

Animal Assisted Intervention International Glossary of Terms

Accreditation: The recognition of a program or institution that maintains standards of professional practice.

Advocacy: Providing or supporting a voice for the rights, needs and preferences of the people and animals with which you work.

Agency: The capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power; action or activity; operation; choice making. To have a choice between at least two desirable options in a scenario.

Advanced Level Competencies: Discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes employed in a professional capacity such as an appropriately educated and trained, experienced, qualified professional that is active in a specific area of AAIs (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP and/or AAPP). The advanced level reflects someone who has mastered the entry and intermediate level skills reflected in the standards and many competencies of their member category (or categories). They have gained enough experience to be independent in theory and practice, and automatically implement standards and competencies into practice. Advanced level members recognize that continuing education and professional development is lifelong.

Animal Assisted Activities (AAA): AAA incorporates specially selected and trained animals into impromptu or planned activities and interactions that may be offered by volunteer, paraprofessional or professional human-animal teams. AAA may be unstructured or goal oriented in areas such as motivational, recreational, social and general well-being. AAA teams have participated in a minimum of introductory preparation and training for the populations they visit and the dog they are handling. With additional preparation and training, AAA teams can work directly with a licensed, degreed or equivalent healthcare, human service or educational professional in AAE, AAT and AASP. AAAs promote mutual wellbeing and benefits for the humans and animals involved. AAIs may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Animal Assisted Education (AAE): AAE incorporates specially selected and trained animals into goal directed, educationally relevant teaching plans that are designed to promote development of general or special education skills in areas such as cognition, social functioning, personal growth, responsible pet carers, etc. AAE is developed, directed and/or delivered by a person who is licensed, degreed or equivalent education professional specialized expertise in teaching/education. The process is evaluated and documented. AAE providers who handle their own dogs have additional intermediate to advanced training in dog advocacy, handling, communication, behavior, husbandry, health, welfare and well-being in both living and working situations. Alternatively, teaching/education providers may choose to work in conjunction with an AAA team, a professional dog handler or an AASP who have additional training for the scope of AAE. AAE may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. AAE promotes mutual wellbeing and benefits for the humans and animals involved. AAEs may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI): AAI is an interdisciplinary term that describes unstructured or goal-oriented activities that intentionally incorporate animals into human services, healthcare, education and similar fields. AAIs may be individual or group in nature, and are appropriate for a variety of ages and abilities. AAI is an umbrella term that encompasses the AAI membership fields including Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA), Animal Assisted Education (AAE), Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP) and Animal Assisted Placement Programs (AAPP). AASP and AAPP represent member categories that reflect the wide ranging nature of AAI, and that AAI service providers who do not fit into AAA, AAE or AAT have indicated the need for. AAIs promote wellbeing and benefits for humans and provide a positive experience for the animals without force, coercion or exploitation. AAIs may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Animal Assisted Intervention Animal Handler: A person who has been trained to handle animals for the specific area and level of AAI in which they provide services (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP or AAPP). An AAI animal handler has knowledge in animal behavior, communication, animal training skills and animal welfare.

Animal Assisted Intervention Instructor: A person who is an expert with comprehensive and authoritative Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes in theory, practice (experience) and research in one or more specific areas of AAI. Instructors frequently demonstrate expertise by teaching coursework, participating in the development of theory and research, publishing papers, research, etc. in one or more areas of AAI (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP) expertise.

Animal Assisted Placement Program (AAPP): An AAPP involves a professional program or individual who provides specially selected and/or trained animals to professionals in AAA, AAE, AAT or AASP. AAPPs instruct animal recipients/handlers about animal advocacy, handling, training, communication, behavior, husbandry, health, welfare and well-being in both living and working situations. Some examples of AAPPs are Assistance Dogs International (ADI) (or similar) dog training organizations or similar that raise, train and place “facility dogs” or train dogs for placement with healthcare, human service, education, crisis response, clinics. AAPPs also includes individuals or organizations that offer owner-self-training classes for healthcare, education or human service providers, etc. AAPP promotes positive, safe relationships between the handler and the animal.

