Examination for
CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINER – KNOWLEDGE ASSESSED (CPDT-KA®)

Handbook for Candidates

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers®

SPRING 2026 TESTING PERIOD

Application Deadline: Wednesday, January 14, 2026
Testing Period Begins: Saturday, March 7, 2026
Testing Period Ends: Saturday, March 28, 2026

FALL 2026 TESTING PERIOD

Application Deadline: Wednesday, July 15, 2026
Testing Period Begins: Saturday, September 5, 2026
Testing Period Ends: Saturday, September 26, 2026

Fees and deadlines are subject to change without notice. All fees listed are in US $ and are non-refundable. The late Application Fee is in addition to the Application Fee. Applications will not be accepted after the Late Application Deadline. All deadlines are effective 11:59 pm ET.

Test Accommodations requests MUST be submitted **no less than 8 weeks** before the start of the testing period.

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Mission Statement

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® (CCPDT®) exists to be the industry leader in defining and maintaining competency in the dog training and behavior profession.

Guiding Principles of the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers

- To develop a recognized standard of proficiency based on current scientific evidence for dog training and behavior professionals through an independent certification process of standardized testing.
- To maintain empirically validated certification examinations that are psychometrically sound, based on current scientific evidence in the profession, and independent of commercial influence.
- To recognize documented training and behavior experience as valid, functional criteria relevant to the certification process.
- To encourage growth in, and fluency of knowledge in, the profession, and thus foster a link in the community of trainers, behavior consultants, academics, veterinarians and veterinary staff, breeders, rescues, shelters, and other animal professionals.
- To benefit animal and human welfare by promoting strategies and methods based on humane practices defined by the CCPDT Values.
- To promote and protect the CCPDT's designations as the publicly recognized credential of dog training and behavior professionals committed to education, experience, and professional excellence.

Position Statements

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® (CCPDT®) endorses reinforcement-based training strategies as the primary method for modifying behavior, reducing fear and aggression, and fostering positive relationships between dogs, their owners or caretakers, and the community.

Our standards are guided by scientific research, practical effectiveness, and ethical responsibility, ensuring that credentialed trainers are equipped to serve with skill and integrity**.** We prioritize practical, outcome-driven approaches continuously informed by evolving science and real-world experience, bridging the gap between academic theory and practical application. We oppose the use of behavioral intervention strategies and training equipment that cause physical harm, induce prolonged stress, or lead to chronic anxiety from sustained fear.

Our standards promote effective, ethical, and humane training methods while addressing behavioral challenges with measurable, evidence-based practices. Through these standards, the CCPDT seeks to advance the field of dog training and behavior consulting while balancing community safety, dog welfare, and professional competence.

Certification

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT) endorses the certification concept by examination for all dog training and behavior professionals. Certification focuses specifically on the individual and indicates relevant current knowledge in a specialized area of practice. Certification for dog training and behavior professionals is highly valued and provides formal recognition of basic knowledge.

The CCPDT reserves the right to change any of the requirements concerning its Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA®) credential, including, but not limited to, the eligibility requirements, examination content, recertification requirements, fees, use of the mark, name of the mark, and the website. Information published in the current version of the CPDT-KA Handbook for Candidates on the CCPDT website supersedes all other printed or electronic versions of this Handbook. Neither the Handbook for Candidates, the examination application form, the examination, nor the CCPDT credential constitutes a contract between the candidate or the certificant and the CCPDT.

Purposes of CPDT-KA Certification

To promote the delivery of safe and effective dog training through the certification of qualified professional dog trainers by:

1. recognizing formally those individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the CCPDT and pass the Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainers - Knowledge Assessed;
2. encouraging continued professional growth in the practice of professional dog training;
3. establishing and measuring the level of knowledge and skills required for certification in professional dog training;
4. providing a standard of knowledge and skill requisite for certification; thereby assisting the employer, public, and members of the professional dog care industry in the assessment of the professional dog trainer.

Eligibility Requirements

1. A Training Log documenting at least three hundred (300) hours of paid or volunteer experience in dog training within the last three (3) years. Two hundred twenty-five (225) hours of experience must be training hours that include: instructing group dog training classes, conducting private training lessons, consulting with clients, and/or training hands-on with one or more dogs. A candidate may log training hours as a Trainer's Assistant, provided they are actively instructing a client or training a dog as part of their assistant role. Seventy-five (75) hours of experience can be in other related areas such as volunteering at an animal shelter in a non-trainer capacity, consulting with another trainer about current cases, designing training plans, working as a veterinary technician or dog groomer, and/or assisting another trainer but not actively instructing a client or training a dog. Training Log hours cannot be earned by training your own dog.
2. Be at least 18 years of age and have earned a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent.
3. A signed and completed Attestation Statement from a CCPDT certificant, IAABC Certified Dog Behavior Consultant, Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, Professional Canine Trainer – Accredited, Professional Canine Behavior Consultant – Accredited, veterinarian, or other credentials listed on the Attestation Statement. Credentials not listed on the Attestation Statement will not be accepted. ***The Attestation Statement form can be found at the end of this handbook.***
4. Acknowledgment of and commitment to adhere to the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures.
5. Completion of the online application.
6. Payment of the required fee.

NOTE: An individual convicted of a felony shall be ineligible to apply for certification until release from confinement and completion of any probationary period.

Appeals on Eligibility

Candidates who have been deemed ineligible to sit for an examination may appeal in writing to the CCPDT Executive Committee, by sending a letter either by postal mail to the headquarters office of the CCPDT (Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, 25 West 39th Street, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10018), or by email to administrator@ccpdt.org. The letter must be accompanied by supporting documents and must be received within ten (10) business days after the notification of ineligibility is sent to the candidate. The CCPDT will review the appeal and notify the candidate in writing of its decision within ten (10) business days of receipt of the written appeal.

Should the decision be in favor of the eligibility of the candidate to sit for the examination, but past the deadline for

the current testing period, the candidate will be enrolled to take the examination during the next regularly scheduled testing period.

Non-discrimination

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers does not discriminate against any individual based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, disability, physical limitation, marital or familial status, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, or any other characteristic prohibited by law.

Administration

The certification program is sponsored by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers. The examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed is administered for the CCPDT by the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC), 25 West 39th Street, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10018, (212) 356-0660, www.ptcny.com. Before applying for and taking the examination, questions concerning the examination should be directed to PTC at www.ptcny.com/contact.

Certification and Recertification

Eligible candidates who pass the Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed may use the designation, Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA®), after their names and will receive an e-certificate verifying their certified status from the CCPDT. This certificate is the property of the CCPDT. A directory of Certified Professional Dog Trainers – Knowledge Assessed certificants' names, cities, states, and zip codes will be maintained on the CCPDT website. If you do not wish to have your information publicly available on the website, please notify the CCPDT by email and you will be removed from the online directory.

The Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed credential is valid for a period of three (3) years, at which time the certificant must have accumulated Continuing Education Units (CEUs) at CCPDT-approved programs and meet any new requirements or measures of qualification. Alternatively, the certificant may opt to retake and must pass the current examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed to maintain the credential.

Revocation of Certification

Certification may be revoked for any of the following reasons:

1. Falsification of any part of an application
2. Felony convictions that occur during the certification period
3. Misrepresentation of certification status
4. Violation of CCPDT policies, including, but not limited to, the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures.

The Certification Compliance Committee of the CCPDT provides the appeal mechanism for challenging the revocation of CCPDT certification. It is the responsibility of the individual to initiate this process.

Application Procedure

The online application is accessed via the CCPDT website. Read and follow the directions on the application and in this Handbook for Candidates.

Completion of Application

Complete all information requested in the online application.

NOTE: The first and last name you enter on your application must exactly match the first and last name listed on your current government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license or passport.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE and CODE OF ETHICS: All candidates must read and agree to adhere to the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics as part of their online application. The Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics can be found at the end of this handbook and on the CCPDT website.

THE HIERARCHY OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE PROCEDURES POLICY: All candidates must read and agree to adhere to the CCPDT Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedure Policy as part of their online application. The Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedure Policy can be found at the end of this handbook and on the CCPDT website.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- **ATTESTATION STATEMENT:** The signed Attestation Statement is required to sit for the examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed. The statement can be signed by a current CCPDT certificant; IAABC Certified Dog Behavior Consultant, Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist; Pet Professional Accreditation Board Professional Canine Trainer or Canine Behavior Consultant; veterinarian; or other credentials listed on the Attestation Statement. Credentials not listed on the Attestation Statement will not be accepted. The Attestation Statement form can be found at the end of this handbook, as well as on the CCPDT website. The Attestation Statement must be saved as a .jpg or PDF and uploaded into the online application.
- **TRAINING LOG:** See Eligibility Requirements for details. The online Training Log instructions can be found on the CCPDT website. The Training Log may be uploaded into the online application using the template on the CCPDT website or entered directly into the online application where instructed.

SUBMIT THE APPLICATION: Submit the completed application, Attestation Statement, and fee online by the deadline shown on the cover of this Handbook.

- When you start a new application you will be asked to create a user account and password. This account will be used to access your score report after the exam, so keep this information for later use.

CCPDT randomly selects applications for audit. If selected, you will be required to provide additional information before your application is approved. Failure to comply will result in the denial of your application.

Fees

Fees and deadlines are subject to change without notice. All fees listed are in US $ and are non-refundable. The Late Application Fee is in addition to the Application Fee. Applications will not be accepted after the Late Application Deadline. **All deadlines are effective 11:59 pm ET.**

- Application fee for the Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed: **$425**
- Late fee: **$100**
- Transfer fee: **$230**

After you submit the online application and application fee, your application will be reviewed and you will be notified via email of your eligibility status. Your application will not be reviewed until your payment has been received. Applications without payment will be in pending status and you will not be registered to take the exam. **Applications are reviewed EXACTLY AS SUBMITTED, without any subsequent updates or edits.** It is your responsibility to ensure that your application is correct and complete prior to submission.

Candidates who are deemed to be ineligible will be refunded the exam fee, less a $100 administrative fee. In the unlikely event that a refund is granted to an approved candidate, a $100 administrative fee will be deducted from the refund amount. Late application fees and transfer fees are excluded from all refunds.

Please be advised: Prometric does not have the authority to grant transfers to another testing period or refunds.

Refunds

There will be no refund of fees. Candidates unable to take the examination during the original test period may transfer to either of the next two testing periods. There is a transfer fee of $230. **Candidates may only transfer once - please plan carefully.**

No refunds will be issued for applying for the incorrect examination or testing period, for failing to make an examination appointment, or for failing to appear for your scheduled appointment.

Examination Administration

The examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer – Knowledge Assessed is administered during an established three-week testing period daily, Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays, at computer-based testing facilities or via live remote proctoring managed by Prometric.

Scheduling Authorization

PTC will send approved candidates a Scheduling Authorization via email. Scheduling Authorizations are sent approximately 11 weeks before the first day of the testing window. The emails come from **notices@ptcny.com**. Candidates cannot make an appointment until they receive a Scheduling Authorization.

If you have not received your Scheduling Authorization by 3 weeks before the start of your testing window, contact PTC at www.ptcny.com/contact.

