



# AAAIP

Association of Animal-Assisted  
Intervention Professionals

# Candidate Handbook



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# Introduction

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## Certification Overview

There has long been a practical and empirically validated need within the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI) for an assessment of professional knowledge in integrating therapy animals within an existing scope of practice. Researchers and practitioners have often made this suggestion in published literature on the topic, and this gap in services has been continuously named throughout organizational research projects conducted by Pet Partners.

This credentialing opportunity not only provides a foundation for professionalizing and standardizing AAI as a complementary treatment modality within an existing professional practice, but it also allows for the demonstration of awareness of best practices in AAI that protect client safety and animal welfare.

## AAI Specialist Certification (C-AAIS)

Earning the C-AAIS credential distinguishes you as a professional who is qualified to integrate therapy animals into practice, positioning you as an advocate for the welfare of both the humans and the animals involved in AAI. Investing in AAIS certification is an investment in yourself and your long-term career.

## Benefits of Certification

Certification can help you:

- Demonstrate your credibility to clients, employers, and other key stakeholders.
- Be seen as a leader in the field.
- Advance the standardization and professionalization of the intervention.

AAI participants benefit from these elements of certification:

- Objective, independent, third-party evaluation and assessment of professional competence.
- Commitment to client safety and/or consumer protection.
- Accountability through ethical conduct standards and/or a disciplinary process.

For employers, certification represents a high level of achievement and demonstrates proficiency and a broad base of knowledge in AAI. Hiring certified individuals or investing in certification for your current employees can help achieve the following:

- Increase the competence level of your staff.
- Build a strong, dedicated team that is committed to high standards of AAI.
- Promote ongoing enhancement of knowledge and skills.
- Improve the quality of information and care.
- Minimize risks associated with the intervention.

## Testing Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities

AAAIP complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and strives to ensure that no individual with a documented disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the certification exam solely by reason of that disability provided that reasonable special accommodations can be made. Applicants requesting an accommodation must notify AAAIP prior to scheduling the exam. Please see the Policies section later in this Candidate Handbook for more detailed information.

## About the Certification Commission

The Certification Commission is a standing committee of the Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals (AAAIP). The Commission is empowered by the AAAIP Board of Directors and Bylaws to provide oversight and governance for the certification programs as well as to establish related policies. The Certification Commission is solely responsible for all essential decisions related to the development, administration, and ongoing maintenance of the certification program.

The Certification Commission does not develop, approve, recommend, or endorse certificate programs, courses of study, education, or training leading to certification. The Certification Commission does not require that candidates for certification complete education or training programs offered by AAAIP.

## Contact Information

### The Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals (AAAIP)

[www.aaaiponline.org](http://www.aaaiponline.org)

[support@aaaiponline.org](mailto:support@aaaiponline.org)

### Prolydian

[support+aaaip@prolydian.com](mailto:support+aaaip@prolydian.com)

850-739-8992

### Examity

[support@examity.com](mailto:support@examity.com)

855-EXAMITY (select option 1)

Chat directly through the Live Chat feature within the Examity dashboard

# Applying for Certification

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## Online Application

All certification candidates are required to complete and submit an online application within AAAIP's certification management system operated by AAAIP's partner, Prolydian. If you do not already have a profile in the Prolydian system, visit <https://app.prolydian.com> to get started.

Certification candidates must complete the application using their name exactly as it appears on a current approved government-issued photo ID. Approved government-issued photo identification includes the following:

- Government-issued driver's license.
- Passport.
- Non-U.S. Military issued identification card.
- Any physical government-issued identification card (must include photo).

## Fee Schedule

Payments are made online by credit card at the time of the application. Visa, Mastercard, or American Express are accepted. Fees are non-transferrable from one candidate to another.

The retest fee is applicable to candidates who have previously taken the exam but did not receive a passing score or individuals who did not arrive for their scheduled exam time.

Fees are established independently for each individual certification and are listed below.

## AAI Specialist Certification

- Member of the public: \$375
- AAAIP all-access member: \$275
- Retest fee: \$200 (up to two retakes for failure to pass)

## AAI Specialist Renewal

- Member of the public: \$275
- AAAIP all-access member: \$175

## Candidacy Requirements

Participation in any of the AAAIP certification programs is voluntary and open to anyone meeting candidacy requirements at the time of application.

## AAI Specialist

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Agree to abide by the [Code of Conduct for Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialists.](#)

## **Application and Testing Deadlines**

After your application and fees have been submitted and processed, you will receive a verification email with instructions on how to register for the examination.

Since examinations are offered on demand, year-round, there are no deadlines for applications. However, candidates must register and take the examination within six months of submitting their application.

