



USE OF CERTIFIED FACILITY DOGS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

PATRICIA SCHECHTER URIE

CANINE COMPANIONS® FACILITY
DOG TEAM

GALLATIN COUNTY COURT DOG



Victim Services Mission Statement

- ▶ To enhance the involvement and safety of violent crime victims in the criminal justice system by providing direct services that lessen the impact of the crime, ensuring that all victims are treated respectfully and fairly, while supporting victims' important role through every step in the criminal justice system.

Canine Companions® Facility Dogs Help Achieve Mission Goals

- ▶ Trained Facility Dogs help calm and relax individuals and reduce anxiety, improving their ability to provide testimony or narratives, and lessen the negative impact that often accompanies re-living their experiences as they go through the legal process.
- ▶ A Facility Dog completed basic service dog training and received additional training that specializes in working with multiple individuals either one at a time or in a group, utilizing specialized commands to assist individuals achieve a goal.

Meet WICKER II

Wicker is an 8-year-old lab/golden cross; bred, raised, and trained through Canine Companions®

He graduated as a Service Dog in 2017, and as a Facility Dog in 2021



Wicker is the first Gallatin County Law & Justice Center Facility Dog

Meet the Facility Dog Team



- ▶ Facility Dog Wicker and Handler Pattie are certified as a Facility Dog Team through Canine Companions®.
- ▶ Sponsored through the Victim Services Program, the Team assists all services within the Center, auxiliary agencies, and other Counties.
- ▶ Pattie is a retired Deputy Sheriff/Forensic Scientist from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and retired Supervising Forensic Scientist from the San Diego Police Department.

Canine Companions® Dogs

Professionally trained by Canine Companions®;
accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI)

- ▶ Assistance Dog Categories: Facility, Skilled Companion, Hearing, and PTSD (Veterans)
- ▶ Minimum two years of training
- ▶ 45 Specialized Skill Commands
- ▶ Must pass public access testing for certification
- ▶ Own breeding program (selective breeding; medical issues, temperament, behavior)
- ▶ Raised in carefully controlled manner from breeding to graduation
- ▶ Fully trained dogs provided at no cost to the disabled and to organizations
- ▶ Most of the published literature for use of dogs in Criminal Justice setting was conducted using Canine Companions® Facility Dogs



The Facility Dog

Levinson was one of the first child psychotherapists to incorporate a dog during child psychotherapy as a “transitional object to facilitate a therapeutic relationship between clinician and child”

Levinson & Mallon, 1969



- ▶ Canine Companions utilizes additional screening of facility dogs over service dogs
 - ▶ Placement in legal system
 - ▶ Confident, affectionate, comfortable having close physical contact with children
 - ▶ Temperament to interact with people from all walks of life, high stress environments, extended periods of time (hours, days, weeks)
 - ▶ Bred, selected, trained to work every day in a challenging environment
 - ▶ Dog should “maximize emotional support for the witness while not jeopardizing the investigation and prosecution of crimes”

Courthouse Dogs Foundation

Helping the Investigator obtain information while gently helping the witness get through the process

- ▶ Victim/Witness
 - ▶ Encountered or witnessed traumatizing event
 - ▶ Fear, terror, helplessness, hopelessness, despair, anxiety, insecure, untrusting, unsafe, intimidated, confused, traumatized, loss, abandonment
 - ▶ Interviewer is a stranger and environment unfamiliar
 - ▶ Difficulties answering questions
 - ▶ The legal process itself re-traumatizes witnesses
- ▶ Facility Dogs provide sense of calm, security, safety, support, love, bonding, trust
- ▶ Use of a Facility Dog to calm witnesses and help them feel safe can help obtain accurate information and improve efficiency throughout the legal process



BRIEF SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN LITERATURE REGARDING USE OF FACILITY DOGS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE CASES

- ▶ Reduces levels of anxiety and stress for victims and family members
- ▶ Creates a more comfortable environment
- ▶ Helps victims to cope more effectively
- ▶ Frames focus during proceedings
- ▶ Increases engagement and motivation
- ▶ Reduces fear
- ▶ Increases overall wellbeing
- ▶ Enhances communication
- ▶ Helps build a better rapport
- ▶ Victims feel more relaxed and more calm
- ▶ Enables victims to open up more about their experiences
- ▶ Victims feel safe and emotionally supported
- ▶ Whole criminal justice process a more positive experience



Spruin, E., Dempster, T., and Ozcakil Mozova, (2020), Facility dogs as a tool for building rapport and credibility with child witnesses, *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 62, pp. 100-110.

Spruin, E., Ozcakil Mozova, K., Dempster, T. and Freeman, R. (2020). The use of facility dogs to bridge the justice gap for survivors of sexual offending, *Social Sciences* 9(6).

