, health and wellness programs, etc.

Table 1

Question: There are **4-H members** in my county who would likely be interested in taking a self-directed project to learn about assistance animals.

Answer	%	Count
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Somewhat Disagree	1.64%	1
Neither agree nor disagree	13.11%	8
Somewhat Agree	65.57%	40
Strongly Agree	19.67%	12
Total	100%	61

Table 2

Question: I have **adult clientele** who would be interested in a self-directed project to learn about assistance animals.

Answer	%	Count
Strongly Disagree	7.14%	3
Somewhat Disagree	11.90%	5

Neither agree nor disagree	45.24%	19
Somewhat agree	30.95%	13
Strongly agree	4.76%	2
Total	100%	42

Table 3

Question: I would utilize **leader-directed activities** about assistance animals in my programming if curriculum was available.

Answer	%	Count
Strongly Disagree	5.26%	5
Somewhat Disagree	9.47%	9
Neither agree nor disagree	28.42%	27
Somewhat Agree	49.47%	47
Strongly Agree	7.37%	7
Total	100%	95

Results showed strong favorability toward a self-directed learning opportunity for 4-H members, which influenced the decision to format the curriculum as a 4-H project book. Of the sixty-one 4-H professionals who responded, 85.24% somewhat or strongly agreed that there are 4-H members in their county who would be interested in taking a self-directed project about assistance animals.

The bulk of the information gathering happened between May 2021 and August 2021. Other information was gathered to fill gaps as needed throughout the curriculum development process between January and March 2022. Topics of research included:

- Assistance animal definitions

- Federal and Ohio state laws, rights of the animals and their handlers, registration or certification required for each type

- Training for each type (if applicable), socialization, commands

- Possible tasks and jobs of each type of assistance animal

- Assistance animal etiquette

- Assistance animal organizations in Ohio, how to volunteer with them

- Animals and Positive Youth Development

- Other topics as identified throughout the research process

Assembly

The curriculum development process followed Ohio State University Extension Publishing best practices. Jane Wright, the Curriculum Manager with OSU Extension Publishing, provided guidance and resources throughout the curriculum development process. Jane provided the following resources and materials:

- Ohio 4-H Project Book Activity Template (June 2020)

- Life Skills for Use with 4-H Project Book Activity Template (January 2009)

- Planning Grid for Project Book with Project Areas (n.d.)

- A blank 4-H project book template

The eight activities within the curriculum are divided into three project areas:

<u>What is an Assistance Animal?</u>

1. What is Zooeyia?

2. Defining "Assistance Animal"

3. Service, Therapy, Emotional Support: What's the Difference?

<u>Becoming an Assistance Animal</u>

4. Training for their Future

5. Get to Work!

6. Investigating Impact

<u>Etiquette and Contemporary Issues</u>

7. In the Wild

8. Service Dog Misrepresentation

Following a standard 4-H publication format, each activity includes an introduction, the activity itself, "more challenges," background about the topic, and a fun fact about that topic. The activities all have project skills, life skills, and success indicators associated with them. Educational standards from the National Health Education Standards are linked to each activity. These references to educational standards may be helpful should teachers or administrators in the K-12 school system find interest in supplementing their curriculum with activities from this curriculum. Some activities may include career profiles, additional resources for furthering learning, and answer keys as applicable. The "Talk it Over" questions at the end of each section allows youth to share, reflect, generalize, and apply what they just learned. The Flesch-Kincaid reading level was checked throughout the curriculum development process to ensure the content is appropriate for the target audience.

Project Content

4-H Project Book Manuscript

See Appendix for full curriculum manuscript.

Discussion and Implications

The activities from this curriculum were adapted for an in-person presentation at the first annual 4-H Animal Science Career Quest event at Michigan State University in March 2022. At the end of the session, youth and adult participants completed a brief, voluntary survey about the session and content. A Likert-type scale allowed respondents to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- I learned something I will use in the future.

- The material of this lesson is important.

- I think other people should learn about this topic, too.

100% of respondents (n=10) strongly agreed with these statements, helping to create a case for the importance of this project.

It is expected that this manuscript will be edited and designed in time to be published in the fall of 2022 so 4-H members can begin taking *Assistance Animals in Action* as a 4-H project starting in 2023. It will be available in Ohio, and it will be shared with 4-H professionals in Michigan, too. Other 4-H programs across the country and other youth-serving organizations may be interested in the materials, as well. Possible avenues to share this curriculum could include digital media and advertisement, journal articles, presentations at 4-H conferences and in-services like the Ohio 4-H Conference

or NAE4-HYDP Conference, and presentations at external conferences that focus on mental health, disability advocacy, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The material within this curriculum has potential to be adapted into a leader guide for Extension professionals and volunteers to use in programming. Such programming could include (but is not limited to) 4-H school enrichment, teen leadership programs, 4-H club meetings, camp, youth or adult health and wellness programs, or community development programs. An important next step will be to develop an evaluation for participants to investigate impact and so the curriculum can be continually improved.

Conclusion

The Assistance Animals in Action 4-H project book curriculum is the first of its kind, as it is the only one to date to focus specifically on the three types of assistance animals. This 4-H project provides youth with accurate information about assistance animals. It also encourages them to become assistance animal advocates by sharing what they learned with others or by volunteering with an assistance animal organization near them. As previously discussed, education about assistance animals could help to alleviate some of the challenges service dogs and their handlers face in public settings, including misrepresentation of animals and poor public perception. This curriculum could be a gateway to more educational opportunities about assistance animals, including a case for legislative clarity surrounding these animals. As educational opportunities and materials about assistance animals become more widely available to the general public, service dog and their handlers will be able to work in public more safely with more advocates on their side.