## **Scheduling**

After completing the application, you will receive an email with instructions on how to schedule your examination. If you have not received a receipt within two business days following online application submission, you should contact Prolydian. Candidates must take their examination within six months of submitting their application.

Once the examination has been scheduled, you will receive an email confirming the date and time of the examination. The email will also contain instructions on how to prepare for a live remote proctored exam session. If you do not receive an email with instructions, please check your Junk or Spam email folders before contacting Prolydian.

## **Rescheduling**

Should you need to reschedule your exam, you may do so yourself, as long as it is at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled test time. To reschedule, log into your Prolydian account and navigate to the “My Exams” page. You must choose a new date within your six-month exam window.

## **Cancellations, Retesting, and Refunds**

If you cancel your testing appointment with less than 24 hours’ notice, or if you miss your testing appointment, you will not be able to reschedule without paying a retesting fee.

On the day of the exam if you show up late, provide inadequate identification to the proctor, or your testing setup does not meet requirements, you will not be able to complete your exam and will need to reschedule which will incur a retesting fee.

No fees will be refunded in the event a candidate fails to register for an exam within the allowed six-month exam window.

# Preparing for your Exam

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## AAI Specialist Examination Content Outline

The C-AAIS credential is a computer-based exam composed of 125 multiple-choice questions administered in one session, with a single, 15-minute, candidate-initiated break. Candidates have three (3) hours to complete the exam. All questions will be included in calculating the candidate's scores. The exam questions cover the topic areas detailed in the examination content outline included below. The exam is offered in English only.

Exam content covers five domains:

1. Animal Welfare and Well-being.
2. Zoonosis and Infection Prevention.
3. Animal Behavior Awareness.
4. AAI Foundations.
5. Professional Best Practices.

Candidates are encouraged to develop a study plan based on review of the AAI Specialist Competencies, which is available online at <https://aaaip.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/AAI-S-Practice-Analysis.pdf>. At this time we are unable to provide a practice test or practice questions.

Certifications offered by AAAIP are developed using nationally recognized industry standards. The C-AAIS examination conforms to a content outline based on a practice analysis of AAI professionals. The initial AAIS practice analysis study was conducted in 2020 with participation from a diverse panel of subject matter experts (SMEs). The practice analysis study focused on identifying the professional knowledge needed for integrating AAI as a complementary treatment modality within an existing scope of practice. Exam questions are based on this analysis, and it is an essential process in identifying required expertise and performance standards.

The AAAIP Certification Commission provides oversight for the development and ongoing maintenance of the certification examination(s). The Commission and AAAIP staff work in partnership with the selected psychometrician to ensure the examination is developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted principles for professional certification program.



# Before Your Exam

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## Examity Profile Setup

Examity is a secure and reliable online proctoring solution that gives candidates the flexibility and safety to take the exam remotely. It provides certifying bodies like AAAIP with robust security features to prevent cheating and preserve the integrity of the credential.

Your exam will be delivered through Prolydian and proctored by Examity. **Candidates MUST complete the profile setup and computer requirements check prior to beginning an exam.**

Follow the steps below to complete your profile setup:

1. Log into your Prolydian account at <https://app.prolydian.com>.
2. Click the Access My Examity account button from your Prolydian exams dashboard.

If this is your first time accessing your profile, you'll be prompted to review and edit your contact information as needed:

- Verify your contact information in the first step, titled Add your information.
- Click the Next button.
- Click the Open Camera button to take a picture of your photo ID; or click Upload an image.
- After adding your photo ID, Click Next.
- Complete the system requirements check by clicking the Check if your system meets Examity requirements button.
- Click Next.

If this is not your first time accessing your profile, be sure to verify your information by clicking the Profile button at the top of your Examity account page.

## Confirm Technical Requirements

Be sure that the computer and the location where you intend to take the examination meet the requirements specified in your confirmation email **before** examination day. If they do not meet the requirements, you will not be able to complete the test and retesting fees will apply.

Additional instructions will be provided to applicants in their confirmation email.

### Technical requirements

- Examity V5 System Check: <https://on.v5.examity.com/systemcheck>
- Operating system: OS X El Capitan 10.11 or later; Windows 10. (Windows machines in 10 S mode are not supported.)
- Browser: Google Chrome (Current Stable and First Preceding Version). Download Chrome [here](#). Chrome is required for testing.
- Web camera: Minimum resolution 640×480; Recommended resolution 1280×720.

- Internet speed: A required upload and download speed of 2Mbps, with 10Mbps preferred.
- RAM: Minimum 2GB; Recommended 4GB.
- A functioning microphone: Webcams with built in microphones and stand-alone microphones supported.

