



Atlas Assistance Dogs® Academy – Certified Trainer Program

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Benefits.....	1
Prerequisites.....	2
Requirements	2
Continued Certification Requirements.....	3
Accommodations.....	4
Areas of Proficiency.....	4
Proof of Equivalency and Prior Qualifications	5
Fees.....	6

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

Prerequisites

Atlas' program is designed for someone who is already working as a professional dog trainer, or has professional level experience, 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. It is also a great resource for professional or professional level trainers who wish to continue to expand their education. 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, using an online learning platform, reading and editing simple Excel or Word documents, recording and sharing videos.
- Access to actual or simulated clients and their dogs for assignments
- Access to a dog for you to train with for assignments.

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.
- Completing the training program will require you to submit videos that show you training a dog as well as ones that show you coaching others to train their dogs. Written assignments will also be required.
- 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. If you do not have a facility or intend to start or expand a program, we will work with you on alternative ways to use this part of the program.
- Agree Atlas may contact other training professionals in our network to ask for references about you as a trainer and professional.
- Provide two 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.

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.

Accommodations

Atlas strives to be as accessible as possible and encourages people with disabilities or alternative learning needs to complete our programs. We want to be part of expanding access to our profession to people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in any area, please reach out to us directly at info@atlasdog.org before or during the course and we will do our best to work with you. We do not want you to be frustrated, so please reach out to us as soon as possible if you have any questions or concerns.

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. In some cases we will provide discounts to courses based on experience, but still have trainers complete them. Details on how to establish equivalent qualifications are covered later in this document.

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

The Dog portion of our program includes several 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 as well as build a foundation for more advanced service modules.

Dog-related course include:

- Puppy Socialization and Rearing
- Dog Body Language and Communication
- Dog Health, Maintenance, and Preventative Care
- Training Methods and Learning Theory
- Fitness and Conditioning

- **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 courses include:

- Ethics, Empathy and Integrity



- Private training and Planning Training programs
- **SERVICE WORK: Service Dog Specialties: Disability law, people with disabilities, service dog specialty skills**

The Service Work portion of our program is composed of several 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 courses include:

- Choice of Dog Appropriate for Service Work
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Relevant Laws
- Understanding Disabilities and 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 on the Atlas website: <https://www.atlasdog.org/atlas-academy/> .

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 certification fee will be based on the areas of proficiency agreed upon during your interview and based on your documentation.

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 may be requested. Up to two 3-month extensions can be purchased at \$225 per extension. Access to the program will be removed 12 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.
- Certification fee with no discounts: \$3,770 (as of January 2024).
- 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: \$2,889 (as of January 2024).
- 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.
- If Team Facilitators wish to complete our full Academy, the fee is heavily discounted. In that case, up to two payments will be accepted.
- If students have completed any of our Standalone programs that are also part of our Academy program, appropriate discounts will be applied to the Academy tuition.



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

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/>