



Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP)

Standards, General Competencies, Accreditation Processes and Manual, and Glossary

The Animal Assisted Intervention International Standards of Practice most recent revision was **February 21, 2021**. This revision includes citations from articles and books, and peer-reviewed journals that identified the need for the outlined standards. The standards, competencies and accreditation procedures have been compiled into specific membership category booklets. The AAIL Board of Directors wishes to extend special thanks to the following people who made contributions to the revisions and spent hours reading and citing the literature, amongst other tedious work. AAIL has ongoing working groups that are currently developing complementary documents and are also listed here.

AAIL Standards

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Original Competencies: Stewart, L. A. (2014); Stewart, L. A., Chang, C. Y., Parker, L. K., & Grubbs, N. (2016); and Stewart, L. A., Johnson, A., Bruneau, L., & Callahan, M. M. (2016).

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Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP) Standards, General Competencies Accreditation Processes and Manual, and Glossary

Introduction

This booklet provides a clear outline of Animal Assisted Intervention International's requirements for members working in the field of AAPP. It covers:

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The Animal Assisted Special Programs membership category is defined as follows:

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 animals and provide a positive experience for the animals without force, coercion, or exploitation. AASPs may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Animal Assisted Special Programs Membership Criteria

Membership in AASP is open to organizations and individuals who have professional experience in interventions and who create and/or implement professional animal assisted programs to meet measurable goals outside of the fields of education and therapy.

Full membership criteria:

- Organization or individual should have advanced to expert level knowledge and experience in the practice of animal assisted interventions within their specialty work and/or the creation of professional AAI programs (See AAll Member Booklet for AASP, Appendix I, Competencies).
- Voting rights.
- Working group privileges.
- May apply for position on board of directors.
- Use of AAll Logo.

Full Membership example of titles:

- Director of Programs.
- Autism Specialist that is not considered therapy or education position.

- Assistance Dog Prison Instructor.
 - Canine Specialist (will define in glossary).
 - Animal Assisted Intervention Specialist/Consultant.
 - Social Worker in regions where social work is not considered a therapist position.
 - Child/Victim Protection Advocate.
- **Associate membership criteria:**
 - Membership in AASP is open to organizations and individuals who have entry level to intermediate level experience in AAls and who create and/or implement professional AAI programs to meet measurable goals outside of education and/or therapy/healthcare or alongside them with their own credentials as a specialist.
Some examples are: person or program who teaches veterans, inmates, or other populations to train dogs for their own life skills, social workers that are not working in therapeutic capacity, criminal defense professionals integrating dogs to assist victims, specialized crisis response teams in correctional facilities or to natural disasters, school based programs taught by professionals (other than those with education or healthcare license) with scholastic or therapeutic goals for the students, etc.
 - Working at a level of entry to intermediate level competencies (see AAI Member Booklet for AASP, Appendix I, Competencies).
 - No voting rights or Board of Director appointment.
 - Working group privileges upon invitation.
 - Use of AAI Logo.



Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP) Standards of Practice – Accreditation Manual

The Standards of Practice have been produced by the authors under the direction of the Members and Board of Directors of Animal Assisted Intervention International (AAII), to assist and encourage individuals, organizations, institutions, and health and human service providers who are interested in, or are implementing, any animal assisted intervention (AAI) program including AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP and AAPP. AAII considers this a living document that will undergo revisions as needed to keep up with the scope of AAI around the world.

The standards outlined in **this** booklet are a minimum of what is required to conduct an **AASP program** for Animal Assisted Intervention International (AAII) members. All programs are encouraged to work at levels above the minimum standards and should also meet any standards or regulations that are required by governing bodies for their region and their home organization.

The first four sets of Standards are the same for any AAI program with dogs, therefore, the term Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) will be used. The last set of standards are specific to AASP.

1. Standards of Practice for the Administration of Programs
2. Standards of Practice for the Ethical Treatment and Welfare of Participants
3. Standards of Practice for Dog Handlers and the Support of Dogs
4. Standards of Practice for the Health, Welfare and Well-being of Dogs
5. Standards of Practice for Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP)

Attached to each standard is a description of the assessment method(s) that will be used during the accreditation process as follows:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Documentation | Written evidence to show compliance |
| Observation | Assessor observes standard during session, pre-video etc. |
| Interview | Discussions with people involved in the process |

For those seeking accreditation, the required documentation, and the order in which they need to be organized in your accreditation portfolio may be found in the section titled ACCREDITATION PORTFOLIO at the end of this document.

Guidance Notes

Where appropriate, **Guidance Notes** are included to support the Standard and are there to facilitate understanding and/or clarifying the associated sentence(s).

Recording the assessment

- ✓ Each section needs to be successfully met.

In this document:

“**Shall**” indicates a requirement.

“**Should**” indicates a recommendation.

Standards of Practice for the Administration of Programs

These standards apply to all members/member organizations and their volunteers, staff, and anyone who is facilitating or participating in any program.

1.0 Program Structure

1.1 Members shall have an organizational chart for staff. **(Documentation)**

1.2 Where programs operate as not-for-profits, they shall be legally established with articles of incorporation/statutes/bylaws. **(Documentation)**

1.3 Where programs operate as for-profits, this shall be made clear to clients/partners. **(Documentation/Observation/Interview)**

2.0 Complaints Policy

2.1 Members shall have a written policy as to how complaints received from staff, volunteers, participants, and facility partners will be addressed. **(Documentation)**

Guidance Note:

The policy must provide a clear process for resolving complaints.

3.0 Safe Working Environment

3.1 Members shall complete annual risk assessments and management plans for each location where any type of AAI (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, AAPP) is carried out, to ensure staff, participants, partners, and dogs are always operating in a safe environment. **(Documentation, Interview & Observation)**

Guidance Note:

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Issues relating to dog transport and/or dog holding area issues (indoor or outdoor).
- Ensuring there are first aid kits available when working at a facility.

- Environment is conducive and comfortable for dogs and participants for AAI activity.

4.0 Image Protection

4.1 Members shall have a procedure in place for gaining written consent from participants, staff or volunteers for any filming or photography that involves them. **(Documentation)**

5.0 Confidentiality of Information

5.1 Members shall have a written policy that ensures any sensitive information and records regarding applicants, participants, volunteers, staff, and donors will be treated confidentially. Policy includes a statement that applicant/client information will not be disclosed to any third party unless she/he has given prior express permission. **(Documentation & Interview)**

5.2 Sensitive information shall be kept secure. **(Observation)**

6.0 Insurance

6.1 Members shall have insurance in place appropriate to all activities undertaken and to deal with all key risks. This may include any or all the following: Professional liability, business liability, dog training, bodily injury to clients or other staff, etc. **(Documentation & Interview)**

7.0 Operating Partners

7.1 Where a member is working closely with another partner/organization (e.g. facility), appropriate documentation (e.g. contracts, leases, agreements, memorandum of understanding, etc.) shall be in place. **(Documentation)**

8.0 Marketing Statements and Fundraising

8.1 Members shall only make statements about their work in any form of promotional material that they know to be honest. **(Documentation/Observation)**

8.2 Members shall comply with any local fundraising regulations and, at a minimum, keep records of their fundraising activities, including the source of any money raised. **(Observation/Interview)**



Standards of Practice for the Ethical Treatment and Welfare of Participants

These standards apply to all members/member organizations and their volunteers, staff, and anyone who is facilitating or participating in any program.

1.0 Human Interaction

1.1 All AAI personnel (healthcare/human service providers, dog handlers etc.) supporting the participant SHALL demonstrate positive human interaction with the participant and have appropriate social skills, verbal and nonverbal communication. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will observe that the people involved in the interactions have appropriate verbal, non-verbal and social skills to ensure good communication at all stages of the intervention. This includes a respectful working relationship between members of the team, and an understanding of the human-animal bond.

1.2 Participants and other professionals shall be treated with respect at all times. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Providers respect the autonomy of participants and implement an informed consent process before all interactions (*Bibbo, 2013; Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013; Hartwig & Smelser, 2018; Winkle & Ni, 2019*).
- Providers avoid assumptions about particular cultures and animals, as these are not universal (*Every et al., 2017*).

1.3 All support staff and members of the participant's team shall be involved in planning and be adaptable to meet the challenges of any session. **(Interview/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- You will need to show the assessor evidence that all your work is patient/client goal oriented, appropriately treatment planned, carried out, measured, and documented. This should include general summaries, and information on the duration, nature, and content of sessions.



- Both participant and anyone present should have the option to terminate the intervention any time (*Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013; Winkle & Ni, 2019*)



- Evaluator will ask for your “Rules of Engagement” or introduction to the dog, including how participants are guided for appropriate behavior and safety when interacting with the dog. This should be in written form within the portfolio but may be delivered by other means (spoken word, demonstration, sign language, etc.) when introducing the dog to participants.
- First aid kits for humans and another for dogs should be at each program location. Emergency and regular veterinary information should be posted or carried with handler at each program location. Diagram/written evacuation plans should be in view of handlers and participants.

1.4 AAI team members shall participate in at least 8 hours of annual formal continuing education covering human animal interactions/bond, dog handling, behavior and training, population disability, formal session planning etc. A minimum 4 hours should be dog focused and 4 hours human focused. **(Documentation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- AAI providers are expected to have specific training and supervision or mentoring in their area of AAI (*Chandler, 2005; McBride et al., 2006; Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013; Baumgartner & Cho, 2014; Stewart et al., 2015; Winkle & Ni, 2019*). Training includes clinical work, risk management and informed consent (*Hartwig & Smelser, 2018*):



1.5 Those involved in the delivery of AAI sessions should work within their existing capabilities. They must be honest, transparent and accurate about their competence, experience and qualifications/ training. For example, AAA providers do not refer to AAA sessions as formal therapy (AAT) or education (AAE), except in sessions in which they are working with licensed/degreed providers. An organization that only works within one member category should describe itself as providing that service rather than claim AAls which implies more than one AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, AAPP. **(Documentation/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- The professional ethics of relevant, respective professions and organizations should be adhered to (*Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013; Winkle & Ni, 2019*). An organization that only works within AAA should describe itself as such rather than claim AAls which implies AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, AAPP.