Candidates who apply less than 11 weeks before the opening of the testing window will receive a Scheduling Authorization within 3 business days after receiving an approval notice.

Scheduling Your Examination Appointment

The Scheduling Authorization will indicate how to schedule your examination appointment with Prometric, as well as the dates during which testing is available. Appointment times are first-come, first-served, so schedule your appointment as soon as you receive your Scheduling Authorization to maximize your chance of testing at your preferred location and on your preferred date. **Candidates who wait until the last minute run the risk of missing out on their preferred date, time, and location. Candidates unable to schedule an appointment may be subject to forfeiture of their fees.**

After you make your test appointment, Prometric will send you a confirmation email with the date, time, and location of your exam. Please check this confirmation carefully for the correct date, time, and location. Contact Prometric at (800) 741-0934 if you do not receive this email confirmation or if there is a mistake with your appointment.

Note: International candidates may also schedule, reschedule, or cancel an appointment online at www.prometric.com.

IMPORTANT! You MUST present your current driver's license, passport, or U.S. military ID at the test center or during your remote check-in. Expired, temporary, or paper driver's licenses will NOT be accepted. The first and last name on your Scheduling Authorization MUST exactly match the first and last name on your photo ID. ***Fees will not be refunded for exams missed because of an invalid ID.***

Scheduling a Remotely Proctored Examination Appointment

If you prefer to test via live remote proctoring in your home or another quiet distraction-free location, you must provide a computer with a camera, microphone, and an internet connection to allow real-time video communication

with a remote proctor.
Please see the Live Remote Proctoring FAQs for more info: https://ptcny.com/remote-proctor-faqs/

PLEASE BE ADVISED: It is the candidate's responsibility to be sure their equipment and workspace meet all of the requirements for Live Remote Proctoring. If a candidate makes an appointment for remote proctoring and is unable to test due to not meeting the technical requirements or physical requirements of the workspace, the candidate will forfeit their examination fees.

Test Center or Live Remote Proctoring: What's the Difference?

	Test Center Exam	Live Remote Proctored Exam
Additional cost	No	No
ADA Accommodations offered	Yes	Yes – Extra time accommodations only
Breaks allowed	Unscheduled breaks are permitted; however, the exam timer will continue counting down.	No breaks are permitted. Candidates must NOT leave camera view until the exam has ended.
Equipment needed	None – Computer provided at the test center	The candidate provides their own laptop or desktop computer to take the exam. The computer must have: • Webcam • Microphone • Secure, reliable internet For complete requirements: www.prometric.com/proproctorcandidate
Testing space needed	None – testing space provided by the test center	Candidates must test alone at a desk or table in a room with a door and no distractions or interruptions. Other people or animals are not permitted in your testing area.
Check-in procedure	Candidates must show their current Government-issued photo ID; walk through a metal detector or be wanded by staff; and roll up their sleeves and turn out pockets for a visual inspection.	Before check-in, the candidate's equipment needs to pass a compatibility check. During check-in, candidates must show their current government-issued photo ID; perform a 360° scan of the room using their camera; and roll up sleeves and turn out pockets for a visual inspection.
Monitoring	Proctors monitor candidates through video and physical walkthroughs in the testing room.	Remote proctors monitor candidates through video and audio, as well as ProProctor security software.

This information is provided as a courtesy summary and may not represent full requirements or

specifications for in-person testing or live remote proctored testing. For Live Remote Proctored FAQs, visit https://ptcny.com/remote-proctor-faqs/

Changing Your Examination Appointment

Candidates can reschedule their examination appointments within the same testing period as long as the request is submitted within the timeframe described below. Reschedule within the permitted time frame by calling or going to the Prometric website: www.prometric.com/ccpdt.

Time Frame	Reschedule Permitted?	Stipulations
Requests submitted 30 days or more before the original appointment	Yes	None
Requests submitted 29 to 5 days before the original appointment	Yes	Candidate must pay Prometric a rescheduling fee of $50.
Requests submitted less than 5 days before the original appointment	**No**	Candidates who do not arrive for their appointment to test will be considered a no-show and all their examination fees will be forfeited. Candidates will need to reapply and pay fees for a future testing period.

Transferring to a New Testing Period

Candidates unable to take the examination during their scheduled testing period may transfer to either of the next two testing periods. Transfers to a later testing period will not be accepted. **There is a transfer fee of $230.** You cannot transfer more than once so please plan carefully.

Candidates are responsible for contacting Prometric and canceling the original examination appointment if one was made. Candidates who do not cancel the original exam appointment will be considered a no-show and will not be permitted to transfer.

Transfer applications must be received according to the application deadlines and fees for the new testing period. Transfer candidates must meet the eligibility criteria of the CPDT-KA exam at the time of the transfer application submission.

Candidates wishing to transfer to a new testing period need to follow the steps below.

1. Go to apply.ptcny.com.
2. Click “Transfer Existing Application.”
3. PTC Support will send you an email letting you know your transfer application was approved and that you can log back into your application and pay the one-time $230.00 transfer fee.

Contact PTC at www.ptcny.com/contact if you have any questions regarding the transfer process.

If candidates are unable to take the exam during the testing period for which they registered and elect not to transfer to another eligible testing period, the application will be closed and all fees will be forfeited. There will be no refund of fees. Candidates may only be transferred to a new testing period once; please plan carefully.

NOTE: Transferring your examination only refers to instances when a candidate is unable to take their exam during a testing period for which they have already applied. Candidates who did not pass their examination and are retaking

the examination need to complete the full application and pay the full examination fee. If a candidate has been found to have violated security policies, they may not transfer and must pay the exam fees in full if they're granted a reexamination.

Failing to Report for an Examination

If you fail to report for an examination, you will forfeit all fees paid to take the examination. A completed application form and examination fee are required to reapply for the examination.

Online Practice Test

Candidates can experience what the computerized test will be like by taking an online practice exam. There are two 50-question CPDT-KA practice tests available for purchase. Scores by content area are provided upon completion. This is an opportunity to experience taking the computerized exam, to review the types of content included in the Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed, and to learn more about question format and style. The practice tests are optional and are neither the preferred nor only means to prepare for the exam.

Two hours are allotted to complete the 50 questions for a fee of $105. The practice tests can be found at https://secure.ptcny.com/webtest/.

Test Accommodations

CCPDT and PTC support the intent of and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will take steps reasonably necessary to make testing accessible to persons with disabilities covered under the ADA. According to the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, walking) or a major bodily function (such as neurological, endocrine, or digestive system).

The information you provide and any documentation regarding your disability and test accommodations is confidential and is not included in scoring or reporting.

All approved testing accommodations must maintain the psychometric nature and security of the examination. Accommodations that fundamentally alter the nature or security of the exam will not be granted. Note that accommodations for an examination (test accommodations) may not be the same as accommodations provided by your employer for your job. You can find more information about testing accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (www.ada.gov).

Requests for Test Accommodations must be uploaded with the candidate's application and fees at least 8 weeks before the start of your testing period. You must complete and upload both Part 1 and Part 2 of this Form at the same time. Missing information or incomplete Forms will result in a delay in processing. **If your Form is incomplete and/or not received at least 8 weeks before the start of the testing period, we cannot guarantee that we can make these test accommodations in time for you to test and you may need to transfer to another testing period and pay the transfer fee.**

To request test accommodations, follow these 3 steps:

1. Download the Test Accommodations Form, available from www.ptcny.com or by calling PTC at (212) 356-0660.
2. Complete the Test Accommodations Form with your doctor/healthcare professional.
3. Upload the completed and signed Test Accommodations Form with the online exam application. Submit your application and Test Accommodations Form at least 8 weeks prior to the start of your chosen testing period.

NOTES:

- Only those requests made and received on the official Test Accommodations Form will be reviewed.

- All requests must be made at the time of application. Accommodations cannot be added to an existing exam appointment.
- Do not go to www.prometric.com or contact Prometric to request test accommodations as they are not authorized to approve accommodations. All requests for test accommodations must be submitted on the PTC Test Accommodations Form.
- If you need to use your cell phone or another electronic device to monitor a medical condition, such as diabetes, please be sure to include this on Part 1 of the Test Accommodations Form so that we can notify Prometric in advance.
- If you are a nursing parent and will need to use a breast pump during your exam, please complete Part 1 of the Test Accommodations Form and submit it at least 8 weeks before your testing period to allow time to make suitable arrangements at the test center.
- Only pre-approved test accommodations will be permitted on the day of the examination. Test center personnel are not authorized to make any changes to the test accommodations on the day of the testing session and any such change may result in your examination score being canceled.

Preparing for the Examination

- Check your government-issued photo ID (driver's license, passport, or U.S. Military ID) when you make your examination appointment. Is it expired? Does the first and last name on your ID match the first and last name on your Scheduling Authorization email? Proctors at the Prometric testing center or via remote access will refuse admission to candidates with expired IDs, IDs with names that do not match their records, or temporary paper IDs. Candidates without valid ID will be marked as no-shows and will forfeit their exam fees.
- Check your PTC Scheduling Authorization email and Appointment Confirmation email from Prometric to make sure everything is accurate (i.e., your name, exam name, appointment date, time, and location).
- For in-person testing, make yourself familiar with the location of your chosen testing site and any requirements they may have for parking, and check the weather and traffic conditions before you leave for the testing center. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to arrive as a late arrival may prevent you from testing. In the event of inclement weather, check the Prometric website for site closures: https://www.prometric.com/en-us/pages/siteclosure.aspx.
- For remote testing, make sure that your testing area and equipment meet the requirements provided by PTC and Prometric. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to log into the remote system, as late log-in may prevent you from testing.
- Prometric's website provides information on what you can expect on your test day, including a walkthrough of check-in and security procedures for both in-person and remote testing: www.prometric.com.
- This Handbook provides the Content Outline for the examination. Use this to help you start studying for the examination.
- Review the Rules for the Examination in the following section before your appointment.
- Review the Prometric exam software tutorial here: https://ptcny.com/pdf/prometricsoftwaretutorial.pdf

What to Expect at the Testing Appointment

PTC has partnered with Prometric Testing Centers to deliver examinations to candidates, either in-person or via live remote proctoring.

Here is what you can expect for your **in-person testing appointment**:

- Candidate Check-In
    - Candidates will be asked to present their IDs.
    - Candidates will be asked to empty and turn out their pockets.

- Candidates will be "wanded" or asked to walk through a metal detector.
- Inspection of eyeglasses, jewelry, and other accessories will be conducted. Jewelry other than wedding and engagement rings is prohibited.
- Religious headwear may be worn into the testing room. However, it may be subject to inspection by a testing center administrator before entry into the testing room is permitted.
- Prometric provides lockers for candidates to store their purses, mobile phones, jackets, food, drinks, and medical supplies.

