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## **ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNOUNCES THERAPY DOGS FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE AT THE CHILDREN'S CENTER**

*Partnership With "The Good Dog Foundation" Will Supplement Existing Therapeutic Programs to Help Relieve Stress and Provide Emotional Support to Dozens of Youth in Foster Care*

**New York, NY** – Today, the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell announced a new partnership with "The Good Dog Foundation" to provide therapy dogs to children in foster care on-site at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center. The goal of the program is to promote recovery from trauma and stress among children in care.

"We are often working with children at some of the most vulnerable times in their lives, and we want to make sure their experience with us is as healing as possible. In addition to our ongoing therapeutic programming, this new therapy dog program will offer additional comfort and support to children who have experienced trauma. I want to thank The Good Dog Foundation for their partnership and commitment to supporting New York City's children in foster care," **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.**

The Children's Center serves as the entry point for many of the children and youth who come into New York City's foster care system. The Children's Center provides a range of therapeutic programming and services to provide a safe, trauma-informed and welcoming environment for children and youth.

Research suggests that the act of petting animals releases an automatic relaxation response and can lower anxiety, provide comfort, and reduce loneliness. A study conducted by Yale University titled "[The Influence of Interactions with Dogs on Affect, Anxiety, and Arousal in Children](#)" reported that children experiencing stress who then interact with therapy dogs benefit from improved mood and reduced anxiety.

The Good Dog Foundation seeks to ease human suffering and promote recovery from trauma and stress using animal-assisted therapy services. As part of a new partnership with ACS, The Good Dog Foundation brings therapy dogs to the Children's Center twice per month. During therapy dog sessions, handlers from The Good Dog Foundation allow youth in care to play with and pet the dogs. The youth are also taught how to properly interact with the dogs and how to perform tricks with them.

"Helping children recover from trauma is a core mission and growing focus for us," said Rachel McPherson, Good Dog Founder and President. "For our teams at the Scoppetta Center, it's all about giving kids awaiting homes in NYC's foster care system a safe, joyful 'time out' to connect with unconditionally loving and healing animals. We're thrilled to partner with ACS."

The following dogs will be visiting youth at the Children's Center: Jedi (Shi Tzu), Cece (Havanese), Bailey (Golden Retriever), Reggie (Yellow Lab), Oliver (Yellow Lab), Sandy (Yellow Lab), Little Dude (Poodle/Shih Tzu/Bichon), Jefferson (Mixed), Emmett (Golden Retriever), Georgie (Havanese) and Chula (Pekingese/Poodle). Each of the dogs go through a rigorous screening process before they become certified therapy dogs. Dogs must pass a temperament evaluation for suitability to become a therapy dog, including an evaluation of the dog's behavior around people using service equipment such as wheelchairs and crutches.

The Good Dog Foundation (Good Dog) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that seeks to ease human suffering and promote recovery from trauma and stress using animal-assisted therapy services. Since its founding in 1998, Good Dog has been recognized as among the most innovative and reliable in the United States, through the use of professionally-trained and supervised volunteer teams who work to aid the healing process in humans and enhance clients' quality of life.

The Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center is a child-friendly facility that operates 24 hours a day, providing medical screenings and temporarily housing children and youth when they enter foster care. An interdisciplinary team of Child Protective Specialists, Social Workers, Nurses, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Child Care and Administrative staff provide support and clinical services to children to reduce trauma associated with child maltreatment, as well as loss and separation from parents and primary caregivers.



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