2.0 Working with Participants, Healthcare and Human Service Professionals (if applicable)

2.1 AAI staff shall ensure that participants are thoroughly screened or evaluated prior to participation (history with animals, allergies, physically, cognitively, and psychosocially healthy/safe enough to participate) (*Winkle & Ni, 2019*). **(Documentation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- Screening assesses allergies, comfort levels, feelings about animals, experience with animals, expectations and responsibilities related to pets, general interests, cultural views and potential for animal harm/contraindications (*Bibbo, 2013; Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013; Baumgartner & Cho, 2014; Silcox et al., 2014; Hartwig & Smelser, 2018*).
- Providers understand significance and implications of a history of animal cruelty, and its link to violence and abuse within interpersonal relationships, in assessments, screening and development of individual therapy plans. Research (*Risley-Curtiss et al., 2006; Risley-Curtiss, 2010 as cited in Evans & Gray, 2012, NZ; IAHAIO, 2018*). *Pagani et al. (2010)* suggest that abuse of animals by children or young people is often hidden from and/or minimized by parents and caregivers, therefore child and youth self-report measures are recommended. Providers acknowledge that, in addition to those with a known history of cruelty towards animals, other participants will have undisclosed histories of cruelty towards animals. Therefore, adequate staffing levels and supervision must be in place regardless of known history. (*Evans & Gray, 2012, NZ; Arluke 1999 as cited in Fine 2015*).

2.2 All AAI work shall be appropriately planned, documented, and guided with clear treatment plans/ goals or educational plans/goals for AAT or AAE produced. Client performance is measured and documented. (*Winkle & Ni, 2019*). **(Documentation/ Interview/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Goals: Providers have well developed instructional/intervention plans and clear purpose for incorporating AAT:

[REDACTED]

- Documentation: Providers record and document observations to identify and describe participant's patterns of behavior, as needed, according to discipline/ organization standards (ex. subjective, objective, measurable activities, and outcomes). While a structured approach to documenting outcomes and evaluating effectiveness is advised for some programs (AAT/AAE), it is not always possible or suitable for all AAI programs. Confidentiality is maintained for all documentation and participant information (*Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013*).
- Program evaluation: Providers undertake systematic program evaluation to assess efficacy (*Barba, 1995; Johnson et al., 2003 as cited in Bibbo, 2013; McBride et al., 2006; Winkle & Ni, 2019*).

2.3 Handler shall be in control of the situation and be able to attend to the dual responsibility of advocacy for both the participant and the dog(s). **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Providers have specific training in animal health, welfare, well-being, behavior, and advocacy to ensure animal well-being and participant safety (*Jalongo et al., 2004 as cited in Baumgartner & Cho, 2014; Dawson and Campbell, 2005, as cited in McBride et al., 2006; Friesen, 2010; Stewart, Chang, Parker & Grubbs, 2016, as cited in Hartwig & Smelser 2018; Foreman et al., 2017; Winkle & Ni, 2019*).

- Providers have a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with the animal (*Stewart, Chang and Rice 2013, as cited in Hartwig & Smelser, 2018; Fine, 2015; VanFleet & Faa-Thompson, 2017*), and promote the well-being of the animal, including providing adequate opportunity to rest and recover (*Serpell, 2006; Zamiř, 2006, as cited in Evans & Gray, 2012*). Providers acknowledge the potential to do harm to the animal and that animals are sentient being with needs equal to that of a person (*Society for Companion Animal Studies Limited, 2013; Taylor, Fraser, Signal, & Prentice, 2014, as cited in Every et al., 2017; Fine, 2015*).

2.4 Handlers shall have a strong understanding of the populations they are serving, and medical/behavioral clearance when necessary. **(Documentation/Interview/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

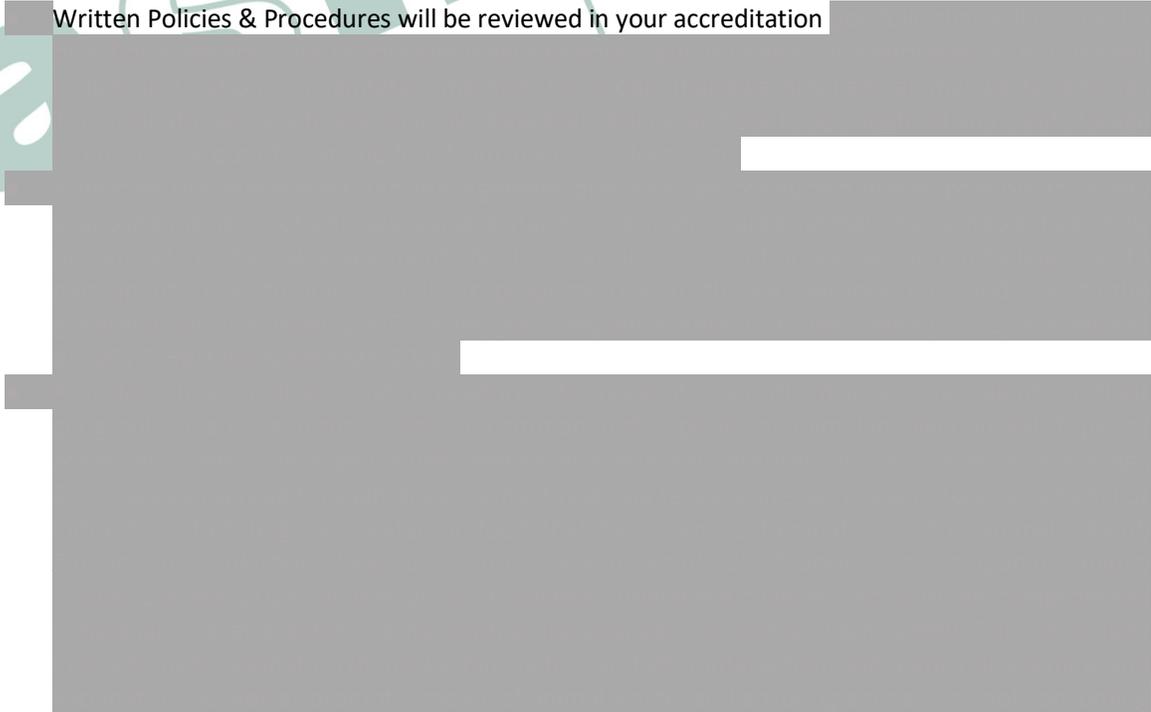


2.5 Providers shall assess and manage risks in all AAI activities and environments, including typical bio-directional zoonotic risk factors, public health crisis situations, and no raw-food policies. **(Documentation/Interview/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- All levels of organization understand risks associated with injury, zoonotic disease transmission, public health crisis situations, and providers seek expert advice in these areas to assess and manage risk to ensure welfare of humans and animals (*Chandler, 2005; McBride et al., 2006; Evans & Gray, 2012; Winkle, 2016; Occupational Safety and Health Administration, as cited in Foreman et al., 2017*).

Written Policies & Procedures will be reviewed in your accreditation



[Redacted]

3.0 Communication

3.1 AAI personnel shall demonstrate ability to communicate respectfully with AAI participants, families, and any other support staff, and ability to appropriately educate others about AAA, AAT, AAE and animal advocacy (welfare and well-being). **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

[Redacted]

3.2 AAI personnel shall ensure the safety of participants (appropriate interactions, not immunocompromised, etc.) and the dogs that work with them. **(Documentation/ Observation/ Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- It is recommended that providers seek legal counsel to review all policies and procedures concerning participant safety (*Job Accommodation Network, Michigan State University School of Law, Foreman et al., 2017*).

Policies, procedures, and staff education [Redacted]

4.0 Other staff/Organization structure

4.1 Participants have the right to service delivery from qualified staff/providers. **(Documentation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

This should include the following:



- All staff should understand the clear goals and objectives of the AAI program (*Milgate et al., 2002, as cited in Foreman et al., 2017; Baumgartner & Cho, 2014*).



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Standards of Practice for Handlers Supporting Dogs (Previously titled 'Animal Support')

These standards apply whether there is a dedicated dog handler or an AAA/AAT/AE/AASP provider is handling their own dog. These standards apply to all members/member organizations and their volunteers, staff, and anyone who is facilitating or participating in any program.

1.0 Human Interaction

1.1 Dog Handlers shall acknowledge and work within their own level of competence, education, licensure, and skill set. **(Interview/Observation)**

1.2 During an AAI program, the dog handler shall demonstrate positive examples of human interaction, through appropriate social skills, including verbal and nonverbal communication. **(Observation)**

1.3 The dog handler shall show empathy and sensitivity for the participants with whom they work, and all others involved. They should demonstrate the ability to build rapport and establish effective working relationships with participants, therapists, other professionals, and volunteers, demonstrating good communication skills. **(Observation)**

1.4 They shall demonstrate the ability to be adaptable and flexible and demonstrate imagination and creativity when planning and carrying out activities or interventions. The dog handler should be proactive and show evidence of thinking ahead and predicting possible problems/danger and show good problem-solving skills. They should have the ability to remain calm, even if difficult situations arise so that the participants and dog are kept calm. **(Observation)**

1.5 They shall demonstrate an understanding of human-animal interactions (HAI) and the human animal bond (HAB). **(Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- 1.1 – 1.5 It is clearly vital that people involved in the interactions must have very good social (verbal and non-verbal) skills. The likely evidence of this will be clear communication between everyone involved and evidence of good forward planning. Assessors will want to see evidence of this planning during their visit. They will also want to observe interactions, in person or via videos.
- Everyone involved in the interactions needs a good understanding of HAI and HAB, and evidence of how this has been developed through experience and educational work will be required. It is important you keep documentary evidence of any training you provide to your team.

