

CVPM KPA-CTP RVT LAT CVT SPHR  
ALAT CCRP CPDT-KSA AVA SHRM-  
M-CP LATG SPHR CVA CVPM CPD  
PHR VTS LVT CPDT-KA SHRM-CP  
I-SCP AVA CVPP RVT AVA CCRT  
RT CBCC-KA LVMT LATG ALAT SPHR  
KSA CVJ RVT CPDT-KSA CCRP RVT  
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I-SCP AVA CVPP RVT AVA CCRT  
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KSA CVJ RVT CPDT-KSA CCRP RVT



# Certifications for Veterinary Team Members

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Veterinary team members can pursue credentials and certifications in a variety of practice areas, but many of these certifications are not well promoted and therefore not well known. Certifications can help enhance client relationships, compliance, and bonding by promoting career development for team members, improving team morale, and helping team members develop emotional buy-in with the veterinary practice.

The following list, although extensive, may not include all credentials and certifications available for nonveterinarians. Team members with special interests should contact academies, societies, and associations to explore further options.

## TAKE ACTION

- 1** Encourage team members to seek certifications in topics they are passionate about to ensure personal and professional growth in the practice.
- 2** Seek out opportunities for certification by contacting academies, societies, and organizations to discover what other relevant programs may be available.
- 3** Delegate client education tasks to credentialed veterinary nurses and assistants to appropriately leverage their skills and divide responsibilities in the practice.

## Credentials versus Certifications

A credential is issued by a third party with authoritative power and is proof of an individual's competence in a given subject. Possessing a credential not only helps prove competence and capability in a given field but also demonstrates that the individual is properly trained and equipped to carry out his or her duties. To sit for a credential examination, an individual must meet certain requirements—often a set level of education or experience or a combination of both. Credentials verify that a team member has achieved a baseline level of competence in his or her subject matter.<sup>1</sup>

Certification is a formal process that recognizes and validates an individual's qualifications in a certain specialty. Team members earn certifications to demonstrate they are qualified to perform a job or task through educational achievement. Certifications are earned from a professional society and must be renewed periodically, generally by completing CE requirements.<sup>1</sup>

## Credentials

### Veterinary Assistant

Veterinary assistants can become approved veterinary assistants (AVA) or certified veterinary assistants (CVA). These differ not in the knowledge needed but the body that oversees the process.

**Possessing a credential not only helps prove competence and capability in a given field but also demonstrates that the individual is properly trained and equipped to carry out his or her duties.**

- The National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) hosts AVA credentialing.<sup>2</sup> Participants must attend a NAVTA-approved program, graduate from the program, and pass an examination. After passing the examination, AVAs are required to attend 10 hours of CE every 2 years to renew their designation through NAVTA. Currently, VetMedTeam maintains the examination and renewal process for AVAs on NAVTA's behalf.
- Several state veterinary medical associations provide CVA certification within their state and offer several levels of certification. Participants must attend an approved program and pass an examination. After passing the examination, CVAs are required to attend approximately 5 hours of approved CE every year (depending on the state) to renew their designation. Currently, Texas,<sup>3</sup> Florida,<sup>4</sup> Missouri,<sup>5</sup> and California<sup>6</sup> offer CVA programs.

## Veterinary Technician

This is one of the most well-known designations; however, the credential varies between states and can be confusing to team members and clients. Depending on the state, a credentialed veterinary technician may be registered (RVT), licensed (LVT), or certified (CVT) or may be a licensed veterinary medical technician (LVMT). Visit NAVTA's Veterinary Nursing Map to see which states recognize each designation. (See **Resources**, page 48.)

Credentialed veterinary technicians are required to attend and graduate from an AVMA-approved program<sup>7</sup> and pass the Veterinary Technician National Examination.<sup>8</sup> Depending on the state, credentialed veterinary technicians may also be subject to additional examinations and required to attend CE each year in order to renew their designation.

## Veterinary Technician Specialist

A veterinary technician specialist (VTS) is a credentialed veterinary technician who completes a formal process of education, training, experience, and testing to qualify for the VTS designation.<sup>9</sup> NAVTA currently recognizes 15 academies. (See **Resources**, page 48.)

