



Atlas Assistance Dogs® Trainer Policies

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This document details critical policies that all Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators must agree to abide by. These policies are in place to protect our clients, their dogs and each of our reputations as ethical professionals. Whenever we refer to a “trainer” in these policies it applies equally to an Atlas Team Facilitator or Atlas Certified Trainer.

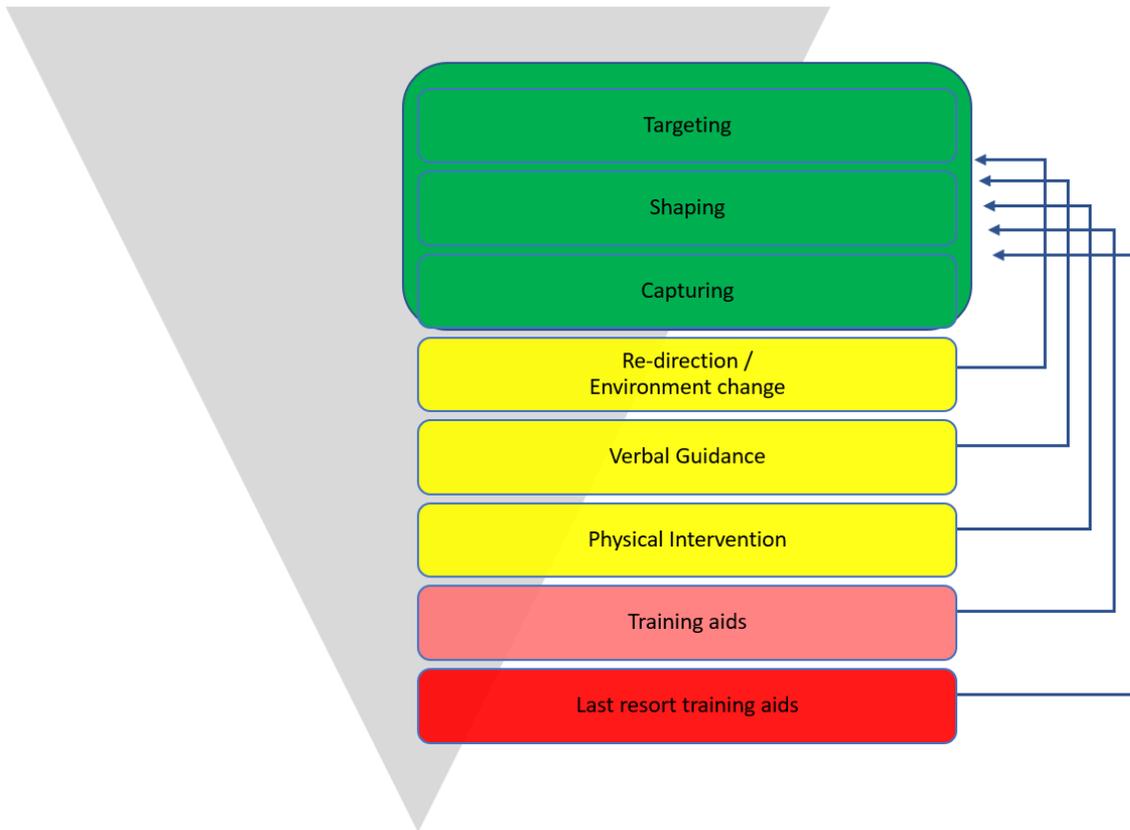
Atlas Certified Trainer and Atlas Team Facilitator Pledge

I agree to treat all people and all dogs they work with ethically, compassionately, and as individuals. I will use only ethical and scientifically based training methods, always employing the least invasive method possible, and will work with clients to ensure they understand and use humane and effective methods in handling their dogs.

Training Policy

Atlas Assistance Dogs is committed to ethical, humane, and compassionate treatment of dogs and people. This policy applies to any training you do. We believe training is about forming trusting relationships with dogs and people. Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators agree that they will always maximize the use of positive methods and will always use the least invasive training methods possible. The range of acceptable training methods is shown in the diagram below. The word “trainer” applies equally to Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators in this policy. Before a trainer works with a dog, they have an ethical responsibility to the dog to ensure they are healthy emotionally

and physically, both in general as well as in the immediate training environment/session. Any issues regarding the dog’s wellbeing must be addressed before proceeding with training.

