



Atlas Assistance Dogs® Academy – Certified Trainer Program

Last Updated 07/25/2020

Contents

Introduction	1
Benefits	1
Prerequisites	2
Requirements	2
Continued Certification Requirements	3
Areas of Proficiency	3
Fees	8
Referenced Qualifying Certifications and Courses	10

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming an Atlas Certified Trainer. You are making an investment in yourself that will allow you to expand your professional offerings and provide you with skills to help improve the quality of life for countless individuals. Service dog training is a challenging and highly rewarding profession. As we are working with vulnerable people as well as dogs, it is critical we approach it with the utmost of integrity and expertise. Atlas is committed to expanding the pool of highly skilled trainers to ensure anyone who would benefit from a qualified assistance dog can have one. Thank you for being a part of our mission. Should you have any questions at all, please contact info@atlasdog.org.

Benefits

These are just some of the benefits of being an Atlas Certified Trainer:

- » Proof of high level of skill and quality training service dog teams, and the confidence that comes with having completed the Atlas program
- » Ability to advertise as an Atlas Certified Trainer
- » Certification earns you up to 21 CEUs for KPA and CCPDT-KA
- » You are part of the effort of expanding access to qualified service dogs
- » Access to Atlas materials and resources for your clients
- » Promoted in Atlas Trainer listings and Atlas materials
- » Access to the Atlas network for brainstorming and professional support for yourself and your clients
- » Preferred consideration as an Atlas Team Facilitator or Atlas Team Facilitator Lead



- » Access to new Atlas courses as they become available
- » Exclusive option to access our Teams Set in Motion™ program as an auditor. Have your clients sign up for the course to augment your work with them and enjoy your discounted access to provide them references and support with our comprehensive online class.

Prerequisites

Atlas' program is designed for someone who is already working as a professional dog trainer and wants to expand their present offerings or develop new offerings working with people who wish to have their dog trained as a service dog. While prior certifications are not required, applicants will receive discounts and benefit from prior experience and certifications.

Applicants should have:

- » At least an intermediate level of knowledge and skills with positive reinforcement training techniques such as clicker/marker training, target training, shaping, capturing, and forming behavior chains.
- » At least 2 years of professional dog training experience where you are the primary trainer and are responsible for planning and carrying out lessons with people and their dogs. Private experience is preferred, but group experience is acceptable if you were the lead trainer.
- » Commitment to using only ethical, positive reinforcement, force-free methods and tools with all dogs and people.
- » Comfort with technology that will be used in our online program – email, internet, web browsing, online forms, online chat, web and video conferencing, opening and closing PDFs, reading PowerPoint presentations, reading and editing simple Excel or other spreadsheets, recording and sharing videos.
- » Access to actual or simulated clients and their dogs.

Requirements

This section describes the requirements to be an Atlas Certified Trainer. The basic requirements are:

- » Sign a pledge of ethics addressing how dogs and people will be treated.
- » Agree to Atlas' standards regarding how you will carry yourself in the community and represent Atlas as well how you will represent the best interests of your clients.
- » Agree to the requirements in the Atlas Certified Trainer Program document (this document) and the Atlas Trainer Policies document.
- » Complete Atlas' training program and establish through a combination of certifications, experience, Atlas course work, recommendations, and observations that you have mastered the material in our program.
- » Participate in a review of your training model and business processes to ensure you follow a service dog training program consistent with Atlas program requirements that will fully prepare clients and their dogs to be successful as working teams. This includes review and recommendations pertaining to insurance, facility standards, program contents, paperwork management, and client communications.



- » Agree Atlas may contact other training professionals in our network to ask for references about you as a trainer and professional.
- » Provide two (*three) reference letters:
 - One personal reference from a client you have worked with in private or group training for at least 6 months and have had at least 6 sessions with. *If your clients are typically shorter-term you may alternatively provide two personal reference letters from clients you have worked with in private or group training for at least two months and have had at least 3 sessions with. In either case, preference is for people seeking service dog training from you, but any situation where you are the primary trainer is acceptable.
 - One professional reference from someone in a dog-related profession (trainer, behaviorist, vet, supervisor, instructor, etc.) who has known you professionally for at least 1 year.
 - Letters should comment on your communication, professionalism, knowledge, and expertise.
 - The above two (*three) reference letters may also be used as part of documentation establishing your experience or proficiency in a given area. If you intend to use them that way, please be sure the people writing your references know what you would like them to discuss.