Animal Assisted Special Program (AASP): AASPs offer goal-oriented programs that incorporate specially selected and trained animals to work in professional fields outside of animal assisted education and therapy or in conjunction with these licensed professionals. AASP personnel may or may not have a license, degree, or equivalent, but are delivering a professional level service or program. Examples of these programs: Prison dog training classes that teach inmates life/job skills, community programs for people with disabilities, job training, etc., formal crisis intervention department work (e.g. victim advocates), at-risk populations, camps/vocational programs/after school classes for people with disabilities that develop specific skills, a person who teaches veterans with PTSD how to train animals as part other their life skills goals, dogs that work with paramedics/fire stations and that comfort of victims, ministry dogs (dogs that work with priests, etc.). AASPs promote wellbeing and benefits for humans and provide a positive experience for the animals without force, coercion or exploitation. AASPs may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT): AAT incorporates specially selected and trained animals into goal directed therapeutic/intervention plans that are designed to promote improvement in physical, cognitive, psychosocial, behavioral, and/or emotional functioning. AAT is developed, directed and/or delivered by a professional who is educated, licensed, degreed or equivalent in healthcare/human service and has specialized expertise within the scope of practice of his/her profession; the process is evaluated and documented. AAT providers have additional intermediate to advanced continuing education for AAT theory and practice. AAT providers who handle their own animals have additional intermediate to advanced training in dog advocacy, handling, communication, behavior, husbandry, health, welfare and well-being in both living and working situations. Alternatively, healthcare and human service providers may choose to work in conjunction with an AAA team, a professional dog handler or an AASP who have additional training for the scope of AAT. AAT may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. AAT promotes mutual wellbeing and benefits for the humans and animals involved. AAT may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Animal abuse: Causing physical, psychological or emotional harm to an animal.

Animal neglect: Failing to meet the basic health and welfare needs of an animal including access to water, food, shelter, adequate space for expression of normal behavior, and freedom from distress and pain.

Animal related trauma: The human experience of a traumatic event involving an animal.

Animal Trainer: A person who has skills and knowledge in the area of animal development, husbandry, communication, behavior/behavior modification, practical skills to identify an animals learning style, harness appropriate behaviors, teach an animal how to respond to cues and work with people of all ages and abilities. Animal trainers for AAls should have working knowledge about human-animal interactions, gather information about the specific handler, environment, population and activities in which the animal will be living and working.

Animal Training Instructor: A person who possesses the skills of an animal trainer and can generalize and teach those skills to human recipients of professionally trained or owner self-trained animals for their work in AAA, AAT, AAE or AASP.

Assessment: The performance measurement of a program, participant, staff or dog. May be part of the process of being accredited.

Assessor: AAll trained and approved representative who carries out the accreditation assessment.

Autonomy: Self-government; freedom to act or function independently.

Beneficence: A moral obligation to act for the benefit of others. There are 2 aspects of beneficence: 1 - providing benefits. 2 - balancing benefits and risks/harms.

Board: Board of trustees or directors – ultimately responsible for the program.

Breed specific traits: Behaviour, anatomy and/or appearance typical of a specific breed of dog.

Classical conditioning: Learning concept wherein a benign stimulus and an intrinsically meaningful stimulus are repeatedly paired. The dog eventually responds to the benign stimulus alone with the behavioural response elicited by the intrinsically meaningful stimulus.

Conditioned handling: Graded exposure.

Confidentiality: Appropriate management of verbal, written and recorded participant information, which protects an individuals' right to privacy, as agreed by provider and participant at start of AAI service provision.

Continuing education: Individual engagement in face-to-face, online and paper resources to increase knowledge, skills competency in an area of AAI.

Developmental disability: A condition or diagnosis that impacts an individual's cognitive development and/or ability across the lifespan.

Dog burnout: An overall decrease in a dog's physical, mental or emotional health and/or wellbeing due specifically to duration, type or intensity of AAI work.

Dog stress relief/prevention strategies: Enriching activities embedded in the daily routine of dogs which promote typical behaviour and access to diverse physical, cognitive, sensory and/or emotional stimulation.

Enrichment: Provision of activities that allow for an animal to demonstrate species-typical behaviors including physical, cognitive, sensory or emotional stimulation designed to increase an animal's overall health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Entry Level Competencies: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes required of anyone (human or animal) that is new to AAIs and extending through operating at all levels and in all capacities including AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, AAPP (volunteer, paraprofessional, and professional). The entry level encompasses awareness and initial implementation of skills, knowledge and attitudes reflected in the standards and competencies for those new to AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP and AAPP member categories.

Ethics: Overarching moral principles that guide practice.

Ethological: Understanding a situation/event via the lens of natural animal behaviour and evolution.

Expert Level Competencies: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes required of anyone who has mastery skills (continuing education/professional development) in theory, practice (experience) and research in one or more specific areas of AAI. This category would include those who teach or instruct coursework, who complete research, publish papers, research, etc. in their membership category or categories. Members at the expert level have demonstrated mastery skills in one or more areas of AAI membership (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, AAPP), within their skill set and scope in the areas of theory, practice, research and constructive evaluation of people, animals or programs within their membership field. This category would include those who teach or instruct coursework, complete research, publish papers or books, etc. in their membership category or categories. Expert level members are eligible to become assessors for AAI accreditation.