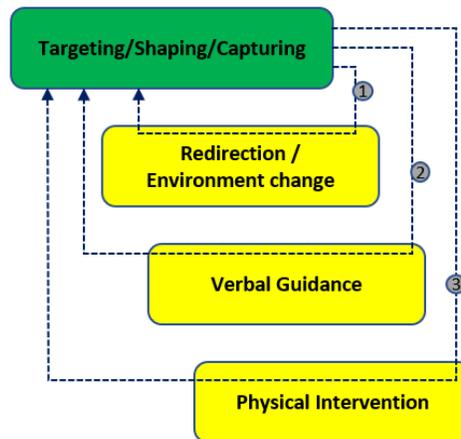


Atlas Assistance Dogs Acceptable Training Methods

The goal should always be to stay in the green zones where training is joyous for both the trainer and the dog. Use of positive reinforcement training is to be maximized at all times. Furthermore, the trainer should always listen to the dog, strive to educate themselves, ask questions of peers and mentors, and ensure they are using the most ethical, scientifically sound, and productive methods possible. Trainers owe this to themselves, the dog, the client, and to the service dog training community.

Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators agree to use only ethical training methods consistent with the chart shown above. They will always start at the first level (Targeting/Shaping/Capturing). If different approaches are needed, and after careful consideration, trainers may move to the next technique level. At each decision point/level, trainers should stop, carefully evaluate the situation, ask advice of experts, and research other alternatives before escalating to methods that have a chance of being aversive. Additionally, this model is not an ongoing path of escalation (i.e. one does not go straight through the list: Targeting/Shaping/Capturing-> Re-direction/Environment Change->Verbal Guidance-

>Physical Intervention->Training Aids ...). Instead, after each level the trainer goes back to positive (cue and capture) methods and tries again. This concept is modeled after Dr. Susan Friedman’s Humane Hierarchy.



Targeting: Use of items (visual targets, scent targets (food lure), motion targets (gestures) etc.) to help guide a dog’s behavior. Targets are typically faded and replaced with verbal, hand or environmental signals.

This may include training tools such as:

- Front or Front/Back clip nylon Harnesses
- Leash (cloth or leather)
- Long leash
- Collar (cloth or leather)
- Target sticks or target objects
- Gates/guides
- Clickers/clicker sticks
- Objects to interact with
- Laser pointers

Shaping: Acceptance of successive approximations that keep the dog motivated and direct them toward a desired finished behavior

- Shaping the desired behavior in incremental steps



- Gentle exposure to new environments at a pace the dog sets
- May be free shaping that dog offers without trainer suggestion, or shaping due to trainer guidance
- May be shaped from targeted or captured behaviors

Capturing: Watching the dog and praising when they offer the skill/behavior on their own

- Stimulation break / intermission / re-group
- Gaze / eye contact
- Staying quiet /ignoring a potential distraction
- 'Dry'- shaking off their body
- 'Go Potty'- bathrooming on cue
- May be shaped to achieve desired behavior after capturing approximation

Re-direction / Environment Change:

- 'Ready?', Saying their name in a questioning tone
- Shifting body weight to get their focus
- Re-direct
- Whistle / gentle clapping
- Going to a different or less distracting location
- Nose / ear / body gentle touch to get attention for redirection

Verbal Guidance: Using a commanding tone for cues such as "Off" or "Leave It" or "Come". Always to be followed with a cue for the desired behavior and praise. Never said with emotion or anger.

Physical Intervention: Physically touching the dog to help them understand how to use their body, providing direction, or getting them to safety. Not used to intimidate or in any intentionally aversive way.

- Body block
- Lifting paws or body onto a surface such as stairs, counter or table
- Pulling dog away from dangerous situation



Training Aids:

- Gentle Leader
- Cloth martingale
- Chain leash (to hear the jingle) or prevent mouthing of leash
- Bitter Apple sprayed directly on an object
- Leash jingling / vibration
- Leash flick (taking the slack out of the leash)

Last Resort Training Aids:

- Spray Shield, Pet Corrector – used only for the dog's safety, e.g., to break up a fight. Never used as a training tool.
- Vibration collar – used only as a temporary training tool to provide cues to the dog (such as in training deaf or blind dogs, or dogs at a distance). May not be used as a correction, may not be a combo shock/vibration collar, and may not be used if the dog responds with any signs of stress or discomfort.

Unacceptable Training Methods

Atlas Assistance Dogs considers the following training methods to be inconsistent with ethical and humane treatment of dogs. These methods are never acceptable.

