



dreamcatcher™
animal assisted
wellness academy

Certification in Animal Assisted Services Training Series

Training Outline for you and your animal

CERTIFICATION IN ANIMAL ASSISTED WELLNESS AND THERAPY

Dreamcatcher™ certifies the professional handler alongside their animal counterpart and offers training for both humans and canines, and temperament/suitability screening for all animals. As a professional wanting to introduce an animal into their practice, the student is to complete the Professional Trainings listed below. The content in the first 3 Distance Learning Courses is imperative to both therapists and teachers alike; however, the process splits to focus on academic or psychological practices in the 4th course. Each student will complete their Scope of Practice, a working document that grows and changes as the student grows and learns more about what they would like to offer. There is also a Scope of Practice pertaining to your animal. Detailed information about each of the components required for Professional Certification in Animal Assisted Services can be found on Page 2-4 under *Mandatory Professional Trainings*.

As part of the Canine Certification Process, canines are screened and evaluated for their temperament and stress tolerance through a variety of hands-on testing. The canine will complete all 3 classes in the Prepare Your Dog for AAS Group Dog Training Series prior to screening. Many of our students are not locally based and so have the option to complete this training through online consultations. One of the most important pieces of the work in this field is to make sure the animal is not placed in undue stressful circumstances, regardless of whether they are tolerant of them. Ethically, we want to ensure the utmost comfort and enjoyment for our animals working alongside us. Detailed descriptions of each of these components can be found on Page 5 under *Mandatory Canine Trainings*.

Some aspects of this certification process were modeled after the Equine Facilitated Wellness - Canada (EFW-CAN) certification. Dreamcatcher™ wishes to extend thanks to this group for permission to utilize their well-developed certification process for working with equines in professional practice as a model for this certificate in Animal Assisted Therapy and Wellness.

This certification process has been developed due to the growing demand from professionals to receive a certificate for their training in Animal Assisted Services. Many professionals are either already partnering with their animals to deliver intervention or educational services or interested in doing so as there are many benefits to this intervention and a growing body of research to support working with animals to help people.

To meet the current demands for certification in this field, this certification process has been developed.

Levels of Certification

- **Animal Assisted Therapist** – Master level helping professionals. This includes mental health therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and anyone else who holds a master's degree in their helping profession and is a trained and qualified therapist. Candidate must be 21 years of age or older at the time the certificate is granted.
- **Animal Assisted Wellness Practitioner** – Undergraduate level helping professionals. This includes Child and Youth Care Counsellors, Rehabilitation Practitioners, Addictions Counsellors, Life Coaches, Educators and anyone else who holds a Bachelor degree in the helping professions. Candidate must be 21 years of age or older at the time the certificate is granted.
- **Animal Handler** – People with a strong love for helping people and working with animals but have no official helping professional qualifications – must either be 18 years or older at the time certification is granted or be



accompanied by an adult while Animal Handling until the age of 18 years after certification is granted. The Animal Handler Certification Process is under construction and will be posted soon.

Optional Professional Learning

One Day Introduction and Exploration to Animal Assisted Wellness – On-Site Learning

This entails a hands-on, full day introduction and exploration of Animal Assisted Wellness (AAW) for those who are interested in learning more about the field of AAW before committing to the certification process. This training is experiential, accompanied by a variety of advanced reading materials and occurs at the Dreamcatcher™ facility. It is also offered online through your zoom attendance. This training is not part of the certification process.

Mandatory Professional Trainings

Distance Learning

Professional Training – Part One – Introduction and Exploration of Animal Assisted Services

Pre-requisites: None

Duration: At Students' Pace

Location: Distance Learning

This component of the process entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 36 hours of learning about the theoretical and basic foundations of AAS, an overview of the research in the field and an introduction to the ethics and applications of the field. It is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.

Professional Training – Part Two – Law and Ethics in Animal Assisted Services

Pre-requisites: Completed Professional Training – Part One

Duration: At Students' Pace

Location: Distance Learning

This course will provide interested professionals with an in-depth understanding of the ethics of Animal Assisted Services (AAS) necessary for best practices in AAS. Animal assisted practitioners require a thorough understanding of animal behavior, animal welfare, human-animal interactions, potential animal diseases, animal screening and training processes and much more. Students will learn the ethical aspects necessary to ensure safe and ethical human-animal therapeutic interactions. This component of the process entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 36 hours and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.

