



Evaluating Therapy/Facility Animals in their Professional Context

A New Standard for AAI



DR. TAYLOR CHASTAIN GRIFFIN

Credentials

MS - Mental Health Counseling

PhD - Research Psychology

ABC Certified Dog Trainer

Experience

National Director of AAI Advancement, Pet Partners

Executive Director, Association of Animal-Assisted
Intervention Professionals (AAAIP)

Pet Partner Team Evaluator

Professional Dog Trainer for 13+ years



AAAIP

Association of Animal-Assisted
Intervention Professionals



Pet Partners™



DR. LAURA POLESHUCK

Credentials

PhD – Education

OTD, OTR/L – Occupational Therapy

Certified Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialist (C-AAIS)

Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT-KA)

Experience

Associate Clinical Professor, Nazareth University
Occupational Therapy

Co-Founder and Director of the InterProfessional Animal-assisted Wellness (IPAW) Collaborative at Nazareth U

Founder and Executive Director, Tilly's Place

Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program Team Evaluator



History of Therapy Animal Evaluations

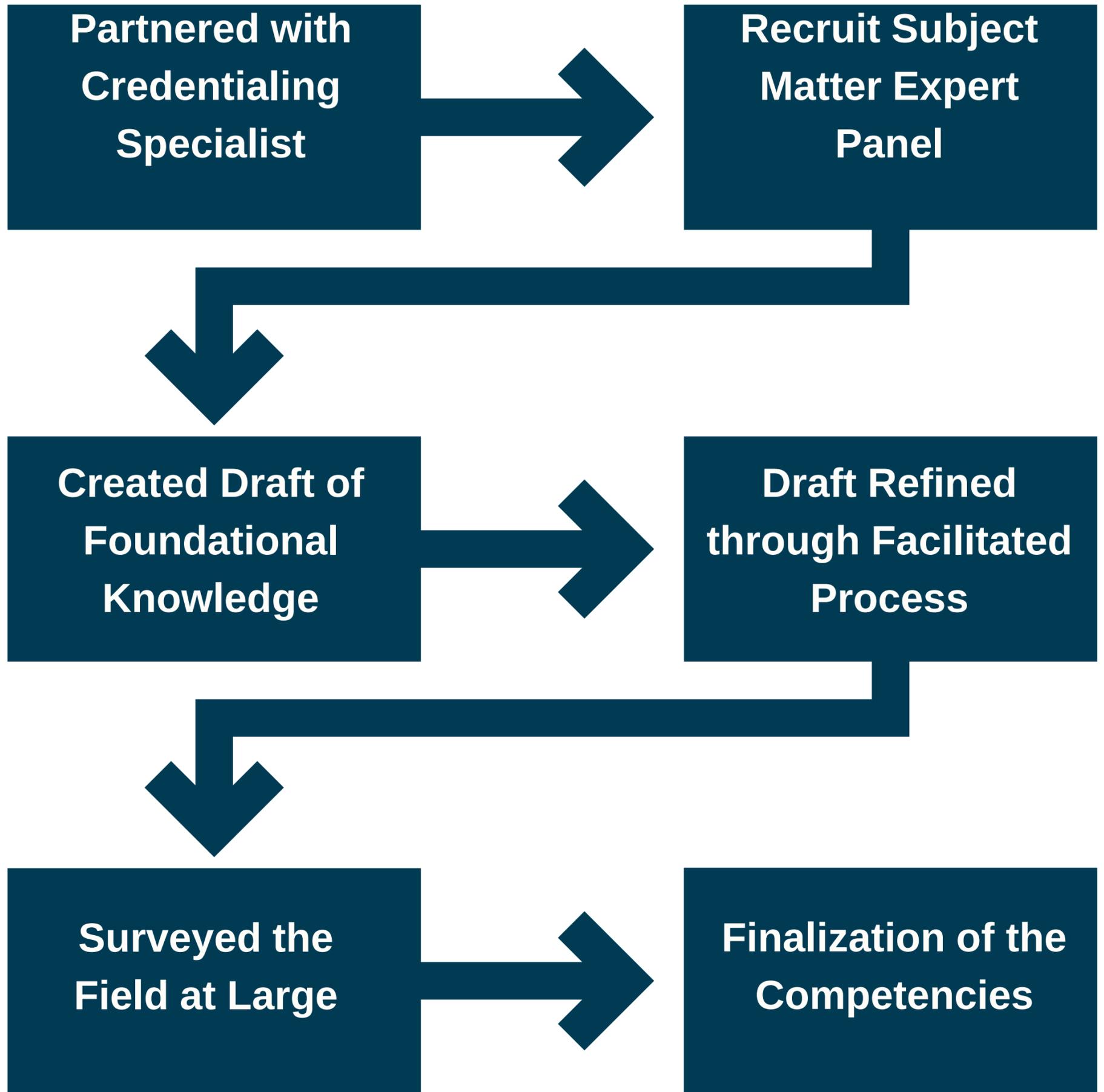
When I graduated from my master's of mental health counseling program, I didn't know what to do to earn the title of "therapy dog team" specific to my work as a counselor...