HOW INTERVIEWER/THERAPIST USE THEIR FACILITY DOGS



- ▶ Chat about the dog when they discuss the interview rules
- ▶ Tell them to let you know if the dog invades their space or if his snoring bothers them (he'll likely fall asleep)
- ▶ A witness may stop in the middle of a disclosure and comment on the dog; maybe twitching in his sleep, and give him a kiss – they are using the dog as an excuse to create a break before going on
- ▶ Some interviewers had witnesses tell their story to the dog or write the dog a letter.
- ▶ Ask them to pet the dog during the interview to help keep their focus on your questions.
- ▶ Find what works for you and the dog and the witness. Keep in mind the dog might not be a fit for a particular interview.



In Their Own Words

- ▶ “Pecos and I have done approximately two hundred forensic interviews together. Because we work in a child advocacy center setting, he also sits in therapy appointments, non-acute medical exams, accompanies children to court and attends multidisciplinary team meetings. When the children see Pecos, they immediately begin to smile and walk towards him. They pet him, walk him and snuggle with him and their caregivers appear relieved that a calm dog is available for their child. In many instances, children do not know what to expect when they have an appointment in the program. Pecos changes how children perceive the process.”



Michele Thames, Forensic Interview Coordinator, Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters, Child Abuse Program, Norfolk, VA

- ▶ “The emotional response of the children when they hear about the dog certainly differs for each child, but I will say probably 95% of the children who have been told that there is a dog who can be present for their interview, have chosen to meet Ellie and have her present in the interview. What’s most memorable though are the times when I initially meet a child and they appear completely withdrawn (slumping down in their chair, avoiding all eye contact with me, barely responding to my questions) but they become much more engaged and animated when they hear that there is a dog available to sit with them during the interview. In those cases, it seems that rather than dreading the beginning of the interview, the child seems to look forward to it as they know that they’re going to have dog present to sit with them.”

Carolyn Webster, Child Interview Specialist, King County Prosecutor’s Office, Seattle WA





“I had a late-night interview with Calhoun when I had to question a young boy about seeing his father murder his mother. Although there was little interaction between the boy and Calhoun during the interview, afterwards the boy asked if he could spend some time with Calhoun in the darkened playroom while he waited for a relative to pick him up. I watched them lie in a silent embrace on the floor for about 40 minutes until the family member arrived. That was an unforgettable experience.”

Joy Lucero, Forensic Interviewer, Phillipsburg MT

Incorporating an **Outside** Facility Dog Team in the Forensic Interview Process

BEFORE THE FORENSIC INTERVIEW

- ▶ Determine how you want the witness to meet the dog; ask guardian for consent
- ▶ Let them meet in the neutral waiting area; handler will interact with the witness; teach some “tricks” they can do with the dog; give them some play time together before the interview; handler let’s witness walk dog into interview room
- ▶ Let the witness know the dog is going to take a break and will be waiting for them after the interview

DURING THE FORENSIC INTERVIEW

- ▶ The Facility Dog Team can remain in the waiting room to assist family members and/or additional witnesses, and just be available

AFTER THE FORENSIC INTERVIEW

- ▶ Allow the witness some play or quiet time with the dog after the interview





AFTER THE INTERVIEW OR THE LEGAL PROCESS

- ▶ Most leave a child advocacy center talking about the dog instead of the interview
- ▶ They often ask to see the dog on their next visit, and throughout the legal process
- ▶ They take selfies of themselves with the dog before they leave
- ▶ The traumatic experience of the interview was lessened because of the use of the dog

Other Uses for the Facility Dog Team

- ❖ Support witnesses waiting long hours for interviews, court, or other proceedings
- ❖ Support witness/victim during any proceeding where the Team can be present
- ❖ Support victims' post-SANE examination
- ❖ Incident response calming victims/witnesses, family/others
- ❖ Assist law enforcement/chaplain in difficult notifications or circumstances
- ❖ V.E.T.S. Court, Drug Treatment Court, Youth Probation interviews, Detention Center; MDT Meetings; Search & Rescue (assist family members/staff)
- ❖ Community outreach events
- ❖ Think out of the box; how can the Team help



NOTE: Safety of the dog is paramount; handler's primary responsibility is the safety of the dog

MT Court Qualified



- Accompanied adult on the witness stand who was unable to provide coherent testimony without comfort of a Facility Dog
- Testimony was 7 ½ hours
- Jury advised dog was present
- Dog was not to be seen or heard by the jury

Helping Drug Treatment Court Participants



“Working the hallway” greeting every participant before court starts.

Promotes happiness, engages conversation, gets hugs and pets, and relaxes everyone before entering the courtroom.

Part of the team to help participants be successful in the program.

Once Court starts, Wicker is seated by the podium where the participants interact one on one with the Judge. He can't do anything to disrupt the proceedings.