Continued Certification Requirements

Certification is valid for one year. After that, it must be renewed annually. The following are required to maintain your certification:

- » Atlas Certified Trainer in good standing with no unresolved complaints regarding training approaches or behavior and no outstanding infractions or suspensions, per the Atlas Trainer Infraction Policy, found in the Atlas Trainer Policies document.
- » Agree to maintain your education and expertise and to constantly look for better ways to do what you do. Provide proof of 10 or more continuing education units (CEUs) every year. Any CEUs accepted by IAABC, CCPDT, and KPA are accepted by Atlas. Others may be accepted by request. CEU credits can also be earned by supporting Atlas clients as an Atlas Team Facilitator and by taking newer Atlas courses as they are released. To find out more about becoming a Team Facilitator, contact info@atlasdog.org.
- » Renewal of pledge to follow Atlas' approved methods of ethical treatment of clients and dogs.
- » Annual fee paid, which is presently \$200.

Areas of Proficiency

Each trainer must establish proficiency in the following areas. Atlas offers courses in each of these areas. Proficiency may be established via Atlas courses or, in some cases, by submitting proof of qualification and prior experience as well as completing a test-out in each area. Test-outs are not available for any of the service courses or dog or people course that we feel are fundamental for all to take. Details on how to establish equivalent qualifications are covered later in this document.



» **DOGS: Dog behavior, development, health, communication, learning theory, and training**

The Dog portion of our program includes eight modules. The goal is for trainers to further their understanding about fundamental aspects of dogs and positive training methods as it pertains more specifically to service dog training.

1. **Animal Learning Theory**

Covers the basics of learning theory as it pertains to dog training. Atlas strongly values ethical treatment of dogs (as well as people). This course goes over the four quadrants of learning (training), the importance of positive training methods and demonstrates why they are so much more successful.

2. **Dog Development and Physiology**

Covers physical and emotional as well as cognitive development in dogs from puppyhood to adulthood. This is crucial information to know in any dog training but especially in service dog training, as understanding a dog's needs and early behaviors will set the dog up for better success as the training continues through the dog's life.

3. **Puppy Socialization and Rearing**

Covers information for setting a puppy up for success as they enter the new home. It will go over various phases of puppyhood and how to navigate them in a positive and manageable way.

4. **Dog Body Language and Communication**

Covers important information about reading and interpreting dog body language. This is an important skill for any dog trainer but even more important for those training service dogs. These dogs are exposed to many different potentially stressful environments, and it is our job as trainers and handlers to advocate for them and make sure they are well suited for service work. Service dog trainers also need to know how to relay this information to their clients so that they can ensure their dog remains comfortable and happy in the job they are doing.

5. **Dog Health, Maintenance, and Preventative Care**

Covers information regarding dog health and care and discusses the importance of upkeeping proper mental and physical health protocols in service dogs.

6. **Methods and Use of Training Equipment**

Covers information regarding training tools, equipment, and a review of Atlas' policies on ethical and positive training methods. The course discusses safety, usefulness, and methods for using various training tools specific to service dog training.

7. **Dog Training Approaches Including Planning and Carrying Out Training Sessions**

Covers training approaches, exercises to build confidence and focus, and behavior adjustment methods. It also presents information and suggestions regarding the planning of private and group lessons specific to service dog clients. Service dog trainers must understand that their clients need goals and plans, but also flexibility.

» **PEOPLE: Communication, Leadership, Instruction, Compassion, and Professionalism**

The goal of these courses is to help trainers understand and develop effective communication skills with their clients, as well as to learn how to adapt their teaching and communication methods appropriately based on their clients' individual, needs, abilities and, preferences. Learn the best approaches to teaching clients with disabilities.



1. **Common learning styles and teaching skills**

Focuses on concepts and skills that will increase the trainer's ability to understand and teach their clients based on their individual learning styles and abilities. You may find that some of your clients with disabilities need different tools to learn and understand new concepts. This course gives you some insight into how to approach these cases.

2. **Ethical principles and behaviors when training**

Focuses on ethics in training. Topics discussed include our code of ethics as well as those from CCPDT, and the importance of integrity and empathy in service dog training towards both the dog and the client.

3. **Communication, listening, interpersonal skills**

Covers information about communication skills specific to clients with disabilities. The material goes over basic types of communication but also some more complex ways that clients may be communicating with their trainers and exhibiting stress non-verbally.

4. **Planning and setting up training sessions**

Covers information regarding the planning, management, and expectations of your training lessons with service dog clients. Service dog training is not without its challenges and these specific clients may encounter difficulties with training in ways pet dog clients may not. The course discusses strategies for success, specific to clients with disabilities, their families, and for yourself.

