**Animal Hospice and Palliative Care (AHPC) Certification Program**

Become a standout in your field and demonstrate dedication to your professional growth by becoming AHPC certified. Certification is a voluntary process by which a non-governmental organization grants recognition to an individual who has demonstrated a high level of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Certification means that one has met specific eligibility requirements including training, experience, and education, and passed a rigorous, comprehensive examination. Certification indicates a substantial professional commitment to the field and documents this expertise to employers, colleagues, and clients. Establish your credibility and gain the confidence of employers and clients by achieving AHPC certification.

**Introduction**

This handbook provides information about the application, program, and examination to become certified in Animal Hospice and Palliative Care. It outlines the design and content of the program and guides candidates through the entire process from application through examination. For your convenience, this handbook may also be downloaded from the IAAHPC website at [www.iaahpc.org](http://www.iaahpc.org)

**About the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care (IAAHPC)**

The International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care (IAAHPC) is dedicated to promoting knowledge of, and developing guidelines for, comfort-oriented care to companion animals as they approach the end of life. The IAAHPC is the only national/international organization dedicated solely to the advancement of high quality AHPC services provided by interdisciplinary teams.

**About AHPC Certification**

The AHPC Certification Program will standardize and define the skills and knowledge required of individuals and organizations offering animal hospice and palliative care and will establish a standard of care that will reflect a level of excellence achieved by those individuals who have obtained certification.

**Eligibility Requirements**

Program enrollment is limited to:

* Licensed veterinarians with 2 years of clinical experience
* Credentialed veterinary technicians with 2 years of clinical experience
* Current license
* Applicants must be IAAHPC members in good standing

\*If you have any question regarding meeting our clinical experience criteria please reach out to the AHPC Administrator ahpc@iaahpc.org

**Program Description**

The AHPC CP is a ~100-hour RACE-approved continuing education program that certifies its students in animal hospice and palliative care. The program begins with an overview of fundamental concepts and progresses to cover the unique challenges of veterinary medical, nursing, and caregiver care as related to the animal hospice model.

The AHPC certification program is presented in modules; in a flexible format designed to allow students to create a curriculum timeline that best fits their busy schedule. Online modules are composed of streaming lectures and activities that students can complete and submit at their own pace; however each module has an established start and finish date. Every other year we hope to offer an in-person communication module as well as an in-person euthanasia techniques lab that is held in conjunction with the biennial in-person IAAHPC conference.

To be awarded the designation of Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Veterinarian (CHPV) and Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Technician (CHPT), participants must successfully complete the following:

Introduction to AHPC: *(25 hours, online)* Introductory topics pertinent to offering hospice and palliative care.

Communication Training: *(onsite or virtual)* Participation in a 1-day or 2-1/2 day, interactive End-of-Life Communication Workshop.

Advanced Hospice Care: *(25 hours, online)* Advanced topics in hospice and palliative care.

Advanced Pain Management: *(22 hours, online)* Pain Management for hospice and palliative care patients.

Advanced Euthanasia: (10 hours, online)

Students are also encouraged to attend a half-day Euthanasia Technique Laboratory held in association with our in-person conference. Admission to the Euthanasia Technique Laboratory is free for certification students.

Continuing Education: (20 hours, online or in person)

Students also need to acquire 20 animal hospice and palliative care (AHPC) continuing education credits or need to attend our conference, whether in person or virtually.

Peer Reviewed Hospice Case Report

Completion of one case report will be required as part of certification requirements. A case report should involve patient care delivered during the 4-year period preceding the date of case study submission. The case should employ a well-structured, balanced strategy. It should reflect a coherent, cogent thought process regarding patient assessment and management. The case report should be of the caliber that it could be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed journal such as JAVMA or other peer-reviewed journals. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling should be on a level consistent with that of a professional journalist.Case reports must be submitted by June 15 to qualify for taking the exam, which is offered in July of the same year. Additional guidelines for writing Case Reports, as well as grading criteria, are included at the end of the handbook.

Online Exam

The AHPC certification exam is designed to test a well-defined body of knowledge representative of the current professional practice in animal hospice and palliative care. The online exam covers the breadth of current knowledge concerning animal hospice and palliative care and consists of a mix of multiple-choice and True/False questions. Participants must achieve a passing score of 80 percent. The exam portal will be open for a period of two consecutive weeks. This two-week time frame will begin 6-8 weeks prior to the conference. The exam will be an online/open book exam that must be completed in a single session within a 3-hour time frame (from the time of starting the exam). ***Students must have successfully completed all 5 modules and submitted their case study to qualify for taking the certifying exam***.

**Program Timeline**

This is a professional program and students are expected to be mindful of all deadlines. Plan your time accordingly and put all deadlines in your calendar at the **start** of the program.