2.0 Preparation for AAI Sessions

2.1 Participants shall be screened for allergies, zoonosis, medical conditions (e.g. infections, open wounds, burns, immunocompromise), visual impairments, mental health status (e.g. hallucinations, dementia, etcetera), phobias, cultural issues, aggression, violence, abuse/neglect issues, or any other indicators that would put the participants, dog handler, provider, or dog at risk. This standard is meant as a preparatory standard, not an exclusion of participation. (Winkle, 2016; Chandler, 2017). **(Documentation)**

2.2 All involved employees shall be informed about and introduced to the AAI program prior to program implementation. Where possible, the dog handler should introduce the dog to the environment in which it is going to work and the staff it will work with prior to the AAI program starting (Winkle, 2016). **(Interview)**

2.3 Dog handlers shall be thoroughly screened prior to undertaking the role and undergo a comprehensive induction process. **(Documentation)**

2.4 The dog handler shall show careful handling and supporting the dog when needed and encourage initiative while still maintaining control. This is important in order for the dog to learn to have genuine interactions with clients. A dog handler shall have working knowledge (knows personality, skills, etc.) of the dog they are working with, and will develop and maintain a working relationship with the dog prior to sessions. **(Interview/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- AAIL acknowledges that different elements of AAI require different levels of skills. Assessors will want to ensure that the key people working with your organization, or you if you work alone, fully understand the different AAI disciplines and the respective skills and experience required to be successful. Volunteers are unlikely to have the same kind of skill as professional handlers, but they should understand the different disciplines within AAI (AAT, AAA, AAE) and be aware of the skill levels required to undertake each intervention effectively.

[Redacted text block]

- Where you are working with volunteers, your educational program should consist of the following at a minimum. Assessors will look for evidence of the following:

[Redacted text block]

- 
- Professional staff trainers/handlers should have experience in handling/training dogs for special interventions and show how they are involved in at least 8 hours continuing education each year as previously detailed.

3.0 Working with Participants, Healthcare and Human Service Providers (if applicable)

3.1 The dog handler shall demonstrate an understanding of their role in each session and take guidance and direction from the healthcare, human service, educational or special program personnel regarding the participant's goals/activities. If working within AAT sessions, these should be planned with involvement from the handler and the therapist. The handler must be able to communicate effectively with a multidisciplinary team, using appropriate language and be reliable and predictable so the professionals with whom they work know what to expect from them. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- You will be required to show assessors how you organize your sessions and the planning you undertake. Dog handler should understand and operate according to their qualifications. They demonstrate ability to respond to the dog's needs and needs of the participant/group.

3.2 The dog handler acts as the advocate for the dog and shall have the ability to say "no" if the dog is not suitable for or is uncomfortable during a session, or if a facility is not appropriate for a dog's presence or engagement. The activities within a session should be suited to that participant and dog. **(Observation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- When planning sessions, the handler will ensure that the dog is not overworked, or at risk of burnout. Length and frequency of sessions, and number of breaks should be suited to the individual dog's abilities. The dog handler should be able to show judgement and be able to make decisions on behalf of the dog and not compromise the dog for the participants.

3.3 During an AAI session, it is the dog handler's responsibility to pay attention to the dog, its behavior, communication and safeguarding the dog where necessary, not allowing people to crowd or suddenly approach the dog and ensuring the dog has room to move away if needed. There may be times when it is appropriate to remove the dog from the situation, and the dog handler will use their judgement to decide when this is necessary. **(Observation)**

3.4 The dog handler shall have training and experience interacting with different people with physical and/or developmental disabilities/conditions, mental health conditions, relevant to the participants group with whom they will be working and should show an awareness of the needs of each individual participant. **(Documentation/Interview/Observation)**

3.5 The dog handler shall be polite and adhere to confidentiality policies. **(Interview)**

4.0 Education/Experience

4.1 The dog handler (including healthcare/human service/educational or special program providers who handle their own dogs) shall have good, general knowledge of dogs, including learning theory, and the application of humane training methods using relationship development and positive reinforcement (e.g. clicker training, body language, behavior, stress indicators, and calming techniques). Dog handlers will NOT

use aversive equipment (choke chains, prong collars, martingale collars, electronic, or any other devices that administer negative or harmful stimuli), positive punishment nor negative reinforcement techniques, as they are not allowed. **(Documentation/Observation/Interview)**

4.2 The dog handler shall have knowledge of the human participant's social behavior and understanding of the dog's freedom of choice and preferences for persons, environments, and situations. **(Observation)**

4.3 The dog handler shall have insight and training for breed specific traits, be knowledgeable about classical and operant conditioning, and demonstrate techniques of positive reinforcement and gentle handling rather than positive punishment and negative reinforcement or restraint (e.g. choke chains/leash corrections, leash jerks), show awareness of canine developmental milestones (mental, physical, and social), and individual skill level and range of capabilities for each dog he/she handles. The dog handler should know the dog they are working with well and understand their individual preferences, strengths and limitations. **(Documentation/Interview/Observation)**

4.4 Dog handlers shall attend staff and participant meetings when appropriate, in-service or complete recommended basic education materials for each population of participants served. They must conduct an ongoing evaluation of the environment for safety. **(Interview)**

4.5 Staff and volunteers who handle dogs independently for programs (AAA, AAT, AAE or AASP), without supervision, shall have initial training as laid out in the competencies. Handlers shall have a designated mentor until able to demonstrate basic entry level skills, and complete at least 8 hours of formal continuing education every year in the topics of animal assisted intervention, dog training/handling, or dog behavior. **(Documentation)**

This may include:

- Workshops
- In-services
- Webinars
- Books
- Formal coursework
- Conferences
- Mentorships/Internships

4.6 Dog handlers shall be able to demonstrate an understanding of the following areas:



(Interview/Documentation)

4.7 The dog handler shall be trained in and demonstrate zoonotic risk/ infection control and public health crisis contact information, knowledge for their region, including risks to participant and environmental precautions (Winkle, 2016). Written documentation should include:

- Risk factor (e.g. tape worm).
- If and how it is transmitted between dogs and people (or from person to dog to another person).
- If it is transmittable to other dogs.
- Where/How it is spread.
- How to recognize it.
- Cleaning procedures (indoors/outdoors).
- Treatment for dog.
- Prevention for human and dog.

(Documentation/Interview)

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will want to talk to your handlers about how they have developed their skills and the approach they take during sessions. Their responses need to be in line with the standards.
- Assessors will also want proof that continuing training is in place for all handlers with at least 8 hours a year undertaken.
- Dog handlers must be able to demonstrate to assessors an understanding of the areas listed in 4.6 and 4.7

5.0 Assessment

5.1 The dog handler shall undertake an assessment that includes their ability to handle (and if appropriate, train) a dog in the type of situation in which they will be working. If working in AAT this should incorporate working with therapists and contribution to planning programs. **(Documentation)**

Guidance Note:

- The assessment may be part of a formal course which the handler undertakes, or through an independent body, but the organization should ensure an assessment of skills/knowledge of the dog handler takes place before they can practice.

5.2 The dog handler shall be assessed on their ability to provide consistent handling and develop a genuine relationship with the dog. It is important that the dog and handler are well matched. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- The dog takes security from the handler and they must know that dog well in order to manage any situation that may arise and do the best for the dog. The dog handler should ensure that the dog demonstrate signs of enjoying interacting with specific populations, environments and that they find participating in the activities rewarding. Therefore, dogs should be friendly to participants and engage willingly. It is important the dog can initiate contact with participants in a genuine way, while remaining safe and under control.

5.3 The handler shall be assessed for their ability to handle and train each dog they will be working with. This will involve assessment of the temperament and behavior of the dog, and responsiveness to cues to the level at which the handler works/trains the dog(s) they are working with (see competency tiers). **(Documentation/Interview/Observation)**

5.4 The dog handler shall be able to direct the dog with a normal speaking voice or with discreet hand signals. **(Observation)**

5.5 The dog handler shall be able to walk the dog with minimal cues with a loose lead (no choke chains, prong collars or harsh restraint). **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- The dog handler needs to show considerate handling, always supporting the dog when needed, and showing consideration for the participant.

5.7 When possible, dog handler and dog shall be assessed in the environment (or similar environment), under similar conditions, and with a similar population to which they will be working. The handler and dog must be evaluated prior to a session, and then during a mock or actual session. (Refer to AAIL Suitability/Training of Animal Standards for more detail on assessment). **(Observation)**

5.8 Dog handlers are responsible for ensuring that dogs are re-evaluated at least yearly (or when there is a change in health, population, or environment) for the type of work, population, environment, duration, distance work, etc. according to the demand of the typical working conditions for that team. The organization shall ensure assessments are consistent within the organization and between others. The dog handler shall be with the dog during these assessments so that the dog and handler are evaluated together. **(Interview/Documentation)**

6.0 Documentation

6.1 The dog handler shall understand and follow facility policies and procedures. **(Interview)**

6.2 The service provider or educational institution shall obtain permission from the participants or legal guardians for involvement in the AAI program. In some cases, schools or hospitals, etc. may be responsible for obtaining permissions. **(Documentation)**

6.3 The dog handler shall provide, upon request, documentation relating to his/her own health and meet all legal requirements (e.g. background check, passport, human vaccinations). This should also include all insurance documentation, if applicable. **(Documentation)**

6.4 The dog handler shall document overall behavior and health changes of the dog and any potential training, behavioral, or health concerns that surface during sessions, along with a plan and an evaluation to rectify the situation. **(Documentation)**

6.5 The dog handler shall keep regular (weekly or monthly) records for sessions he/she is involved with and identify specific areas in which the dog may require additional inquiry, preparation, training or socialization. He/she should also continue to highlight and document any concerns or potential risks that could occur to compromise the welfare of the dog during the sessions and take steps to rectify these before the next session. Tracking of incident reports and/or plans for discontinuation must be documented. **(Documentation)**

6.6 Dog handler shall maintain vaccination records for each dog and provide proof to organizations in which the dog works, upon request. **(Documentation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

[Redacted]

7.0 Risk Assessments/Safety

7.1 Risk assessments and management plans pertaining to AAI work shall be done for dogs, participants, handlers, environment, and other pertinent areas for each program site. **(Documentation)**

7.2 The dog handler shall demonstrate an awareness of safety of the dog and all people involved in AAI work. For example, they should show an awareness of hazards and risks, such as potential injuries from falling over the dog, or spilled water, or the dog's behavior, zoonotic risk factors, and judge if situations are safe for the participant and the dog, awareness of the environment for safety issues for humans and dogs, and where to get information about potential public health crisis. **(Observation)**

7.3 The dog handler shall ensure activities/interactions are appropriate for the participant's abilities and that they are appropriate for the dog's age, skill set and preferences. The dog handler must keep records of training/behavior issues and resolution plans of the dog for historical reference. **(Observation)**

7.4 The dog handler shall be aware of the relevant canine laws (e.g. transportation, leash laws and public access laws) within their region. **(Documentation/Interview)**

7.5 The dog and handler should be clearly identifiable, wearing uniform/carrying ID where appropriate. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will want to see what type of risk assessments and management plans you carry out in all the locations you work in and how this is documented.

