



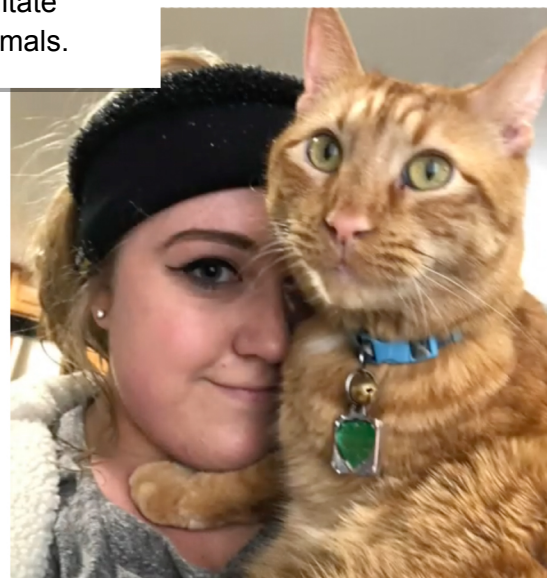
Volunteer Handbook 2023

7275 Kipling St. | Arvada CO 80005

720- 266- 4444 | Aatpc.org

MISSION STATEMENT

Through our counseling and training programs, Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado provides and promotes animal assisted psychotherapy to facilitate healing for all people in need and for rescued animals.



WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME

Welcome Letters from the Volunteer Coordinator	1
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ONBOARDING

STEP 1: Online Application	2
STEP 2: Site Tour	2
STEP 3: Enrollment Fee STEP	2
4: Training Classrooms STEP	2
5: Hands on Training	2

GENERAL VOLUNTEER

Requirements to Volunteer	3
Additional Qualifications Dress	3
Code for Volunteers Taking	3
Photographs or Videos	3
Confidentiality	3
General Volunteer Job	4
Positions	

VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCE

Commitment	5
Requirements General	5
Attendance Holidays	5

VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION

Download Slack	6
Update Announcements On Slack	
& Volunteer Team Group Message	6
Notice Boards (Indoor & Outdoor)	6



EXPECTATIONS

Filling out Animal Care Checklist Sheet	7
Bringing Visitors to the Property	7
Bringing Dogs and Other Animals to the Ranch	7
Non-Harassment Policy/Non-Discrimination Policy	7
Drug-Free/Alcohol-Free Environment	8
Open Door Policy	8
Professional Conduct	8

SAFETY

Safety Precautions	9
Emergency Contacts	11
Incident Reports	11

WHAT ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY PROGRAMS OF COLORADO IS ALL ABOUT

Welcome Letters	12
Mission Statement	13
Our Values Are...	13
Our Commitment To You	13
History and Goals	14

THERAPY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mazey's Dream	15
Sasha's Paw	15
Veterinary Counseling Program	15
Psychiatric Medication Support	15
Virtual Pet Loss Support Group	15
Free Community Events	15

VOLUNTEER LINKS & RESOURCES

Volunteer Links & Resources	16
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WELCOME FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Dear Wonderful Volunteer,

Welcome to Animal Assisted Therapy Colorado.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering!

Volunteers are an essential part of our facility. We would not be able to operate without the generous support of people like you.

This handbook has been prepared to inform new volunteers of the policies and procedures of this company and to establish AATPC's expectations. It is not all inclusive or intended to provide strict interpretations of our policies; rather, it offers an overview of the work environment.

Ask questions! Please know that your questions and concerns are always welcome. We hope that you find the duties of your volunteer experience to be a rewarding one.

On behalf of everyone at AATPC, we welcome you.

Kind Regards,
Lex Baca

Volunteer Coordinator
lbaca@aatpc.org
(720) 878 7464



Lex Baca

Volunteer Coordinator
lbaca@aatpc.org

"Volunteering is an act of heroism on a grand scale. And it matters profoundly. It does more than help people beat the odds; it changes the odds." – William J. Clinton



ONBOARDING PROCESS

STEP 1 ON-LINE APPLICATION

Interested volunteers must complete a [Volunteer Application](#).

STEP 2 SITE TOUR

After a review of your application the volunteer coordinator will reach out via email to schedule a 1 hour tour of the facility. Although attending a tour is mandatory for incoming volunteers, attendance does not obligate the potential volunteer to pursue entering the program. Rather, it will help you decide whether AATPC is right for you.

