



Benefits of Animal Assisted Interventions



Legge, M. (2016). The role of animal-assisted interventions in anti-oppressive social work practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 46(7), 1926-1941. Retrieved from: Retrieved from:

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=e55c2637-d307-4d67-b318-4887cef804ea%40sessionmgr4009>

McMaster University released a study on *the role of animal-assisted interventions in anti-oppressive social work practice*. Relevant literature was reviewed in this qualitative study to assess the effects that animal-assisted interventions can have in social work practice with research showing benefits to animal-assisted interventions. Animal-assisted interventions compared with anti-oppressive practices helps to combine a need for services that are person focused and social just with the intervention focus of using animals to help individuals heal on mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

Findings from this review found that animal-assisted interventions can work together with anti-oppressive practices by being complementary interventions and foster communication and collaboration between clients and social work practitioners with the use of animals as a trust builder. This study helps to show the greater need for social work practitioners to utilize creative and varying interventions such as animal-interventions to help build trust and communication with clients, and that many individuals seeking social services who may face incredible society barriers and oppression could benefit greatly from the role of a service animal.

Olsen, C., Pedersen, I., et al. (2016). Effect of animal-assisted interventions on depression, agitation and quality of life in nursing home residents suffering from cognitive impairment or dementia: a cluster of randomized controlled trial. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, (12), 1312. Retrieved from:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/doi/10.1002/gps.4436/pdfjsessionid=D95FC86D5A41AD4128D9AADC1FC1E739.f04t04>

Geriatric Psychiatry released a study on the *effect of animal-assisted interventions on depression, agitation, and quality of life in nursing home residents suffering from cognitive impairment or dementia in a cluster randomized controlled trial*. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a 12-week animal-assisted intervention on cognitively impaired nursing home residents because of their highly reported cognitive issues such as depression and agitation. Of the 58 participants in the study, the 28 in the intervention group partook in twice weekly 30-minute animal-assisted intervention sessions with a therapy dog and a qualified handler.

Findings from this study showed that there was a significant effect on depression in this population with severe dementia when animal-assisted interventions were utilized. This study highlights the effectiveness of a non-pharmacological treatment approach when treating elderly and dementia patients, and shows the effectiveness of animal-assisted interventions with this population group that could be transferred over to other depression patients with success.

Hallyburton, A., & Hinton, J. (2017). Canine-assisted therapies in autism: a systematic review of published studies relevant to recreational therapy. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 51(2), 127-142. Retrieved from:

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=edc00f04-35dc-4ca6-918b-a7743c677258%40sessionmgr102>

The Therapeutic Recreation Journal published a *systematic review of published studies relevant to recreational therapy on canine-assisted therapies in autism*. This review looked at the effectiveness of combining animal-assisted interventions in recreational therapy, and how treatment plans that utilize canines can help multiple psychological and physical issues than individuals with autism suffer from. This systematic review utilizes the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-

Analyses (PRISMA) to evaluate existing studies on canines utilized as therapeutic interventions for autistic individuals with 10 articles assessed.

Findings from this review found positive outcomes for many different interventions that included dogs for individuals with Autism, and help to increase the growing support for animal-assisted interventions for individuals with Autism. This study showed successful outcomes from studies that helped incorporate canines into the recreational therapeutic relationship which can make animal assisted interventions more applicable across different therapeutic branches. This review helps to support more research toward incorporating animal-assisted interventions into recreational therapeutic interventions, and supports positive and effective outcomes for canine work with individuals who have Autism.

Bassette, L., & Taber-Doughty, T. (2013). The effects of a dog reading visitation program on academic engagement behavior in three elementary students with emotional and behavioral disabilities: a single case design. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 42(3), 239-256. Retrieved from:

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=39f19c82-68a1-42a4-a929-c8a9cd2d0042%40pdc-v-sessmgr01>

The Child Youth Care Forum published a study on the *effects of a dog reading visitation program on academic engagement behavior in three elementary students with emotional and behavioral disabilities*. This study looked at the effects that having a therapy dog in readings programs in schools can have on children with emotional and behavior problems, especially with growing popularity of these programs being implemented in school. This study focused on a systematic evaluation of how a dog visitation reading program affected three elementary aged children during on-task reading aloud behaviors. In the intervention process, children in the study read aloud to a therapy dog opposed to them reading aloud only to themselves.

Findings from this study indicated that all three children both enjoyed the dog therapy sessions and were observed to have improvements in their behaviors. The study found that the students were more on-task when they had the therapy dog to listen to, their task engagement was improved and maintained even with difficult tasks, and were more excited to read and pick out books when they had a dog to read to. This study helps to show the effectiveness that animal-assisted interventions have with elementary school aged children with behavioral and emotional problems, and promotes future studies to assess these outcomes on a larger study scale.

Schramm, E., Hediger, K., & Lang, U. (2015). From animal behavior to recurrent depression. *Zeitschrift Fur Psychologie*, 223(3), 192-200. Retrieved from:

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=b844d0f7-f644-4ccc-bf10-c06076608f11%40sessionmgr103>

Research Spotlight released a study on *an animal-assisted mindfulness intervention for recurrent depression*. Literature on animal-assisted interventions has shown effectiveness with improving mental health, quality of life, and decreasing individual's feelings of isolation, and depression reduction results have been found through various animal interventions. For this study, 6 patients participated in 8 group sessions of mindfulness animal-assisted interventions with no dropouts, and sheep were incorporated as the animal-intervention process.

Findings from this study showed a decrease in depressive symptoms when engaged in animal-assisted interventions. Findings also showed that this form of treatment was highly feasible and accepted by patients who completed all aspects of the treatment problem, and reported after the program being more attentive, perceiving situations with mindfulness, and being able to learn how to better understand problems through nature.