- During the Exam
  - Candidates have 3 hours to complete 200 exam items (180 scored items, plus 20 pre-test items)
  - No breaks are scheduled during the exam. Candidates who must leave the testing room to take a break will not be given extra time on the exam
  - Candidates are only permitted to leave the testing room to use the restroom or access food, drink, or medicine from their assigned locker
  - Candidates who take an unscheduled break are subject to additional security screenings before being permitted to reenter the testing room
  - Accessing mobile phones, study materials, or anything other than food, drink, or medicine during the examination is prohibited
  - Smoking is prohibited at the testing center
  - All examinations are monitored and may be recorded in both audio and video format
  - Proctors periodically walk through the testing room for security monitoring

NOTE: Other exams will be administered at the same time as your exam. Therefore, you may hear ambient noises such as typing, coughing, or people entering and exiting the testing room that cannot be avoided. Prometric is unable to provide a completely noise-free environment. However, headphones may be requested to minimize impact.

Here is what you can expect for your **live remote proctored appointment**:

- Candidate Check-In
  - Candidates will be asked to present their IDs.
  - Candidates will be asked to empty and turn out their pockets.
  - Candidates will be asked to perform a 360° scan of the room using their camera. The room must have a door. Other people or animals are not permitted to be in the room, except service animals that have been pre-approved as a test accommodation.
  - Inspection of eyeglasses, jewelry, and other accessories will be conducted. Jewelry other than wedding and engagement rings is prohibited.
  - Religious headwear may be worn while testing. However, it may be subject to inspection by a testing administrator.

- During the Exam
  - Candidates have 3 hours to complete 200 exam items (180 scored items, plus 20 pre-test items)

- No breaks are permitted during the exam. Candidates must NOT leave camera view until the exam has ended.
- Accessing mobile phones, study materials, or any other device or material is prohibited.
- Accessing food, drink, or medicine during the examination is prohibited unless pre-approved as a test accommodation.
- All examinations are monitored and may be recorded in both audio and video format

Please see Prometric's website for more information about what to expect on testing day.

Rules for the Examination

Please read the information below carefully. You are responsible for adhering to the examination rules while at your testing location.

- You must present your current driver's license, passport, or US Military ID at your testing location. Candidates without valid ID will **not** be permitted to test. Temporary or paper copies of your ID will not be accepted.
- Cell phones, watches, and all other electronic devices are strictly prohibited at your testing location, except the equipment required for a remote exam. Please leave these items in your car, in your assigned locker at the testing center, or in another room at your remote location. You may NOT access your cell phone, electronic devices, or study materials at any time.
- NO watches, including fitness/smart watches and similar devices, can be worn during the examination.
- No papers, books, or reference materials may be accessed, taken into, or removed from the testing location. You may ONLY access snacks, drinks, medicines, or personal healthcare items from your locker during an in-person exam. You may NOT access snacks, drinks, medicines, or personal healthcare items during a remote proctored exam, EXCEPT for a clear container of water.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination session. The candidate should carefully read the directions that are provided on screen at the beginning of the examination session.
- In-person testing candidates are prohibited from leaving the testing room while their exam is in session, except for going to the restroom or accessing their locker for food, drink, or medicine only. Remote proctored candidates are prohibited from leaving the testing location while their exam is in session under any circumstances.
- Bulky clothing, such as sweatshirts (hoodies), jackets, coats, and hats (except hats worn for religious reasons), as well as most types of jewelry, may not be worn while taking the examination. Proctors will ask you to remove such items and place them in your locker or outside of your remote testing location. Please see Prometric's statement on Test Center Security for more information.
- No food or beverages are permitted inside the testing location.

Contact PTC at www.ptcny.com/contact with any questions about the Examination Rules.

Irregular or improper behavior that is observed, made apparent by statistical analysis, or uncovered by other means before, during, or after the examination will be considered a violation of these rules and may constitute grounds for invalidation of a candidate's examination. CCPDT will initiate an investigation and request suitable analyses and

appropriate documentation.

VIOLATION OF ANY OF THE RULES LISTED ABOVE MAY LEAD TO A FORFEITURE OF FEES, DISMISSAL FROM THE TESTING LOCATION, AND CANCELLATION OF YOUR TEST SCORES.

Exam Security

Candidates seeking admission to take the examination do so to pursue certification and for no other purpose. Because of the confidential nature of the examination, candidates may not make or keep copies, excerpts, or notes of examination materials, and may not use or divulge information learned from the examination. The examination is the exclusive property of CCPDT and candidates may not use examination information in any way without the express written consent of CCPDT.

The CPDT-KA examination is confidential. Candidates are required to sign a confidentiality agreement before the start of the examination.

Candidates agree to abide by the testing rules in effect at the time of their test appointment. CCPDT, PTC, and/or Prometric staff may refuse a candidate admission to the examination if they do not have the proper identification as detailed in the Candidate Handbook. Candidates who do not abide by the testing rules may have their exam terminated during the exam administration to maintain a secure and proper exam administration. Candidates whose exams are terminated will forfeit their exam fees.

Disciplinary Policy

Disruptive, abusive, or uncooperative behavior of any kind before, during, or after the examination is strictly prohibited. Irregular behavior constitutes an attempted violation of the testing rules regarding any part of the examination process. CCPDT, PTC, and Prometric staff have the authority to enforce disciplinary action for candidate misconduct.

Examples of violations before testing include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Falsification of any information in the certification application
- Altering documentation submitted with the certification application
- Requesting information about the exam or exam items from previous test takers
- Enlisting a proxy test taker

Examples of violations during testing and breaks, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Misrepresenting identity
- Using a camera, except for remote proctoring which requires that a web camera remain on for the duration of the exam
- Using a recording device
- Using a phone or other unauthorized device at any time during the test administration, including breaks
- Cheating on the exam
- Violating test center or remote proctoring rules
- Using a proxy test taker
- Impersonating another candidate
- Communicating with other candidates during an in-person exam
- Communicating with any third party other than the proctor during a remote proctored exam
- Attempting to gain access to exam content during exam administration
- Giving or receiving help during the exam
- Being uncooperative or abusive with test center staff or proctor
- Tampering with exam computers or software
- Removing anything from your assigned locker except food, drink, medicine, or personal healthcare items

- Bringing anything into the remote testing environment except a clear container of water unless authorized and pre-approved
- Leaving the test center for any reason
- Leaving the camera view of the remote proctor without the proctor's permission for any reason during the exam administration

Examples of violations after testing include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Sharing exam items or content with others
- Taking exam notes or materials from the test administration
- Using or divulging information about the exam
- Altering exam results
- Misrepresenting or misusing certification status
- Engaging in behavior that results in revocation of license in a primary profession
- Conduct that leads to limitations or sanctions imposed by another professional organization
- Violation of CCPDT policies

CCPDT may deny, suspend, revoke, or take other action regarding an application or certification if an individual is not in compliance with this Disciplinary Policy. Violations of any testing rules may result in disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Termination/dismissal of the exam
- Investigation, including a review of audio and video recordings of the exam administration
- Cancellation of exam registration
- Cancellation of exam scores
- Forfeiture of exam fees
- Denial, suspension, or revocation of certification or recertification
- Prohibition from future certification-related activities, including examination, recertification, or volunteer activities within CCPDT
- Denial or suspension of eligibility
- Notification to other parties as necessary

Reporting of Results

Candidates will be notified by email within four (4) to six (6) weeks of the close of the testing period whether or not they have passed the examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed. This period allows for the psychometric and administrative review required to ensure accurate and reliable scores. Scores on the total examination and percentages correct by domain will be reported. Successful candidates will also receive an e-certificate from the CCPDT.

Examination Challenges

It is the policy of the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers to provide every candidate with an opportunity to question the reliability, validity, and/or fairness of a test and its questions. Candidates may submit a complaint in writing to the CCPDT's administrative offices no later than fourteen (14) calendar days after taking the examination. Complaints and challenges must be communicated in writing and within this time frame. The CCPDT will NOT consider late challenges or complaints, or challenges or complaints not submitted in writing. All challenges and complaints shall receive the CCPDT's full attention. The CCPDT shall investigate each challenge or complaint and acknowledge it in writing to the complainant.

Re-examination

The examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed may be taken as often as desired upon submission of a new application, including all application components as defined in the current Eligibility

Requirements, and payment of the examination fee. There is no limit to the number of times the examination may be repeated.

If a candidate has been found to have violated security policies, they must contact CCPDT to request permission for reexamination.

Confidentiality

The CCPDT will release the individual test scores ONLY to the individual candidate and only by email to the email address on the application. Any questions concerning test results should be referred to the CCPDT or the Professional Testing Corporation. Aggregate exam data may be used for research and other purposes.

Candidate information shall be kept confidential and not publicly disclosed without the expressed consent of the candidate unless required by law or court order. By applying for certification, candidates and certificants consent to the following disclosures of their personal information:

1. Name, certification, city, state, and zip code included in the online directory located on the CCPDT website (active certificants only)
2. For confirmation of certification status and dates of testing requests from employers or prospective employers
3. For sharing with vendors involved in the development and administration of exams
4. To CCPDT volunteers, staff, and consultants as needed

If you pass the exam and do not wish to have your information publicly available on our website, please notify the CCPDT by email and you will be removed from the online directory.

Content of Examination

1. The Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed is composed of objective multiple-choice items. There are 180 scored items on the exam, plus 20 pre-test items. Only the scored items count towards a candidate's final score. The pre-test items are randomly distributed throughout the exam and do not count toward a candidate's score. The pre-test items are being evaluated to determine if they perform well enough to be introduced as scored items on future examinations.

2. The questions for the examination are developed by individuals with expertise in dog training and are reviewed for construction, accuracy, and appropriateness by the CCPDT.

3. The CCPDT, with the advice and assistance of PTC, prepares the examination.

4. The content for the examination is described in the Content Outline.

5. The Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainers - Knowledge Assessed is weighted in approximately the following manner:

DOMAIN	% of Exam
I. Applied Learning Theory	25%
II. Instructional and Teaching Skills	32%
III. Canine Behavior, Ethology, and Well-being	26%
IV. Professional Skills, Ethics, and Laws & Regulations	17%

Content Outline – CPDT-KA

The Content Outline, generated through regular surveying of dog trainers, describes what a professional dog trainer should know and be able to do. This information is sorted into four (4) broad categories called domains. Each domain is organized into two lists: Tasks and Knowledge Areas.

Knowledge Areas represent what dog trainers KNOW. They reflect the concepts and topics a professional should understand and be familiar with.

Tasks represent what surveys in the industry have indicated dog trainers actually DO. They are skills a dog trainer should understand and have the ability to perform if necessary.