[Redacted]

References:

Chandler, C. K. (2017). *Animal-assisted therapy in counselling*. Taylor & Francis.

Winkle, M. Y. (2016) *Dogs in practice: The art and science of animal assisted therapy* [Conference presentation]. Dogwood Therapy Services, Albuquerque, NM, United States.



Standards of Practice for the Health, Welfare, Well-being and Training of Dogs

These standards apply to all members/member organizations and their volunteers, staff, and anyone who is facilitating or participating in any program.

1.0 Basic Needs and Rights of the Dog

1.1 The “[Five Freedoms](#)” in conjunction with [Operational Details of the Five Domains Model and its key Applications to the Assessment and Management of Animal Welfare](#) (Mellor, 2017), and the [One Health Initiative](#) (Hediger et al., 2019), must underpin all AAI activity and form the basic rights that all animals can expect.

1. Freedom from thirst, hunger, and malnutrition by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor (*Grandgeorge & Hausberger, 2011; Milani, 2016*).

Aims: “Minimize thirst and hunger and enable eating to be a pleasurable experience” (*Mellor, 2017*).

2. Freedom from discomfort by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area (*Grandgeorge & Hausberger, 2011*).

Aims: “Minimize discomfort and exposure and promote thermal, physical and other comforts” (*Mellor, 2017*).

Example: Shade (*Mellor, 2017*), good air quality (*Mellor, 2017*), room temperature (*Glenk, 2017*), protection from hazards, toilet area, etc.

3. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease by prevention and/or rapid diagnosis and treatment (*Grandgeorge & Hausberger, 2011*).

Aims: “Minimize breathlessness, nausea, pain and other aversive experiences and promote the pleasures of robustness, vigor, strength and coordinated physical activity” (*Mellor, 2017*).

Example: Foster good muscle tone, posture and cardiorespiratory function (*Mellor, 2017*) and Bio-mechanics.

4. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering (*Grandgeorge & Hausberger, 2011*).

Aims: “Promote various forms of comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence and a sense of control” (*Mellor, 2017*).

Example: “Provide safe, congenial and species-appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences” (*Mellor, 2017*). Ensure goodness of fit for dog and environment, population, and activity level.

5. Freedom to express most normal behavior by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the dog’s own kind (*Glenk et al, 2013; Grandgeorge & Hausberger, 2011*).

Aims: “Minimize threats and unpleasant restrictions on behavior and promote engagement in rewarding activities” (*Mellor, 2017*).

Example: Congenial company and appropriately varied conditions (*Mellor, 2017*). Being able to rest, play and engage in enriching activities that the dog prefers and enjoys. **(Observation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- AAll members should ensure they treat these as an absolute minimum to be exceeded significantly for all dogs involved in AAI. “Animals develop a better relationship to humans if, above the quality of interactions, their life conditions are appropriate” (*Grandgeorge & Hausberger, 2011*).
- The animal welfare and well-being (see standards) are the very basic foundations of what is expected in terms of dog welfare throughout the dog’s life. It is hoped that all individuals and organizations will meet a higher standard of dog welfare and well-being. It is vital that you take care of the dogs’ physical and emotional health at all stages of its life. The AAll standards use the animal welfare and well-being as a starting point for dog welfare, although they represent the minimum expected.
- You will need to show proof that everyone involved in interactions understand animal welfare and well-being. You will need documentary proof to show that you include this in any training courses you run and in all your internal planning.

2.0 General Health, Welfare and Well-being of the Dog

2.1 Dog waste shall be immediately picked up and disposed of in an appropriate place. The dog handler must practice hand-washing and standard precautions for hygiene and infection control on a regular basis. **(Observation)**

2.2 Dog(s) shall be under regular veterinarian supervision. The facility will maintain individual files for each dog and contain proof of current vaccinations (or titers), parasite prevention, and healthcare based on regional requirements. Routine evaluations by a licensed veterinarian and prevention procedures shall be in place for internal and external parasites (e.g. heartworm, fleas, ticks, etc.). **(Documentation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will ask to speak to your current veterinarian or veterinary personnel on the phone, live video or in person, please provide a signed release form stating that AAll has permission to exchange information with veterinary staff.



- You are expected to keep full documentation on all aspects of the dog’s welfare and well-being, treatments, etc.

2.3 Dogs participating in AAI shall not have any serious health problems (e.g. hip/elbow problems, Leishmaniasis) that would be exacerbated by participating in AAls. **(Documentation)**

2.4 Dogs under veterinarian care for illness, injury, or pregnancy, shall not work during the time of gestation/nursing or treatment until the veterinarian approves of the dog’s return to work. **(Observation/Documentation)**

2.5 Dogs shall not demonstrate any signs of injury or illness while working, unless there is proof of a medical treatment plan and clearance by the veterinarian to work. **(Observation/Documentation)**

2.6 Area where dogs spend a lot of time shall be regularly disinfected and treated for parasites when necessary. **(Observation)**

2.7 Dog(s) shall be kept clean and free of hair tangles, debris and offensive odor. The same applies to all AAI equipment (e.g. toys, blankets, dishes). **(Observation)**

2.8 Dogs show minimal signs of anxiety and no aggression towards participants in AAI sessions. If working with other dogs, any signs of aggression outside of normal development and canine communication shall be manageable. **(Observation)**

2.9 AAI delivery shall be avoided in food preparation, medication, and infection sensitive areas as well any other areas specified by facility rules. **(Observation)**

2.10 Dogs shall be comfortable and safe during any of transportation used, with consideration of local laws, if any are in place. **(Observation/Interviews)**

Guidance Note:

- This includes minimal stress for motor vehicles, using booties to protect paws from heat or cold damage, protection from the elements, etc. Dogs should not be left alone in cars below 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Celsius) or above 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius).

2.11 The *One Health Initiative* supports all Animal Assisted Interventions (*Hediger et al., 2019*). **(Interview)**

3.0 Temperament

3.1 The minimum standards for a general dog assessment include the following:

3.1.1 Environment:

- Observation of the dog with its handler in various situations based on the planned or spontaneous intervention, and natural environments.
- The dog shall remain under control and easily redirected.
- The dog shall not regularly vocalize inappropriately according to the context, population, environment, and may be easily redirected, and presents in a safe manner.
- The dog shall be comfortable with and not overreact to distractions, unusual situations (e.g. sudden noises/movement, etc.) in the environment, or equipment that is commonly present. **(Observation)**

3.1.2 Social:

- The dog shall present itself in a safe and approachable manner.
- The dog shall display genuine signs of interest for socializing with people and receiving attention from a variety of people, demonstrating appropriate responses.
- Observation of the dog with its handler with different groups/individuals, representative of the participant groups with which the dog will work.
- The dog shall be assessed walking through a crowded area. The dog must not get over excited or show continual signs of stress.
- The dog shall demonstrate control around food, toys and other resources and show no signs of resource guarding.
- If the dog is required to play as part of the AAI work, this shall be assessed to ensure it will play in an appropriate way.
- If the dog is required to work in the presence of other dogs, it shall be well mannered around other dogs with consideration given to normal canine communication and development.

4.4 The dog shall be able to perform previously introduced skills specifically needed for the session or demonstrate appropriate waiting behavior. Dog must only be involved in a session when its presence is planned to contribute towards the therapeutic outcomes, or if its presence is motivational, or beneficial for positive associations for the dog. **(Observation)**

5.0 Training and Handling

5.1 All training and handling methods should be designed to promote the welfare and well-being of dogs. Dogs should be trained and handled in a positive and humane manner at all times. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

5.2 Trainers and handlers shall use positive reinforcement/reward based (food, toys, verbal cues, touch, etcetera) and humane training techniques to train and engage the dogs to the greatest degree possible (Glenk et al, 2013; Mellor, 2017). The handler is able to elicit the dog to respond to verbal and/or non-verbal cues. **(Observation)**

5.3 The training technique shall be compatible with the situation in which the dog will be working. For example, down stays or 'place' cues could be taught so that the dog learns to relax in the position rather than be on high alert, waiting for the next cue. **(Observation)**

5.4 The dog handler shall show careful handling, supporting the dog when needed. The dog handler must encourage initiative, adaptability, and problem-solving skills while still maintaining control. This is important for the dog to learn to have genuine interactions with participants. During AAI work, the participants should be able to observe the dog handler showing empathy and kindness to the dog at all times. This will help the participant to understand how to interact with dogs in a safe and positive way (Winkle & Ni, 2019). **(Observation)**

5.5 Choke chains, prong collars, electronic devices and any other equipment that can administer negative or harmful stimuli are NOT allowed. Training aids shall never be used in such a way as to inflict physical or psychological pain to the dog. The handler shall ensure that the dogs are not harmed, abused, or neglected in any way (Glenk et al, 2013; Houpt et al, 2007). The dog handler shall not demonstrate/use any harsh handling methods either leading up to, or during the AAI sessions. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will want to see the dogs in training sessions and monitor their responses to all the training standards. They will also want to see the dogs working in a range of different environments, indoors and outside, on-leash and off-leash according to how the dog normally works. Assessors will want to observe that the dogs are being treated in a humane way at all times.