References

ADA 2010 Revised Requirements: Service Animals. (2010, September 15).

    ADA.Gov; U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. Retrieved

    March 8, 2022, from https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

Assistance Animals. (n.d.). U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

    (HUD). Retrieved March 8, 2022, from

    https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/assistance_

    animals

Brennan, J., & Nguyen, V. (2014). *Service Animals and Emotional Support

    Animals*. ADA National Network. https://adata.org/guide/service-animals-

    and-emotional-support-animals

Callina, K. S., Mueller, M. K., Buckingham, M. H., & Gutierrez, A. S. (2015).

    Building hope for positive youth development: Research, practice, and

    policy. In E. P. Bowers, G. J. Geldhof, S. K. Johnson, L. J. Hilliard, R. M.

    Hershberg, J. V. Lerner, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Promoting Positive Youth

    Development* (pp. 71–94). Springer International Publishing.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17166-1_5

Center for Human-Animal Interactions Research and Education at The Ohio

    State University (n.d.). https://chaire.osu.edu/

Cordova, C. (2020). Preventing the Delegitimization of Service Animals: A

    Proposal to Keep Service Animal Law from Going to the Dogs. Chapman

    Law Review, 23(1), 247–285.

Dial, A. (2019). The Working Public's Perceptions of Service Dogs: A

Phenomenological Investigation of Gatekeepers' Experiences. The

Research Repository at West Virginia University.

https://doi.org/10.33915/etd.3875

Dogs with blind, deaf, or mobility impaired person (2006). Ohio Revised Code

Section 955.43. https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-955.43

Etiquette for Guide and Service Dogs. (n.d.). Guide Dog Foundation. Retrieved

March 8, 2022, from

https://www.guidedog.org/PuppyRaising/PuppyRaiserManual/Resources/

Assistance_Dog_Etiquette.aspx

Fairman, S. K., & Huebner, R. A. (2009). Service dogs: A compensatory resource

to improve function. Occupational Therapy in Health Care.

https://doi.org/10.1080/J003v13n02_03

Friesen, L. (2010). Exploring animal-assisted programs with children in school

and therapeutic contexts. Early Childhood Education Journal, 37(4), 261–

267. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-009-0349-5

Hall, S. S., MacMichael, J., Turner, A., & Mills, D. S. (2017). A survey of the

impact of owning a service dog on quality of life for individuals with

physical and hearing disability: A pilot study. *Health and Quality of Life

Outcomes*, *15*, 59. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-017-0640-x

Karetnick, J. (2019, September 24). *Service dogs 101: Everything You Need to

Know about Service Dogs*. American Kennel Club.

https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/service-dog-training-101/

Karetnick, J. (2019b, December 2). *How to Train a Therapy Dog: Learning if Your*

Dog is Fit for Therapy Work. American Kennel Club.

https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/how-to-train-a-therapy-dog/

Lee, T. (2017). Criminalizing Fake Service Dogs: Helping or Hurting Legitimate

Handlers? Animal Law, 23, 325–355.

Moore, R. (2016). The Power of a Pet. TEDxOhioStateUniversity [YouTube].

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t4m6mo0bMY

Mueller, M. K. (2014). Is human-animal interaction (Hai) linked to positive youth

development? Initial answers. Applied Developmental Science, 18(1), 5–

16. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2014.864205

Positive Reinforcement Training. (n.d.). The Humane Society of the United

States. Retrieved March 8, 2022, from

https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/positive-reinforcement-training

Reisen, J. (2021, February 24). *Service, Working, Therapy, Emotional Support*

Dogs: Which is Which? American Kennel Club.

https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/service-working-therapy-

emotional-support-dogs/

Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., Hellyer, P., Cheung, L., & Kogan, L. (2017). Public

perceptions of service dogs, emotional support dogs, and therapy dogs.

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 14(6),

642. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14060642

Service Dog Etiquette. (n.d.). International Association of Canine Professionals.

Retrieved March 8, 2022, from

https://www.canineprofessionals.com/service-dog-etiquette

Service, Emotional Support, and Therapy Animals. (n.d.). American Veterinary

    Medical Association. Retrieved March 8, 2022, from

    https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/service-

    emotional-support-and-therapy-animals

Stop Dog Fraud (n.d.). Canine Companions. Retrieved April 6, 2022 from

    https://canine.org/stop-dog-fraud/

Take the Test. (n.d.). American Kennel Club. Retrieved March 8, 2022, from

    https://www.akc.org/products-services/training-programs/canine-good-

    citizen/take-the-test/

The Human-Animal Bond throughout Time. (2018, December 7). *Perspectives |*

    The College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University, *Fall*

    2018. https://cvm.msu.edu/news/perspectives-magazine/perspectives-fall-

    2018/the-human-animal-bond-throughout-time

Trainer, M. (2016, September 30). *Service Dogs Save Lives.* ShareAmerica.

    https://share.america.gov/service-dogs-save-lives/

Types of Service Dogs & What They Do. (n.d.). Purina. Retrieved March 8, 2022,

    from https://www.purina.co.uk/find-a-pet/articles/dog-types/breed-

    guides/service-dogs