

# Chapter Leader Quick Reference Guide



With more than 2,600 (and growing!) members, Love on a Leash® (LOAL) relies on our 70+ Chapter Leaders to ensure our organization's mission is carried out consistently throughout the country.

## Responsibilities of Love on a Leash® Chapter Leaders

- Serve as a liaison between LOAL members within your chapter boundaries and National LOAL.
- Know LOAL Guidelines well and be familiar with our website and promotional materials.
- Coordinate with local facilities and your visit captains to schedule therapy pet visits.
- Guide potential LOAL members through the control evaluation and supervised visits process.
- Communicate visit opportunities to all certified LOAL teams in your chapter boundaries.
- Maintain a guide for your successor, including facility contacts, current member roster, schedule of regular visits, and any tips and tricks you have learned specific to your chapter.

## Who Supports You?

You are not alone! You are part of a national non-profit organization of dedicated volunteers. The National Love on a Leash® Board of Directors are volunteers and certified LOAL handlers. The current Board, including contact information is on the LOAL website. The board of directors ensures that LOAL adheres to regulations to maintain our non-profit 501(c)(3) status, maintains current liability insurance, and supports all certified members across the country.

National Love on a Leash® has three part time assistants. The **Membership Assistant** ([membership@loveonaleash.org](mailto:membership@loveonaleash.org)) processes membership renewals, inputs new member information into the database, sends new member welcome packets/IDs, and fulfills direct LOAL merchandise orders. The **Administrative Assistant** ([assistant@loveonaleash.org](mailto:assistant@loveonaleash.org)) updates the website and database, sends donor thank you letters and condolence cards, processes Advanced Therapy Degrees, creates the newsletter, and supports our members at large. The **Chapter Assistant** is the primary contact for Chapter Leaders ([assistant2@loveonaleash.org](mailto:assistant2@loveonaleash.org)).

Chapter Leaders may delegate responsibility among their chapter members, forming committees as needed; however, **chapters may not form their own boards or use the title President.**

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## What does National LOAL Provide for Chapters?

**Promotional Materials.** When a chapter is initially formed, the new Chapter Leader receives a welcome packet which includes a chapter banner, trifold brochures, comparison cards, a digital logo (for use as a social media profile picture, letterhead, etc), and a current chapter roster. Chapter Leaders may order additional promotional materials as well as business cards at no cost by [emailing the Chapter Assistant](#).

**Merchandise.** Love on a Leash® merchandise (apparel, LOAL book, trading cards) is only available for purchase by active LOAL members. [Log into your account](#), go to the “Order Merchandise” tab, and click on the link at top of page to order from our verified vendor; or order additional vests, bandanas, decals, or neck wallets directly from LOAL. If a chapter has specific merchandising requests, the Chapter Leader should contact the Chapter Assistant to discuss. *Chapters may not create their own logos or apparel.*

**Financial Support.** Love on a Leash® is a national non-profit entity. *Chapters may not maintain their own bank accounts, nor may chapters charge any fees or dues to their members.* Each LOAL member receives a vest or bandana upon certification and the board will always reimburse chapters for reasonable expenses, so there are no expenses at the chapter level that would require individual accounts. At no time may any LOAL members accept payment or compensation for visits. Often, individuals or facilities wish to make donations in thanks for our visits. *All donations must be made to National Love on a Leash® to support our national infrastructure; checks should be mailed to: Love on a Leash® Treasurer, PO Box 4548, Oceanside, CA 92052-45548.* We are exceedingly grateful for every donation and budget prudently.

**Protection.** As members of a national organization, you are protected by our liability insurance any time you are on an official Love on a Leash® visit. Our certificate of insurance renews each September and a copy is automatically provided to Chapter Leaders. Our national board of directors are available to support all our members should any issues arise related to your volunteer work with Love on a Leash®.

**Chapter Assistant.** The National LOAL Chapter Assistant sends quarterly bulletins and active member rosters to Chapter Leaders; she is dedicated to serving all of our esteemed chapter leaders. Email [assistant2@loveonaleash.org](mailto:assistant2@loveonaleash.org) with any questions or concerns; you will receive a response within one business day.