STEP 3 PAY DONATION FEE

Once you are ready to join the team, we ask to send in a **\$30 donation fee**. This one-time sign up fee will help care for our animals, and secure your role as an official AATPC volunteer. [Click here for link to sign up](#)

STEP 4 TRAINING CLASSROOM

There are two on-line training classrooms, depending your position. Use links below to access the classroom materials. **Read over all materials before hands on training.**

- [Cat & Indoor Animal Care Training Classroom](#)
- [Outdoor Animal Care Training Classroom](#)

STEP 5 HANDS ON TRAINING

Volunteers will learn the tasks that need to be completed during every shift.

New volunteers will be trained by the Volunteer Coordinator, Ranch Manager, or senior volunteer.

Training usually takes two shifts. However, volunteers are welcome to ask for more training shifts until they feel comfortable doing the work alone.

GENERAL VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

REQUIREMENTS TO VOLUNTEER

- Cannot be an active client or have immediate family enrolled in our counseling program.
- Must be 18 years of age or older to volunteer without an adult.
- Volunteer at least two hours per week (*if interested in animal care position*).
- Remain active for 6 months (*if interested in animal care position*).
- Complete facility tour, volunteer orientation, and training.
- Understand and accept all policies and guidelines.
- Pay the one-time \$30 payment fee.

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Have a passion for animal welfare.
- A general understanding of Animal Assisted Therapy.
- Strong communication skills.
- Be very reliable.
- Ability to lift at least 20 pounds.
- Ability to work well independently and within a team.

DRESS CODE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are requested to pay a \$30 fee when they begin volunteering. This covers the cost of one T-shirt. Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for their individual responsibilities and position. You may choose to wear your AATPC tee shirt, but this is not required. Close toed shoes are to be worn when working with horses and goats.

FOR YOUR SAFETY PLEASE Refrain from wearing short shorts or skirts, torn clothing, political shirts, etc. Be prepared and aware of the weather on your volunteer day.

TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEOS

We encourage volunteers to take photos or videos of the animals and/or AATPC's property. Please tag us on social media platforms. We love for you to share your volunteer experience.

PLEASE NOTE:

Volunteers may not take recordings of any sessions or clients.

You may take photos of staff members or other volunteers, with their permission.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers may be present at times when clients are also present. All client information is to be kept confidential.

GENERAL VOLUNTEER JOB POSITIONS

CAT CARE & SOCIALIZATION

Volunteers who would enjoy working with our 7 therapy cats and foster kittens are needed to feed them wet and/or dry food, clean litter boxes, give them fresh water and spend some time socializing.

Shift Times: Monday - Sunday | 8 am - 10 am & Saturday and Sunday | 5 pm - 7 pm

INDOOR ANIMAL CARE & SOCIALIZATION

Volunteers who would enjoy working with our therapy rats, rabbits, guinea pigs and skinny pigs are needed to help with feeding, room cleaning and spending some time socializing.

Shift Times: Monday - Sunday | 8 am - 10 am & Saturday and Sunday | 5 pm - 7 pm

OUTDOOR ANIMAL CARE & SOCIALIZATION

Volunteers who would enjoy working with our therapy alpacas, horses, mini, donkeys, goats and chickens are needed to help with feeding, pen cleaning, mucking, turn out/in and spending some time socializing.

Shift Times: Monday - Sunday | 8 am - 10 am & Saturday and Sunday | 5 pm - 7 pm

ANIMAL CARE BACKUP VOLUNTEER

Volunteers who are trained in all areas of animal care including outdoor, indoor and cat care, should have a flexible schedule and be willing to be a backup for short notice shifts.

Shift Times: Varies (We usually know a couple of days before if we will be short staffed)

GARDEN VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are needed to help with the upkeep of the produce and memorial garden. Duties include watering, weeding, outside sweeping, harvesting and deadheading.

Shift Times: 8 am - 10 am Flexible with days

PROPERTY CARE VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are needed to help keep AATPC grounds safe and beautiful. Duties include property maintenance, heavier outdoor projects as in weed whacking, tree trimming, weeding and mowing.

Shift Times: 8 am - 10 am Also Flexible with days and shift times

VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCE POLICY

COMMITMENT REQUIREMENTS

ANIMAL CARE SHIFT

- A minimum of two hours per week for 6 months is required for animal care volunteers. This ensures that volunteers are trained and comfortable when working with the animals.

GARDEN / PROPERTY CARE VOLUNTEER

- A minimum of 2 hours per week for spring, summer, and fall seasons.

GENERAL ATTENDANCE

Animal Care:

Volunteers are assigned to teams who depend on each other. Animals need to be fed and put to bed safely each day, and if a volunteer does not show up, their health and safety may be compromised.