### **Not supported**

- Tablets (iPad, Galaxy Tab, Galaxy Note, and similar devices)
- Mobile (Android, iOS)
- ARM CPU Architecture
- Chromebooks

# On Exam Day

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## Connect to your Proctor

You may access your exam up to 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. Follow the steps below to access your exam:

1. Log into your Prolydian account at <https://app.prolydian.com>.
2. From your Prolydian exams dashboard, click the Access my Examity account button.
3. Click the Connect to proctor button.
4. Follow the instructions to install the Examity extension and connect to a proctor.

### Having trouble?

Check out Examity's Online Proctoring Troubleshooting Guide

<https://examity.com/online-proctoring-troubleshooting-guide-for-test-takers-v4/>

## Present Identification

Candidates are required to present a valid, government-issued photo identification to the proctor to gain access to the exam. Acceptable forms of identification (photograph and signature required) include the following:

- Government-issued driver's license.
- Passport.
- Non-U.S. Military issued identification card.
- Any physical government-issued identification card (must include photo).

The name and photo on the identification presented must match the examinee as identified at the time of registration. Candidates will not be permitted to test without proper identification; retesting fees will apply.

## Abide by Remote Proctored Exam Rules

To provide a fair and consistent environment for all candidates, exams are delivered using standardized procedures following strict security protocols. Candidates are required to follow all testing rules at all times. Failure to follow these rules may result in termination of a candidate's testing session, invalidation of the candidate's exam score, and/or disciplinary action. To ensure the security of the examinations, the following rules will apply:

- Candidates arriving more than 15 minutes late will be required to reschedule the examination.
- Candidates are permitted to have a beverage in a clear, spill-proof container.

- No other individuals are permitted in the testing location with the candidate.
- No watches, cell phones, or other electronic devices are permitted.
- No resources, notes, books, or references of any type are allowed.
- Exam room lighting should be adequate for the proctor to view the candidate and surrounding area.
- The candidate must remain in view of the proctor, except during the pre-scheduled break.
- Reading out loud or any attempts to capture exam content (e.g., taking photos, copying questions, etc.) are prohibited.
- Attempts to remotely control the computer, resize browsers, or print the screen are prohibited.

The only materials candidates should have within reach as they check in are their ID and phone or mirror (to show their monitor). These must be placed out of reach once the check-in process is over. A beverage as described above may be kept on the desk.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Be sure that your computer and the location where you intend to take the examination meet the requirements specified in your confirmation email **BEFORE** examination day. If they do not meet the requirements, you will not be able to complete the test, and you will not receive a refund.

### **If Rules are Violated**

Any candidate who is observed engaging in any misconduct will be subject to dismissal from the examination, may be barred from future examinations for a period ranging from one year to permanent dismissal, and may be required to forfeit their current examination fee and/or period of eligibility. Proctors are authorized to take immediate, appropriate measures against candidates who are caught violating testing rules. The candidate is entitled to appeal the dismissal determination.

### **Power Failure or Loss of Internet**

Computer-based tests are delivered via secure Internet connections. Internet connections are subject to local Internet providers. While it is not the norm, Internet connections can on occasion be lost momentarily, requiring the proctor to log you back into your exam. If you lose your Internet connection, inform the proctor, who will assist you in logging back into your exam. Upon logging back into your exam, you will resume at the first unanswered question. Your exam time remaining will be the same as it was when the Internet connection was lost.

# After the Exam

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## Results

Typically within 72 hours of completing your exam, you will receive a score report via email. The score report will contain an indication of “pass” or “fail” for the overall exam, based on the passing standard set by the Certification Commission.

Additionally, each score report will contain subscores identifying your performance by domain. These subscores can help passing candidates identify areas for future continuing education, as well as inform a study plan for failing candidates who wish to retake the exam.

## Retesting

Candidates who fail the exam must wait 14 days from the initial exam date before retaking the exam. A retest fee must be submitted during the rescheduling process. If the candidate fails the second attempt, they must wait at least 90 days before retaking the exam for a third time.

If the candidate fails the third attempt, they must wait at least six (6) months from the original test date before reattempting the exam. A new application must be submitted at that time and regular testing fees will apply.

## Appeals

All candidates have the right to file an appeal of an adverse decision resulting in a denial of certification or recertification based on a failure to satisfy application requirements, payment of fees required by AAAIP, or failure of the certification examination caused by conditions beyond the candidate’s control. See the Appeals Policy later in this Candidate Handbook.

## Your Certificate

A certificate will be available for download for candidates that are successful in passing their certification examination. Go to <https://app.prolydian.com/Organizations/AAAIP> and click on your My Achievements section to download. Successful candidates will also receive information on maintaining certified status.

The certification credential certificate may only be displayed during the time period for which the credential is valid.