> ***NOTE:*** *CCPDT candidates and certificants must adhere to all CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, Policies, and Position Statements. Not all of the Tasks represent a skill a CCPDT certificant is allowed to engage in as a primary means of training. However, a professional should understand the application of these tasks. Understanding the application of a task is not the same as choosing to apply the task.*

Domain I. Applied Learning Theory

01. Apply learning theory appropriately and humanely to change and/or maintain behavior
02. Create, adjust, and evaluate the effectiveness of training plans
03. Identify and appropriately use reinforcers and punishers
04. Select and humanely use appropriate training techniques
05. Identify and implement appropriate reinforcement schedules
06. Collect and/or interpret data
07. Identify, set, and adjust criteria

Knowledge Areas drawn upon to perform tasks in Domain I include:

K01, K02, K03, K04, K05, K06, K07, K08, K09, K10, K17, K18, K19, K20, K35, K43, K44, K51, K52, K54, K58

Domain II. Instructional and Teaching Skills

01. Teach and coach clients in private and group settings
02. Create maintenance and management plans for clients
03. Create training plans for clients
04. Teach clients how to apply learning theory to change and/or maintain behavior
05. Teach safety and management skills to clients
06. Manage the environment to promote learning
07. Teach clients mechanical training skills
08. Develop, implement, and adapt lesson plans and class curricula
09. Teach clients to use equipment and tools related to canine care and training safely, effectively, and consensually
10. Communicate with clients effectively
11. Identify and apply appropriate teaching and instructional theories to help clients achieve specific training goals

12. Teach clients to recognize and interpret dog body language, vocalizations, behavior, and indicators of health/well-being

Knowledge Areas drawn upon to perform tasks in Domain II include:

K03, K04, K06, K07, K08, K09, K11, K12, K13, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20, K21, K22, K23, K24, K25, K26, K27, K42, K43, K46, K52, K53, K54, K56, K57, K58, K61, K62, K63, K64, K65

Domain III. Canine Behavior, Ethology, and Well-being

01. Observe, interpret, evaluate, and monitor interactions involving dogs
02. Observe, interpret, evaluate, and assess dog body language and vocalizations
03. Recognize and respond to basic health and well-being needs and concerns of dogs
04. Review the dog's vaccination and other medical records
05. Interpret behavior/training history and training progress
06. Identify and select appropriate physical and mental enrichment
07. Select and properly fit appropriate training and management equipment
08. Create a safe training environment and reduce risks of injury and disease

Knowledge Areas drawn upon to perform tasks in Domain III include:

K07, K15, K27, K28, K29, K30 K31, K32, K33, K34, K35, K36, K37, K38, K39, K40, K41, K42, K43, K44, K45, K46, K48, K49, K50, K51, K52, K53, K54, K55, K56, K57, K58

Domain IV. Professional Skills, Ethics, and Laws and Regulations

01. Collect and store dog, client, and business records as appropriate
02. Identify the need for, and refer to, veterinarians and other professionals
03. Explain policies and roles/rights/responsibilities to clients
04. Identify and resolve conflicts
05. Use problem-solving and critical thinking skills
06. Create and follow the best business and ethical practices
07. Understand and follow laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines

Knowledge Areas drawn upon to perform tasks in Domain IV include:

K10, K13, K14, K15, K16, K19, K21, K22, K46, K47, K50, K59, K60, K61, K62, K63, K64, K65, K66, K67, K68, K69, K70, K71, K72, K73, K74, K75, K76

Knowledge Areas

K01. Applied behavior analysis
K02. Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence sequences
K03. Setting and changing training and behavior criteria
K04. Stimulus (i.e., cue) discrimination and control, generalization, salience, overshadowing, blocking, context effects, etc.
K05. Learning Theory/Behavior change processes (e.g., reinforcement, punishment, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, extinction, counterconditioning, systematic desensitization, flooding, deprivation, habituation,

sensitization)

K06. Training techniques (e.g., shaping, fading, luring, chaining, back-chaining, targeting, capturing, prompting, mimicry, body blocking, molding)

K07. Risks and benefits of different training and behavior change techniques

K08. Reinforcers (primary, secondary/conditioned, etc.), markers, and no-reward markers

K09. Reinforcement schedules (e.g., continuous, fixed ratio, intermittent ratio, fixed interval, intermittent interval, differential, variable ratio, variable interval, jackpots, contrast effects)

K10. Data collection and documentation

K11. Client motivation

K12. Client needs and limits

K13. Client assistance and accommodations

K14. Consultation/lesson preparation

K15. Safety

K16. Emergency plans

K17. Training goals

K18. Measurable goals

K19. Management plans

K20. Training and behavior change plans

K21. Private and group lessons

K22. Lesson plans and class curricula

K23. Teaching, training, coaching, and consulting skills (e.g., motivational interviewing, active listening, mechanical skills, learning modalities)

K24. At-home practice

K25. Maintenance plans

K26. Follow-up schedules

K27. Evaluation of training plan effectiveness

K28. Ethology

K29. Canine species-specific behavior

K30. Dog senses

K31. Dog cognition and perception

K32. Genetic influences

K33. Breed-specific traits

K34. Developmental stages

K35. Behavior as observable, measurable, and reproducible

K36. Action patterns/motor programs

K37. Predictability, frequency, and intensity of behavior

K38. Bite level/severity of bite

K39. Dog-dog interactions

K40. Socialization

K41. People-dog interactions

K42. Dog-client compatibility

K43. Training or behavior problems

K44. Dog attention and engagement

K45. Displacement behavior

K46. Cooperative care

K47. Veterinarian release

K48. Injuries, contagious diseases, and transmission in dogs

K49. General health and well-being of dogs (e.g., body language, vocalizations, behavior, indicators of health/well-being)

K50. Elements of dog's history (e.g., vaccination records, health, previous training, and behavioral issues, home environment)

K51. Dog freedom (e.g., agency, choice, consent-seeking, learned helplessness)

K52. Management of environment (e.g., distractions, safety, proofing)

K53. Management equipment (e.g., voice, crates, cones, gates)
K54. Prevention as a strategy
K55. Physical and mental enrichment recommendations
K56. Training equipment and props (e.g., leashes, collars, jumps, hoops)
K57. Demonstration or prop animals (e.g., dogs, cats, plush toys)
K58. Stages of learning (e.g., acquisition, fluency, generalization, adaptation, maintenance of behavior)
K59. Professional competency/case eligibility (working within one's skill set)
K60. Policies: Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA), Humane Hierarchy, CCPDT Joint Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics
K61. Roles, rights, and responsibilities/needs, desires, and limits of trainer, client, and dog
K62. Client-friendly communication and feedback
K63. Conflict resolution
K64. Critical thinking skills
K65. Ending client relationships
K66. Trainer health/well-being/mental health/self-care
K67. Referrals to other professionals (e.g., veterinarian, behavior consultant, lawyer, insurance agent, nutritionist, fitness trainer)
K68. Research methods
K69. Scientific literacy
K70. Professionalism, cultural competency, and business skills
K71. Business practices
K72. Laws and regulations
K73. Definitions of service dog, therapy dog, and emotional support animal
K74. Business and legal recordkeeping (e.g., signed confidentiality release form, informed consent)
K75. Documentation, reports of training sessions, training logs
K76. Storage of client information

Sample Examination Questions

In the following questions, choose the best answer.

1.) If an owner calls before class and says that his puppy has had diarrhea for the past two days, the trainer should
   1. advise the owner to put the puppy on a bland diet.
   2. instruct the owner to immediately take the puppy to the vet.
   3. tell the owner not to bring the puppy to class and to call its veterinarian.
   4. ask the owner for more details to determine whether the puppy should come to class.

2.) Which of the following information would be most important to obtain before a dog comes to class?
   1. Owner's training goals
   2. Dog's previous training
   3. Dog's vaccination and behavior history
   4. Dog's breed, age, and reproductive status

3.) A slip collar should not be left on an unsupervised dog because
   1. the collar may loosen and slip off the dog.
   2. the dog may catch the collar on something and strangle.
   3. it is difficult to put identification tags on this type of collar.
   4. the dog can only tolerate the collar for a short period of time.

4.) Which outcome is expected when an unpleasant stimulus is removed following a response?

1. Positive punishment
2. Negative punishment
3. Positive reinforcement
4. Negative reinforcement

5.) How should a dog trainer aid an owner with limited mobility?

1. Tell the owner to bring someone to assist during class
2. Refer the owner to a colleague with experience training assistance dogs
3. Discuss a variety of options and agree on reasonable accommodations
4. Recommend board and train, giving the dog back to the owner with instructions

6.) A frightened dog may display which of the following behaviors?

1. Mounts owner or dogs during playtime
2. Instigates "keep away" with other dogs
3. Wags tail with ears set neutrally on head
4. Scans facility and does not focus on the owner

7.) Which of the following is the most appropriate type of equipment for a dog with a collapsed trachea?

1. Prong collar
2. Body harness
3. Breakaway collar
4. Limited slip collar

8.) Which of the following conditions is common in large, deep-chested breeds and is associated with exercise, excessive food and water intake, and/or stress?

1. Heat stroke
2. Hip dysplasia
3. Gastric torsion
4. Thyroid disease

CORRECT ANSWERS TO SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1.3; 2.3; 3.2; 4.4; 5.3; 6.4; 7.2; 8.3

References

The following list of references may help prepare for the examination. This list does not attempt to include all acceptable references nor is it suggested that the Examination for Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed is necessarily based on these references. Using these materials does not guarantee a successful outcome on the examination.

Instruction

Books

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Books

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APPENDIX A: Application of the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedure

Position Statement on Behavior Change Procedures in Dog Training

Our Position

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® (CCPDT®) endorses reinforcement-based training strategies as the primary method for modifying behavior, reducing fear and aggression, and fostering positive relationships between dogs, their owners or caretakers, and the community.

Our standards are guided by scientific research, practical effectiveness, and ethical responsibility, ensuring that credentialed trainers are equipped to serve with skill and integrity. We prioritize practical, outcome-driven approaches continuously informed by evolving science and real-world experience, bridging the gap between academic theory and practical application. We oppose the use of behavioral intervention strategies and training equipment that cause physical harm, induce prolonged stress, or lead to chronic anxiety from sustained fear.

Our standards promote effective, ethical, and humane training methods while addressing behavioral challenges with measurable, evidence-based practices. Through these standards, the CCPDT seeks to advance the field of dog training and behavior consulting while balancing community safety, dog welfare, and professional competence.

Glossary

As used in this statement and throughout CCPDT policies, positions, and practices, the following definitions are applied:

- Agency: The ability to exert control and overcome challenges in one's environment to gather knowledge and enhance skills for future use.
- Aversive: Any stimulus, including training equipment, behavioral intervention strategies, or environmental factors, the dog seeks to avoid or escape.
- Certification Period: The time when a CCPDT certificant's credentials are valid, starting from the award date and ending on the expiration date, unless renewed.
- Choice: the act of choosing or selecting from more than one desirable alternative.
- Collaborative Team: A certified or licensed dog trainer or behavior consultant, veterinarian, veterinary behaviorist, or other specialists who collaborate to guide training decisions.
- Conditioning Process: Preparing dogs and their owners or caretakers to use training equipment safely and effectively by systematically introducing the equipment to teach the dog how to avoid aversive elements.
- Control: the ability to predictably and effectively produce desired results in a given situation.
- Dog Behavior Consultant: A dog behavior consultant is a dog trainer with advanced expertise in behavior modification who specializes in resolving behavioral problems, including aggression, fear, phobias, and anxiety.
- Dog Trainer: A dog trainer teaches dogs fundamental skills and desirable behaviors, addresses common behavioral challenges, and helps owners or caretakers implement strategies to prevent and manage undesired behaviors. Trainers may also specialize in preparing dogs for specific roles, such as service work, therapy, sports, or other specialized tasks.
- Prolonged Exposure: Extended or continuous exposure to a specific stimulus or situation over an extended period, leading to distress.
- Punishment-Based Training Strategy: a dog training or behavioral intervention strategy intended to decrease an undesired behavior by primarily using positive punishment.