Professional Training – Part Three – Animals in Practice

Pre-requisites: Completed Professional Training – Part One and Two

Duration: At Students' Pace

Location: Distance Learning

This course will provide detailed information about the many ways animals are currently being partnered with to help people. The common species of animals typically partnered with in AAS will be discussed as well as details about their language and behavior and things you will be expected to know if partnering with them in your work. How to choose a wellness or intervention animal will be discussed as well as the process of having it screened and certified to work with you. The general ethics of handling animals in practice will be addressed. This component of the process entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 36 hours of learning and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.



Mandatory Professional Trainings Continued

Professional Training – Part Four A or B

Students will choose between the two streams offered in Professional Training Course Part Four that best suits their profession. Part Four A – Applications of Animal Assisted Services in Counselling is designed for those that have chosen a career in counselling or therapeutic services. Part Four B – Applications of Animal Assisted Services in Education is designed for those who are working as educational professionals.

Professional Training – Part Four A – Applications of Animal Assisted Services in Counselling

Pre-requisites: Qualified Helping Professional, Completed Professional Training – Part One, Two, and Three

Duration: At Students' Pace

Location: Distance Learning

This course will provide an in-depth understanding of how to ethically and effectively integrate animals into counselling / office settings. Detailed information about the many ways animals are currently being partnered with to help people will be provided. The models in which AAT can be practiced, their ethics and the importance of maintaining balance in the AAT environments will be discussed.

Details about how to introduce an animal into an office or counselling setting will be provided as well as how to set up an office environment and what supplies you will need to integrate your animal successfully into your office setting. Techniques and intentions of AAT will be discussed, the intricacy of matching animals to individuals or groups will be reviewed and directive and non-directive canine assisted play therapy approaches will be outlined. Students will submit a Final Project which will summarize the details of their own future or current AAT practice. This component entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 36 hours and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.

Professional Training – Part Four B – Applications of Animal Assisted Services in Education

Pre-requisites: Qualified Educational Professional, Completed Professional Training – Part One, Two, and Three

Duration: At Students' Pace

Location: Distance Learning

This course will provide an in-depth understanding of how to ethically and effectively integrate animals into educational settings. The course will introduce the models in which AAS can be practiced and inform about the importance of maintaining balance in the AAS environments. It will also overview the current status of animals in schools and review the researched benefits of animals for students. A discussion of both indoor and outdoor learning environments will be held as well as a discussion for the importance of getting the administrators and educational institution on board and ways to do so. Students will submit a Final Project which will summarize the details of their own future or current AAS program. This component entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 36 hours of learning and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.

Experiential Learning

Professional Training – Part Five – Exploring Animal Assisted Services – Internship

This is a hands-on and practical application of the learnings of the online courses. It provides a deep understanding of the concepts of the courses and demonstrates core competencies in the practice of animal assisted Services. This is a 24-hour internship and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course. It is a three - day internship that takes place at the Dreamcatcher™ facility in Ardrossan, Alberta. Participants can also attend this internship online via zoom. On site accommodations can be rented if booked in advance.

Mandatory Professional Trainings Continued

Professional Training – Part Six – Further Education/Practice of Integrating Animals



This component is comprised of either working with your own animals in your practices or attending other seminars/learnings in Animal Assisted Services. Time spent must be documented and signed off by the course instructor if working with your animals or signed off by approved Animal Assisted Practitioners if working within someone else's practice. The requirement is a minimum of 60 hours.

Professional Training – Part Seven – Completion of an Animal Species / Behavior Course

This refers to undergoing a course in animal ethology to get a better understanding of animal husbandry, language, anatomy, stress signals, body language and communication, etc. This course should contain a hands-on animal handling component as part of its offering – 36 hours.

Professional Training – Part Eight – Integrating Animal Assisted Intervention Practices

This is a hands-on and practical application of the learnings of all aspects of the information attained to date. It is intended to ensure that practitioners fully understand and can implement all aspects of AAS in their chosen field as well as fully understand their scope of practice. It will consist of role-playing scenarios in the AAS mediums, incorporating all skills into practice and ensuring all ethical obligations are fully understood and adhered to. Students will submit 10 hours of video footage of themselves working with their animal counterpart and clients. Dreamcatcher™ adheres to the strictest confidentiality guidelines and will ensure any client information will remain anonymous.

Professional Training – Part Nine – Practicum Hours

This refers to working with or under the supervision of an approved AAP. This is necessary to ensure best practices are maintained. The requirement for this practicum is 125 hours with 10 hours of direct face to face supervision. Once the supervision hours are completed, the supervisor will be responsible for recommending the supervisee for certification in AAS as well as ensuring that the Scope of Practice document is complete and accurate.