Facility: A building or place that provides a service to people who are in need of specific care e.g. residential home, clinics, hospital, etc.

Facility Dog: A dog trained and placed with a primary (and secondary) handler to work in a facility such as a school, hospital, aged care facility, etc. The dog lives with the primary handler, and the primary handler meets the dogs' health and wellbeing needs during the workday and while at home. The secondary handler may share the role of caring for the dog, or may perform the primary handler's role when they are absent.

Grooming: Using specifically designed tools to clean a dog (example: brushing, trimming nails, cleaning ears, brushing teeth, bathing, etc.).

Handling: Using voice, physical contact and body position for communication intention and feedback to an animal.

Healthcare/human service provider: A person who has achieved professional practice with a college degree, license or equivalent in a primary discipline such as human mental health provider, occupational therapist, social worker, speech therapist, etc.

Human-Animal Bond: Mutually beneficial emotional, psychological and physical interactions that lead to a relationship that supports the health and well-being of both humans and animals.

Human-Animal Interaction: General reference to any exchange between a person and a non-human animal. This encompasses the human-animal bond.

Immuno-compromised: An overall decrease in the body's ability to fight infection/disease/ill health due to an existing diagnosis or condition.

Individual: Person working in an area of AAI.

Inservice: A (brief) training intended for collateral staff about AAI programs that will be taking place within the organization, center, etc.

Institution: A society or organization founded for a religious, educational, social, or similar purpose.

Intermediate AAI Competencies: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes required of dog-handler teams providing animal-assisted interventions including handlers who work under the direction of professional providers of AAE/AAT (paraprofessional and professional). The intermediate level reflects those who have mastered the entry level skills reflected within the standards and several competencies, but are still in the phase of being trained, mentored and/or supervised for AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP and/or AAPP. They are still learning the theoretical foundations of the standards and competencies, and are learning to apply them to practice in their member category (or categories) and discipline. Those with a position of intern, assistant and apprentices and similar best fit this category.

Leishmania: Skin condition caused by specific type of sand fly bite.

Macro: Large scale.

Mentor: A person with skills, knowledge and experience in AAI who is providing guidance, feedback and passing on skills and knowledge to another, typically less experienced, person working in AAI.

Micro: Small scale.

Negative reinforcement: Removing a stimulus that the recipient enjoys/finds favourable in response to a specific behaviour.

Negative punishment: Removing something positive to decrease an undesirable or bad behavior.

Non-maleficence: Means non-harming or inflicting the least harm possible to reach a beneficial outcome. Harm and its effects are considerations and part of the ethical decision-making process.

One Health Initiative: Movement promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration between all sectors relating to humans, animals and the environment for the betterment of all.

Operant conditioning: Learning concept wherein the dog is trained to make a link between a specific behavior and consequence.

Organization: an organized body of people with a particular purpose, especially a business, society, association, etc.

Paraprofessional: a person to whom a particular aspect of a professional task is delegated but who is not licensed to practice as a fully qualified professional.

Participant: Any individual who participates in AAI services – may also be known as patients, students or clients.

Petting: Physical contact/touch of a dog that is pleasant for both human and animal.

Philosophy of practice: Personal model that informs a provider's approach to all considerations related to daily service provision.

Physical disability: A condition or diagnosis that impacts an individual's physical development and/or ability across the lifespan.

Policy: Regularly revised document pertaining to practice, which clearly outlines a provider's position and expectations of staff and/or participants.

Positive punishment: Adding a stimulus that the recipient does not enjoy/does not find favourable in response to a specific behaviour.

Positive reinforcement: Adding a stimulus that the recipient enjoys/finds favourable in response to a specific behaviour, i.e. reward based.

Procedure: Regularly revised document pertaining to practice, which clearly outlines a process including expectations of staff and/or participants.

Protection/bite work: Role of a dog with specific training to respond using behaviour designed to prevent an individual from accessing another individual or resource.

Raw diet: Uncooked meat or animal products.

Secure base: An individual who elicits a feeling of safety, comfort, health and/or happiness in another human or animal.

Session: Instance of AAI conducted with individual or group.

Scope of practice: The limits within which a provider can ethically provide care, training, advice or information to a participant.

Standard(s): A set of rules that describe the quality of the administration and scope of programs, the participants, the animals, and the AAI members.

Temperament: An individual's naturally offered affect or behaviour.

Welfare: Refers to the state of a being; the treatment that a being receives and provision for physical, cognitive and emotional needs.

Well-being: An individual's (human animal or other animal) state of being safe, comfortable, healthy and happy. It involves quality of life.

Zoonosis: A disease that can be passed between humans and animals.