- Qualified Professional: certified or licensed dog trainer, behavior consultant, veterinarian, veterinary behaviorist, or other educated specialist.

- Reinforcement-Based Training Strategy: a dog training or behavioral intervention strategy intended to increase a desired behavior or change the dog's emotional response to a situation by primarily using positive reinforcement.

- Training Equipment: Any tools, devices, or apparatus used to assist in teaching, managing, or modifying a dog's behavior. This includes items designed to facilitate communication, reinforce desired behaviors, ensure safety, or prevent undesired behaviors during training sessions. Examples include harnesses, head collars, martingale collars, muzzles, prong collars, slip collars, and electronic training collars.

- Well-being: A state of being comfortable, happy, and healthy.

The Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures

When implementing behavior change plans, certificants must follow a structured, ethical decision-making process. The Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures, developed by Dr. Susan Friedman, PhD, provides a step-by-step framework that prioritizes the least intrusive, effective interventions before considering more restrictive measures.

The Hierarchy serves as an ethical safeguard, requiring certificants to initiate any behavior change plan by addressing physical health, antecedent arrangement, and environmental management to prevent the rehearsal of undesired behaviors. They must focus on positive reinforcement strategies that encourage desired behaviors or improve the dog's emotional response to a situation, prompting trainers to prioritize the most humane and effective strategy based on each case. By following this framework, trainers avoid punishment-based strategies unless all reinforcement-based options have been exhausted, and an evidence-based justification exists for their use.

In most cases, desired behavior change can be achieved by effectively managing the dog's environment, meeting physical health and exercise needs, and using non-aversive operant and classical conditioning. These techniques teach foundational skills, train alternative behaviors, and use desensitization and counterconditioning to modify the dogs' behavior. The Hierarchy explicitly discourages using punishment-based training strategies for convenience, personal preference, or as an initial step in training or behavior change plans.

Adhering to the Hierarchy requires a high level of competency and education. Certificants must be skilled in maximizing reinforcement-based strategies, minimizing reliance on punishment-based methods, and avoiding the use of aversive equipment - all while delivering effective training solutions that uphold professional standards.

Ethical Considerations in Behavior Change Plans

The training strategies used by dog trainers and behavior consultants play a pivotal role in shaping dogs' immediate and long-term behavioral and emotional responses. The CCPDT advocates for reinforcement-based training strategies as they are associated with reduced instances of aggression, emotional conflict, avoidance, and fear. These strategies should be the primary approach for teaching new skills and behaviors and forming a solid foundation for advanced training.

Certificants must remain aware of potentially aversive elements in their behavior change plans, including unintended consequences or management protocols that may impact the dog's well-being. Management strategies that significantly limit a dog's agency or behavioral repertoire should be avoided whenever possible, opting for less intrusive antecedent arrangements that promote choice and control. All behavior change plans must be continuously assessed for risk, necessity, and effectiveness.

Certificants must prioritize the safety and well-being of the community, followed by the best interests of their clients, while striving to meet dogs' needs and enhance their overall well-being. This commitment includes maximizing the use of reinforcement-based training strategies, minimizing reliance on punishment-based methods, and ensuring no harm is done. In all cases, decision-making should be guided by the ethical principles outlined in the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, ensuring adherence to both its letter and spirit.

Additionally, the CCPDT emphasizes the importance of tailoring behavior change plans to align with the needs and

capacities of a dog's owner or caretaker. Achieving positive welfare outcomes often hinges on creating practical, minimally intrusive strategies that are feasible for human clients to implement effectively.

Respecting Methodological Diversity in Dog Training

The CCPDT acknowledges the significance of understanding the strengths and limitations of different dog training methodologies. It also recognizes that opinions regarding the use of punishment-based training strategies and certain types of training equipment differ within the professional community.

We acknowledge that evidence indicates that reinforcement-based training methods are effective in most instances. However, as an organization dedicated to evidence-based training practices, we must recognize the utility of negative reinforcement and positive punishment in specific situations, toward realizing an overall benefit to welfare.

We strive to provide evidence-based and practical guidance to dog training professionals working across various practice areas. Therefore, when developing a behavior change plan, CCPDT certificants must take the following steps before escalating a behavior change plan to add more restrictive measures:

- Follow a thorough evaluation of the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures for each dog and owner or caretaker with whom they work.
- Consideration of the dog's breed, age, health, home environment, past reinforcement history, community safety, and the owner or caretaker's knowledge, skills, abilities, and limitations.
- Advise only on cases within their competencies, experience, and certification.
- Consult with qualified professionals when dealing with challenging cases.

The Use of Training Equipment

We acknowledge that dog owners and caretakers may require the support of training equipment to manage undesired behaviors. While such equipment can be helpful in temporarily managing undesired behavior, it should not be a substitute for comprehensive training. Training equipment or punishment-based training strategies should only be considered when their application clearly and measurably outweighs the risks. Compliance issues, unrealistic training goals, or personal preferences are not justifications for unnecessary pressure or equipment that may cause emotional distress to dogs.

When selecting training equipment and behavior intervention strategies, certificants must:

- Prioritize equipment that minimizes harm and considers the dog's physical and emotional well-being.
- Follow a comprehensive conditioning process to ensure the dog and the owner or caretaker understand how to use training equipment safely and effectively.
- Document why the equipment is being used and for how long.
- Regularly assess the dog's emotional response and behavior to determine whether the equipment remains appropriate or necessary.
- Develop a plan to reduce reliance on training equipment when the dog can be safely managed in real-world settings.

Criteria for Considering Punishment-Based Training Strategies

- Utilization of punishment-based strategies is only considered when the potential harm from not using such methods (e.g., escalation of undesired behavior) exceeds any risks associated with their use.
- Evidence must demonstrate that less intrusive methods cannot achieve the desired outcomes. This requires documented attempts using the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures, with data collected at each step.

- Punishment-based strategies should only be employed if management strategies are assessed and determined to pose more significant risks than the training intervention itself.

- Punishment-based strategies may be employed only when safety or well-being concerns for the dog or others are present and documented.

Implementation and Education about Training Equipment and Punishment

- Trainers must be trained and proficient in using training equipment and punishment-based techniques before implementation.

- Trainers must educate the dog's owner or caretaker about the intended use, alternative options, potential risks, and expected outcomes of these tools and techniques.

- A thorough conditioning process must be established to ensure that the dog and the handler are competent in safely and effectively implementing the equipment and techniques.

- Trainers must document and regularly review the effectiveness of their training plans and make necessary adjustments if the plan proves ineffective or leads to unintended consequences

Certification Compliance & Accountability

The CCPDT is committed to holding certified trainers accountable for adhering to CCPDT policies, positions, and practices. The Certification Compliance Committee investigates claims of misconduct involving CCPDT certificants and candidates. Certificants must be ready to explain their choice of methods and equipment, ensure their behavior change plans align with the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, and show a commitment to reinforcement-based training strategies. This includes consulting with other professionals or referring clients to another certified dog training professional when dealing with ineffective training plans or cases beyond their expertise.

CCPDT certificants and candidates found in violation of these expectations are subject to sanctions imposed by the Certification Compliance Committee, up to and including suspension or revocation of certification as outlined in the CCPDT Certification Compliance and Disciplinary Procedures.

Conclusion

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers remains committed to humane and evidence-based dog training practices. Our position emphasizes the importance of reinforcement-based training strategies, personalized behavior change plans, and ongoing professional development to ensure the well-being of dogs and the effectiveness of training outcomes.

The CCPDT acknowledges that it cannot account for bad actors within the dog training or behavior consulting community, nor can it address all misunderstandings or misinformation in the broader community. CCPDT certificants can competently navigate the complexities of dog training and behavior consulting by adhering to the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, including the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures. Our Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and other policies and positions aim to provide clear, ethical, and practical guidance, fostering a professional community committed to best practices and continuous learning.

We recognize that dog training is an ever-evolving field, and we are committed to supporting our certificants through continued education, dialogue, and collaboration with the broader professional community. Together, we can ensure that dog training practices continue to advance, prioritizing the welfare of dogs and the safety and satisfaction of their owners, caretakers, and communities. While the CCPDT upholds industry-recognized baseline standards and can impose sanctions for violations of its practices, policies, and positions, it recognizes that its role is advisory rather than regulatory due to the lack of legally enforceable standards for the dog training industry. This understanding guides our emphasis on prescriptive policies that encourage best practices and adherence to ethical standards.

The CCPDT is committed to setting comprehensive standards that support dog trainers in making effective, ethical,

and welfare-oriented decisions. We acknowledge that the complexities of dog training and behavior consulting cannot be fully encapsulated in a single position statement and strive to provide guidance that reflects the depth and breadth of the field. The CCPDT calls on all dog training professionals to uphold these industry-recognized baseline standards, engage in ethical practices, and contribute to a culture of excellence and continuous improvement in dog training and behavior consulting. By doing so, we can collectively enhance the human-animal bond and promote dogs' overall well-being.

Background

Founded in 2001, the CCPDT was established as an independent credentialing organization, distinct from educational providers, certificate courses, and membership associations. The CCPDT serves a singular purpose: to assess and validate professional competence in dog training and behavior consulting. This independence ensures that our certification standards are objective, science-based, and rooted in the highest principles of professional ethics.

Our certificants - whether earning a Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge Assessed® (CPDT-KA®), Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge and Skills Assessed® (CPDT-KSA®), or Certified Behavior Consultant Canine-Knowledge Assessed® (CBCC-KA®) credential - represent a broad range of practice areas. Every candidate meets strict eligibility requirements and demonstrates the necessary competencies in dog training and behavior consulting by passing a comprehensive, psychometrically sound certification examination. The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accredits our certifications, a distinction that reflects our dedication to competence, fairness, and scientific integrity.

APPENDIX B: Prohibited Practices Policy

Introduction

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® (CCPDT®) is dedicated to advancing the field of professional dog training and behavior consulting by establishing and maintaining industry-recognized baseline standards for certification, continuing education, and ethical practices. By implementing an independent, psychometrically sound certification process, the CCPDT enhances professionalism and credibility within the dog training community, safeguards consumers by identifying qualified professionals, and fosters a commitment to ethical practices and ongoing professional development among our certificants.

Demonstrating professional competence through psychometrically sound certification examinations remains the cornerstone for maintaining the profession's integrity, preventing poor welfare outcomes, protecting the public from unqualified professionals, and empowering certificants to exercise independent, timely, and ethical professional judgment in the best interest of their clients.

CCPDT certificants offer services across various practice areas, aiming to positively impact the lives of dogs, their owners or caretakers, and their communities. The CCPDT fosters ethical behavior in the profession by establishing objective certification eligibility and maintenance requirements, adopting the ethical standards outlined in the Prohibited Practices Policy, and enforcing these standards in instances of professional misconduct as specified in the Certification and Disciplinary Procedures policy.

The CCPDT supports effective, humane, practical, and outcome-driven training strategies that are consistently informed by evolving science and real-world experience, bridging the gap between academic theory and practical application. The Prohibited Practices Policy guides the professional activities of CCPDT certificants. The policy also provides a way for certificants to evaluate their behavior and for others to assess whether a CCPDT-certified dog trainer or behavior consultant has violated their ethical obligations.