This concludes the Mandatory Professional Training to complete certification and qualifies people to work with animals in their practices of helping people. **To maintain certification, continuing education will be required.** If looking to incorporate a canine into practice, please continue to page 5.

Before Certification is Granted, Master's level candidates must submit:

- Proof of education and credentials in a helping profession
- Proof of professional membership in their Professional Regulatory body
- Proof of Professional and Commercial (General) Liability Insurance
- A signed and current Scope of Practice Statement

Undergraduate candidates must submit:

- Proof of education and credentials in a helping profession
- A signed and current Scope of Practice Statement
- Proof of any memberships of any practice organizations they may belong to

All candidates must submit:

- Current Standard First Aid Certification
- Payment of certification fees

Mandatory Canine Trainings

Each course consists of 4 x 1-hour long weekly classes that are broken down into 45 minutes of teaching time with 15 minutes reserved for a question-and-answer period. Courses are taken in sequential order and can be done through group training, either online or in person at the Dreamcatcher™ facility, or via one-on-one consultations with the trainer.



PYD 1: Introduction to AAS

Pre-requisites: None.

Duration: 4 weeks/1hour

Location: Dreamcatcher™ Ranch/Online via Zoom

Includes Karen Pryor iClick Clicker & Wrist Band

This class is suitable for all handlers and dogs between the ages of 4 months – 10 years. This is your chance to dive into an introduction to Animal Assisted Services (AAS) and learn from a highly skilled, professional dog trainer who has implemented dog behaviour and screening tests for multiple AAS organizations. It includes an introduction to AAS and what it entails, a “how to guide” for the certification process, exploring and implementing different learning methodologies, touch desensitization, and much more!

This class is also suitable for people who may not be sure about entering the field of AAS but would like to learn how to understand their dog and communicate clearly with him/her through positive and effective science-based training methods. It is also recommended for anyone who may wish to have a friendly, well-behaved pet at home and in the community.

Note: *this class can be omitted if your puppy already has obedience training. **If you're uncertain whether your animal requires the Intro to PYD class, you have the option to schedule a consultation with our trainer. During this consultation, you can discuss your and your animal's current knowledge and training, enabling our trainer to make an accurate assessment and recommend the most suitable class for you and your animal.*

PYD 2: Fundamentals of AAS

Pre-requisites: None

Duration: 4 weeks/1hour

Location: Dreamcatcher™ Ranch/Online via Zoom

This class is suitable for dogs older than 6 months, with handlers hoping to pursue a future in AAS. It includes 4 hours of hands-on instruction with your dog and covers obedience skills vital to success in AAS as well as more advanced behaviour training and desensitization, specifically tailored to prepare your dog to pass certification to work in the field of animal assisted services.

PYD 3: Public Access Skills

Pre-requisites: PYD 2: Fundamentals of AAS

Duration: 4 weeks/1hour

Location: Dreamcatcher™ Ranch/Online via Zoom

This class includes 4 hours of hands-on instruction with your dog and out-of-class instruction and feedback on recorded training homework. It covers advanced obedience work and task training that your dog will need to work in public or office AAS settings.

PYD 4: Advanced AAS Activities

Pre-requisites: PYD 2: Fundamentals of AAS and PYD 3: Public Access Skills

Duration: 4 weeks/1hour

Location: Dreamcatcher™ Ranch/Online via Zoom

This class includes 4 hours of hands-on instruction with your dog and out-of-class instruction and feedback on recorded training homework. It covers advanced activities and interactive skills for a dog to be working within in an AAS setting.

Screening

Offering an industry leading aptitude and temperament test that gathers detailed behavioural information about your canine, Dreamcatcher™ guides you to fully understanding ‘in the moment’ responses from your dog as his or her emotional state shifts during screening. Our skilled Canine Behavioural Experts educate you about what signals your companion uses to relay his or her feelings, needs and wants in everyday and stressful situations. Let our Experts provide you with detailed recommendations regarding areas of improvement for your canine’s behavior and what population or setting your canine would be best suited to work in as a career.



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Optional Canine Training

Private Training and Consultation

Private Training and Coaching are available upon request. For students who are unable to attend weekly classes, it may be possible to schedule One on One Consultations to complete the canine training individually instead of in a group format. These consultations can be in person or via zoom. Please contact the office for more information.

This concludes the Mandatory Canine Training to complete certification and qualifies a canine to work with people in their practices of helping other people. **To maintain certification, continued training will be required.**