5.6 Dogs shall be given breaks during training and work activities appropriate for activity preference, stage of training and development (Haubenhofer & Kirchengast 2007; Milani, 2016). **(Observation)**

5.7 Dogs shall show an aptitude for training, a willingness to learn, and willingness to engage with participants. **(Observation)**

5.8 Dog handlers are responsible for ensuring that dogs are re-evaluated at least yearly (or when there is a change in health, population, or environment) for the type of work, population, environment, duration, distance work, etc. according to the demand of the typical working conditions for that team. The organization shall ensure assessments are consistent within the organization and between others. The

dog handler shall be with the dog during these assessments so that the dog and handler are evaluated together. **(Interview/Documentation) CHANGE THESE along with Sec 5.8 in training of dogs**

5.9 Healthcare/Human Service Providers that regularly work with/handle their own or regular 'staff dogs' shall be re-evaluated as a team, at least yearly (or when there is a change in health, population, or environment) for the type of work, population, environment, duration, distance work, etcetera according to the demand of the typical working conditions for that team. **(Documentation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- You must outline your regular re-evaluation procedures and show proof that you re-evaluate the team annually, and the dog when there is any specific change in their health, or they are working in a significantly different environment. If the dogs are tested by an internal source, you must show how some element of objectivity is present in the assessment approach.

5.10 During sessions, the dog handler shall be able to elicit an interaction by the dog directly with the participant when appropriate, as well as responding to cues given by participants (Winkle & Jackson, 2012). **(Observation)**

6.0 Obedience

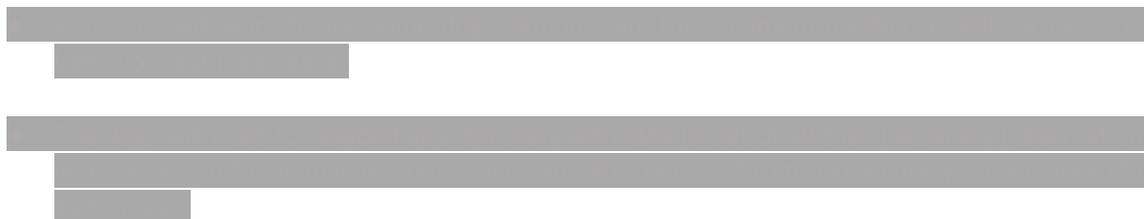
6.1 The dog shall be trained to respond to basic obedience cues including the following:

- Its name.
- Sit.
- Down.
- Stay or wait.
- Walk in a controlled position on a loose lead – the dog handler must be able to walk a dog with minimal cues with a loose lead.
- Come when called (i.e. if the dog will be interacting with participants off-lead, then off-lead behavior or control must be assessed).
- Leave it – items or food (i.e. the dog must show control around food, toys, etc. without snatching).
- Greet with calm behavior (not jumping up unless asked), vocalizations are acceptable if they are not disruptive to the setting/population. **(Observation/Documentation)**

6.2 The dog shall respond appropriately with 80% (8 out of 10 trials) accuracy when assessed for animal assisted activity and 90% (9 out of 10 trials) accuracy when assessed for animal assisted therapy or education. If a dog shows significant stress behaviors during an assessment it should not be continued, but rather the assessment should be stopped at that point with the indication that the dog needs further preparation, training/socialization before being submitted to another assessment. **(Observation)**

6.3 Facility shall provide a list of expected obedience and cues appropriate for each category in which the dogs participate (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP), with each dog having an evaluation checklist. **(Documentation)**

Guidance Note:



- You will be asked for the list of cues that you use for each category (AAA, AAE, AAT) and the evaluation checklist that is used to evaluate each dog against these cues. Assessors may ask to observe some of the items from your internal list and off lead behavior, if the dog is expected to work off lead.

7.0 Evaluation, Behavior and Assessment

7.1 Dogs with a history of training or participating in bite or protection work shall **NOT** participate in any branch of AAI. **(Interview and Observation)**

7.2 Dogs working in AAI programs shall be evaluated for temperament and emotional soundness. **(Documentation/Interview)**

Guidance Note:

- Dogs must display genuine interest and demonstrate signs of enjoyment for socializing with and receiving attention from a variety of people. The dog will also be evaluated for appropriateness and goodness of fit for work based on population, environment, activities, duration and frequency (Hatch, 2007; Winkle & Jackson, 2012; Glenk et al, 2013; Winkle, 2016; VanFleet, R., & Faa-Thompson, T. 2017; Kovacs et al., 2018).

Assessors will want to fully understand how you evaluate your dogs for this work.

7.3 Dogs shall maintain appropriate behavior – must not regularly vocalize unnecessarily or should be able to be redirected (e.g. barking, growling, or whining when in public); however, some vocal greetings and activity vocalizations are acceptable (Winkle, 2016). They shall present themselves in a manageable and safe manner, with appropriate contextual social skills in response to other dogs and humans. **(Observation)**

7.4 Breed type and breed specific traits shall be taken into consideration. While there is no standard for breed type, some types of dog will be more suited to a particular situation or intervention due to the temperament, activity level, size, etc. **(Documentation/Observation)**

7.5 The dog's evaluation shall include:

- reaction to strangers
- children
- people on floor
- level of obedience
- grooming acceptance/cooperative care
- walking on loose leash
- ability to respond off-leash if appropriate
- behavior in a crowd
- responding to its name
- ability to work with other animals in the environment and show resilience without any adverse reactions
- appropriate reaction to distractions
- ability to be redirected
- acclimation to healthcare equipment and environment
- ability to be alone, and separation from the handler

Dogs/puppies should demonstrate appropriate contextual responses in these situations. **(Documentation/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will ask to review a copy of dog evaluations that include the above items.

7.6 Where possible, the dog shall be evaluated in the environment, under similar conditions, and with a similar population and activities for which it will be working. The team will be evaluated prior to a session, and then during a mock or actual session. The dog shall wear appropriate collars or harnesses, leash, etc. that it would wear in a typical session. If a dog is expected to walk together with a participant and handler, or on double leash, or off leash that shall be evaluated as well. **(Documentation/Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will ask to review a copy of dog evaluations that include the above items.

7.7 The assessment shall include the dog's temperament, behavior, and responsiveness to cues. Additional testing items that are unique and specific to the population, environment, distance, duration, and precision shall be identified and evaluated at least yearly. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will want to ensure that handlers recognize behaviors and the implications. For example: the difference between 'aggressive behavior' versus 'aggressive dog'.

8.0 Welfare of the Dog During an AAI Sessions

8.1 Handler shall be aware of how human emotional state (both from handlers and participants) and behavior can influence dog's emotional state/behavior and vice versa. **(Interview)**

8.2 Dogs shall be comfortable working directly with participants and interacting with strangers, while viewing the handler as a secure base in order to explore environment, play, and interact with others. (Topal, Miklosi, Csanvi & Doka, 1998; VanFleet & Faa-Thompson, 2017). **(Observation)**

8.3 Dogs shall be viewed as a subjective participant instead of an objective instrument, with the animal's behavior and interaction being assessed, not just the human's reaction. The animal is a key part to the intervention and can heavily influence the outcomes (Vitztum & Urbanik, 2016). **(Observation)**

8.4 During sessions, the welfare of dogs shall be considered. Dogs shall be monitored closely for clinical signs of stress, injury, illness, fear, and fatigue. Stress levels in dogs shall be minimized before, during, and after each AAI session, as well as in living environment. (Hediger et al., 2019). **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Assessors will observe your AAI sessions. This could be done in several different ways – physically present, video footage (with blurred faces if necessary) etc. and it is for you and the assessor to agree the best way for this to happen.
- There are times when a situation may be stressful for a dog and the assessor will closely observe how the handler prevents or deals with this situation. It is critical that you have a clear safe space within the facility for the dog to rest and the assessor will ask to see this.
- You must ensure that everyone involved in the interaction is fully briefed on the session, the risks and the importance of the need to meet the physical and emotional safety of the dog.

8.5 Dogs shall never be placed in situations in which they could be at physical or emotional risk. **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

- Dogs must not be abused, dragged, physically forced into a position, choked, or harmed in any way. Stress and anxiety must be prevented and managed for the betterment of the dog (Glenk, 2017; Palestrini et al., 2017, Hediger et al., 2019).
- Trainer and handlers must use positive reinforcement/reward-based training at all times. Equipment that administers negative or harmful stimuli is not allowed. This includes, but is not limited to choke chains, prong collars, vibrating collars, leash jerks, and electronic devices. Martingale collars must be justified (such as breeds with smaller heads in which collars may slip off). Training aids must be used appropriately, as intended, and never be used in any way to inflict physical or psychological pain on a dog.

8.6 The dog handler shall educate the participant about rules of engagement, dog handling and safety rules. The participants will treat the dog with appreciation and respect. The dog handler shall take responsibility for the welfare of the dog and be able to advocate on the dog's behalf. **(Observation)**

8.6 The dog shall only be involved in a session when its presence is integral to the outcomes of the session. If not required in a session the dog may be better off resting. **(Observation)**

8.7 The dog shall have access to an appropriate area and be given opportunities, as required, for rest, access to water, and access to toileting facilities before and after each session. **(Observation)**

8.8 Dogs shall be given breaks based on activity level, development level, stress levels, weather, etc. **(Observation)**

8.9 Dogs need to have their own space and places to get away if desired (*KINDGOM, U. 2017*). Animal can choose to be with participant or move away and handler can adjust intervention accordingly (*VanFleet & Faa-Thompson, 2017; Winkle & Jackson, 2012; Winkle, 2016*). **(Observation)**

8.10 Interactions shall be terminated immediately if the dog's welfare is in danger of being compromised (Winkle, 2016). **(Observation)**

8.11 The dog shall not mix with unfamiliar dogs on site without careful consideration and supervision. If more than one dog is working in a working session, ideally, the dogs would have time to familiarize themselves with each other in advance. **(Observation)**

8.12 Dogs shall demonstrate signs of adaptability, even temperament, and flexibility in different situations (e.g. crowding) and interactions with the populations, environments, and activities in which they are being asked to participate **(Observation)**

Guidance Note:

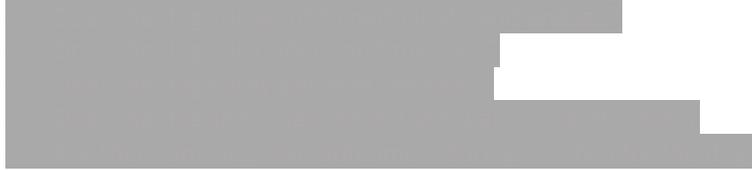
- Includes persons with unusual or brisk movements, persons using wheelchairs, crutches or other equipment). Considerations for different handlers should be included (*Wycoff, 2014; Glenk, 2017; VanFleet & Faa-Thompson, 2017*).