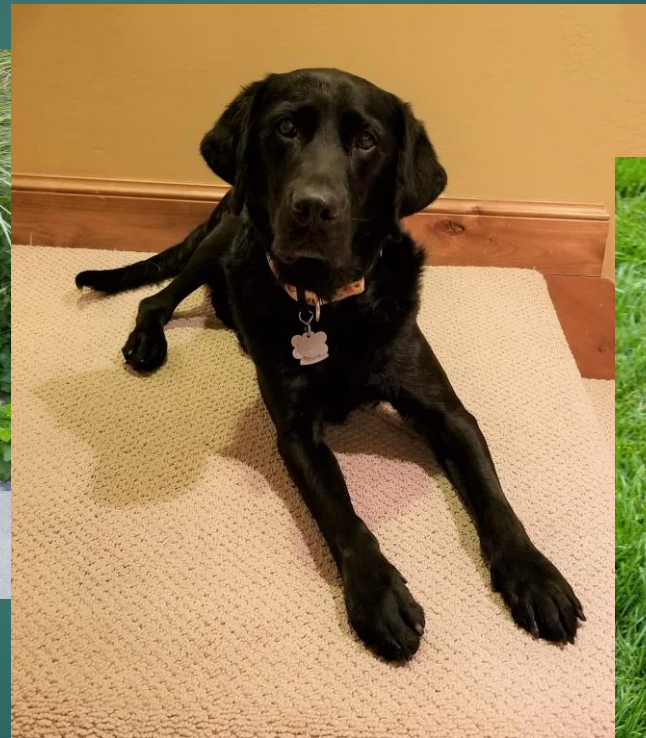


General Facility Dog Commands

Ice breaker commands to teach the witnesses when first meeting and interacting with the dog.



Sit



Down



Stand



Speak



Shake

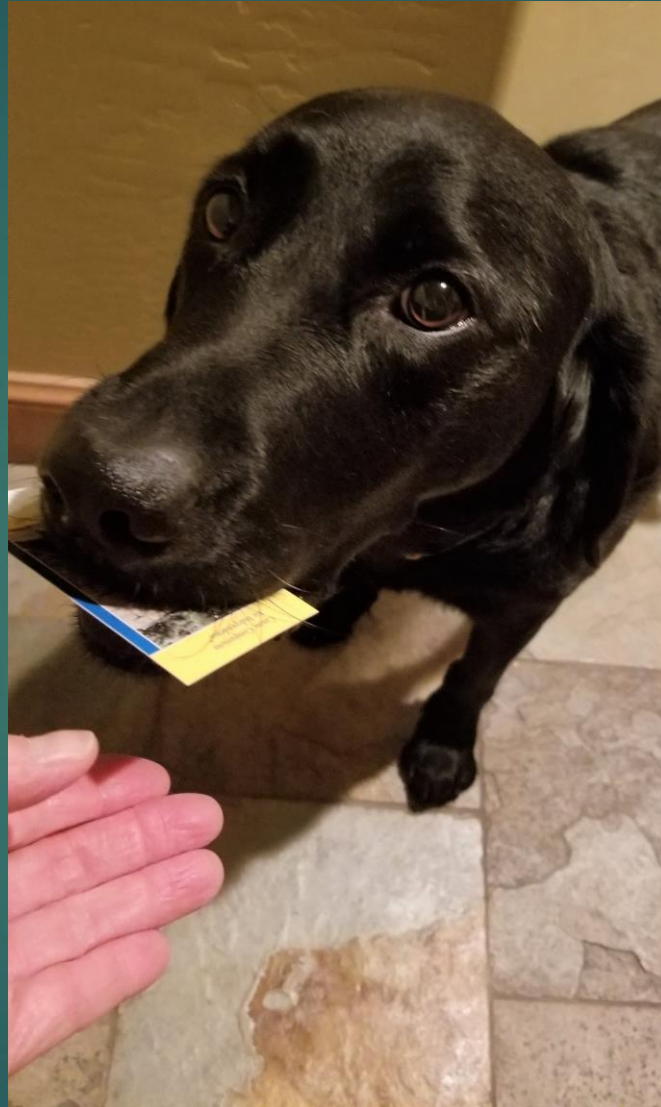


Pick up his leash

Children and adults enjoy learning to give some simple commands which also begins to distract them from the proceedings and helps to calm and relax them.