# Maintaining Your Certification

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## Purpose

Those holding a certification credential demonstrate their commitment to stay abreast of best practices by ensuring their knowledge and expertise remain current via recertification.

## Recertification Process

Certificants must renew every two years to maintain their credential.

For AAI Specialists, renewal requires:

- Continued agreement and compliance with the [Code of Conduct for Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialists](#)
- Submission of 12 hours of approved continuing education. All activities must take place following the date of certification to be eligible for credit.
- Payment of renewal fee.

Candidates may also choose to recertify by taking the current version of the exam.

A candidate who does not recertify within 45 days of their expiration date is considered expired and must retake the applicable exam.

## Extension Requests

An extension of the recertification deadline for extenuating circumstances may be granted for up to two (2) months beyond the expiration date. Such requests must be submitted by emailing [support@aaaiponline.org](mailto:support@aaaiponline.org) before the certification expires.

The request must include a statement of extenuating circumstances, the number of recertification hours completed, and a detailed plan stating how all requirements will be fulfilled by the requested extended deadline. If an extension is granted, the original expiration date will remain constant. If the extension is not granted, the individual is no longer certified and must cease promoting themselves as being AAIS certified. To earn the certification again, the individual must sit for the applicable exam.

## Recertification Requirement Waiver

The recertification requirement may be temporarily waived by the Certification Commission under either of the following circumstances:

- The individual has experienced serious health or medical problems or has been caring for someone with serious health or medical problems.
- The individual has been called to active military duty.

Requests must be submitted by emailing [support@aaaiponline.org](mailto:support@aaaiponline.org). If the waiver is granted, once the conditions upon which the recertification waiver was approved no longer exist, the individual must complete the recertification process in the time that the recertification was required prior to the request for the waiver—e.g., if a waiver is granted three months prior to an individual's certification expiring, the individual will have three months to complete the

recertification process or risk his or her certification lapsing.

## Continuing Education Hours

All continuing education must be submitted online via the Prolydian portal. A listing of pre-approved CE credits is available via the [Prolydian online portal](#), but other activities may be submitted for approval provided they can be directly linked to one of the knowledge [domains](#).

Credit will be awarded for eligible continuing education on an hour-for-hour basis for continuing education activities. Activities must be completed after certification has been granted to qualify. All continuing education requires the submission of documentation. This is detailed at the time of submission, but generally speaking it involves demonstration of completion or participation and possibly illustration of relevance to the competencies. If you have questions about continuing education eligibility or documentation, contact us at [support@aaaiponline.org](mailto:support@aaaiponline.org).

## Structured Learning Activities

- Conferences
- In-person events, such as seminars
- Online coursework
- University coursework
- Webinars

## Independent Learning Activities

- Published scholarly article
- Reading of a journal or scholarly article
- Reading of a textbook

# Ownership and Use of Your Credential

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## Mark and Logo Use

The mark and logo for the AAI Specialist Certification is the property of AAAIP. Use of any AAAIP certification marks and logos is limited to those persons who have been granted the certification by AAAIP and who satisfy all maintenance and recertification requirements established by AAAIP. Use of the mark and logo by individuals who have not been granted and maintained the certification is expressly prohibited. Permission to use the certification marks and logos shall not be transferred to, assigned to, or otherwise used by any other individual, organization, or entity.

Those persons who have been granted permission to use the certification mark and logo shall do so pursuant to the rules and guidelines established by AAAIP. Persons granted permission to use the certification mark and logo must familiarize themselves with the established rules and guidelines for use and must execute approved agreements setting forth such rules and guidelines for use.

Marks and logos may not be revised or altered in any way. They must be displayed in the same form as produced by AAAIP, and they cannot be reproduced unless such reproduction is identical to the mark provided by AAAIP.

The certification initials, such as C-AAIS, may be used on materials, such as business cards, stationery, letterhead, and similar documents on which the name of the individual certified is prominently displayed, to promote themselves personally as an individual certified in the maintenance and reliability profession.

The mark or logo may not be used in any manner that could bring AAAIP into disrepute or in any way considered misleading or unauthorized. The mark or logo may not be used in any manner that would tend to imply a connection between any business and the certification which, in fact, may not exist. This includes any use of the mark or logo that the public might construe as an endorsement, approval, or sponsorship by AAAIP of a certificate holder's business or any product or service thereof.

## Suspension or Revocation of Permission to Use Mark or Logo

AAAIP retains the right, at its sole discretion, to suspend or revoke any person's permission to use its certification mark or logo. In most circumstances, when AAAIP is informed that a person is misusing the certification mark or logo, AAAIP will provide the person with notice of the misuse and a reasonable opportunity to comply with AAAIP's rules and guidelines. However, AAAIP retains the right to suspend or revoke privileges without notice and an opportunity to correct, particularly when the violation is of a gross nature and more immediate action is necessary to stop misuse.