If a client is already using any of these methods with their dogs when the trainer begins working with the client, the trainer is expected to actively work with them to refrain from using these techniques and help them to understand approved training methods. Atlas Assistance Dogs will not certify individuals who use any of these training methods, and we will revoke certification if we become aware that any of these methods is being used.

- Horse whips
- Physically kicking / hitting / kneeing
- Anger and frustration including shouting angrily
- Throwing items
- Physical correction (including, but not limited to, gagging, muzzle holds, lip pinches, alpha rolls)
- Leash pops/jerks where the dog's body or neck is physically moved
- Intimidation (standing over, hovering, dominance, heavy staring)



- Flooding – intentionally pushing past boundaries and taking away choice
- Prong collars
- Choke chains
- Slip leads (except in the case of emergency)
- Shock collars
- Bark/spray collars
- Page / vibrate / beep collars (the only acceptable use of these collars is vibration-only collars described above under Last Resort Training Aids)
- Chain martingales
- Bitter apple sprayed in the mouth

Drug and Alcohol Policy

Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators are prohibited from consuming, distributing, possessing, selling, or using illegal, controlled substances while working with clients and their dogs. In addition, staff may not be under the influence of any legal controlled substance, such as drugs or alcohol (over legal driving limits), while testing or training with clients and their dogs. Prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications, taken as prescribed as long as they do not inhibit your ability to work, are an exception to this policy.

Professional Conduct Policy

Atlas Assistance Dogs expects Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators to adhere to a standard of professional conduct. This ensures that the work environment is safe, comfortable, and productive. Trainers should be respectful, courteous, and mindful of others' feelings and needs. General cooperation is expected between all Atlas Certified Trainers, Atlas Team Facilitators, volunteers, and others working in support of Atlas' mission. How we are perceived by the public and our clients is a direct reflection of our level of professionalism and the image of Atlas Assistance Dogs. It is one of the things that gives people confidence in Atlas certification. Individuals who act in an unprofessional manner may be removed from their position or decertified by Atlas Assistance Dogs.

Anti-Discrimination Policy and Anti-Harassment Policies

Atlas Assistance Dogs is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, Atlas expects that all relationships among persons acting as Atlas representatives, including Atlas Certified Trainers, will be businesslike and free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and harassment.



In order to keep this commitment, Atlas maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment and harassment based on any elements identified in our Anti-discrimination Policy.

Please refer to the Atlas Assistance Dogs Complaint and Harassment Prevention Policy and Anti-Discrimination Policy for complete statements of these policies.

Working with Minors

Atlas' requirements for working with minors are mandatory for Team Facilitators and recommended for Atlas Certified Trainers.

When working with a minor, we want to ensure that everyone feels safe and comfortable, and that appropriate guidelines are followed. We also want to leave space for the client to work independently from their parent and be able to build trust with their facilitator.

In this policy, "adult" is defined as: parent, legal guardian, adult sibling, or other approved individual.

When working with a client who is under the age of 18, Team Facilitators **may NOT**:

- Be in the client's home with no adult present
- Be in a room alone with closed doors. Facilitators may, however, have an adult in close proximity while having the training lesson with the client
- Drive them/have them in your car (or be in their car) with no adult present

Team Facilitators may work with the client alone in these settings:

- In public with others present
- In the client's home if an adult is also in the home (no closed doors)
- Text, call, email client with parent/guardian pre-approval

Atlas Certified Trainer and Atlas Team Facilitator Infraction Policy

The purpose of this document is to define the policy for how to handle pending and active Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators who in some way violate Atlas' Trainer policies. This policy sets guidelines. It is up to the Trainer and Atlas Team Facilitator Committees, respectively, to determine how the standards will be applied based on a given situation, though the committee should strive to be consistent and fair with all trainers. The word "trainer" applies equally to Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators in this policy. Trainers agree to use only the Atlas-approved training methods with all dogs and clients they work with. Additionally, if a trainer is charged with any criminal or civil infraction, the applicable committee will review the charges to determine if this Infraction Policy is applicable. The complaint as well as decision will be documented and kept in the trainer's internal file. If members of the committee have a conflict of interest due to a personal relationship with the trainer, they may give input but must excuse themselves from the final discussion and vote as to consequences.



Depending on the level of infraction, different consequences pertain. The purpose of this policy is to protect clients, both human and dog, and ensure the integrity of our program and trainers. It is also to ensure trainers are handled consistently and fairly when complaints or issues arise. Trainers will have an opportunity to present their case and discuss the infraction with the Trainer or Atlas Team Facilitator Committee, as applicable.