Therefore, if you are unable to make your scheduled shift, please fill out the request coverage form, contact the Volunteer Coordinator and your team to be sure there will be enough people to adequately take care of the animals. If you will be gone for an extended period of time, please do the same.

Volunteers who do not attend their shift or show up late repeatedly will receive a warning. If volunteers continue to miss their assigned shift the volunteer will be asked to leave the volunteer program.

Holidays:

Even though AATPC may be closed for a holiday, the animals still need to be fed and taken care of.

Therefore, if your shift falls on a holiday, we expect that you will be there unless you fill out the request for coverage form in advance. If you are in town, and would like to help out with extra time during the holidays, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, as this is always appreciated!

AATPC is closed between December 24 and January 1st each year. The agency is also closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Easter, 4th of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the week between Christmas and New Year's.

VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION

AATPC always strives to effectively communicate with our volunteers. Since we are recruiting a large volunteer base, we ask that you use the following guidelines to ensure accurate and effective communication.

DOWNLOAD SLACK

All volunteers are required to download the free application called **Slack**. This app will link up volunteers in a group message with their team members. This will be the main form of communication between team members and the volunteer coordinator.

LIKE ANY UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS ON SLACK & VOLUNTEER TEAM GROUP MESSAGE



Throughout the month the Volunteer Coordinator will send out messages on the #General channel in Slack that will have major updates and events that will occur at the Ranch.

The day before, the Volunteer Coordinator will send out updates to the channel day you are assigned to come in. Please check Slack before starting your shift and keep apprised of any updates.

Note: If the team would rather use a different form of communication, ensure to add the Volunteer Coordinator to the alternative form of communication.

NOTICED BOARDS (INDOOR & OUTDOOR)

To give the animals their best life possible, we must keep up on updates/requests for individual animals' needs. Oftentimes, the needs are temporary.

Volunteers are an essential part of AATPC's work. Our goal is to retain a satisfied volunteer base that finds gratification and reward in helping AATPC meet its mission in the most effective manner possible. However, there are occasions when the volunteer program is simply not a good fit for a volunteer. Just as a volunteer is free to leave at any time, for any reason, AATPC reserves the same right to end our relationship with a volunteer. Dismissal of a volunteer will occur only as a last resort, and will generally take place following progressive disciplinary actions where possible.

EXPECTATIONS

FILLING OUT ANIMAL CARE CHECKLIST SHEET

Each position has an **Animal Care Checklist Sheet** that lives in the volunteer kitchen. This sheet plays a crucial role in ensuring that each feeder knows what needs to be completed during every shift for every animal. Oftentimes, there will be small changes that happen within the animal feeding.

Each recent change will be highlighted in yellow. It's the responsibility of each volunteer to work off this checklist and thoroughly check off every item once completed.

Volunteers Daily Must:

- **Check Slack before starting shift for any updates**
- **Check the whiteboard for any daily updates**
- **Give respectful space to any occurring sessions**

BRINGING VISITORS TO THE PROPERTY

Our insurance does not allow visitors to the Ranch unless they have signed a Release Form [link](#) accepting responsibility for anything that happens while at the Ranch. We do not advise bringing small children unless, they can follow directions and refrain from having any physical contact with the animals. If you wish to bring a visitor, please receive permission from the Volunteer Coordinator and have them sign the Release form before interacting with any animals.

BRINGING DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS TO THE RANCH

Only dogs that have been trained and certified with the therapist through Professional Therapy Dogs of Colorado, and who have been approved by the Director, may be present at the Ranch. For all the animal's safety, we ask that volunteers not bring their animals to the ranch except in rare instances when pre-approved by the Director.

NON-HARASSMENT POLICY/NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

AATPC prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, ancestry, or any other status protected by applicable law. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and is free from discriminatory practices and harassment. Consistent with its workplace policy of equal employment opportunity, AATPC prohibits and will not tolerate harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, ancestry, or any other status protected by applicable law.



DRUG-FREE/ALCOHOL-FREE ENVIRONMENT

Volunteers are prohibited from unlawfully consuming, distributing, possessing, selling or using controlled substances while on duty. Individuals who habitually or excessively use or abuse alcohol, a habit-forming drug or controlled substance are in violation of Colorado's mental health statute (*Colorado Revised Statute 12-43-222*).