Purpose

This policy defines specific training practices and tools that are strictly prohibited for CCPDT certificants, candidates, and board members in all professional activities, including but not limited to direct service delivery, consultation, supervision, and training. The purpose of this policy is to safeguard dog welfare, maintain professional integrity, and establish clear guidelines that align with humane and effective training principles.

While this policy may not address every controversial practice in the dog training industry, it categorically prohibits techniques and tools that are deemed harmful, inhumane, or unjustifiable compared to available alternatives.

Policy Considerations

In developing these standards, the CCPDT carefully evaluated the welfare implications of various training tools and practices, drawing on scientific research, industry best practices, and the ethical responsibilities of professional trainers. The prohibited practices in this policy reflect a commitment to safeguarding dog welfare, ensuring the effectiveness of training approaches, and maintaining the professional integrity of CCPDT certificants. These prohibitive practices support policies designed to prioritize community safety, foster client trust, protect the well-being of dogs, and uphold the credibility of the profession. They safeguard the reputation of CCPDT certificants, align with contemporary training practices, and strengthen relationships with clients, colleagues, and the wider community.

Scope

This policy applies to all CCPDT certificants, candidates, and board members in every aspect of their professional conduct, irrespective of setting or mode of delivery (e.g., in-person, virtual, or written communication).

Glossary:

As used in the Code and throughout CCPDT policies, positions, and practices, the following definitions are applied:

- **Electronic Training Collar**: A collar that delivers a static pulse stimulus.
- **Head Collar**: A collar designed to fit around a dog's muzzle and behind the ears.
- **Prong Collar**: A collar with interlocking links that rest against the dog's neck.
- **Slip Collar**: A collar designed to tighten around a dog's neck when tension is applied.

Prohibited Practices

Any training equipment, method, technique, tool, or behavioral intervention strategy that leads to sustained or prolonged signs of fear, stress, or discomfort is strictly prohibited. Certificants must discontinue using equipment,

tools, or practices that the dog cannot adapt to or build resilience toward, recognizing that a learning phase may involve temporary signs of stress. Such practices have the potential to cause long-term emotional and behavioral harm, including increased anxiety, increased aggression, and chronic stress.
The following practices are expressly forbidden for CCPDT candidates, certificants, and board members in all professional contexts:

- **Alpha Rolls or Pinning:** Forcing a dog onto its back or physically holding it down to assert dominance.

- **Collar & Leash Corrections:** Jerking or yanking a leash or collar to redirect a dog's attention, correct undesired behavior, or enforce compliance is prohibited. This includes using such corrections to teach new skills or as the primary method in proofing exercises, applying them with such frequency, force, or duration that they cause observable physical harm or psychological distress, or using them when the dog displays clear signs of anxiety, fear, or confusion, which may exacerbate the dog's emotional or mental state.

- **Dominance-Based Language:** Interpreting or communicating dog behavior through the lens of debunked dominance hierarchies or alpha theory.

- **Ear Pinch:** Using pinching pressure with the hand or a tool to force compliance in obedience training or retrieving exercises.

- **Electronic Training Collars (E-Collars)**: Using electronic training collars is prohibited for dogs under one (1) year of age. Their use is not permitted to teach foundational skills, such as basic obedience cues, or for addressing aggression, anxiety, fears, or phobias. Certificants must avoid using electronic training collars in any training situation that does not pose safety risks to the dog, their owner or caretaker, or the broader community.

Trainers must demonstrate competency in the safe and effective use of electronic training collars through documented education, such as participation in mentorship programs or hands-on workshops. Only one electronic training collar may be used on a dog at a time, and stimulation must be applied exclusively to the neck.

Certificants must continuously monitor dogs for signs of stress or distress, including physical indicators such as excessive scratching or pawing at the collar, wide eyes ("whale eye"), pinned ears, tail tucking, or a stiff body posture. Behavioral signs can include vocalizations like yelping, whining, or barking, as well as freezing, avoidance behaviors, reluctance to move or engage, or attempts to escape or remove the collar. Physiological signs, such as excessive drooling, dilated pupils, increased heart rate, or panting unrelated to physical exertion, must also be observed and addressed promptly.

An electronic training collar must be discontinued if the dog shows signs of distress or fails to demonstrate a clear, consistent understanding of how to avoid or respond to the collar. Certificants must implement a structured conditioning process, ensuring the dog and its owner or caretaker are educated on the collar's operation and purpose. Behavior Change Plans must include a documented rationale for the collar's use, potential risks associated with using the collar, a step-by-step outline of the conditioning and training process, and a plan to reduce reliance on the collar over time. All applications must comply with the CCPDT Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and Position Statement on Behavior Change Procedures.

- **Flooding:** Exposing a dog to fear-inducing stimuli at full intensity to force habituation.

- **Food or Water Deprivation**: It is strictly prohibited to deprive a dog of essential sustenance to coerce compliance or increase motivation during training. Including a dog's daily meals in a structured behavior change plan is acceptable.

- **Forced Submission or Restraint**: Forcing a dog into a submissive posture or using physical restraint that causes the dog to display signs of fear, pain, or distress.

- **Head Collar:** Applying forceful or abrupt pressure, such as yanking, jerking, or sharply pulling the leash, when using a head collar is prohibited.

Certificants must monitor dogs for signs of stress or distress. Indicators may include excessive pawing or scratching at the head or face, frequent yawning or lip licking, pinned ears, wide eyes (commonly called “whale eye”), tail tucking, or a stiff body posture. Behavioral signs include reluctance to move, freezing, avoidance behaviors, vocalizations (e.g., whining, crying), or persistent attempts to remove the collar (e.g., rubbing against objects or the ground). Physiological signs include excessive drooling, dilated pupils, increased heart rate, or panting unrelated to exertion.

A head collar must be discontinued if the dog shows signs of distress or fails to demonstrate a clear, consistent understanding of how to avoid or respond to the collar. Certificants must implement a structured conditioning process, ensuring the dog and its owner or caretaker are educated on the head collar’s operation and purpose. Behavior Change Plans must include a documented explanation for the collar's use, potential risks associated with the use of the collar, a step-by-step outline of the conditioning and training process, and a plan to reduce reliance on the collar over time. All applications must comply with the CCPDT Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and Position Statement on Behavior Change Procedures.

- **Helicoptering**: Lifting a dog by its collar or leash and either holding it suspended or swinging it around.

- **Intimidation Tactics:** Methods intended to frighten or overwhelm a dog, including yelling or threatening postures in non-emergency situations.

- **Restricted Air Flow:** Any practice that restricts the airflow with a collar or leash.

- **Physical Punishment:** Using physical force, including but not limited to bonking, hitting, kicking, muzzle grabbing, scruff shaking, or smacking.

- **Prong Collar**: Prong collars are prohibited for dogs under six months of age or as a primary tool for teaching new behaviors.

Certificants must monitor dogs for signs of stress or distress. These may include excessive scratching or pawing at the collar, wide eyes ("whale eye"), pinned ears, tail tucking, or a stiff body posture. Behavioral indicators such as vocalizations (e.g., yelping, whining, barking), reluctance to walk or move, freezing, avoidance behaviors, or attempts to escape or remove the collar should also be observed. Physiological signs include excessive drooling, dilated pupils, increased heart rate, or panting unrelated to exertion. If the dog does not show a clear and consistent ability to respond appropriately to the prong collar, or if there are any signs of prolonged fear, stress, or discomfort, its use should be stopped immediately.

The use of a prong collar must be discontinued if the dog shows signs of distress or fails to demonstrate a clear, consistent understanding of how to avoid or respond to the collar. Certificants must implement a structured conditioning process, ensuring the dog and its owner/caretaker are educated on the collar’s operation and purpose. Behavior Change Plans must include a documented rationale for the collar's use, potential risks associated with the use of the collar, a step-by-step outline of the conditioning and training process, and a plan to reduce reliance on the collar over time. All applications must comply with the CCPDT Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and Position Statement on Behavior Change Procedures.

- **Sensory Deprivation**: Practices that isolate a dog from normal sensory stimuli in a manner that causes undue stress or fear, such as prolonged confinement in dark or restrictive spaces.

- **Slip Collar:** Applying forceful or abrupt pressure, such as yanking, jerking, or sharply pulling the leash when using a slip collar is strictly prohibited.

Certificants must monitor dogs for signs of stress or distress. Indicators may include excessive pawing or scratching at the collar, frequent yawning or lip licking, pinned ears, wide eyes (commonly called “whale eye”), tail tucking, or a stiff body posture. Behavioral signs include reluctance to move, freezing, avoidance behaviors, vocalizations (e.g., whining, crying), or persistent attempts to remove the collar (e.g., rubbing against objects or the ground). Physiological signs include excessive drooling, dilated pupils, increased heart rate, or panting unrelated to exertion.

A slip collar must be discontinued if the dog shows signs of distress or fails to demonstrate a clear, consistent

understanding of how to avoid or respond to the collar. Certificants must implement a structured conditioning process, ensuring the dog and its owner/caretaker are educated on the slip collar's operation and purpose. Behavior Change Plans must include a documented explanation for the collar's use, potential risks associated with using the collar, a step-by-step outline of the conditioning and training process, and a plan to reduce reliance on the collar over time. All applications must comply with the CCPDT Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and Position Statement on Behavior Change Procedures.

- **Startle Tools:** Trainers are not permitted to throw or toss any object at a dog intending to interrupt, correct, or modify behavior, except when the trainer is responding to an immediate safety risk.

Accountability for Certificants in Violation
Certificants alleged to violate any CCPDT policy, position, or practice are subject to review according to the procedures outlined in the Certification and Disciplinary Procedures.

Conclusion
The CCPDT is committed to advancing the dog training profession by establishing and enforcing clear, enforceable standards of ethical practice. This policy ensures that certificants follow methods that protect dog welfare, foster trust, and uphold the credibility of the training profession. By prioritizing reinforcement-based techniques and addressing harmful practices, the CCPDT strengthens its mission to elevate the standards of professionalism and competence in dog training.

APPENDIX C: Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics

Introduction

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® (CCPDT®) is dedicated to advancing the field of professional dog training and behavior consulting by establishing and maintaining industry-recognized baseline standards for certification, continuing education, and ethical practices. By implementing an independent, psychometrically sound certification process, the CCPDT enhances professionalism and credibility within the dog training community, safeguards consumers by identifying qualified professionals, and fosters a commitment to ethical practices and ongoing professional development among our certificants.

Demonstrating professional competence through psychometrically sound certification examinations remains the cornerstone for maintaining the profession's integrity, preventing poor welfare outcomes, protecting the public from unqualified professionals, and empowering certificants to exercise independent, timely, and ethical professional judgment in the best interest of their clients.

CCPDT certificants offer services across various practice areas, aiming to positively impact the lives of dogs, their owners or caretakers, and their communities. The CCPDT fosters ethical behavior in the profession by establishing objective certification eligibility and maintenance requirements, adopting the ethical standards outlined in these Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, and enforcing these standards in instances of professional misconduct as specified in the Certification and Disciplinary Procedures policy.