Pick up items on command



Hand out trading cards



Retrieves items

Cover – dog provides deep pressure laying on top of person on command



Visit – dog puts head on lap with pressure; increases sense of calm



Lap – Immediate release of tension

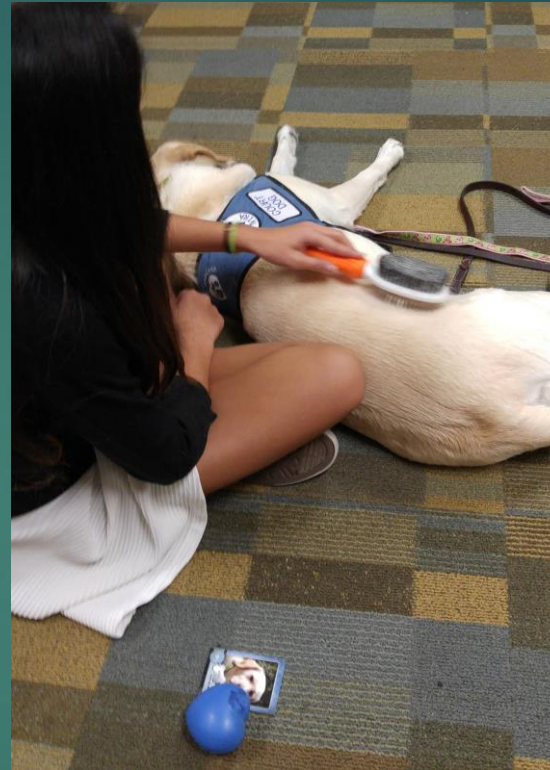
Distraction and Bonding Time



Card games



Avid bowler



Grooming time



Read together



Nap time

Endless Possibilities



Trial prep/interviews



De-stressing staff

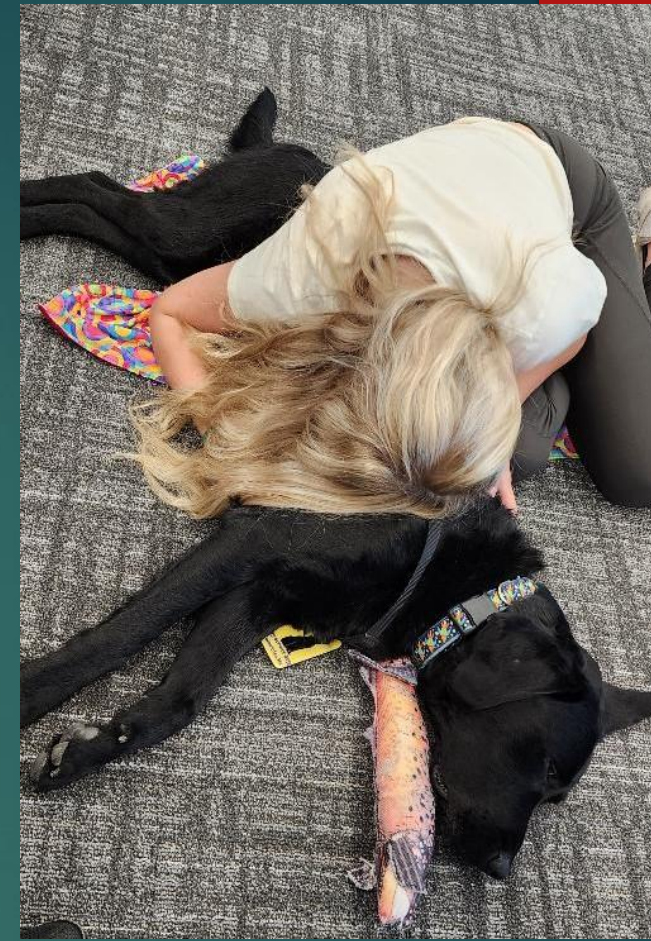


Presentations and training



Public events

Everything is just a little bit better with a dog



How To Apply for a Canine Companions® Facility Dog

Who: Contact Canine Companions®

1-800-572-BARK | info@canine.org

HOW: Complete an online application at canine.org

FEE: Certified Service/Facility Dogs are provided **AT NO COST**. Your agency is responsible for the food, medical care, equipment, grooming, etc.

PROCESS: Complete application; interview process; wait list; attend 2- week training at our Santa Rosa CA facility while staying in our dorms; graduate and go home with your new Facility Dog.



Wicker II

SCHEDULE THE GALLATIN COUNTY FACILITY DOG TEAM

Contact: Handler Pattie Urie
pattieurie1@gmail.com
Cell: 619-890-7456

- ▶ The Team self-schedules on a first come; first serve basis
- ▶ Invite the Facility Dog Team to your agency and see how they can help you
- ▶ Schedule the team for an event (meetings, interviews, waiting time, etc.)
- ▶ On-call for afterhours/weekend emergencies when you feel the dog could be a significant benefit

Reference: The COURTHOUSE DOGS FOUNDATION® has a wealth of information, videos and supplemental information:
<https://courthousedogs.org>

I love the kind of
hugs where you can
physically feel the
sadness leaving
your body.



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