8.13 The dog consistently responds to all cues (e.g. 80-100% of the time). **(Observation)**

8.14 The dog's appropriate age of retirement will depend on tasks that it participates in, and its veterinary release to participate in good health. Good observations and regular assessments are important for working dogs and must occur more frequently with aging dogs. If their behavior, health, or welfare becomes compromised due to age or ability, they shall no longer be involved in AAI (Winkle, 2016).
(Interview/Observation)

Guidance Note:

- The questions that need to be asked include the following:



References:

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- VanFleet, R., & Faa-Thompson, T. (2017). *Animal assisted play therapy*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

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Winkle, M., & Jackson, L. (2012). Animal kindness: Best practices for the animal-assisted therapy practitioner. *OT Practice, 17*(6), 10-14.

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Standards of Practice for Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP)

AASP implementation assumes the participation of four valued parties:

- The participant - AASP program beneficiary.
- The dog handler - an individual who has training and experience in dog handling, training, and behaviour.
- The program/institution or professional provider - in some cases, the professional and the dog handler may be the same person; or they may be two separate people.
- The AASP support dog.

1.0 Preparation

- 1.1 Prior to the program, ideally, the dog handler should complete a facility visitation with the population served without the dog **(Documentation)**
- 1.2 Specific AASP areas to carry out planned sessions shall be identified, as well as emergency and evacuation plans created and documented prior to program implementation. **(Documentation)**
- 1.3 A dog handler shall have working knowledge of the dog they are working with, in effort to develop and maintain a working relationship with the dog prior to the sessions. **(interview/observation)**

2.0 Ethical Guidelines and Professional Qualifications

- 2.1 The AASP activities shall be practiced within the specific scope of practice context of the dog handler and the professional, and under ethical guidelines of their own professions. **(Interview)**
- 2.2 All information and documentation obtained during the conduct of the AASP program shall remain confidential if required by that area of practice. **(Interview)**

3.0 Competencies

- 3.1 Demonstrate initial Core and Intermediate Competencies. **(Observation/Interview)**
- 3.2 Handlers shall have a designated mentor until able to demonstrate Professional Competencies, and complete at least 8 hours (this can be a combination of AAIL field CEUs that total 8 hours) of formal continuing education every year in the topics of AASP, and/or animal behavior/training/handling, and human-animal bond. **(Documentation)**

This may include:

- Workshops
- In-services
- Webinars
- Books
- Formal coursework
- Conferences
- Mentorships/Internships

4.0 Mentoring and Supervision

- 4.1 Dog handlers and AASP providers who are new to AASP must identify and collaborate with a mentor who has achieved Professional Competencies with experience in reading dog behaviour and AASP. This works the same as in other categories-if someone is new to reading with dogs without teachers, they would try to find a mentor who has handled dogs and/or have lead similar sessions in these programs to guide them. **(Interview)**
- 4.2 The dog handler will participate in AASP under the direction and supervision of the qualified service provider with knowledge and experience in AASP. **(Interview)**

5.0 Documentation

- 5.1 All documentation of dog handler and dog must be provided and maintained, including dog health and behaviour evaluations, participation summaries and incident reports, and discontinuation of services. **(Documentation)**
- 5.2 The dog handler must demonstrate zoonotic risk/ infection control (example, monthly preventative) knowledge for their region, including risks to participant and environmental precautions. **(Interview)**
- Risk factor (example: tape worm)
 - If how it is transmitted between dogs and people (or from person to dog to another person)
 - If it is transmittable to other dogs
 - Where/how it is spread
 - How to recognize it
 - Cleaning procedures (indoors/outdoors)
 - Treatment for dog including temporary discontinuation of presence until cleared for return
 - Prevention for human and dog
- 5.3 General monthly summaries are recommended for AASP support dog including estimate of hours or schedule worked, types of activities and populations. **(Documentation)**
- 5.4 When appropriate for the field of work, the AASP will include professional documentation for each participant, should reflect participation in AASP service provider in client or dog records. **(Documentation)**

6.0 Goal-directed Activities

- 6.1 The dog handler and AASP provider must be able to collaborate to create activities that are goal-specific and measurable. The activities may or may not include direct contact with dog. This may include the set-up, planning, and organizing of the activity, rather than just completion of a task. **(Interview)**

7.0 Termination of Services

- 7.1 AASP program will be discontinued if AAI is no longer supporting goals, if there are any health concerns of humans or dogs, or there are any changes in the environment, dog handler, or population that are not conducive to the dog's skills or well-being. **(Documentation)**

Animal Assisted Placement Programs Competencies

AAll members come from a variety of backgrounds and the scope of each member's work is different. AAll recognizes that there may be people with different expectations and skill sets from volunteer visiting through expert instructors of any given member category (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, or AAPP). In collaboration with Dr. Leslie A. Stewart, PhD., LCPC, AAll adopted and adapted the following competency models:

Stewart, L. A. (2014). Competencies in animal assisted therapy in counseling: a qualitative investigation of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of competent animal assisted therapy practitioners.

Stewart, L. A., Johnson, A., Bruneau, L., & Callahan, M. M. (2016). Animal-assisted interventions competencies.

Stewart, L. A., Chang, C. Y., Parker, L. K., & Grubbs, N. (2016). Animal-assisted therapy in counseling competencies. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, Animal-Assisted Therapy in Mental Health Interest Network.

Due to the nature of our membership and the roles that people, and animals fulfil, AAll has outlined 4 tiers of competencies for each member category. The layout has changed, the competencies rearranged from three to four levels, and additional competencies were constructed (represented in green) to reflect AAll Standards that were not covered with the previous Competency versions (2014, 2016 and 2016). These changes allow individuals and programs to improve skills over time as required by membership standards.

Entry Level – 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.

Intermediate Level - 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.

Advanced Level - The advanced level reflects those who have 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.

Expert Level - 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 AAll accreditation.

See Appendix 1 for full details.

As part of the Accreditation process, Assessors will want to ensure that programs are aware of the standards and competencies of their volunteers and staff and that people are operating within the program at the

appropriate level. They will do this through reviewing **Documentation**, through **Interview** and through **Observation** during the accreditation process, as outlined in the **Accreditation Portfolio Contents Section**.

AAII has produced a detailed paper on competencies and all practitioners are urged to read it in Appendix I. It is important to understand the function of the competencies which are detailed in this paper. Some competency sections are shared with all categories (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP and AAPP) of AAI so the terminology includes AAI rather than only AAT. This booklet is for AAT practitioners who will be responsible for all items in their current level of competency as detailed in the **Accreditation Portfolio Contents Section**.

Competency levels can be summarized as follows:

| | Entry Level (Awareness) | Intermediate Level (Trained) | Advanced Level (Experienced) | Expert Level (Expert) |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Membership | New Member | Working towards Accreditation | Eligible for Accreditation | Accredited |
| Animal Assisted Activity (AAA) | Volunteer | Intern, Assistant, Apprentice | Professional (even if volunteering), Mentor | AAA Instructor, Researcher, Author, |
| Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) | Volunteer | Intern, Assistant, Apprentice | Licensed/Degreed /Equivalent Practitioner, Mentor | Formal AAT Instructor, Researcher, Author |
| Animal Assisted Education (AAE) | Volunteer | Intern, Assistant, Apprentice | Licensed/Degreed /Equivalent Practitioner, Mentor | Formal AAE Instructor, Researcher, Author |
| Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP) | Volunteer | Intern, Assistant, Apprentice | Professional or Practitioner, Mentor (Other than AAA, AAE or AAT) | Instructor, Researcher, Author |
| Animal Assisted Placement Programs (AAPP) | Volunteer | Intern, Assistant, Apprentice | Professional, Mentor | Instructor, Researcher, Author |

Within AAA, AASP and AAPP, it is recommended that the minimum competency level required for lead collaborators within specific interventions are **marked in bold**. In the case of AAT and AAE, this minimum is essential as the intervention requires the active involvement of a licensed practitioner.

AAll Accreditation Process

Accreditation Application & Instructions

The AAll accreditation process includes both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (measurable) information. This is your opportunity to develop and implement systems that ensure the maintenance of standards set forth by AAll. Organizations that wish to apply for accreditation will provide, complete, or develop documents in AAT as listed below. You may be active in more than one field in which case, you must fill in the sections of other membership category booklets that you have not previously filled in. To be eligible for accreditation, members/organizations will have been full members for at least 1 year. The actual items that will be reviewed in the accreditation process are listed under [Accreditation Portfolio Contents Section](#).

AAll Accreditation Process

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Step 1 | |
| Step 2 | |
| Step 3 | |
| Step 4 | |
| Step 5 | |
| Step 6 | |
| Step 7 | |
| Step 8 | |

Accreditation Portfolio

Your **Accreditation Portfolio** should contain the following information, in this order, at a minimum. Each Heading is a new section in printed portfolio, or a new file on a computer.