5. **Confidentiality and professionalism**

Covers information relating to staying professional and keeping up with a standard of confidentiality necessary when working with clients.

» **SERVICE WORK: Service Dog Specialties: Disability law, people with disabilities, service dog specialties**

The Service Work portion of our program is composed of seven modules. The goal of these modules is for trainers to develop an understanding of the world of disability and service dogs. Learn about medical and psychiatric conditions and how to train a dog to help mitigate those conditions.

Most importantly, appreciate that dog training is more than just working with the dog. Most importantly, and that no matter the disability or specific set of challenges, the clients you will be working with are people beyond all else, with goals, aspirations, and passions.

1. **Choice of Dog Appropriate for Service Work**

Covers physical, psychological, and emotional requirements of service dogs. It evaluates various sources for finding a suitable service dog. Discusses temperament, health, and red flags to look for during an evaluation.

2. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Relevant Laws**

Covers information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as other laws and regulations concerning service dogs and their handlers, their rights and the rights of businesses. As trainers, it is important to understand these laws and be able to educate your clients about their protected rights but also their own legal requirements as handlers and the rights of



businesses. This course also provides ideas as to how to best support a client faced with public access challenges and coach them to become their best self-advocate.

3. **Understanding Disabilities**

Covers information on a wide range of disabilities. As a service dog trainer, understanding your clients' experiences is crucial. You are training (or helping them train) their dog to help mitigate their disabilities, so comprehending their needs is a fundamental step in the process. It also helps you understand your clients' challenges on a deeper level and what might be barriers in their training. This will allow you to think critically and problem solve in an innovative way when those challenges occur.

4. **How to be a Successful Trainer when Working with Clients with Disabilities**

Covers information involving the experiences of people with different disabilities and gives insight as to how service dog trainers can successfully communicate and work with their clients. Service dog trainers must try their best to understand and empathize with their clients in order to help them meet their training goals.

5. **Developing Your Service Dog Program**

Covers a wide variety of information regarding how to successfully work as a service dog handler, including working appropriately and safely in public, keeping your service dog happy and healthy throughout the dog's working (and non-working) life, being a good self-advocate if challenged etc.

This course has been developed primarily for our clients and Team Facilitators but is a very useful resource for trainers as they will need to coach their own clients on how to navigate these day-to-day activities.

6. **Atlas' Public Access Test**

This course is text and video based. It goes over Atlas' entire Public Access Test (PAT), including what to expect during the test and explains the overall importance of the PAT. This course has been developed for our clients, Team Facilitators, and trainers as it will help everyone stay on the same page and ensure that all are fully prepared.

7. **Disability Skills Training**

This four-part course covers detailed information regarding a variety of cues and skills used to mitigate a wide range of disabilities.

Each course is accompanied by its own Skills Manual which provides details on how to introduce and refine each skill as well as tips, tricks, and important notes.

We present each skill with a definition, purpose, prerequisite. It is then followed by a video demonstration of use and/or teaching of skills. We follow it up with a discussion of possible use with clients.

○ **Foundational Concepts and Disability Tasks**



Detailed foundation of concepts and associated skills that become building blocks to use for all subsequent service dog training.

- **Balance and Mobility Tasks**
Covers detailed information regarding a variety of cues which are used to mitigate disabilities or symptoms related to mobility and balance. Example of such tasks are mobility retrievals, balance assistance, bracing, and many more.
- **Medical Alert and Response Tasks**
Covers detailed information regarding a variety of cues which are used to mitigate disabilities or symptoms related to various medical conditions. Examples of such skills are medical alerts and responses, medication retrievals, getting help, and many more. Application of scent-detection skills for medical alerts and responses are included.
- **Psychiatric and Cognitive Tasks**
Covers detailed information regarding a variety of tasks which are used to mitigate disabilities or symptoms related to various psychiatric and cognitive disabilities. Examples of such tasks are alerting to an approaching person, creating a physical barrier, behavior interruption and many more.

8. **Sweet Snoopers Scent Detection by Debby Kay**

Atlas is pleased to partner with Debby Kay to offer her Sweet Snoopers course. This course is designed to teach the world-renowned training methodology of Debby Kay's Sweet Snoopers Program. Debby's program is recognized as one of the most reliable scent detection programs available.

It presents a step-by-step approach to applying conditioning principles to train a dog to consistently and reliably detect a specific scent and alert their handler to the presence of the target sense.

Proof of Equivalency and Prior Qualifications

Atlas recognizes trainers come with diverse sets of backgrounds and experience, and we think you should get credit for that and not be required to spend time and money on areas where you are already an expert. At the same time, we want to ensure the quality, experience, integrity and consistency we want all Atlas Certified Trainers to embody.