Infraction Levels:

Level 1:

These are cases where a policy has been disregarded, such as using unapproved training tools or approaches. It might also be the case where the client, facilitator or trainer observed and/or complained about poor communication or follow-up, poor training implementation, or lack of experience. These are typically cases where the impact on the client or dog is relatively low, but the training method is still not in alignment with Atlas' policies and values.

Level 2:

These are cases where a policy has been purposefully and knowingly disregarded, typically multiple times, such as using unapproved training tools or approaches. It would also include cases of purposefully misleading the client about their dog's capabilities, their progress in training, or being repeatedly rude or disrespectful. These are cases where we do not feel the trainer is operating in the client's, dog's, or Atlas' best interest but the dog and trainer are not in imminent risk of harm, though are being treated poorly.

Level 3:

These are cases where we feel there is imminent risk of serious emotional, mental, or physical harm to the client or dog. This may be due to repeated use of unapproved tools such as prong collars or e-collars; repeated use of techniques such as flooding or intimidation; or repeatedly disregarding clear signals from the client or dog they are in distress. It can also include multiple poor training or planning decisions that put the client and dog in situations where they are at risk of serious harm from another dog, person, or object (such as a moving car).

Level 4/Most Serious:

These are cases where there is a confirmed incident of serious emotional, mental, or physical harm to the client or dog. This would include physical abuse such as kicking, hitting, or shaking. It would also include extreme emotional or mental abuse such as threatening, loud and repeated verbal shouting and language, bullying, or dominating. In the case of dogs, it includes use of techniques such as alpha rolls, gagging, choking, or pain holds.

Consequences for Atlas Certified Trainers and Atlas Team Facilitators:

Consequences are the same for Atlas Certified Trainers or Atlas Team Facilitators, other than fees don't apply to facilitators.



Level 1 Infraction:

Pending trainer or facilitator

Three-month period before Atlas will reconsider the application. Current application will still be processed with no additional fee, but an additional interview will be held with applicant.

Current trainer or facilitator

Written notification of disregard to policy and warning

Level 2 Infraction:

Pending trainer or facilitator

One-year period before Atlas will re-consider the application. The trainer's application fee is not refunded, and the trainer must restart the application process.

Current trainer or facilitator

One-year suspension. Can be reinstated after one year, pending a successful phone interview, review of references, and receipt of suspension and renewal fees.

Level 3 Infraction:

Pending trainer or facilitator

Two-year period before Atlas will re-consider application. The application fee is not refunded, and the trainer must restart the application process.

Current trainer or facilitator

Two-year suspension. After completion of the suspension period, the trainer must fully re-apply to be considered as an Atlas Certified Trainer or Atlas Team Facilitator. We will review and consider the seriousness of the prior infraction(s) during the application process. Trainer may be required to redo all or a portion of the coursework, including the in-person portion in the case of an Atlas Team Facilitator.

Level 4/Serious infractions:

Pending trainer or facilitator

Three-year period before Atlas will re-consider the application. The application fee is not refunded, and the trainer must restart the application process.

Current trainer or facilitator

Immediate termination of the relationship with the trainer. Depending on the infraction, police and/or animal welfare services may be notified at the time of termination. After the completion of the suspension period, the trainer must fully re-apply to be considered as an Atlas Certified Trainer or Atlas Team Facilitator. We will review and consider the seriousness of the prior infraction(s) during the application process. Trainer may be required to redo all or a portion of the coursework, including the in-person portion in the case of an Atlas Team Facilitator.



Repeat Infractions:

If similar infractions are repeated within a one-year period, six months will be added to the infraction level timeframes. If there are multiple infractions within a one-year period, that are not similar in nature, three months will be added to the infraction level timeframes.

Suspension includes:

Atlas Certified Trainers

- Removal from Active Trainer Search Site and from access to Atlas Intranet Site and accounts
- Revocation of permission to use Atlas Certified Trainer materials/branding or advertise themselves as an Atlas Certified Trainer.

Atlas Team Facilitators

- Clients reassigned to another Atlas Team Facilitator for the duration of their certification process.
- Removal from access to Atlas Intranet Site and accounts
- Revocation of permission to use Atlas Team Facilitator materials/branding or advertise themselves as Atlas Team Facilitator.

Appeal Process

Anyone who feels they have been treated unfairly under the policies in this document may appeal by filing a complaint through the Atlas Assistance Dogs Complaint and Harassment Prevention Policy.

Thank you for your careful attention to these policies and keeping our clients and their dogs safe.