

Chart of Major, Nationally Recognized Certifications and Credentials (Experience Matters Also)

Certification / Credential	Issuing Organization	Credential Type	Primary Focus	Relevance to Shelter Behavior Assessment
ABCDT (Animal Behavior College Dog Trainer Program)	Animal Behavior College	Professional Certificate	Dog training	School-issued professional dog trainer certificate program. Includes clicker training as part of its curriculum but is not a dedicated clicker-training certification or shelter behavior credential.
Accredited Dog Trainer (ADT)	IAABC	Professional Accreditation	Professional dog training	Accreditation for experienced professional dog trainers. Demonstrates advanced knowledge of learning theory, humane training, and behavior modification. While not shelter-specific, it is highly respected when combined with substantial shelter behavior experience.
Accredited Shelter Dog Trainer (AST-D)	IAABC	Professional Accreditation	Shelter dog training	Accreditation specifically for experienced shelter dog trainers. Demonstrates competency in shelter dog handling, enrichment, humane training, learning theory, and behavior modification. Particularly valuable for professionals working in municipal and private animal shelters.
APDT Membership	Association of Professional Dog Trainers	Professional Membership	Professional networking and continuing education	Membership organization only. Membership is not a certification or accreditation and does not independently demonstrate professional competency.
Board-Certified Veterinary Behaviorist (DACVB)	American College of Veterinary Behaviorists	Board Certification	Veterinary behavior medicine	Highest professional credential in animal behavior. Veterinary specialists qualified to diagnose and medically treat behavioral disorders, prescribe medication, and evaluate complex aggression and behavioral cases.
Certified Behavior Consultant Canine-Knowledge Assessed (CBCC-KA)	CCPDT	Professional Certification	Canine behavior consulting	Advanced certification demonstrating expertise in canine behavior modification and behavioral consultation. Highly respected and particularly valuable when combined with substantial shelter behavior experience.
Certified Clicker Trainer	No recognized national issuing organization	None	Training methodology	There is no nationally recognized professional certification with this title. "Clicker training" is not a formal certification itself; it is a training method, not a credential. Professionals specializing in clicker training typically hold broader credentials such as KPA-CTP, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA, or ABCDT.
Certified Dog Behavior	IAABC	Professional Certification	Canine behavior consulting	Advanced certification for professionals managing aggression, fear, anxiety, and other complex canine behavior cases. Requires documented professional

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Consultant (CDBC)				experience, credential review, case studies, professional references, ethics compliance, and continuing education. Highly respected within the behavior profession.
Certified in Shelter Behavior – Dog (CSB-D)	IAABC	Professional Certification	Shelter canine behavior	IAABC's highest certification specifically for shelter canine behavior professionals. Requires documented shelter behavior experience, credential review, case studies, professional references, ethics compliance, and continuing education. Specifically designed for shelter behavior assessment, placement decisions, enrichment, rehabilitation, and shelter operations.
Certified Professional Dog Trainer–Knowledge & Skills Assessed (CPDT-KSA)	CCPDT	Professional Certification	Dog training	Builds upon CPDT-KA by requiring demonstration of practical training and instructional skills. Particularly valuable when combined with extensive shelter behavior experience.
Certified Professional Dog Trainer–Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA)	CCPDT	Professional Certification	Dog training	Recognized dog-trainer certification demonstrating knowledge of learning theory, animal behavior, training methodology, instruction, ethics, and professional practices. Although it is not specifically a shelter behavior-assessment credential, CPDT-KA is one of the most respected independent certifications in the dog training profession. When combined with substantial hands-on experience in an animal shelter—particularly evaluating canine behavior, managing behavioral cases, and making placement recommendations—it provides a strong and widely respected foundation for conducting shelter behavior assessments and making informed behavioral recommendations.
Fear Free Certified Professional (FFCP)	Fear Free	Professional Certification	Fear, anxiety, and stress reduction	Supplemental certification focused on reducing fear, anxiety, and stress during animal handling, training, and veterinary care. Complements behavior assessment expertise but does not replace formal behavior credentials.
IAABC Membership	International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants	Professional Membership	Professional networking and continuing education	Membership alone is not a certification or accreditation. IAABC certifications and accreditations require a separate application process, documented professional experience, credential review, case studies (where applicable),

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				professional references, adherence to the IAABC Code of Ethics, and continuing education.
Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partner (KPA-CTP)	Karen Pryor Academy	Professional Certificate	Positive reinforcement and clicker training	Highly respected professional trainer credential emphasizing marker-based learning, clicker training, shaping, positive reinforcement, and behavior modification. While not a shelter-specific behavior credential, it provides an excellent foundation when paired with substantial shelter experience.
Low Stress Handling® Certification	Low Stress Handling® University	Professional Certification	Humane animal handling	Supplemental certification emphasizing low-stress handling and restraint techniques that reduce fear and anxiety. Supports humane handling practices but is not a stand-alone behavior assessment credential.
Practical Animal Shelter Experience	N/A	Professional Experience	Shelter operations and canine behavior	Extensive experience evaluating dogs in an open-admission animal shelter—including behavioral assessments, aggression evaluations, handling, enrichment, rehabilitation, adoption counseling, euthanasia decision-making, and public safety evaluations—is one of the most valuable qualifications. When combined with recognized professional credentials, it significantly strengthens an individual's qualifications as a shelter behavior assessor.
Shelter Behavior Affiliate (SBA)	IAABC	Affiliate Credential	Entry-level shelter behavior	Foundational credential intended for shelter staff and volunteers. Demonstrates knowledge of shelter behavior principles and learning theory and typically includes documented shelter experience, supervisor endorsement, ethics compliance, and continuing education. Provides an excellent foundation for professionals entering shelter behavior work.

Key Distinctions

- **Board Certification:** Highest level of professional specialization (e.g., DACVB).
- **Professional Certification:** Independent credential demonstrating knowledge, experience, and competency through established standards.
- **Professional Accreditation:** Recognition of advanced competency based on documented professional experience and evaluation.
- **Professional Certificate:** Awarded upon successful completion of a structured educational program; generally differs from an independent third-party certification.
- **Professional Membership:** Indicates affiliation with a professional organization but does not independently establish competency.
- **Professional Experience:** Practical shelter experience remains one of the most important qualifications for conducting shelter behavior assessments and making sound behavioral recommendations. Credentials and experience are complementary, not interchangeable.