In addition, volunteers may not be under the influence of any controlled substance, such as drugs or alcohol, while at work, on the company premises or engaged in company business. Prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications, taken as prescribed, are an exception to this policy unless they impair the volunteer's ability to safely interact with the animals.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

AATPC has an open-door policy and takes the concerns and problems of our volunteers seriously. AATPC values each volunteer and strives to provide a positive experience. Volunteers are encouraged to bring any concerns or problems they might have or know about to their coordinator or some other member of management. [link](#)

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

AATPC expects its volunteers to adhere to a standard of professional conduct and integrity. This ensures that the work environment is safe, comfortable, and productive. Volunteers should be respectful, courteous, and mindful of others' feelings and needs. General cooperation between volunteers is expected.

DISMISSAL POLICY

Volunteers are an essential part of AATPC's work. Our goal is to retain a satisfied volunteer base that finds gratification and reward in helping AATPC meet its mission in the most effective manner possible.

However, there are occasions when the volunteer program is simply not a good fit for a volunteer. Just as a volunteer is free to leave at any time, for any reason, AATPC reserves the same right to end our relationship with a volunteer. Dismissal of a volunteer will occur only as a last resort, and will generally take place following progressive disciplinary actions where possible.



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SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Safety measures and rules are in place for the protection of all volunteers. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each volunteer to help prevent accidents. To ensure the continuation of a safe workplace, all volunteers should review and understand AATPC's workplace safety policy. Volunteers who observe an unsafe practice or condition should report it to the Director immediately. Volunteers are prohibited from making threats against anyone in connection with their work or engaging in violent activities while in the employ of the company. [policy](#)



Volunteers must be alert and aware of any potential dangers to themselves. Take every precaution to ensure that your surroundings are safe and secure. Guard personal belongings and company property. Visitors should be escorted at all times. Report any suspicious activity to the Director immediately.

Even though our animals are considered safe in general, there is always the potential for an animal or person to be injured through their interaction. The following are some general guidelines and precautions to minimize the risk to both you and the animal(s).



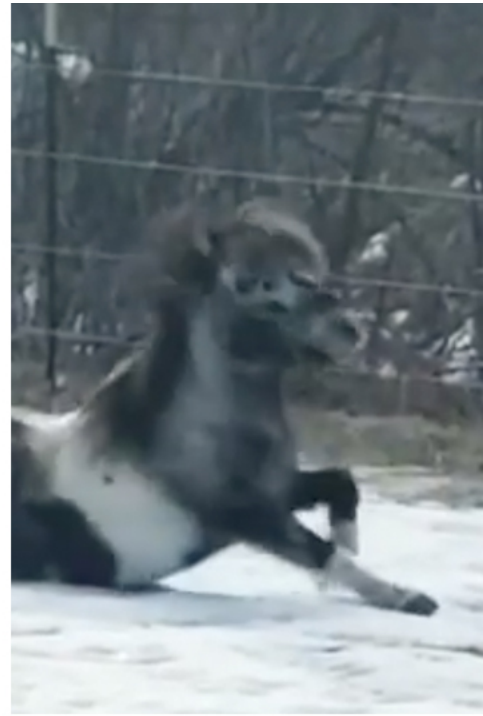
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- Outdoor Volunteers must be fully trained in operating the tractor before riding alone.
- Always wear closed toed shoes when working with the outdoor animals. This is an important thing to model to clients, as well. Many of us keep an extra pair of shoes at the Ranch.
- Shoes with heels are a bad idea, as there are areas of uneven terrain, slippery mud and ice. In winter it is advisable to wear good boots with traction.
- Do not try to carry a load that is too heavy for you. Practice proper lifting and ask for help when you need it.
- Do not climb and sit on, or walk along any of the fences.

HORSE SAFETY GUIDELINES

- Please refrain from entering the horse area until you have been “introduced” to the horses.
- Do not walk behind the horses or donkeys.
- Do not pick the horses hooves.
- Know the signs of stress, fear and anger for each type of animal.
- If you believe an animal is stressed, angry or afraid, move away from that animal.
- Keep voices low around the animals and in the waiting rooms, as sessions can be going on at any time.
- Keep dogs out of areas with the donkeys and horses. Donkeys are naturally aggressive to canines and must be kept separate at all times.
- Lily and Dahlia like to bite – especially exposed toes. She will also chew on clothing and can chew on exposed skin. This can hurt!
- Under no circumstances are the horses or donkeys to be hand fed or given treats! This makes them rather mouthy, and often bite or nibble at clients’ hands. This is a big liability and safety issue!