AAII Accreditation Application: To be completed by every applicant.

| Portfolio Requirement | Tick when completed |
|---|---------------------|
| Letter of recommendation for accreditation from Mentor (you will put this in last- see Step 6). | |
| Accreditation Application | |
| Full Member status for at least 1 full calendar year. | |

Section 1: Standards - Administration

| Standard | Portfolio Requirement | Tick when completed |
|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1.1 | | |
| 1.2 | | |
| 1.3 | | |
| 2.1 | | |
| 3.1 | | |
| 4.1 | | |
| 5.1 | | |
| 6.1 | | |
| 7.1 | | |
| 8.1 | | |

Section 2: Standards - Ethical Treatment and Welfare of Participants

| Standard | Portfolio Requirement | Tick when completed |
|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1.4/4.1 | | |
| 1.5 | | |
| 2.1 | | |
| 2.2 | | |
| 2.4 | | |
| 2.5 | | |
| 3.2 | | |
| 4.1 | | |

Section 3: Handlers Supporting Dogs (Animal Handlers)

| Standard | Portfolio Requirement | Tick when completed |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 2.1 | [Redacted] | |
| 2.3 | [Redacted] | |
| 3.4 | [Redacted] | |
| 4.0-4.3 | [Redacted] | |
| 4.5/4.6/4.7 | [Redacted] | |
| 5.1 | [Redacted] | |
| 5.3 | [Redacted] | |
| 5.8 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.2 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.3 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.4 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.5 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.6 | [Redacted] | |
| 7.1 | [Redacted] | |

Section 4: Standards – Health, Welfare, Wellbeing and Training of Dogs

| Standard | Portfolio Requirement | Tick when completed |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 2.2/2.3/ 2.4/2.5 | [Redacted] | |
| 4.1 | [Redacted] | |
| 5.8 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.1 | [Redacted] | |
| 6.3/7.5 | [Redacted] | |
| 7.2-7.5 | [Redacted] | |

Section 5: Standards – Animal Assisted Special Programs

| Standard | Portfolio Requirement | Tick when completed |
|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1.1 | [Redacted] | |
| 1.2 | [Redacted] | |
| 3.2 | [Redacted] | |
| 5.1 | [Redacted] | |
| 5.3 | [Redacted] | |
| 7.1 | [Redacted] | |

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. AAA may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. 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 wellbeing and benefits for humans and animals, and provide a positive experience for the animal without force, coercion, or exploitation. AAT 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 wellbeing and benefits for humans and animals, and provide a positive experience for the animal without force, coercion, or exploitation. AAE 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. AAI 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. AAI may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. AAI's promote wellbeing and benefits for humans and animals and provide a positive experience for the animal without force, coercion, or exploitation. AAT 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 animals 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 of humans. The process is evaluated and documented. AAT is developed, directed and/or delivered by a person who has formal education, is

licensed, degreed or equivalent and has specialized expertise in a specific discipline within healthcare/human service fields. 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 collaboration with others in the AAI field including AAA, AAE, AASP, or AAPP or a professional dog handler who has additional training for the scope of AAT. Collaborative partners may or may not have separate goals. AAT may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. AAT promotes wellbeing and benefits for humans and animals and provide a positive experience for the animal without force, coercion, or exploitation. 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 animal development, husbandry, communication, behavior/behavior modification, practical skills to identify an animal's 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: AAI 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: Behavior, 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 behavioral response elicited by the intrinsically meaningful stimulus.

Collaborative-Animal Assisted Education (C-AAE): Where an organization contributes to AAE, for example by training dogs and acting as the dog handler but does not have a licensed human healthcare practitioner or human services provider on their staff or working with them as a consultant, the collaborative work is recognized by AAI and this element can be accredited. CAA-E promotes wellbeing and benefits for humans and animals and provide a positive experience for the animal without force, coercion, or exploitation. AAT may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Collaborative-Animal Assisted Therapy (C-AAT): Where an organization contributes to AAT, for example by training dogs and acting as the dog handler but does not have a licensed human healthcare practitioner or human services provider on their staff or working with them as a consultant, the collaborative work is recognized by AAI and this element can be accredited. C-AAT promotes wellbeing and benefits for humans and animals, and provide a positive experience for the animal without force, coercion, or exploitation. AAT may directly or indirectly involve the animal.

Collaborative Program: occurs when an individual or organization collaborates with another who has complementary but different credentials, membership or skill sets and have a shared responsibility for program needs. Sessions or programs involve the joint work of each member's skills set. The work involves different skill sets in AAI collaboration, animal(s) and is experiential in nature. Examples include: A therapist who does not have an appropriate animal that calls in a skilled dog handler; AASP calls upon a therapist to build a therapy-based program, a AAA member calls upon a teacher to collaborate on an educational program, a placement program calls upon a therapist to teach AAT placement coursework to newly placed AAT teams, etc. The work involves different skill sets in AAI collaboration, animal(s) and is experiential in nature.

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 welling 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 behavior 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 AAI 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 behavior 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 favorable in response to a specific behavior.

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 favorable in response to a specific behavior.

Positive reinforcement: Adding a stimulus that the recipient enjoys/finds favorable in response to a specific behavior, 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 behavior 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 behavior.

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.

Appendix 1: Competencies

This document is a 'work in progress' and is intended as a guideline for members. The chart below outlines the key knowledge, skills, and attitudes competencies for each level of AASP:

| Knowledge | Core competencies |
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| Entry Level Knowledge (Awareness) | <p>Trainers/instructors/programs new to AASP should possess general knowledge about the provision of AAI, with an awareness of the AAI standards of Practice. They should also possess a basic working knowledge of the health, welfare, wellbeing, and training of dogs (<i>See AAI Standards of Practice for the health, well-being and training of dogs</i>). Specifically, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand the different disciplines within AAI that you are training/preparing the dog for (AAT, AAA, AAE, AASP, AAPP). b) Have specific knowledge of AAPP (obtained through comprehensive induction process covering paperwork, systems, participant population). c) Show basic knowledge of infection control procedures, zoonoses, standard precautions, risk management, incident reporting and protocols for hygiene and infection control e.g. cleanliness of dog and equipment. d) Understand dog welfare and wellbeing, and the needs and rights of a dog e.g. five freedoms/ domains. e) Have knowledge of developmental stages of the dog f) Have knowledge of training aims and objectives of an AAI dog, including temperament and typical skills required from the dogs. g) Understand communication between people and dogs (body language and facial expression, effect of emotions, intonation of voice). h) Have knowledge of signs of stress or illness in dogs. |
| Intermediate Level Knowledge (Trained) | <p>Competent trainers/instructors/AASP programs possess in-depth knowledge about dogs on an individual, breed, and species level. Specifically, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Have extensive, species-specific ethological knowledge about the dog(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Physiology, behavior & history. ii) Care & husbandry: health and welfare practices, including vaccination protocols, parasite control protocols (both dog and environment). iii) Understanding that knowledge about one particular breed is not necessarily generalizable to other breeds, and that there may be intra-breed differences. iv) Knowledge of canine development (including social, educational, temperamental, and physical development) and socialization approaches. v) Knowledge of dog handling, behavior, preparation, and training techniques and use of appropriate equipment. vi) Working knowledge of learning theory relating to the practical training and handling of dogs. vii) Positive, humane, non-coercive preparation and training methods. viii) Ability to manage, train, support, and advocate for dog(s) in a variety of environments and situations. ix) Ability to facilitate dog's socialization, desensitization, and comfort. x) Understanding of dog temperament traits suited to AAI as well as specific needs of program, and knowledge of assessment methods. xi) Understanding the supportive role required by the general public within the local community in which the puppy is placed, i.e. public image. b) Understanding the social, religious, and cultural factors relevant to AAI and multicultural implications of human-animal interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Respecting the attitudes of others, particularly those concerned with the dog's presence. ii) Understanding that human-animal interaction may hold different meanings across a variety of cultures and beliefs. c) Awareness on how the recipient can maximize the potential for safe interactions between participants and dogs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Infection prevention/control and consideration of other zoonotic agents. ii) Considerations for allergies, phobias, history of witnessing or participating in animal abuse or, neglect, and history of animal-related trauma and incorporation in participant screening process. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) Awareness of the future participant groups the dog will be working. iv) Inclusion of pre-intervention strategies e.g. familiarization visits, planned introduction with participant and dog, instructions for appropriate interaction. <p>Awareness of the One Health Initiative and its relevance in Animal Assisted Interventions (Hediger et al., 2019).</p> |
| <p>Advanced Level Knowledge (Experienced)</p> | <p>Experienced trainers/instructors/AASP providers acquire AAI specific training, assessment, and supervision. Specifically, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) have advanced knowledge of selecting, raising, training, and evaluating dogs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Ability to source, assess and identify suitable dogs for future AAI work taking into the account their temperament, health, breed type and background. ii) Ability to analyze temperament and behavior. iii) Ability to recognize temperament traits that should ideally be present in a puppy selected as a future intervention support dog and those present in the dog ready for AAI. iv) Have knowledge of the current ways of raising puppies to support their development. v) Have knowledge of advanced training methods and behavior modification techniques to be able to identify and intervene timely to prevent behavioral issues being developed. vi) Thorough evaluation to ensure the dog is physically and socially appropriate for their career path. vii) Ability to evaluate and recognize a dog is not suited to the role. viii) Knowledge of dog health and welfare need and ways of managing these. ix) Understanding of basic principles of therapy interventions. x) Understanding of the needs of future participants and how these are supported by the dog. b) Have successfully completed relevant coursework. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Coursework and evaluation of dog training. ii) Knowledge of how dogs are incorporated into therapeutic settings. iii) Evaluation of AAI knowledge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. History of AAI in general b. Literature and evidence-based practice of AAI c) Understand the impact of the human-animal bond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Understand the physiological & neurological impact of human-animal interaction and the potential for emotional states of humans and animals to influence each other. ii) Understanding the development of the bond between recipient and dog. d) Understand the vital role of effective risk management strategies and skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Knowledge of liability issues related to AAPP. ii) Confirm personal and professional insurance coverage. iii) Completion of risk assessments and solutions. <p>Show knowledge of legal issues associated with AAPP such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Local public access laws relating to working dogs, identification requirements. ii) Relevant of local canine laws e.g. leash laws, transportation. |
| <p>Expert Level Knowledge (Expert)</p> | <p>Knowledge of AAI specific training and techniques. Specifically, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand the implications for specific future participant populations and different environments having been working with a variety of therapists and AAI programmed. b) Understand the implications for specific presenting concerns. c) Understand therapy and theory-based interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Understanding of the goals of AAI interventions. ii) Awareness of current literature outcomes for the AAI selected interventions. <p>Competent providers of AAPP demonstrate integrated ethics. Thus, competent providers of AAI are aware of AAI specific ethical considerations and can incorporate ethical professional practice with ethical AAI practice. Specifically, they should:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Be able to recognize and discuss the ethical implications of AAI. b) Discuss and address potential safety issues. c) Maintain respect for the dog(s), handler/AAI provider (recipient for the rest of the document), the patient(s)/participant(s), and the treatment process. d) Be able to recognize and point out the recipient's personal biases, including the impact of the recipient's emotional bond with the dog and its impact on the treatment process. |
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| Skills | Core Competencies |
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| Entry Level Skills (Awareness) | <p>Trainers/instructors/programs new to AASP demonstrate ability to describe the principles of AAI, socialization and demonstrate basic dog handling skills. Specifically, they should show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ability to support a dog, identify signs of stress. b) Ability to reflect on their own practice and adapt methods to achieve success. If they are new can they do this and how? c) Ability to perform a supportive role to help AASP programs to deliver services. |
| Intermediate Level Skills (Trained) | <p>Competent trainers/instructors/providers of AASP programs demonstrate ability to raise, train and support the dog while considering the needs of the future participants when preparing the dog for the role.</p> <p>Ability to prevent and respond to dog stress, fatigue, and burnout (Hediger et al., 2019). Specifically, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Actively prevent dog burnout and fatigue. b) Proactively plan stress-relief and stress-prevention strategies for the dog(s). c) Show ability to accurately predict, prevent and immediately address unexpected dog stress. d) Show ability to identify and respectfully respond to dog's signals and body language, especially when they do not want to interact whether on or off lead. e) Show ability to provide for the dog's needs, both in the training sessions and in general living conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Access to water, a quiet rest/retreat area, and regular bathroom breaks. ii) Provision appropriate transportation. iii) Attending to dog's overall wellbeing through appropriate provision of quality nutrition, exercise, grooming, enrichment, and veterinary care, making decision to not carry out formal training and give the dog rest if unwell. iv) Ability to use positive training methods effectively and skillfully showing consideration for the dog e.g. breaks, choice of skills suitable for individual dog. <p>Ability to objectively assess a dog's suitability, strengths, and limitations despite the trainer/instructor/AAPP provider's potential emotional bond with or personal bias towards the dog. (See Standards section 1.3, 1.4, 1.7). Specifically, they should show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ability to predict future behavior and suitability for the role by assessing the puppies' temperament and recognize potential future intervention support dogs. b) Ability to identify and address personal biases towards the dog(s). c) Ability to objectively assess a dog's suitability for AAI, according to environment, population, activities. The match between the individual dog and recipient and/or program is crucial. d) Ability to objectively describe and document the dog's response to training, overall behavior, and strengths and weaknesses on a daily or weekly basis using appropriate terminology. |

