The powerful human animal bond makes animal assisted interventions (AAI) an increasingly popular treatment option. AAI offers positive, sensory-integrated support for individuals with emotional, physical, cognitive or behavioral issues.

AAIs have been practiced successfully in prisons, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, counseling centers and hospitals. The practice dates back hundreds of years in Belgium and was used by Florence Nightingale to aid the wounded soldiers during the Crimean War. She believed if the wounded could limit their stress by holding and caring for small animals, the body could do what it was meant to do … heal. She also used her small owl, Athena.

A diverse range of people can apply animal assisted interventions into their practices including nurses, teachers, counselors, physical therapists, sociologists and more.

Taught by multidisciplinary professionals, Oakland’s Animal Assisted Therapy certificate program helps fulfill the need for alternative, innovative and holistic health care practices.
Animal Assisted Therapy (ATT) certificate program consists of five eight-week modules taught by faculty with expertise in their fields.

Module 1 – Intro to AAT (first half of fall semester) Includes readings on the literature and learning what it takes to get started with AAT.

Module 2 – Psychology of AAT (second half of fall semester) Includes learning theories and behavior modification by applying this to AAT.

Module 3 – Special Populations (first half of winter semester) Includes a closer look at vulnerable populations and how AAT will fit within these populations.

Module 4 – Animal Welfare (second half of winter semester) Includes learning if your animal is appropriate for AAT, how to certify your pet, what a temperament assessment is, and the provisions needed for utilizing animals.

Module 5 – Capstone (first half of spring semester) Includes writing a final paper that will be used as a proposal, program plan or grant.

Program cost is $350 per course (both in/out of state; in/out of country) plus the costs of books (available on Amazon). Payment of $350 is due prior to the start of each course.

About Animal Assisted Therapy

There is more to AAT than just having an animal in the room. Understanding the role of the facilitator, the role of the animal co-facilitator, the role of the client, and using intentionality are critical.

The goal we want to achieve with all students is to help them attain their vision. This completely online program provides the opportunity to network with like-minded individuals; learn from the experience of others; and gain the skills, language and knowledge necessary to properly utilize AAT. Students come from around the world, from a variety of disciplines.

AAT can assist with:
- Physical changes
- Cognitive changes
- Emotional changes
- Physiological changes
- Behavioral changes

To apply to the program, visit oakland.edu/animalassistedtherapy.

What Can I Do With a Certificate in Animal Assisted Therapy?

This AAT certificate program works as a specialization or enhancement to your current degree or profession. Likewise, this program will improve your credibility as a volunteer or assist you in developing or funding an animal assisted intervention program.

Through the exploration of the human-animal bond, learning theory and application, these modules will highlight the views of AAT from the perspectives of the facilitator, the animals and the people who benefit from these therapeutic interventions. The better we understand the implications and limitations of the interventions, the better equipped we are to use them.