Actions by AAAIP to suspend or revoke use of the certification mark shall be communicated in writing to the person whose privileges are being suspended or revoked and to all other persons affected by the decision. AAAIP may also publicize its actions on its website and/or any other of its publications. Should any person continue use of AAAIP's certification marks or logos after notice of suspension or revocation, AAAIP shall seek full equitable and/or legal remedies through a court of competent jurisdiction.



## Proper Use of the Credential

After meeting all eligibility requirements and passing the examination, individuals may use their credential in all correspondence, on resumes/CVs, and promotional materials, such as stationery, websites, business cards, etc. The mark or logo may be used only with the name of the individual certified.

Individuals who have met the certification requirements are authorized to use the following certification mark according to the following guidelines:

- The credential may be used as C-AAIS or Certified Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialist.
- The credential is used after the certificant's name and following any academic degrees or licenses (e.g., Mary Smith, RN, C-AAIS or John Smith, MBA, C-AAIS)
- The credential must be clearly associated with the individual certified or be referenced in general terms:

Examples of correct use:

- ☐ Mary Smith is a Certified Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialist.
- ☐ John Smith, C-AAIS.
- ☐ Three XYZ employees hold the AAIS certification.

Example of incorrect use:

- ☐ XYZ organization employs three C-AAISs.

## Verifying Certification Status

A public, online directory of AAAIP Certified Professionals is available at [app.prolydian.com/organizations/aaaip](http://app.prolydian.com/organizations/aaaip). You can elect to be listed in this directory.

To add yourself to the directory,

- Log into your Prolydian account.
- From your dashboard, navigate to the My Achievement section.
- Click Add to Public Registry.

# Policies

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## Contact Information Changes

The AAAIP (Prolydian) online portal is the primary method used for communication regarding exam confirmations, exam results, and recertification. As a candidate and certificant, you have 24/7 access to exam-profile details and are responsible for ensuring that your contact information in your profile is kept up to date. AAAIP recommends using a personal email address and phone number in the event of changes in employment.

## Nondiscrimination

AAAIP does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, ethnic origin, color, religion, race, disability, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of its activities or operations. These include, but are not limited to, approval of certification/recertification applicants, staff decisions (including but not limited to hiring, discipline, promotion, and termination), selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. AAAIP is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for certification candidates, certificants, volunteers, staff members, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

## Statement of Impartiality and Fairness

AAAIP's leadership and management, including its Certification Commission, endorse the principles of impartiality and fairness and commit to do the following:

1. Implement its policies and procedures impartially and fairly;
2. Not restrict certification based on undue financial or other limiting conditions; and
3. Not allow commercial, financial, or other pressures to compromise impartiality in certification activities.

## Impartiality Related to Education and Training Leading to Certification

AAAIP produces comprehensive education and training materials for professionals who work with therapy animals. The AAAIP Certification Commission does not require, provide, approve, accredit, recommend, or endorse any specific educational programs, courses, study guides, review materials, or other examination preparation products.

## Confidentiality and Privacy of Information

AAAIP shall hold in confidence, and in a secure manner, the information obtained in the course of certification program activities at all levels of the organization, including the activities of all personnel (paid, contracted, or volunteer) acting on its behalf. Except as required in this Policies & Procedures Manual, information about a particular individual is considered confidential information and shall not be disclosed to a third party by AAAIP staff, volunteers, or contractors without prior written consent of

the individual. Where the law requires information to be disclosed to a third party and unless the law restricts it, the individual shall be notified in writing beforehand of the information disclosed.

## Testing Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities

AAAIP complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and is committed to providing necessary testing accommodations for examinees with documented disabilities, consistent with the requirements of the law. Accommodations may also be approved for examinees with documented qualifying medical conditions that may be temporary or are not otherwise covered by the ADA, such as pregnancy or a temporary impairment following surgery, including conditions that require the use of medical devices or medication during the examination. AAAIP will also provide testing accommodations for candidates testing in other jurisdictions, to the extent required by applicable laws in those jurisdictions.

An individual is not considered to have a disability requiring accommodation if the limitations arising from the individual's impairment do not significantly restrict the individual's major life activities when compared with the abilities of the average person. Non-specific diagnoses such as individual learning styles, learning differences, academic problems, computer phobias, slow reading, and test difficulty or anxiety in and of themselves do not constitute a disability or impairment.