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## Frequently Asked Questions/Tips & Tricks

### New Members

Love on a Leash® members love sharing our pets, educating people on the benefits of pet therapy, and explaining exactly what a therapy pet does. People often ask Chapter Leaders how to join Love on a Leash®. Always direct interested parties to our website, where the current guidelines, applications, and instructions are: <http://www.loveonaleash.org/Forms-Guides/Applications.aspx>

### Certification Issues

Three issues come up frequently regarding the certification process; exceptions are never made. The control evaluator may not supervise any of a team-in-training's visits. The entire process, from control evaluation to application submission must be completed within one (1) calendar year. Each handler must undergo the entire process for each pet s/he wishes to be certified with.

### Supervised Visits

**Non-LOAL supervisors.** Experience has shown that adherence to LOAL processes and guidelines produces confident, qualified pet therapy teams who represent Love on Leash well; thus, we believe it is critical that teams-in-training are mentored by certified LOAL teams whenever possible. If a team-in-training within chapter boundaries requests a non-LOAL supervisor, National will first verify with the Chapter Leader that the certified LOAL teams in the chapter are not comfortable or available to supervise the team-in-training. Only then will National approve a non-LOAL substitute supervisor; however, National LOAL reserves the right to question or deny any team-in-training's request for a non-LOAL supervisor. *The substitute must be approved in writing (via email) by National LOAL prior to the team-in-training's first supervised visit.*

**LOAL Supervisors.** As a general rule of thumb, certified LOAL teams should have completed 12 LOAL visits (after being certified) before being asked to supervise teams-in-training; we defer to the Chapter Leaders' judgement as to whether a team is ready sooner (or later). There is no hard and fast rule.

### Chapter Membership

LOAL members are not required to join a chapter if they live within a chapter's boundaries, but they may still participate in chapter-coordinated visits. Chapter Leaders should communicate with all LOAL members in their area and always be welcoming to any certified teams who attend visits. There is no minimum requirement for how often a team goes on visits or attends chapter functions. Any team that completes the certification process is part of Love on a Leash®, provided they renew their membership annually.



## Tips from Long-Time Chapter Leaders

- Ask for help – delegate, but stay very involved. Don't spread yourself too thin!
- Listen to your members and be open to their suggestions.
- Provide a monthly schedule to all members with pertinent visit information. Some Chapter Leaders create a short newsletter each month with a calendar showing upcoming visits. You will have better participation the further in advance people know of visits.
- Keep the lines of communication open; use whatever method(s) work for you and your members: Facebook, Email, Group chats, Meetup, Google Calendar, Phone Calls.
- Keep in touch with control evaluators and facilities in your area; this will be vital in helping teams-in-training through the certification process efficiently.
- Choose supervisors and visit captains carefully, and never hesitate to ask a team-in-training to repeat visits or seek additional training for their pet. Love on a Leash® isn't for everyone.
- Make sure new members feel welcome and get to know your members; coordinate social events if there is interest (picnics/BBQs, holiday parties, monthly coffee/lunch, weekly hikes, local dog-friendly events, etc.)
- Stay very organized. Keep track of members' contact info, teams-in-training making supervised visits (and the dates of their control eval, etc.), and people that have expressed interest in getting their pet certified; refer them to at least two trusted control evaluators and visit supervisors.
- Share chapter information with former members that have not renewed due to health or deceased dog if they are interested in continuing to support the chapter. Often, they wish to keep their membership current and continue to supervise teams-in-training.
- Get together 15-20 minutes prior to each visit for a "meet and greet" with pets and humans.
- Respond to all visit requests and phone calls promptly and keep records of all correspondence.
- To grow your chapter, you may contact dog trainers who offer Therapy Dog classes and give them your information so they can refer graduates to you. But remember LOAL does not endorse one particular trainer, training style, or facility.
- Know the guidelines and applications well; contact National if you have questions or concerns.
- Show your members appreciation - remember they are volunteers!
- Be positive. If you can't visit a person or facility, coordinate with other pet therapy organizations in the area so furry love is available to more people.
- In big chapters, meet with your visit captains regularly so everyone is on the same page.
- Get involved with community events to share information about Love on a Leash®.
- HAVE FUN!