During your interview, we will discuss your areas of expertise and which would be considered equivalent for a given proficiency area. The combination of that documentation and successfully completing course test-outs will be considered proof of proficiency in a given area. We do not offer test-outs for our Service Courses.

Your initial certification fee will be based on the areas of proficiency agreed upon during your interview and based on your documentation. Upon receipt of the fee, you will be given access to test-outs for all areas you are attempting to establish proficiency. If you do not pass any of the test outs with a score of 80% or higher, you will be invoiced for the balance to cover those courses. Once you have paid the invoice for any additional courses, you will be granted access to the training program.

Below are some of the areas we recognize as equivalencies for various parts of our program. **Applicants are encouraged to suggest other means of establishing proficiency which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis**



by the application committee.

Experience Examples:

- » Two or more years of documented experience with puppy training and socialization, established via > 50 hrs. of training logs.
- » Four or more years of experience as a teacher where you were the primary person responsible for lesson planning, giving lessons, and managing classrooms for children or adults. Established via resume and interview discussion.
- » Certified Mediator or Personal Coach.
- » You follow a service dog training program that was previously reviewed and validated by Atlas. Review of the program must have been within the last 1 year.

Other requirements may be met or partially met by the following certifications and educational experiences.

Certification Examples:

- » UW- Certificate in Applied Animal Behavior
- » KPA Certified Training Partner
- » CCPDT-KA
- » CBATI Education:
- » Bachelor's degree or higher in animal behavior or science
- » Veterinary
- » Dog Gurus: Knowing Dogs 101 Dog Language Course Graduate
- » Coaching People to Train their Dogs with Terry Ryan Course Graduate
- » LLA Professional Course Graduate
- » IAABC- Animal Behavior Principles and Practice Course Graduate

Fees

- » Application fee is \$50. This is credited toward the certification if the certification fee is paid in one payment. Application fee is non-refundable and valid for 1 year.
- » Extensions to certification window will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Fees may apply. Access to program will be removed 18 months after start date if certification not completed and extensions have not been agreed to between Atlas and student.
- » Renewal is required annually.
 - Standard renewal fees are \$200 as long as they are paid within 3 months of the date of expiration of trainer certification.
 - Pro plan renewal fees are \$300 as long as they are paid within 3 months of the date of expiration of trainer certification and include Audit Access to our Teams Set in Motion™ course.
 - First renewal fee (\$200) is waived if trainer completes their certification in 9 months or less.
 - If renewal is paid more than 3 months, but less than 2 years after expiration, renewal fee is \$300.
 - If the trainer is suspended temporarily, but less than 2 years, re-instatement/renewal fee is \$300.



- If certification is expired for 2 or more years, reapplication is required including a \$50 application fee. Applicant will be required to complete the Program Review and PAT courses as well as any courses that were not available at the time of their certification.
- » Certification fee with no test-out discounts: \$3,520 (as of June 2021).
- » Maximum Discounted rates for highly experienced dog trainer as well as human educator who can show qualification for all areas other than Atlas service programs and required people programs: \$2,620 (as of June 2021).
- » Certification fee may be paid in up to 3 equal installments in 2-month increments, with the first being due at the start of coursework. The full certification fee must be received before students have access to the Service specialty training materials.



Referenced Qualifying Certifications and Courses

ACAAB, CAAB: Associate/ Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist:

<http://www.animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-application.php>

AKC CGC Evaluator: AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator: <http://www.akc.org/dog-owners/training/canine-good-citizen/evaluators/>

CBATI: Certified Behavioral Adjustment Training (BAT) Instructor: <http://grishastewart.com/certification/>

CCPDT-KA: Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, Knowledge

Assessed: <http://www.ccpdt.org/certification/dog-trainer-certification/>

Coaching People to Train Their Dogs: <http://www.legacycanine.com/coaching-people-to-train-their-dogs>

IIABC- Animal Behavior Consulting Principles & Practice: <https://iaabc.org/courses/p-and-p>

KPA CTP: Karen Pryor Certified Training Partner: <https://www.karenpryoracademy.com/why-choose-a-KPA-CTP>

LLA Professional Graduate: http://www.behaviorworks.org/htm/lla_professional_overview.html

UNCW Assistance Dog Training Program: <http://uncw.edu/shahs/includes/AssistanceDogs.html>

UW Certificate in Applied Animal Behavior: <https://www.pce.uw.edu/certificates/applied-animal-behavior>

Knowing Dogs 101, Dog Language: <https://www.thedoggurus.com/knowning-dogs-101/>