

CERTIFICATION IN ANIMAL ASSISTED HUMAN SERVICES

Dreamcatcher™ certifies the professional handler alongside their animal counterpart and offers training for 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. This course is delivered online, enabling students to progress at their own pace. However, it is expected that the student will complete their certification within a two-year timeframe. The content in the first 3 Distance Learning Courses is imperative to both therapists and educators 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 Human 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. Dreamcatcher™ offers canine screening, evaluations, and private consultations with our certified Animal Behaviour Specialist. Dreamcatcher™ no longer offers canine trainings; students will need to find an eligible dog trainer to continue their canine certification. All trainers selected by students must be approved by Dreamcatcher™. This is to provide the highest level of service, and to ensure all ethical and professional considerations are in place. Details about our screening, consults, and certification process 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 Human Services.

This certification process has been developed due to the growing demand from professionals to receive a certificate for their training in Animal Assisted Human 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 Educator** – For people who are educators, teacher's aides, instructors by profession.
- **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's 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. This training is not part of the certification process.

Mandatory Professional Trainings

Distance Learning

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

Pre-requisites: None

Duration: At Students' Pace

Location: Distance Learning

This course will introduce professionals to the field of Animal Assisted Human Services, learning the history, definitions, requirements, and more. 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 AAHS, 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 Human 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 Human Services (AAHS) necessary for best practices in AAHS. 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 AAHS 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 Human Services in Counselling is designed for those that have chosen a career in counselling or therapeutic services. Part Four B – Applications of Animal Assisted Human Services in Education is designed for those who are working as educational professionals.

Professional Training – Part Four A – Applications of Animal Assisted Human 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. 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 Human 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 AAHS can be practiced and inform about the importance of maintaining balance in the AAHS 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 AAHS 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 Human 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 Human 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. On site accommodations can be rented if booked in advance. Students can attend this internship at any time during their process but it is recommended to do it after they have acquired the knowledge from the courses.



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 Human 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. Please note, Dreamcatcher™ does not currently offer this course, students will need to obtain these credentials through a separate institution.

Professional Training – Part Eight – Integrating Animal Assisted Human Services Into Practices

This step provides hands-on application of course learnings under an approved Animal Assisted Services Professional (AASP) supervisor. It ensures practitioners can implement all aspects of AAHS in their chosen field while understanding their scope of practice and ethical obligations. Students must complete 125 hours of practice with 10 hours of recorded supervision (video, telephone, or virtual) with a qualified AAHS supervisor. Students will submit 10 hours of video footage working with their animal counterpart and clients and/or arrange supervision discussions about their practices. Upon completion, the supervisor will recommend the student for AAHS certification and verify the Scope of Practice document is complete and accurate. Dreamcatcher™ maintains strict confidentiality, ensuring all client information remains anonymous.

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, Human Services Assistance Animals must be rescreened and have new scopes of practice reviewed every 2 years.**

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

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 for his/her career.

Training

Students must find an eligible dog trainer approved by Dreamcatcher™. It is important to find a science-based, human trainer. Some credentials to look for when choosing a dog trainer are:

- CPDT-KA/CPDT-KSA (Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers)
- CABK/CBCC-KA (Certified Animal Behaviour Consultant/Canine-Knowledge Assessed)
- KPA CTP (Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partner)

Helpful Links:

- Choosing a Dog Trainer Tips: <https://www.ccpdt.org/dog-owners/how-to-choose-a-dog-trainer/>
- CPDT/CBCC Trainer Directory: <https://www.ccpdt.org/dog-owners/certified-dog-trainer-directory/>
- Karen Pryor Trainer Directory: <https://karenpryoracademy.com/find-a-trainer/#!/directory/map>

Optional Canine Training

Private Consultation

Dreamcatcher™ offers in-home or online consultations and coaching sessions that are tailored to suit the needs of you and your canine. Let us build a training plan with you, while focusing in on particular challenges your dog is experiencing. Remote students may find a dog trainer approved by Dreamcatcher™ to complete their consultations. Private consultations are available upon request. Please contact the office for more information.

Update on our Canine Certification Process

Dreamcatcher™ is currently working on developing partnerships with qualified trainers across the country to provide access to trusted professionals in their local area. One of the most important pieces of the work in this field is to guarantee 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. However, we are still actively developing the components of our new canine certification process and will share more details as they become available. Our commitment to maintaining high standards for certification remains unchanged and we will continue to support our students in the certification process.

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.**