The CCPDT supports effective, humane, practical, and outcome-driven training strategies that are consistently informed by evolving science and real-world experience, bridging the gap between academic theory and practical application. The Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics (Code) guide the professional activities of CCPDT certificants. The Code also provides a way for certificants to evaluate their behavior and for others to assess whether a CCPDT-certified dog trainer or behavior consultant has violated their ethical obligations.

Scope of the Code

The Code applies to all individuals who hold a CCPDT certification (CPDT-KA®, CPDT-KSA®, CBCC-KA®) or have completed a CCPDT certification application. For the sake of efficiency, the term "certificant" is used throughout this document to refer to those who must act in accordance with the Code. The CCPDT does not have authority over dog trainers who are not currently certified through our organization.

The Code governs the professional activities of certificants, encompassing direct service delivery, consultation, supervision, training, management, and other roles in the dog training profession. It dictates certificants' conduct in all settings and methods of delivery, including in-person interactions, written communication, phone calls, social media, emails, text messages, and video conferencing. The Code pertains to certificants' personal behavior only when it directly affects their professional responsibilities or poses a potential risk to the health, safety, or welfare of clients, dogs, the community, supervisees, or trainees. This includes situations where a certificant's personal behavior related to their own dogs, such as neglect, mistreatment, or employing training practices inconsistent with the Code, might reasonably raise concerns about their ability to maintain ethical practices in their professional activities.

Enforcement of the Code

The standards outlined in the Code are not exhaustive, as it is impossible to predict every scenario that could constitute an ethics violation. Therefore, the absence of specific behaviors or actions from these standards does not imply that such behavior is ethical or unethical. The interpretation and application of the standards require careful attention to their wording, intent, and the core principles they embody. Each situation must be assessed practically, considering all relevant factors. Certificants are expected to be knowledgeable about and comply with the Code. A lack of awareness or misunderstanding of this Code cannot be used as a defense against allegations of ethical misconduct.

The Certification Compliance and Disciplinary Procedures outline the CCPDT's process for addressing ethical misconduct. Certificants who are found to be in violation of the Code may face disciplinary actions, including, but not limited to, supervision periods, required continuing education, suspension or revocation of certification, withdrawal of candidate application approval, or other sanctions as determined by the CCPDT.

Ethical Decision-Making

Certificants will inevitably face complex ethical dilemmas that require careful consideration and adherence to the principles outlined in the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. Trainers should approach these

situations by systematically identifying problems, evaluating potential solutions, and ensuring that decisions align with both core principles and specific professional standards. Ethical decision-making involves a thorough assessment of the full context of the situation and the relevant ethical standards.
Certificants must prioritize the safety and well-being of the community, followed by the best interests of their clients, while striving to meet dogs' needs and enhance their overall well-being. This commitment includes maximizing the use of reinforcement-based training strategies, minimizing reliance on punishment-based methods, and ensuring no harm is done. In all cases, decision-making should be guided by the ethical principles outlined in the Code, ensuring adherence to both its letter and spirit.

Glossary
As used in the Code, and throughout CCPDT policies, positions, and practices, the following definitions are applied:

- **Agency:** The ability to exert control and overcome challenges in one's environment to gather knowledge and enhance skills for future use.
- **Aversive:** Any stimulus, including training equipment, behavioral intervention strategies, or environmental factors, the dog seeks to avoid or escape.
- **Certification Period:** The time when a CCPDT certificant's credentials are valid, starting from the award date and ending on the expiration date, unless renewed.
- **Choice:** the act of choosing or selecting from more than one favorable alternative.
- **Collaborative Team:** A certified or licensed dog trainer or behavior consultant, veterinarian, veterinary behaviorist, or other specialists who collaborate to guide training decisions.
- **Conditioning Process:** Preparing dogs and their owners or caretakers to use training equipment safely and effectively by systematically introducing the equipment to teach the dog how to avoid aversive elements.
- **Control**: the ability to predictably and effectively produce desired results in a given situation.
- **Dog Behavior Consultant:** A dog behavior consultant is a dog trainer with advanced expertise in behavior modification who specializes in resolving behavioral problems, including aggression, fear, phobias, and anxiety.
- **Dog Trainer**: A dog trainer teaches dogs fundamental skills and desirable behaviors, addresses common behavioral challenges, and helps owners or caretakers implement strategies to prevent and manage undesired behaviors. Trainers may also specialize in preparing dogs for specific roles, such as service work, therapy, sports, or other specialized tasks.
- **Prolonged Exposure**: Extended or continuous exposure to a specific stimulus or situation over an extended period, leading to distress.
- **Punishment-Based Training Strategy**: a dog training or behavioral intervention strategy intended to decrease an undesired behavior by primarily using positive punishment.
- **Qualified Professional:** certified or licensed dog trainer, behavior consultant, veterinarian, veterinary behaviorist, or other specialist.
- **Reinforcement-Based Training Strategy**: a dog training or behavioral intervention strategy intended to increase a desired behavior or change the dog's emotional response to a situation by primarily using positive reinforcement.
- **Training Equipment**: Any tools, devices, or apparatus used to assist in teaching, managing, or modifying a dog's behavior. This includes items designed to facilitate communication, reinforce desired behaviors, ensure safety, or prevent undesired behaviors during training sessions. Examples include harnesses, head collars, martingale collars, muzzles, prong collars, slip collars, and electronic training collars.
- **Well-being**: A state of being comfortable, happy, and healthy.

Standards of Practice
The Standards of Practice outline the principles of professionalism, skills, and values expected from professional dog trainers and behavior consultants. The following four foundational principles form the basis of the ethical standards for all CCPDT certificants. Certificants should embody these principles and use them as a guide to interpret and apply the standards outlined in the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.
The four core principles that certified dog trainers abide by are:

1. **Prioritize Well-being**: Certificants support the physical and emotional well-being of dogs, their owners, caretakers, and the broader community by implementing effective, humane, practical, and outcome-driven training strategies that are consistently informed by evolving science and real-world experience.

This means certificants:

- Assess safety and emotional well-being risks to clients, dogs, colleagues, and the community.
- Design and implement behavior change plans that are tailored to the owner's, caretaker's, and dog's abilities, needs, and temperament.
- Prioritize teaching and reinforcing alternative behaviors that replace undesired behaviors.
- Minimize behavioral intervention strategies that produce observable signs of aversiveness.
- Avoid behavioral intervention strategies that cause prolonged stress or lead to chronic anxiety from sustained fear.
- Implement measures to prevent harm and minimize stress.
- Document and communicate the training strategies and goals to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Adjust behavior change plans based on the dog's progress, feedback from the owner, and collaboration with other professionals.
- Systematically assess both immediate and long-term outcomes of behavior change plans to ensure they are effective, humane, and sustainable.
- Use measurable indicators of success, such as behavior improvement, emotional stability, and client satisfaction.
- Collaborate with clients, trainers, veterinarians, and other professionals when needed to design and implement behavior change plans.

2. **Commit to Professional Growth:** Certificants are committed to professional growth through continuing education and hands-on experience to enhance their knowledge, skills, and effectiveness. This includes staying informed about advancements in dog training, actively seeking out learning opportunities, and being open to feedback to enhance their competence and effectiveness.

This means certificants:

- Participate regularly in professional development activities, such as courses, seminars, and workshops focusing on dog training techniques and related disciplines, including neurobiology, ethology, and genetics.
- Stay informed about training methods and practices, identify those with scientific support, and avoid those lacking scientific support or posing potential harm.
- Educate clients about the risks and benefits associated with training strategies.
- Evaluate their knowledge and skills to ensure they practice within their professional competence.
- Seek training and resources to enhance cultural sensitivity and inclusivity when working with diverse groups.

3. **Be Honest and Accountable**: Certificants demonstrate honesty and integrity by consistently providing accurate information, honoring commitments, and taking responsibility for their actions. They transparently represent their qualifications and experience, communicate realistically about training outcomes, and uphold professional accountability in all interactions.

This means certificants:

- Represent their qualifications, the results of their work, and the contributions of others accurately, avoiding any deception or misrepresentation.
- Are accountable for their actions and the actions of any supervisees or trainees under their guidance.
- Stay informed about and adhere to all CCPDT's policies, positions, practices, and other relevant regulations.
- Actively model ethical behavior in interactions with colleagues, clients, and other professionals.
- Establish and enforce policies or practices that uphold integrity and professionalism within their work environment.
- Maintain records demonstrating adherence to professional standards during audits or reviews.
- Identify and manage potential conflicts of interest to avoid or minimize harm, including those that could arise from personal, financial, institutional, political, religious, or cultural factors.
- Disclose relevant relationships or biases and, when necessary, recuse themselves from situations that could compromise ethical decision-making.

4. **Demonstrate Respect and Empathy**: Certificants demonstrate respect and empathy toward clients, colleagues, other professionals, and the broader community by being sensitive to diverse backgrounds,

experiences, and needs.

This means certificants:

- Treat everyone fairly and equitably, regardless of factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender expression/identity, immigration status, marital/relationship status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or any other legally protected status.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of clients and colleagues.
- Promote and respect clients' autonomy and decision-making abilities, especially when working with vulnerable populations.
- Acknowledge the importance of personal choice in training approaches and provide clients with the necessary information to make informed service decisions.

Professional Code of Ethics

Principle I: Responsibility to Clients

1.1 Certificants provide professional services to clients without discrimination based on race, age, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, health status, religion, political beliefs, national origin, or sexual orientation.

1.2 Certificants comply with all applicable local, state, and national laws regarding reporting animal bites and suspected abuse or neglect, ensuring adherence to specific legal requirements within the trainer's jurisdiction.

1.3 Certificants respect clients' rights to make decisions regarding their dog's management, training, and care and help clients understand the potential consequences of those decisions, including engaging in transparent and professional discussions about any risks or dangers associated with potential training approaches, techniques, and applications, including any possible physical or emotional repercussions.

1.4 Certificants obtain written informed consent from clients before videotaping, audio recording, or permitting third-party observation.

1.5 Certificants obtain signed waivers, contracts, or agreements before beginning services.

1.6 Certificants oversee the safety and well-being of clients, animals, and the community when implementing behavior change plans.

1.7 Certificants implement specific protections to ensure the safety and well-being of clients and trainers when working with persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children/minors.

1.8 Certificants fully disclose any potential conflicts of interest to maintain transparency and trust with clients before starting services. Transparency about qualifications, limitations, and past experiences ensures clients understand the trainer's background and approach.

1.9 Certificants do not share confidential information that could reasonably lead to the identification of a client, prospective client, research participant, or another person with whom they have a confidential relationship unless they have obtained the prior written consent of the client or other person with whom they have a confidential relationship.

   a. **Duty to Warn or Protect**: Confidentiality may be breached under specific circumstances, such as a likelihood of harm to oneself, the client, another trainer, or others. Examples include clients threatening harm to themselves or others, cases of child or elder abuse, or a dog that poses an imminent danger to the community.
   b. **As Required by Law**: Certificants may disclose confidential information without the individual's consent as required by law. Examples include responding to inquiries from law enforcement, animal control, the Department of Health, or in response to a lawfully issued subpoena.
      i. Providing necessary professional services.
      ii. Protecting the client, trainer, or others from harm.
   c. **Obtaining Payment for Services**: Disclosure should be limited to the minimum required to receive such payment and achieve the purpose.
   d. **Consulting with Colleagues**: When consulting with colleagues, Certificants shall:
      i. Avoid disclosing confidential information that could reasonably lead to identifying a client, dog, or other person or organization unless prior consent has been obtained or the disclosure is unavoidable.
      ii. Disclose information only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

1.10 Certificants maintain accurate and comprehensive records of all clients, their animals, the services provided, and the outcomes for the duration of their certification period.