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| | <p>Competent trainers/instructors/AASP providers should have sound social and communication skills. They should maintain preparation, training, and evaluation logs for the training of the dog and the recipient.</p> |
| <p>Advanced Level Skills (Experienced)</p> | <p>Experienced trainers/instructors/AASP providers demonstrate good teaching and coaching skills. Specifically, the trainers/instructors/AASP providers should show instructional skills and teach recipients about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Canine care and health, enrichment, animal welfare, and psychological well-being. b) Signs of ill health, and how to apply basic first aid and when to seek veterinary advice to inform decisions as to dog’s participation in training sessions. c) Using humane equipment appropriately, acceptable handling and training techniques, and how to problem solve and teach the dog new behaviors. d) Establishing and maintaining a strong working and supportive relationship with the dog. e) General and individual dog’s stress triggers so that the recipient is able to identify stress and/or anxiety responses to novel stimuli. f) Recognizing and applying effective calming interventions to mitigate the dog becoming stressed or anxious dog. g) How to integrate the dog in animal-assisted interventions and how to prepare for sessions when the dog cannot be physically present (sick days, vacation days), e.g. through storytelling, etc. This should only be for recipient unless reworded to rights of dog to have time off, etc. h) Planning and keeping records of appropriate work schedule that matches breed specific traits and individual dog preferences and skills based on the population served and types of activities. i) Any inappropriateness from either the participants (e.g. inappropriate language or heavy petting) or dogs (e.g. antisocial behavior) should not be overlooked, and immediate remediation put in place. j) The partnered dog’s preference for environments, populations, and activities. k) The importance of freedom of choice for the dog, understanding the preferences and skills of the individual dog. l) Respecting consent from dogs to ensure safety. m) Recognizing when AAI services are no longer appropriate for the dogs due to age, health concerns, changes in the environment, handler or population and are not conducive to the dog’s skills or wellbeing. n) Effectively processing loss and bereavement of a dog (self and participants). o) What appropriate interactions with dog(s) are so that the recipient is able to transfer this knowledge to the participants. <p>The AAPP provider gives them the foundation, while the recipient should then further develop the competencies laid out in AAA/AASP/AAE/AAT sections.</p> |

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| | <p>Competent trainers/instructors/AASP providers demonstrate ability to teach recipients to perform a risk-assessment to evaluate and eliminate/decrease risks within AAI programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Ability to evaluate and decrease potential participant or population risks. ii) Ability to evaluate and decrease potential dog risks. iii) Ability to evaluate and decrease environmental risks. iv) Ability to evaluate and decrease handler/staff risks. v) Ability to evaluate and decrease activity risks. <p>They should also show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ability to accurately read, interpret and respond to dog body language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Ability to link dog-participant interactions to participant behaviors/goals/conceptualization. ii) Ability to link unexpected events or interactions to participant goals or presenting concerns. iii) Ability to model appropriate, respectful, and empathetic dog care and interactions. b) Ability to prepare and conduct a training program for handlers/AAI providers and their self-trained dogs. |
| <p>Expert Level Skills (Expert)</p> | <p>Competent providers of AASP demonstrate a mastery of professional skills in dog training for AAI interventions. Specifically, they should show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ability to mentor, supervise and teach others about best practices in training and placing dogs with recipients. b) Ability to develop placement programs. c) Quality control - ability to objectively assess a range of dogs, including self-trained (if program includes these type of placements), both, pre- and post-placement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) ability to make sound judgement and decision on removing the dog out of the placement program should the standards not be met, and the dog's wellbeing compromised. d) Involvement in developing AAI as an industry, collaboration with other professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Participation in supervised professional practice |

| Attitudes | Core Competencies |
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| <p>Entry Level Attitudes (Awareness)</p> | <p>Trainers/instructors/AASP providers new to AAI should be working under the supervision of an experienced professional/mentor. Specifically, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Demonstrate awareness of their role and level of responsibility b) Follow all procedures and policies set by the AAPP provider to protect the wellbeing and safety of all involved c) Act in the best interests of the program, recipients, and dogs d) Utilize a reflective approach to their own learning e) Understanding that the dogs involved are their responsibility f) Understand animal welfare, well-being, and advocacy and that they directly impact future participant safety |
| <p>Intermediate Level Attitudes (Trained)</p> | <p>Competent trainers/instructors/AASP providers prioritize their responsibility to dogs both, placed and being prepared for AAI and are effective dog advocates.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understanding that the dogs involved are the trainers/instructor’s responsibility both, prior and after they are placed with the recipient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Understanding that animal welfare, well-being and advocacy directly impact participant safety. ii) Understanding that animal advocacy is essential to the ethical practice of AAI. b) Respecting animal rights, animal welfare, and well-being. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Awareness and avoidance of the potential for dog exploitation, either accidentally or intentionally. ii) Show good judgement and be able to make decisions on behalf of the dog and not compromise the dog’s wellbeing. iii) Respond to signs of ill health or reluctance to interact and act accordingly e.g. postpone training sessions, consider withdrawing from the program or choose a different career path. c) Promoting awareness of AAI at micro and macro levels (individual, community, public) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Awareness that they are ambassadors for the field. ii) Maintaining appropriate professional behavior when representing AAI. iii) Willingness to speak to and educate individuals, groups, and organizations/institutions about AAI. iv) Supporting learning opportunities for AAI enthusiasts, students and trainees. v) Supporting and advocating for the development of AAI specialty credentials. <p>Competent trainers/instructors/AASP providers strive towards AAI specific professional values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Enthusiasm and passion for dog training, behavior and AAI. b) Flexibility, openness, and creativity. c) Calm demeanor during unexpected events/situations. d) Effective, expressive, polite and receptive communication, and respectful, non-judgmental attitude. with recipients and other people they work with. e) Adequate/Appropriate empathy for humans and animals. |
| <p>Advanced Level Attitudes (Experienced)</p> | <p>Experienced trainers/instructors/AASP providers prioritize their own formal education, assessment and supervision for general AAI history, theory and practice and dog specific care, training, communication, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Formal coursework and keeping abreast of the literature on dog related matters (training methods, behavior, cognition, emotions etc.) and general AAI coursework including history and current literature. b) Understanding the human-animal bond and how it impacts training and intervention strategies. c) Understanding the importance of formal education pertaining to humane care, training, communication, enrichment and general well-being of dogs. d) Understand importance of record keeping e.g. health and behavior evaluations, training progress records, evaluation, incident reports. e) Understanding ethics and duty to all parties. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Recipient ii) Participants iii) Dogs iv) Self/Discipline |

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| | <p>f) Show consideration for participants, recipients, other staff and volunteers (<i>relating to not taking advantage e.g. photos</i>).</p> <p>g) Give accurate, honest, and professional representation of AAPP program.</p> |
| Expert Level Attitudes (Expert) | <p>Competent trainers/instructors/AASP providers have a well-developed professional identity and are professional advocates for AAI. Specifically, they shall have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Active involvement in continuing education and engagement in professional development. b) Regular consultation and collaboration with other AAPP or AAI providers. c) Regular consultation and collaboration with professional dog specialists. d) Maintaining familiarity with existing and emerging discipline-specific AAI literature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Familiarity with current AAI language/terminology ii) Encouraging and supporting the continued development of AAI or other dog related literature |