**The decision as to whether a medical condition that is not covered by the ADA is a “qualifying medical condition” for purposes of a certification exam accommodation is at the sole discretion of AAAIP.**

Accommodations are provided on an individual basis and depend on the nature of the disability or medical condition and documentation provided. AAAIP will make reasonable efforts to provide the requested accommodations to examinees provided the functional impairment has been demonstrated through adequate documentation, and the accommodations do not fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test, do not jeopardize examination integrity and security, are compatible with the nature and purpose of the examination or assessment program, and do not result in an undue burden to AAAIP. Accommodations cannot be made to the actual content of the examination. A range of available accommodations are considered to assist examinees with disabilities or qualifying medical conditions.

## Examination Accommodations

Examination applicants may request accommodations by completing a Request for Accommodation form upon application submission prior to scheduling their examination. In order to fulfill any accommodations, AAAIP requires at least 30 days between the approved accommodation and the testing date. The Request for Accommodation form is available online at [www.aaaiponline.org/request-for-accommodation](http://www.aaaiponline.org/request-for-accommodation)

All requests for examination accommodations are strictly confidential, and documentation submitted in support of the request is used solely for the purpose of evaluating the request. Failure to provide AAAIP with adequate supporting documentation in a timely manner will cause a delay in the review process and the applicant's ability to schedule and take the examination.

An applicant may request more than one accommodation; however, supporting documentation is required for each requested accommodation.

Examinees cannot schedule their examination, nor can the examination be administered, until the process described above has been completed.

### **Common Accommodations**

AAAIP will base the accommodations on the requests and required documentation received. Common accommodations include extended time for testing (1.5 time or double time), frequent or additional breaks, access to auxiliary items (food, medication, or medical devices), or provision of a reader and/or scribe. Candidates will not be charged any additional fees for approved accommodations.

### **Required Supporting Documentation**

Adequate supporting documentation from a qualified medical professional certifying to the applicant's disability or qualifying medical condition, with specific identification of the requested accommodation and the medical basis for the request, must be submitted to AAAIP, either directly from the medical professional or by the applicant. AAAIP will verify the authenticity of any submissions sent by the applicant. A qualified professional is someone with the credentials, training, and expertise to diagnose the reported disability or qualifying medical condition.

The primary relationship of the attesting professional to the individual must be that of a treating medical professional to a patient; there must be no familial, intimate, supervisory, or other close relationship between the qualified professional and the individual requesting the accommodation(s).

The documentation must meet the following requirements:

1. Be on letterhead, typed in English, dated, signed, and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the qualified medical professional.
2. Contain contact information including address, telephone number, and/or e-mail address of each professional providing documentation.
3. Include the name of the specific disability or medical condition.

AAAIP reserves the right to request further verification, if necessary, of the evaluating professional's credentials and expertise relevant to the diagnosis, to verify the authenticity of the supporting documentation, and to seek clarification of the information provided by the evaluating professional.

### **Review of Requested Accommodations**

AAAIP will consider requests for examination accommodations following receipt of an examination application and all required documentation in support of the request. The applicant will be sent a notification of AAAIP's decision regarding the requested accommodation(s).

If accommodations have been approved, the notification will be in the form of a Testing Accommodations Agreement indicating the accommodation(s) that has/have been approved. The applicant must sign the Agreement and return it to AAAIP by the date indicated within the Agreement. The application for an applicant requesting examination accommodations will not be complete until the signed agreement is received by AAAIP.

## Appeals

An appeal is a formal request for special consideration regarding a decision made by the Certification Commission or its representatives related to an individual's achievement or retention of a certification.

### Appeal Submission

An appeal must be submitted electronically on the AAAIP website. The appeal must be submitted no later than 30 days after notification by AAAIP of the adverse decision. All relevant supportive documentation must be included or referenced in the appeal submission.

### Initial Appeal Review and Determination

The AAAIP Executive Director or their designee will serve as the first level of appeals review. The review will occur within 10 business days of receipt, and a response will be sent to the appellant via email. Staff members will recuse themselves from the appeal consideration if there is any reason for which impartiality might reasonably be questioned or there is actual or apparent conflict of interest.

The AAAIP Executive Director or their designee will review the appeal to determine whether it meets the definition of an appeal and whether appeal submission requirements are met. If it does, the AAAIP Executive Director or their designee will investigate and consider the appeal, including but not limited to taking into account the results of previous similar appeals, and make a determination on appeal action.

The initial response will be one of the following:

- Appeal approved.
- Appeal denied.
  - The response will be accompanied by an explanation for the denial and/or information on an alternate course of action where applicable. The denial will include information on the appellant's further recourse if the appellant wishes to pursue the appeal.
- Appeal delayed to provide time to gather further information.
  - Within 30 calendar days, the appellant will be sent either an appeal denied or appeal forwarded notification.
- Appeal forwarded to the Appeals & Complaints Panel.

Written notice of the Appeals & Complaints Panel determination (appeal denied or appeal approved) or a progress notice (appeal forwarded or appeal delayed) will be provided to the appellant within 10 business days of the determination.