Principle II: Professional Competence and Integrity

2.1 Certificants understand and implement the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures when developing behavior change plans tailored to the dog's needs, abilities, and temperament. Behavior Change Plans must address behavioral goals and support the dog's well-being and long-term success. Effective Behavior Change Plans are multi-faceted, taking into account the following factors:

a. **Nutrition**: Collaborate with veterinarians or nutritionists to ensure the dog receives a species-appropriate diet for its age, breed, activity level, and health conditions if there is reason to believe there could be a nutritional concern.
    i. Certificants refer clients to a licensed veterinarian or qualified canine nutritionist for any diagnosis, treatment options, or dietary recommendations beyond their education or certification.

b. **Health**: Consider any underlying health issues influencing the dog's behavior. When needed, refer to a licensed veterinarian to identify medical conditions contributing to undesired behaviors.
    i. Refer the owner or caretaker to a veterinarian to rule out or identify any underlying medical conditions contributing to the undesired behavior for cases where behavior problems are complex, involve multiple factors, have a sudden onset, or lack a clear link to environmental or developmental causes.
    ii. Refer to a veterinarian in cases where the dog shows minimal or no improvement in behavior despite consistently implementing a behavior change plan over a defined period (e.g., four to six weeks) or if the response to interventions is significantly below expected outcomes.
    iii. Modify the behavior change plan as necessary to accommodate the dog's physical needs while continuing to work toward the established behavioral goals.

c. **Physical Environment**: Use strategic antecedent arrangements to modify the environment, address the dog's motivations, and adjust or eliminate stimuli to prevent the rehearsal of undesired behaviors. These arrangements should support minimally restrictive environmental management strategies that promote behavior change while meeting the dog's behavioral, emotional, and biological needs, including providing appropriate exercise and enrichment opportunities.

d. **Behavioral Interventions**: Assess the dog's interactions with people, other animals, and its environment by observing and documenting its behavior when it is safe to do so. Based on these observations, develop and implement a behavior change plan that prioritizes reinforcement-based strategies to teach and strengthen desired behaviors and improve the dog's emotional response to specific situations.

Behavior Change Plans must incorporate the following elements:

    i. Consideration of the dog's breed, age, health, home environment, past reinforcement history, community safety, and the owner or caretaker's knowledge, skills, abilities, and limitations.
    ii. Practical, achievable, and sustainable strategies tailored to the owner or caretaker's knowledge, skills, abilities, and limitations.
    iii. Clearly defined goals to apply reinforcement-based training strategies consistently and comprehensively to increase alternative behaviors and improve the dog's emotional response to specific situations.
    iv. Opportunities for choice, agency, and control, including allowing dogs to engage with or opt out of training tasks, navigating situations at their own pace, and minimizing unnecessary restrictions on their behavior.

e. **Avoid Punishment-Based Techniques**: Certificants work to minimize the use of and replace punishment-based training strategies, overly restrictive management techniques, and other aversive elements, including those that the owner or caretaker may have already employed when implementing behavior change plans.
    i. Certificants understand that only the dog can determine what is reinforcing or aversive. This requires assessing handling, petting, food, tools, equipment, and the environment each time the dog encounters them.
    ii. Certificants must ensure that personal bias does not influence the training process or the experiences of the dog, owner, or caretaker. The effectiveness of a stimulus must

be evaluated based on observable changes in behavior and emotional state. The effectiveness of a stimulus is measured by its impact on behavior and emotional state, not the certificants intent or preference. The accurate measure of a stimulus is whether it strengthens or weakens the target behavior, regardless of the certificant's intent or personal preference.

iii. When applying safety and management equipment, certificants must implement a comprehensive conditioning process to ensure the dog and owner or caretaker understand how to use training equipment effectively and safely.

f. **Collaboration & Progression**: Certificants collaborate with a qualified professional if the dog shows minimal or no improvement in behavior despite consistently implementing a behavior change plan over a defined period (e.g., four to six weeks) or if the response to interventions is significantly below expected outcomes.

i. Certificants only consider implementing more restrictive or punishment-based strategies after assessing and addressing each step of the Hierarchy of Behavior Change Procedures without success or if a collaborative team determines that the potential harm from the dog's behavior outweighs the risks of the proposed intervention.

ii. Behavior Change Plans must prioritize reinforcement-based strategies, demonstrate a clear progression through reinforcement-based practices, and consider the dog's well-being and the client's ability to implement the plan effectively. Certificants must not escalate a behavior change plan unless it reflects a systematic, ethical approach to training and behavior modification. Escalation based solely on convenience or personal preference is prohibited.

iii. A plan should exist to reduce or eliminate the dog's exposure to aversive elements and the client's reliance on them over time.

g. **Monitoring & Adjustment**: Certificants actively observe the dog's behavior, emotional state, and interactions with its environment to assess the plan's effectiveness and identify signs of progress or areas of concern. Additionally, certificants evaluate the owner or caretaker's compliance, confidence, and ability to implement the behavior change plan as intended.

i. Progress should be regularly evaluated and monitored through measurable outcomes, such as increased frequency of desired behaviors, reduced signs of stress or fear, and enhanced engagement with the environment.

ii. Make necessary adjustments to minimize prolonged exposure to environmental factors that cause stress, fear, and discomfort or fail to meet the dog's behavioral, emotional, and biological needs.

2.2 Certificants continually enhance professional competence through continued education and hands-on experience.

2.3 Certificants maintain adequate knowledge of, and adhere to, all applicable ethical and professional standards.

2.4 Certificants work within their professional education, certification, and individual expertise.

2.5 Certificants do not permit employees, subcontractors, or supervisees to perform professional services beyond their training, level of experience, and competence based on certification and education or to hold themselves out as competent to perform such services.

2.6 If the Certificant has employees, subcontractors, or mentees, they hold them accountable for following the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics when they deliver professional services on behalf of the Certificant.

Principle III: Responsibility to the Profession

3.1 Certificants maintain a respectful and professional demeanor when discussing colleagues' professional acts in public and private forums. This includes refraining from disrespectful or inflammatory commentary in presentations, written media, online platforms, and social media and avoiding cyberbullying or hostile behavior in electronic media.

3.2 Certificants maintain adequate professional liability insurance coverage, including Care, Custody, and Control coverage, where available and required by local regulations.

3.3 Certificants seek support from colleagues, including veterinarians and other relevant professionals, with the necessary education, experience, or certifications when confronted with complex or difficult cases, and refrain from taking cases beyond Certificant's professional education and certifications.

3.4 Certificants provide guidance only within the scope of their recognized professional education and

credentials. For any diagnosis, treatment options, or recommendations beyond their certification—including those related to canine health and nutrition—certificants must refer clients to a licensed veterinarian or other qualified professionals.

3.5 Certificants provide referring veterinarians with feedback on services and behavior change plans to improve continuity of care and ensure a collaborative relationship between the veterinary health care team, training, and behavior professionals.

Principle IV: Financial Arrangements & Truthful Representation of Services

4.1 Certificants clearly disclose and document all financial arrangements, fees, and payment terms with clients before entering into a professional relationship, revisiting these terms if circumstances change. Pro bono or bartered services should be provided only under a specific agreement that adheres to professional standards and ethical guidelines.

4.2 Certificants represent facts truthfully to clients, third-party payors, and students regarding services rendered.

4.3 Certificants must not provide guarantees regarding the specific outcome of training and behavior plans.

4.4 Certificants must consider ending services when: (1) the training goals have been met, (2) the dog is not benefiting from the training, (3) the trainer is exposed to potentially harmful conditions that cannot be reasonably resolved, (4) the client requests discontinuation, (5) the client is not following the behavior change plan despite efforts to address barriers.

Principle V: Advertising

5.1 Certificants accurately represent their pricing, competencies, education, training, and experience relevant to their training and behavior consulting services.

5.2 Certificants use titles that accurately reflect their identity, responsibility, and qualifications, ensuring clarity and transparency for the public

5.3 Certificants correct, wherever possible, false, misleading, or inaccurate information and representations made by others concerning the certificants qualifications, services, or products.

5.4 Certificants represent themselves based on their specific education, training, and certifications, ensuring they offer services aligned with their expertise and qualifications.

5.5 Certificants refrain from making misrepresentations regarding marketing and logos for which they are no longer eligible and remove logos and certification claims when they are no longer maintained.

5.6 Certificants use the most current logos and follow the recommended usage of said marketing materials.

5.7 Certificants conduct their business with integrity, respecting intellectual property rights, upholding copyright laws, and maintaining honesty and professionalism in all communications and practices.

Principle VI: Illegal Behavior

6.1 Certificants must not be convicted of cruelty, abuse, or neglect of animals or humans, crimes against humanity, or violence against animals or humans during their certification period.

6.2 Certificants do not engage in cruelty, abuse, or neglect of animals or humans, crimes against humanity, or violence against animals or humans.

6.3 Certificants must not be convicted of crimes directly related to their professional certifications.

6.4 Certificants do not engage in gross misconduct directly related to their professional certifications.

Principle VII: Cooperation in Matters Related to Ethical Complaints

7.1 Certificants cooperate at all times from the inception of an ethical complaint through the completion of all proceedings regarding that complaint.

7.2 Certificants do not threaten or retaliate against any parties or witnesses to a good faith ethics complaint, both during the course of the complaint and after the completion of all proceedings.

7.3 Certificants create and maintain detailed, high-quality records of their training activities throughout the service relationship. This ensures accountability, supports the trainer's or other professionals' provision of services, and meets applicable legal, regulatory, and organizational requirements. Documentation should be maintained in a way that allows for timely communication and a smooth transition of services if needed during the certification period.

Approved 3/18/2025

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers

Attestation Statement

Please print. All fields are required. Incomplete forms will NOT be accepted.

Candidate's Name: _____

Candidate's Address: _____

The candidate named above is registering to sit for an examination offered by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers. By signing this reference, you indicate that to the best of your knowledge and belief, the candidate has successfully demonstrated a positive relationship with clients, including the safe handling of dogs, in the candidate's role as a dog trainer or canine behavior consultant.

Reference Name: _____

Reference Address: _____

_____

Reference PhoneNumber: _____

Signature: _____ * **Date:** _____

Check one:

___ CCPDT Certificant — Certificate Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

___ Veterinarian — License Number: _____

___ IAABC CDBC — Expiration Date: _____

___ ABS ACAAB — Board Certification Date: _____

___ ABS CAAB — Board Certification Date: _____

___ PPAB PCT-A — Expiration Date: _____

___ PPAB PCBC-A — Expiration Date: _____

* *Attestation Statements are valid for one (1) year from the Signature Date provided the certification is still valid (if applicable).*