**Certification Timeline- Class of 2021-2022**

\*\* Please note this timeline may alter slightly with the ultimate goal of allowing our students to successfully complete the AHPC Veterinary Program during these unprecedented times. Students will be immediately notified of any changes via student emails and our online community.

Introduction to Hospice and Palliative Care: Online

* Registration open June 15, 2021 (close October 31st, 2021)
* Prerequisite: Program Acceptance

Communication: In-person or Online (virtual)

* Registration for the in-person workshop will open when general Conference Registration opens for our Sept 2021 conference (May/June)
* Registration for the in-person workshop closes August 15th, 2021 (attendance Sept 9th-Sept 12th 2021)
* The date for the Online (virtual) Communication Workshop is likely scheduled for July of 2022.
* Prerequisite- Completing Modules 1 is highly encouraged

Advanced Pain Management: Online

* Registration will open October 15th, 2021

Advanced Euthanasia: Online

* Registration open February 15th, 2022

Advanced Hospice Care

* Registration opens April 15th, 2022

Conference

* Students are encouraged to attend our annual conference whether it is an in-person event or is virtual. Attendance satisfies the continuing education requirement. If conference attendance is not possible, students can satisfy the AHPC continuing education credit requirement by earning 20 approved AHPC continuing education credits.

CASE STUDIES:

* One case study *must be submitted by* June 15, 2022. Case studies will be graded by July 15th and students will be given a two-week extension to resubmit their paper if they do not achieve the passing score of 80%.

FINAL EXAMINATION: July 15th to July 30th, 2022

* FINAL EXAMINATION:
  + There will be a 2-week window of online availability for students to take the exam
  + The examination must be completed during a single session, and students will be allotted a 3-hour time frame to complete their examination
  + The examination will be “open-book” and you can use any of your course notes\*\*

GRADUATION SEPT/OCTOBER 2022

**Exceptions to the Program Timeline:**

The AHPC certification exam is designed to be completed during a 14–15-month timeframe, from June of any given year to July-Aug (depending on final exam dates) of the following year.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

***There will be no extensions granted to this timeline and it is the student’s responsibility to keep track of and meet all deadlines*.** Exceptions ***may*** be considered on a case-by-case basis and ***only*** in situations of serious personal illness, loss of a family member, or a natural disaster.

**Should you decide to drop out of your IAAHPC Certification Program class, or if you are unable to meet any of the module deadlines (including completion of the case studies, full conference attendance and completion of the required labs), the following will apply:**

* If you wish to re-enroll in the certification program, there is a $600 re-enrollment fee
* Please note that re-enrollment is ***only*** offered for ***the following consecutive year***!
* If you do re-enroll for the following consecutive year, you do not have to complete any modules that you have successfully completed that previous year
* However, if you are unable to re-enroll the following consecutive year, you will need to begin the certification program over, as if you were a new student, including re-submitting your application, paying for, and retaking all modules (even if they were previously completed)

**Preparing for the Exam**

The final examination is meant to reinforce the comprehensive learning of the certification program. The program goal is to elevate the level of care and skill providers offer the families they are assisting. With that in mind, the open-book examination will be conducted online. It is to be completed in a single session, with 3 hours allotted for each student. Study materials include quizzes, recommended reading assignments, and group forum activities. All course materials will be available online for review. \*

\*Please be aware that you will only have access to the module notes and handouts one year from your registration date. We highly suggest, for ease of studying and for future reference to downloading the handouts for each module and keep a study guide. We also highly suggest that you save your quizzes.

**Fees**

Licensed Veterinarian

*Introductory Module*, 25 hours: $1000

*Communication Module*: $645

*Advanced Hospice Module*, 25 hours: $1,000

*Pain Management Module*, 22 hours: $800

Advanced Euthanasia, 10 hours: $300

**Case study review and exam administration:** $295

**TOTAL COST OF TUITION:** $4,040\*

**\* Does not include cost of conference attendance or cost to earn the required CE credits**

Licensed Veterinarian Technician

*Introductory Module*, 25 hours: $800

*Communication Module*: $516

*Advanced Hospice Module*, 25 hours: $800

*Pain Management Module*, 25 hours: $640

Advanced Euthanasia, 7 hours: $240

**Case study review and exam administration:** $295

**TOTAL COST OF TUITION:** $3,291\*

**\* Does not include cost of conference attendance or cost to earn the required CE credits**

**PAYMENT**

Tuition is paid per module and can be broken up into two payments.

**Application**

Your completed application form and all necessary supporting documentation should be submitted to the IAAHPC, through the student portal, and will be evaluated to confirm that you meet or exceed the program entry requirements. If your application is rejected for any reason, including, without limitation, incomplete, inaccurate, or unverifiable information, your application fee minus a $200 administration fee will be refunded.

