



dreamcatcher™
animal assisted
wellness academy

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 Interventions. Many professionals are either already partnering with their animals to deliver intervention or educational 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.



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This 2-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 AAI, 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 Law and Ethics in Animal Assisted Interventions – Distance Learning

This course will provide interested professionals with an in-depth understanding of the ethics of Animal Assisted Interventions (AAIs) necessary for best practices in AAI. Animal assisted practitioners require a thorough understanding of animal behavior, human-animal interactions, potential animal diseases, animal screening and training processes and much more. Students will learn the ethical standards 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.

Step 3 Animals In Practice – Distance Learning

This course will provide detailed information about the many ways animals are currently being partnered with to help people and their proper titles depending on the type of work they are doing. The common species of animals typically partnered with in AAI 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.

Step 4a Applications of Animal Assisted Interventions in Counselling – 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 along with their proper titles depending on the type of work they are doing. 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.



Step 4b Applications of Animal Assisted Interventions in Education – 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 AAI can be practiced and inform about the importance of maintaining balance in the AAI 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 AAE 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.

Step 5 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 three - day internship that takes place at the Dreamcatcher™ facility in Ardrossan, Alberta. On site accommodations can be rented if booked in advance.

Step 6 Working with 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 7 – 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 8 – 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 three-day internship that takes place at the Dreamcatcher™ facility in Ardrossan, Alberta. On site accommodations can be rented if booked in advance.

Step 9 - 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.



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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:

- Registration Form and 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.