Limitations of Evaluations for Volunteers

- Include a mock visit of typical volunteer environments: hospitals, nursing homes, etc.
- Include volunteer policies that might not apply to professionals: leash rules and time limits
- Doesn't simulate the professional's work environment or population



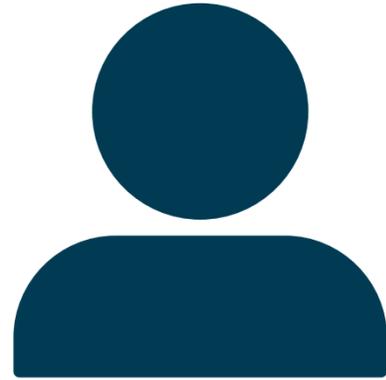


What does the Professional Evaluation Look Like?



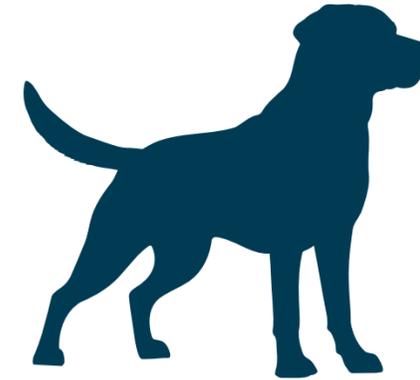
- Scheduled independently by professionals in collaboration with a local trainer or AAI expert
- Take place in person's place of work with clients or mock clients
- Last up to 2 hours
- Evaluator fills out scoresheet while watching behaviors as they naturally occur

Professional Team Evaluation



Handler Skills:

- recognize/interpret body language
- proactive advocacy
- understands animal agency
- leads clients through interactions



Animal Skills:

- basic appropriate behaviors
- connection with handler
- recovery from stress
- generally relaxed and approaching clients
- degree of fit with environment