**Refunds**

Program fees are non-transferable. Candidates requesting to withdraw from the program after submitting an application will be charged an administrative fee of $200.00. Credit card transactions that are declined may be subject to a $25 handling fee.

**Non-Discrimination Policy**

The IAAHPC and Northeast Seminars do not discriminate among candidates based on race, color, creed, gender, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, military discharge status, sexual orientation, or marital status.

**Restrictions**

Those students who have successfully completed the AHPC Certification Program will be allowed to incorporate the credentials of CHPV or CHPT after their name in recognition of their achievement. These credentials are unique to the field of animal hospice and palliative care and may not be used for any other medical field designation. Any person found using these credentials without successful completion of the program will be prosecuted.

**Disclaimer**

The field of animal hospice and palliative care is young and developing. Through research, case reviews, and collaborative analysis, we will undoubtedly continue to learn more each year. As new information comes forth, the program will be modified to share best practices with all participants. The IAAHPC encourages research in the areas of animal hospice, palliative care, and geriatric medicine to enhance the field and ever improve the AHPC certification program.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

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**Comprehensive Case Study Guidelines and Checklist**

The following is a checklist to help ensure your AHPC case report meets expectations. Our goal is to increase the likelihood of a successful case submission, including all components of a quality care plan, with little to no revisions required. Use the Case Design list as your blueprint. We recognize that some components may be unknown, but each submission must include the Cover page, Abstract, Clinical Report, Clinical Outcome, Discussion, Summary, and References. Each component will have points assigned to it so please be as thorough as possible.

Format - Word Document

Font style: Times New Roman

2500 to 3000 words (10 to 12 pages)

Double spaced

Pages numbered

Case choice - Choose a case that showcases your skills supporting a hospice or palliative care

patient, that you were directly or indirectly involved with. The case may be ongoing or

have reached a conclusion. The patient may also be a personal pet. Consult with an

IAAHPC advisor if you are unsure of your choice.

Case Design (Does my case include…..)

Cover page

Name, case title, acute vs chronic delineation, credentials,

address, email, and phone number

Abstract

A clear blueprint of the case for administration to follow

At least 200 or 250 words

Clinical Report

Full signalment – patient name, age, species, breed, gender, weight in kg

Pertinent history

Psychosocial Factors and Desires for Care

Previous experiences

Financial situation

Spiritual needs

Physical abilities to provide care

Emotional state and estimation of anticipatory grief

Other pets of interest

Preplanning considerations

Extenuating circumstances

Emergency contacts

Feelings on hospitalization or additional diagnostics

Plans for death

Plans for aftercare

Plans for memorialization

See checklist (Appendix 1)

Case management

Patient Needs

Pain assessment

Symptom management

Daily enrichment program (aligning with pet preferences)

Mental health of pet

Mobility support

Household/environment modifications

Hygiene considerations

Personalized Care Plan

Use of a daily diary or other means to track progress

Define type of pain scale

Provide pain scale scores

Define type of quality of life scale

Provide quality of life scores

Drug dosages and route of administration

Proper drug names

Medication or plan of care listed for every symptom

Use of integrative care

Define the types of therapy, i.e., laser therapy

Define the duration of therapy, i.e., 15 minutes

Define the parameters of the therapy, i.e., 4 Joules/cm2 over

bilateral hip area

Modification to the original plan based on patient health/client feedback

Client communication and education

Give details about conversations instead of “They got her to settle

down following the instructions”, please list the instructions.

Details should include how you have educated the client about

patient’s disease process and any techniques used to

support the pet.

Client Perspective Regarding Case Management

List Interdisciplinary Team Members

Clinical Outcome

Patient response to care

Manner of death or another outcome

If euthanized, tell us about the experience using CAETA’s 14 Essential

Components. Include discussion of drug choices and dosages, patient response,

quality of the passing, setting, client experience, veterinary team experience,

length of appointment, emotional support, memorialization, successes and

challenges. Minimum of 200 words.

Client Emotional Support

Information on use of sympathy card and/or other support choices

Any grief literature given to the client (Define exactly what was given to the

client, i.e., a booklet about grief, website list for pet loss support groups….)

