



Dreamcatcher Animal Assisted Wellness Academy

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CERTIFICATION IN ANIMAL ASSISTED WELLNESS AND THERAPY

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 Therapy. Many professionals are either already partnering with their animals to deliver therapeutic services or interested in doing so.

There is a growing body of research to support working with animals to help people. There are many benefits to this medium of therapy and as a result, it is becoming very popular.

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

Levels of Certification:

- **Animal Assisted Therapist** - Master's level helping professionals. This includes mental health therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and anyone else who holds a Master's level degree in their helping profession. 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, Educators and anyone else who holds a Bachelor's level 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 following described process is for certification as a helping professional. Animal Handlers will follow the Animal Handler certification process which is currently under construction and will be posted soon.

OPTIONAL:

Two Day Introduction and Exploration to Animal Assisted Therapy – On-Site Learning

This entails a hands-on, 2 day introduction and exploration of Animal Assisted Therapy for those who are interesting in learning more about the field of AAT before committing to the certification process. This two day training is accompanied by a variety of advanced reading materials and occurs at the Dreamcatcher facility. This training is not part of the certification process.



Animal Assisted Therapist and Animal Assisted Wellness Practitioner Certification Steps

Step 1 Introduction to Animal Assisted Interventions – Distance Learning

This component of the process entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 72 hours of learning about the theoretical and basic foundations of AAT, an overview of the research in the field and an introduction to the ethics and applications of the field. It is equivalent to a 6 credit university course.

Step 2 Ethics in Animal Assisted Interventions – 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 ethics of all aspects of AAT in all models, professions and applications of the field. It is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.

Step 3 Applications of Animal Assisted Interventions – Distance Learning

This component entails a Distance Education and Theoretical Learning aspect that is conducted online. It consists of 36 hours of learning about the different applications of AAT, protocols for each application and setting and detailed information regarding starting or establishing new programs. It is equivalent to a 3 credit university course.

Step 4 Exploring Animal Assisted Interventions – 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 interventions. This is a 36 hour course and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course. It is a four day internship that takes place at the Dreamcatcher facility in Ardrossan, Alberta. On site accommodations can be rented if booked in advance.

Step 5 Animals in Practice

This component is comprised of either working with your own animals in your practices or attending other seminars/learnings in Animal Assisted Interventions. 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.

Step 6 – Completion of an Animal Species / Behavior Course

This refers to undergoing a course in animal behavior 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.

Step 7 – 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 AAI in their chosen field as well as fully understand their scope of practice. It will consist of role playing scenarios in the AAI mediums, incorporating all skills into practice and ensuring all ethical obligations are fully understood and adhered to. This is a 36 hour course and is equivalent to a 3 credit university course. It is a one week long internship that takes place at the Dreamcatcher facility in Ardrossan, Alberta. On site accommodations can be rented if booked in advance.



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Step 8 - 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 AAI as well as ensuring that the Scope of Practice document is complete and accurate.

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.

To maintain certification, continuing education will be required.

All educational courses are subject to GST.

This certification process will qualify people to work with animal species OTHER THAN EQUINES in their practices of helping people. Equine Facilitated Wellness certification will not be covered in this process but can be pursued through the EFW-CAN Association <http://www.equinefacilitatedwellness.org/home/>

Equine Assisted Certification at Dreamcatcher will follow at a later date.