## Certifications

### Canine Rehabilitation

Veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians who complete the canine rehabilitation certification program offered by University of Tennessee<sup>10</sup> are designated as certified canine rehabilitation practitioners (CCRP). The credentialed technician can then assist the supervising therapist and perform evaluations, maintain patient records, educate clients, and apply prescribed therapeutic exercises and physical modalities. The Canine Rehabilitation Institute<sup>11</sup> offers a canine rehabilitation assistant certification (CCRA) for veterinary technicians and a certified canine rehabilitation therapist (CCRT) certification for veterinarians.

### Pain Management

The International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management (IVAPM)<sup>12</sup> offers the certified veterinary pain practitioner (CVPP) designation, which is available to veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians experienced in working with patients in pain. The certification is obtained through a rigorous process, and candidates must meet the IVAPM's standards for education, training, and experience. Once certified, CVPPs promote advanced pain management with the use of multimodalities.

### Laboratory Animal Science

The American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) technician certification program sets professional standards for the career advancement of individuals working in

laboratory animal science. The following designations are currently available: assistant laboratory animal technician (ALAT), laboratory animal technician (LAT), and laboratory animal technologist (LATG).<sup>13</sup> LATs with a greater range of experience may qualify for the LATG certification.

### Animal Behavior

Several certifications are available for team members interested in animal behavior. Depending on the organization and certification program, any veterinary team member may qualify. Visit each program online to explore specific requirements.

- **Fear Free:** Certification program developed to teach team members how to prevent and alleviate patient fear, anxiety, and stress<sup>14</sup>
- **Low-Stress Handling:** A certification program that teaches team members low-stress handling techniques to help reduce patient stress<sup>15</sup>
- **Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Professional (KPA-CTP):** Certification in positive-reinforcement animal training techniques<sup>16</sup>
- **Dog Trainer (CPDT-KA, CPDT-KSA) and Behavior Consultant (CBCC-KA)**



## BENCHMARKS

## Gently Does It

Is it worth it to calm and quiet the practice, gently handle patients, treat and distract for examinations, and educate clients about pet stress and different ways to teach their pets? WellMPs think so.

- 30% of survey respondents using low-stress techniques are seeing revenue growth of more than 5%.
- More importantly, 44% believe these techniques are leading to better medical care.

**SOURCE:** *Benchmarks 2016: A Study of Well-Managed Practices*. Columbus, OH: WTA Veterinary Consultants and Advanstar Publishing; 2016:25.

**certifications:** Certification programs by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers that focus on mastery of humane, science-based dog training practices and include knowledge and skill assessment certification levels<sup>17</sup>

### Practice Management

Management team members can pursue the certified veterinary practice manager (CVPM) designation through the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association.<sup>18</sup> Extensive education and experience are necessary to qualify for the examination. Once the participant passes the examination, he or she must obtain 48 hours of CE every 2 years to maintain certification.<sup>19</sup>

### Human Resources

Those in management who wish to continue pursuing their education may seek a certificate in professional human resources (ie, PHR, SHRM-CP). The credentials differ not so much in the knowledge needed but rather in the body that oversees the process. PHR is hosted by the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI),<sup>20</sup> whereas the SHRM-CP is hosted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).<sup>21</sup> Candidates must qualify for the examination with education and experience. Like the CVPM designation, after passing the

examination, designees must meet CE requirements every 2 years to maintain the credential.

Team members interested in strategic planning may seek a certificate in senior professional human resources (SPHR or SHRM-SCP). The SPHR is hosted by HRCI, whereas the SHRM-SCP is hosted by SHRM. Designees must maintain CE and renew every 2 years.

### Veterinary Journalism

The American Society of Veterinary Journalists sponsors the veterinary journalist certification (CVJ). This designation was developed to improve the quality of veterinary medical information delivered to the public.<sup>22</sup> Both veterinarians and nonveterinarians active in public media, as well as nonveterinarians deeply committed to public education, can qualify.

### Conclusion

Allowing team members to seek certifications in topics they are passionate about results in personal and professional growth, enabling an enhanced level of client communication and patient care. Leveraging credentialed and certified professionals for client education tasks creates whole team health: happy teams with a great dynamic and work balance and happy clients that value the entire team. ■

### Resources

- Veterinary nursing map. NAVTA. [navta.net/resource/resmgr/vn\\_initiative/VeterinaryNursingMap.html](http://navta.net/resource/resmgr/vn_initiative/VeterinaryNursingMap.html)
- Veterinary technician specialties. NAVTA. [navta.site-ym.com/?page=specialties](http://navta.site-ym.com/?page=specialties).

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**FUN FACT:** Heather drives a customized Harley Davidson Fat Boy when time allows.

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