Discussion

A comprehensive overview of the case including what you would do differently next time with your elevated comprehension of hospice and palliative care (Note: this is extremely important to help the task force fully appreciate acumen of material)

Summary

At least 200 to 250 words ~~s~~ummarizing the case

Well Written

Professional journals require that contributing authors following common guidelines

which include a few of the details listed below. These details elevate the case study to a

more polished level of presentation:

1. Get the client’s permission to write about their pet and get permission to use any photographs.
2. Provide a clear story line for the case study by following an outline. (For example: Abstract or synopsis, history, clinical report, discussion, conclusion, references…)
3. Try to avoid writing in the first person (instead of “I observed that the patient was agitated” write “This author observed that the patient was agitated” or “the patient was observed to be agitated”.)
4. Do not refer to the reader you, your, our, we… Restructure the sentence. (Instead of “We should embrace hospice care” write “the veterinary profession should embrace hospice care.”)
5. Avoid using the term owner. Use the term caregiver or client.
6. Avoid using non-professional terms
7. Some journals prefer that formal names not be used but this is optional for this your case study. (Instead to “Mr. and Mrs. Smith” caring for Fido write “the caregiver and her spouse”)
8. Avoid superlatives such as extremely, mildly… (The patient’s appetite was mildly decreased write the patient consumed 1/3 of the pet’s daily food ration.)
9. Avoid long sentences and keep the sentence to one thought.
10. Numbers at the beginning of a sentence need to be spelled out.
11. Make sure the time frame between visits or therapy is listed and not only the dates. For example: 2 weeks after the initial house call, a follow-up visit was made for a reassessment.
12. Zero spelling errors: double check for spelling errors. Do not rely on spell check alone.
13. Zero grammar errors

Write in full sentences

Proofread the case study out loud

Have the case study reviewed by a peer prior to submission

Write mostly in the past tense

References

There should be at least 10 references tied to actual case content (This may include references on the disease process, death and dying, human hospice comparisons, research on clinical sign management)

List references at the end to the case study

Must be Immediately searchable

Examples of reference style below:

1. Shearer T. Hospice and palliative care. In: Gaynor J, Muir W, editors Handbook of veterinary pain management. 2nd ed. St. Louis (MO): Mosby 2010: 312-14.
2. Marocchino KD. In the shadow of a rainbow: the history of animal hospice.Vet Clin North Amer Small Anim Pract2011; 41:447-98.
3. Leary S, Underwood W, Anthony R, et.al. AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition. Accessed 1/12/18 <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia.pdf>
4. Bullock J, Lanaux T, Shmalberg J. Comparison of pentobarbital-phenytoin alone vs propofol prior to pentobarbital-phenytoin for euthanasia in 436 client-owned dogs. J Vet Emerg Crit Care 2019; 29: 161-165.
5. Xie H, Ferguson B, Deng X. Application of Tui-na in Veterinary Medicine, 2nd ed. Tianjin, China: Tianjin Jincai Arts Printing Co 2007: 18-20, 32-35.

Appendix 1. Psychosocial worksheet from TCVM for Geriatric Medicine and Palliative Care.

Shearer 2017.

Psychosocial Needs Assessment Worksheet

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Caretaker data** | **Record information below** |
| Primary caretaker |  |
| Description of presenting problem |  |
| Reason for seeking hospice or palliative care |  |
| Other family members and ages |  |
| Available physical support |  |
| Available emotional support |  |
| Is caretaker responsible for family with health issues |  |
| Is caretaker responsible for small children |  |
| Employment schedule (retired, full time, part time) |  |
| Financial constraints or worry about cost of care |  |
| **Environment and activities of daily living** |  |
| Patient’s lifestyle (working dog, agility, companion) |  |
| Pet’s activities of daily living (exercise, grooming…) |  |
| Floor type |  |
| Steps |  |
| Outside terrain |  |
| **Explore pet’s constitution** |  |
| Current constitution at home with people |  |
| Current constitution at home with other animals |  |
| Constitution changes over time |  |
| Constitution outside of home with people |  |
| Constitution outside the home with animals |  |
| **Past Medical Experiences** |  |
| Positive experiences |  |
| Negative experiences |  |
| Losses |  |
| Details of the past that need to be avoided |  |
| Past trouble administering medication |  |
| Past trouble caring for the patient |  |
| **Explore Medical Preferences** |  |
| Preferences for diagnostics |  |
| Tolerance and comfort with diagnostics (venipuncture) |  |
| Tolerance in a hospital setting |  |
| Patient’s behavior around new people |  |
| Patient’s behavior away from home (hospital, boarding) |  |
| Preference regarding hospitalization versus home care |  |
| Preference regarding outpatient care |  |
| Preference regarding outside specialty care (cardiologist…) |  |
| Interest in specific services (TCVM, rehab, alternative…) |  |
| **Philosophy on death and end-of-life choices** |  |
| Belief regarding natural death |  |
| Belief regarding hospice assisted death |  |
| Belief on euthanasia |  |
| Preference to where a pet dies |  |
| Pet owners desire to be present |  |
| Choice on how to handle the remains |  |

