



## Professional Certification in Animal Assisted Play Therapy®

AAPT is a specific form of therapy co-created by Dr. Risë VanFleet (USA) and Tracie Faa-Thompson (UK) over 15 years ago. It is conducted by mental health professionals, allied health professionals, educators, and their associates. It integrates the fields of animal-assisted therapy and play therapy, incorporating significant aspects of ethology, animal behavior, welfare, and ethics. It can be used with children, adults, families, individuals, and groups, as well as with many different species of animals. The elements of (a) mutually respectful and beneficial human-animal relationships and (b) playfulness, lightness and humor are integrated in such a way as to create emotional safety and progress for clients and enjoyable, enriching experiences for the animals. Full information about the method is available in the highly acclaimed and Maxwell Award-winning book, VanFleet, R., & Faa-Thompson, T. (2017). *Animal Assisted Play Therapy*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

### Training & Certification

The International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy® offers online courses, in-person hands-on workshops, and a full certification program. Live skill-building trainings are offered regularly in the USA, UK, Australia, and in other countries as requested. This rigorous professional certification program is based on *demonstrated competencies* acquired through considerable training, relationship work with one's animals, and supervised experience. It is intended for those who are practicing professionals in their fields, although students are welcome. The full manual is at [www.iaapt.org](http://www.iaapt.org). Competencies include the following:

- professional therapy skills
- play therapy skills
- relationship building
- facilitation of client-animal interactions
- animal ethology/behavior/socialization/humane training
- fluency in understanding animal body language
- observation skills/splitting attention
- proactive advocacy for animal partners
- animal handling
- professional ethics
- animal welfare

### Types of Mental Health AAPT Certification

There are several types of certification.

- Certified Animal Assisted Play Therapist® (also has play therapy credential)
- Certified Professional Practitioner in Animal Assisted Play Therapy® (other professional credentials)
- Certified AAPT Supervisor
- Certified AAPT Instructor/Faculty
- Certified Associate in AAPT (paraprofessional working in tandem with mental health professional)
- Certified Canine or Equine Support Specialist for AAPT (animal professionals who have AAPT training)

*These types of certification differ primarily in the academic and professional credentials held by the candidates. All of the professional and paraprofessional certifications have the same core requirements in terms of AAPT training, supervision, and demonstrated competencies. The more specialized certifications have additional requirements.*

# AAPT Certification Requirements Checklist

## PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND:

**Academic degrees and credentials/licenses** (education specific to the profession; these vary with the different certification levels)

**Play therapy training** (varies from full PT credential to core competencies without the credential, differs with certification type)

**Other training required for the specialist certification levels** (e.g., supervisors, educators, animal support specialists)



## ONLINE COURSES: [~ 65 hours]

These are offered through the IIAAPT and are specific to AAPT. Most are 10-14 hours long.

- Introduction to Animal Assisted Play Therapy®
- Canine Communication in AAPT
- Equine Communication in AAPT
- Essentials of Behavior & Training for AAPT
- AAPT Ethics & Animal Welfare
- Supervisory Case Consultation in AAPT & Other Animal Assisted Interventions

## IN-PERSON SKILLS-BUILDING COURSES: [~ 60-75 hours]

1. Animal Assisted Play Therapy® 1: Theory, Research, & Practice (30 actual course hours)
2. Animal Assisted Play Therapy® 2: Relationships, Applications, & Interventions (30 actual course hours; there are prerequisites for both the therapist and the dogs who attend this 2nd level training, usually 6-12 months after the 1st)
3. Equine Specialty Courses for those working in Equine Assisted Play Therapy®

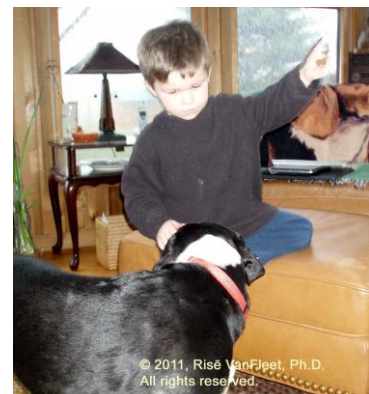
## SUPERVISED PRACTICE: [~ 18 hours]

Supervision is available from Certified AAPT Supervisors individually or in small groups not exceeding 4 participants. The length is based on need/demonstrated competence, but usually involves a minimum of 18 hours specific to AAPT.

## DEMONSTRATED COMPETENCIES:

There are specific ways that the following competencies are assessed for each individual. The process for reaching these competencies is collaborative and clear. The required practical assessments follow.

- **Animal-Specific Evaluation** (for each animal)
  - *Animal Appropriateness Scale*©
  - Demonstration of Animal's Trained Behaviors
  - Therapy Involvement Plan (needs to account for animal personality, strengths, sensitivities, & goodness-of-fit)
- **Ability to Read & Respond to Animal Body Language in Real Time** (at least 2 species; and all species with which one works)
- **Demonstration of Positive Animal Training & Handling Skills**
- **Assessment of the Therapist-Animal Relationship**
  - Scale of Therapist-Animal Relationship Strengths*© (STARS) (multiple dimensions; assessed with each human-animal team)
- **Demonstration of AAPT Skills** (ability to plan, conduct, facilitate, adhere to all principles, and show effectiveness.)
- **Written Case Study** (demonstrates several competencies and integrates all dimensions of AAPT)



*The AAPT Certification Program is a leading example of the highest standards in the credentialing of therapists conducting Human-Animal Interventions. It has been the subject of independent research which found the program to be highly effective in developing self-efficacy and competencies in therapists.*

**For More Information:**

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