## **Second Level Appeal Review and Determination**

If applicable, appeals are sent to an independent three-member team selected from the Appeals & Complaints Panel for consideration. The appeal will be considered no later than 90 days after the appeal receipt.

Members of the Appeals & Complaints Panel will recuse themselves from the appeal consideration if there is any reason for which impartiality might reasonably be questioned or there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

The appeal will not include a hearing or any similar trial-type proceeding.

The function of the Appeals & Complaints Panel in a given case is to review the decision being appealed based on the record that was presented at the time of the determination.

The Appeals & Complaints Panel will review the appeal, including but not limited to taking into account the results of previous similar appeals, and make a determination on appeal action.

The second level response will be one of the following:

- Appeal denied.
- Appeal approved.
- Appeal delayed to provide time to gather further information.

Written notice of the Appeals & Complaints Panel determination (appeal denied or appeal approved) or a progress notice (appeal delayed) will be provided to the appellant within 30 business days of the determination.

## **Procedural Appeal Review and Determination**

If an appellant feels his or her appeal was handled improperly by the staff or Appeals & Complaints Panel, a procedural appeal may be filed with the Certification Commission.

## **Program Complaints**

Individuals with concerns regarding the certification program materials, personnel, or activities are encouraged to discuss these with the individuals involved to try to resolve the matter informally. In some cases, however, informal resolution is not possible, and individuals may wish to file a formal complaint.

### **Submission of Formal Program Complaints**

A formal complaint will be submitted electronically on the AAAIP website within 90 days of the incident's occurrence. In the case of complaints related to exam administration, those must be submitted within two weeks after the applicable exam administration. The submission will include sufficient objective evidence to substantiate the claim(s) and appropriate action to be taken.

Dissatisfaction based on hearsay will not be considered as a complaint. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

## Staff Level Review

The AAAIP Executive Director or assignee will serve as the first level of complaint consideration to determine its validity. This person will investigate the circumstances of any valid complaint and take one of the following actions:

- Determine and implement corrective action.
- Refer the complaint to a different suitable staff member to determine and implement corrective action.
- Escalate the complaint to the Certification Commission for review.

If the complaint is not immediately resolvable, written notice of progress (of a referral or escalation) will be provided to the complainant within 10 business days of complaint receipt.

In all cases, the AAAIP Executive Director or assignee will communicate the proposed resolution to the complainant within a period of no longer than 30 days.

If for any reason the target deadlines in this policy are not able to be met, a progress notice will be sent to the complainant, outlining when the findings will be communicated.

## Certification Commission Review

If a complaint is found to warrant escalation, the Certification Commission Chair will be notified, and the complaint will be reviewed by the Certification Commission or its designees. A decision will be communicated to the complainant within a period of no longer than 30 days.

If for any reason the target deadlines in this policy are not able to be met, a progress notice will be sent to the complainant, outlining when the findings will be communicated.

## Appeal of Complaint Determinations

The determination of staff or the Certification Commission is appealable, and the Appeals policy will apply.

## Complaints Against Certificants

Certificants commit to adhering to the standards set out in the guiding documents for their particular certification program, such as the AAI Specialist Code of Conduct. AAAIP shall have a process for handling complaints against certificants in a constructive, impartial, and timely manner.

## Complaints

A complaint against a certificant must be submitted electronically via the AAAIP website. A complaint must meet four criteria:

1. Specific to a section of the guiding document for their certification program.
2. In writing by the individual lodging the complaint.
3. Supported by definitive and specific evidence of such accusation.
4. Made against a current holder of an AAAIP certification.

## Complaint Handling and Communications

- The complaint and all related documentation will be dealt with in a strictly confidential manner.
- The expectation is that complainant will hold in strict confidence the filing of the complaint. Complainant will not announce or promote in any manner, or use personal or institutional communication vehicles, to announce filing of a complaint.
- If a preliminary investigation of the information/evidence reveals a valid complaint, the individual(s) named in the written complaint will be sent a Notice of Complaint. The Certification Commission will also request any additional information needed and a specific timeframe for providing such information. If this additional information is not received, a decision shall be rendered based on the information initially provided.
- If it is determined that no further action is warranted, the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome of the initial assessment. The target date for this communication is within 30 days after receipt of the complaint.
- If the initial investigation supports the complaint, an independent investigation will commence, and the information shall be handed over to the Certification Commission.
- The Certification Commission will issue a written report of its findings within 60 working days of receiving all further requested supporting information.
- The final disposition will be communicated to the complainant. The target date for this communication is within 10 working days of the written report findings being accepted.
- If for any reason the target deadlines in this procedure are not able to be met, a progress notice will be sent to the complainant, outlining when the findings will be communicated.

