



# Atlas Assistance Dogs® Academy – Certified Trainer Program

Last Updated 09/20/2022

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## 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](mailto: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™ Pro Plan. This gives you access to all content in comprehensive online course as an auditor. Have your clients sign up for the course to augment your work with them and enjoy your discounted access to provide clients with references and support. Trainers receive credit off next year's TSIM fee for each client who signs up for the course.

## 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 two 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 six 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 three 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 one 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](mailto: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.

Dog-related topics covered include:

- Animal Learning Theory
- Dog Development and Physiology
- Puppy Socialization and Rearing
- Dog Body Language and Communication
- Dog Health, Maintenance, and Preventative Care
- Methods and Use of Training Equipment
- Dog Training Approaches Including Planning and Carrying Out Training Sessions

- **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.

People-related topics include:

- Common learning styles and teaching skills
- Ethical principles and behaviors when training
- Communication, listening, interpersonal skills
- Planning and setting up training sessions
- Confidentiality and professionalism



- **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.

Service work-related topics include:

- Choice of Dog Appropriate for Service Work
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Relevant Laws
- Understanding Disabilities
- How to be a Successful Trainer when Working with Clients with Disabilities
- Developing Your Service Dog Program
- Atlas' Public Access Test
- Disability Skills Training
  - Foundational Concepts and Disability Tasks
  - Balance and Mobility Tasks
  - Medical Alert and Response Tasks
  - Psychiatric and Cognitive Tasks
- Medical Scent Detection

Course syllabi for all trainer courses are available [here](#).

## **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 of these 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 percent 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 through more than 50 hours 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 through 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 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 one year.
- Extensions to the certification window will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Fees may apply. Access to the program will be removed 18 months after the start date if certification is not completed and extensions have not been agreed to between Atlas and the student.
- Renewal is required annually.
  - Standard renewal fees are \$200 as long as they are paid within three months of the date of expiration of trainer certification.
  - First renewal fee (\$200) is waived if trainer completes their certification within nine months.
  - If renewal is paid later than three months of the date of expiration, but less than two years after expiration, the renewal fee is \$300.
  - If the trainer is suspended temporarily, but for less than two years, the re-instatement/renewal fee is \$300.
  - If certification is expired for two or more years, reapplication is required including a \$50 application fee. The 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.
  - Teams Set in Motion Pro Plan annual renewal fees are \$200 as long as they are paid within three months of the date of expiration of trainer certification. Trainers receive a \$10 credit to apply to the TSIM renewal fee for each client who enrolls in the course (up to \$200).
- Certification fee with no test-out discounts: \$3,520 (as of September 2022).
- Maximum discounted rates for highly experienced dog trainer as well as human educators who can show qualification for all areas other than Atlas service programs and required people programs: \$2,620 (as of September 2022).
- The certification fee may be paid in up to three equal installments in two-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

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

AKC CGC Evaluator: AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator:

<https://www.apps.akc.org/cgc-evaluator/#/>

CBATI: Certified Behavioral Adjustment Training (BAT) Instructor:

<http://grishastewart.com/certification/>

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

<https://www.ccpdt.org/certification/dog-behavior-consultant/>

[Terry Ryan: Coaching People to Train Their Dogs:](#)

IIABC-Animal Behavior Consulting Principles & Practice:

<https://m.iaabc.org/courses/principles-and-practice/>

KPA CTP: Karen Pryor Certified Training Partner:

<https://karenpryoracademy.com/courses/dog-trainer-professional/>

LLA Professional Graduate:

[http://www.behaviorworks.org/htm/lla\\_professional\\_overview.html](http://www.behaviorworks.org/htm/lla_professional_overview.html)

UNCW Assistance Dog Training Program:

<https://uncw.edu/chhs/shahs/academic/undergraduate/rectherapy/servicedogtraining.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/>