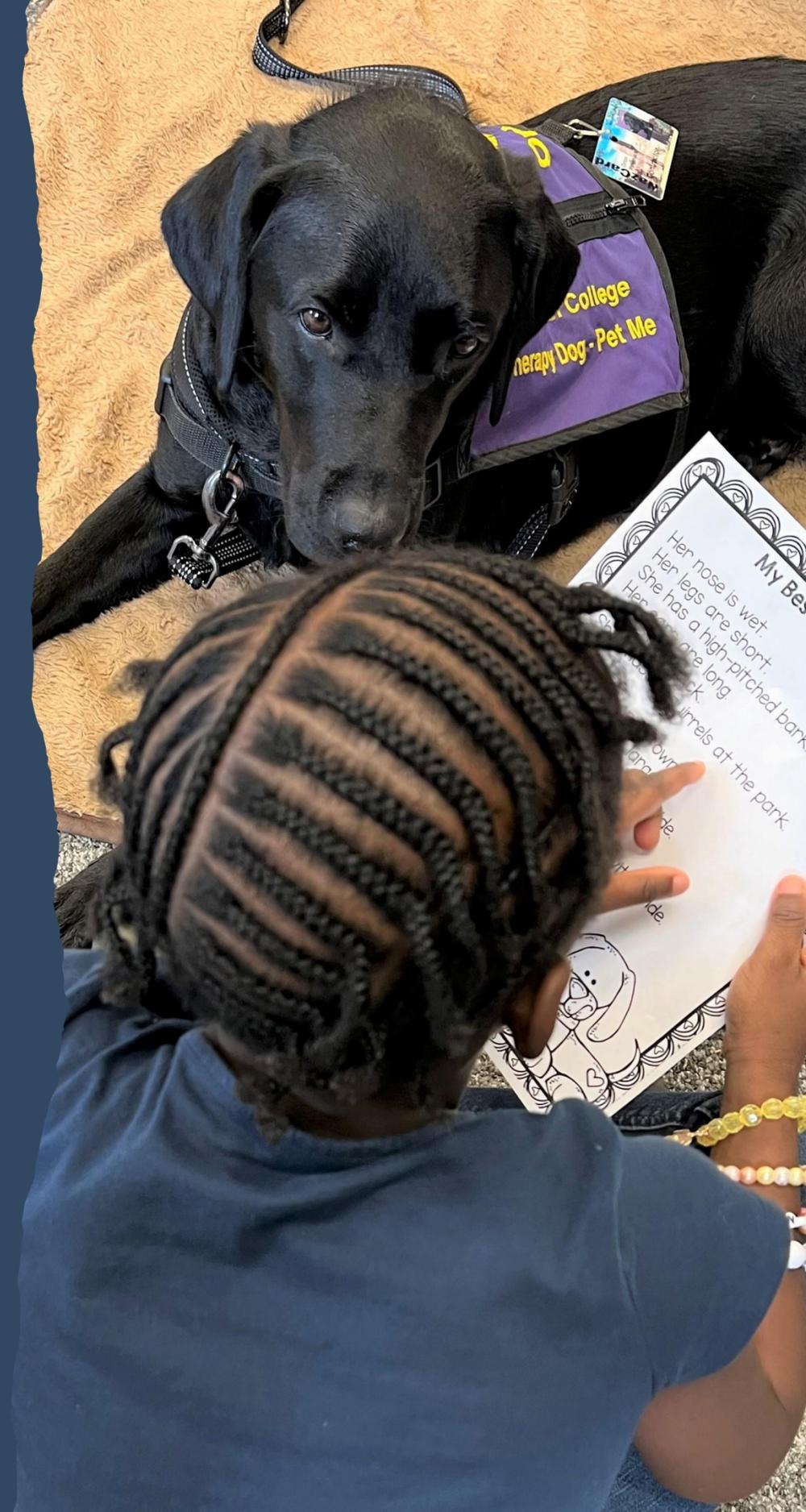


Laura's Experience with the Evaluation

As the evaluator of an animal/handler team

A better fit for the field as I was able to...

- Complete in context
- Assess safety and consent as typical interactions occur
- More than one opportunity to see each item
- Observe in settings with best therapeutic/educational fit
- Understand unique challenges of setting(s) and clients
- Learn about strategies utilized by handlers
- See authentic interactions and on the spot problem-solving



Laura's Experience with the Evaluation



As the animal/handler team being evaluated

A better fit for the field because...

- It was a **set up for success** (vs. prior eval)
- Allowed for consent in interactions (vs. prior eval)
- The evaluator saw both unstructured and structured activities
- Flexibility to see the multiple environments and populations



Laura's Experience with the Evaluation

Multiple settings with various ages, populations, and stimuli

Incorporation of Trained Cues

- Trained cues are incorporated within daily routines and activities
- In the professional evaluation (during activities vs. traditional eval)
- Core skills are seen repeatedly during interactions with students and clients and when walking on campus, e.g.
 - “Come”*
 - Polite greetings*
 - “Sit”*
 - “Down”
 - “Wait”
 - “Leave it”

*Can be seen in just this one interaction



How to Participate



Link to Webpage



Link to Application



Requirements:

- AAAIP Member
- Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialist Certified

AAAIP will be in touch to:

- Approve/Identify local trainer
- Provide scoresheet

After passing:

- Receive certificate as professional therapy animal team
- Can be uploaded to obtain liability insurance
- Re-evaluate every 2 years

Future Directions



- Working to create field of dog trainers with specialized AAI training
- AAIS Certification will always remain a requirement as the first step in obtaining this professional assessment
- Crucial to maintain standard/evidence of knowledge-based competencies

AAAIP RESOURCES

- Monthly events including educational sessions and mentoring circles
- Self-paced online coursework
- AAIS Certification
- Professional Team Evaluation
- Liability Insurance
- Resources and Professional Community
- Subject Matter Expert Opportunities





QUESTIONS? DISCUSSION

Let's Stay in Touch!



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THANK YOU!