## Potential Disciplinary Actions

If a complaint is found to have valid grounds, the Certification Commission may recommend one of the following disciplinary actions depending on the severity of the infraction:

- Warning. A written warning could be issued that outlines the consequences if the situation occurs again, or if there is another violation.
- Suspension. AAIS certification or eligibility to become certified could be suspended.
- Revocation of Certification. AAIS certification could be revoked.

## Appeals of Certification Commission Findings

The subject of the complaint may appeal the disciplinary actions. The Appeals policy will apply.



# Guiding Documents

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## Code of Conduct for Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialists

Certificants and applicants for certification shall act in a manner that justifies public trust and confidence, enhances the reputation of animal-assisted interventions (AAI), and safeguards the welfare of individual clients and participating animals.

### Animals

- Prioritize the welfare of animals engaged in AAI, not only during sessions, but at home as well. Their welfare and well-being are to be placed above all other business considerations.
- Structure interactions in such a way that therapy animals thrive; not simply tolerating, but actively enjoying their role.
- Engage in training methodologies and interactions with animals that are based on positive, relationship-building methodologies that do not intentionally cause fear or discomfort to the animal.
- Be aware of, and comply with, applicable laws regarding animal licensure, vaccination, and restrictions based on species or breed.
- Never falsely represent a therapy animal as a service animal.
- Never abuse, neglect, or mistreat animals, whether your own or someone else's.

### Clients

- Incorporate AAI only where there is reasonable expectation that it will be advantageous to the client. Refrain from providing guarantees regarding the specific outcomes of AAI sessions.
- Respect the client's right to treatment with informed and voluntary consent. Respect the client's right to refuse, modify, or terminate interactions regardless of prior consent given.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure safety and prevent harm to clients.
- Be aware of, and comply with, applicable laws regarding the reporting of injuries caused by animals (e.g., bites).

### The Field of AAI

- Support the implementation of and compliance with standards and best practices in AAI.
- Represent your qualifications honestly, including education, competencies, and professional affiliations, and provide only those services you are qualified to perform.
- Never provide advice or recommendations in areas of veterinary medicine, animal behavior, or human and/or mental health services unless qualified to do so.
- Maintain adequate liability insurance coverage inclusive of AAI activities.
- Never display acts of discrimination, acts of hate, acts of violence, bullying, sexual harassment, coercion, intimidation, or any act of that impedes or interferes with anyone's civil rights.

## AAI Specialist Candidate Statement of Understanding

Before beginning the online examination, each candidate will see onscreen the Candidate Statement of Understanding. Candidates will not be able to begin the examination without reading and agreeing to the statement containing the following items:

1. I agree that all information provided in my application is complete and accurate.
2. I agree to comply with all policies and provisions of the certification program including the Code of Conduct for Animal Assisted Intervention Specialists.
3. I agree to provide any information needed to determine my eligibility for initial and/or continued certification and to cooperate fully with any disciplinary investigations.
4. I agree to make claims regarding certification only with respect to the scope for which certification has been granted. I further agree not to misuse the credential, certification mark, and/or certificate, and not to use them in a misleading manner.
5. I agree to immediately discontinue all claims to certification, discontinue use of the credential/certification mark, and destroy any certificates issued, if certification is suspended, revoked, or expired.
6. I agree that the C-AAIS examination is highly confidential and that the examination questions are the property of AAAIP. I further agree that unauthorized disclosure of the examination questions is prohibited under copyright laws.
7. I agree to comply with all stated rules of the C-AAIS exam.
8. I agree to not copy, release, share, or otherwise disclose confidential examination materials or participate in fraudulent test-taking practices.
9. I understand that:
  - Candidates will be observed by a proctor through a web cam at all times while they are taking the C-AAIS examination. Proctors may not necessarily inform candidates of their observations, but they are required to report behavior that may violate the terms and regulations of AAAIP or other forms of irregular behavior.
  - Any cheating and/or breach of confidentiality/security or any attempt to subvert the examination process by any candidate violates the purpose and principles of the examination. Any candidate who carries out, takes part in, or witnesses such behavior must report it to the proctor and/or AAAIP as soon as possible.
  - AAAIP reserves the right to cancel or withhold any examination results when, in the sole opinion of AAAIP, a testing irregularity occurs; cheating has occurred; there is an apparent discrepancy in, or falsification of, a candidate's identification; a candidate engages in misconduct or plagiarism; aberrancies in performance are detected for which there is no reasonable and satisfactory explanation; or the results are believed to be invalid for any other reason.
  - Conduct occurring before, during, or after testing that violates principles detailed in this Statement of Understanding may result in invalidation of examination results and/or other penalties and will be reported to AAAIP.