PLEASE NOTE:
Lily and Dahlia like to bite – especially exposed toes. She will also chew on clothing and can chew on exposed skin. This can hurt!



EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In case of an emergency, there are Emergency phone numbers posted on the refrigerator in the house. If an animal is acutely injured, please feel free to contact the appropriate vet to ask for advice. Call Melissa if time allows for this – but if you can't reach Linda please don't delay in getting animal help if necessary.

If there is a problem with the property (water flooding, etc.) call Linda or Jeff. Their phone numbers are also posted on the refrigerator.

INCIDENT REPORTS

If you ever have an injury on our property, or if there is another unusual occurrence that may involve our insurance company or any other legal entity, please complete an Incident Report. Forms will be found in the back of the outdoor tasks list binder. If there is ever an injury, it is very important that this be immediately called in to the Director. [link](#)

Note: AATPC reserves the right to unilaterally revise, suspend, revoke, terminate or change any policies, in whole or in part, whether described within this handbook or elsewhere, in its sole discretion. If any discrepancy between this handbook and current company policy arises, conform to current company policy. Every effort will be made to keep you informed of AATPC's policies, however, we cannot guarantee that notice of revisions will be provided. Feel free to ask questions about any of the information within this handbook.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM THE STAFF ...



Linda Chassman PhD.
LMFT, CAAP
Co-Founder & Executive Director

After all this business, I just want to say how happy I am that you have chosen to volunteer with AATPC. My job as the Executive Director is not just to make sure the organization runs smoothly, but that all of the humans and animals here are treated with respect and dignity. If you ever have any concerns please know that my door (*is literally*) open, and I will listen or talk with you about any concerns you have. I am committed to making sure your experience at AATPC is positive and educational. You are everything that makes us amazing. I value you very much.

With barks, brays, neighs, hums, baas, meows, purrs, squeaks, clucks... and my kindest regards,

Linda Chassman, PhD., LMFT, CAAP
Co-Founder & Executive Director



Becky Taylor
Development Director
Animal Assisted Therapy
Programs of Colorado

I have to start by saying thank you for volunteering at Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado! It only took one conversation with Linda for me to be convinced that this place, the work we do, and what we offer to the community is one-of-a-kind. That's why I am bursting with excitement to tell you that I am the new Development Director for Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado.

You are woven into the success story of this organization. I am so proud of this organization and you should be too. I am so honored to make acquaintances with people like you who believe and trust in this organization enough that you've donated so much of your time to support it. None of this would have been possible without you.

Thank you for all you've done and I look forward to getting to know you better. Please do not hesitate to email or call me - even just to say hi!

Warmest Regards

Becki Taylor
Development Director
Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado

MISSION STATEMENT

Through our counseling and training programs, Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado provides and promotes animal assisted psychotherapy to facilitate healing for all people in need and for rescued animals.

OUR VALUES ARE

1. Making a positive impact on all forms of life, including human, animal, and nature through promoting the use of animal assisted psychotherapy.
2. Only including animals in its work that are positively enhanced by that work; each animal has a choice about its participation
3. Teaching through example the mutual benefits of the human-animal bond.
4. Working as much as possible with each client's strengths and building on those

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

The staff members of Animal Assisted Therapy Programs of Colorado value your contributions to our sanctuary. We want your experience to be positive and fulfilling, so our staff members strive to:

1. Provide information, training and help so that you may successfully complete your volunteer assignments.
2. Provide feedback and welcome feedback
3. Treat you as a valued and respected member of our team
4. Be open-minded





HISTORY AND GOALS

AATPC was founded by Linda Chassman and Ellen Kinney Winston in 2010.

Linda had retired from clinical work after moving to Colorado in 2007. She continued to teach at graduate programs, including Colorado University – Denver. Linda has been fostering a litter of feral kittens – Mazey was one of the kittens who showed amazing promise as a therapy cat and Linda adopted her, dreaming of how she could help others, especially kids.

Ellen had recently received her Master's Degree and had always dreamed of doing animal assisted therapy with her dog Sasha. Once she contacted Linda they began to put their dreams together and developed the idea of AATPC as a counseling and training center.

Within just a few short months they opened their first office near downtown Denver in a Victorian house/office – with Mazey and Sasha as their therapy animals. Just one year after they were looking for more space – one with land so they could fulfill their dream to have more animals, especially horses and goats. They then moved to a one-acre Ranch in Lakewood.

Sadly, Mazey passed away just a few months after AATPC opened at Lakewood. She was only 14 months old. Linda felt that Mazey had been her muse, and while the formal name for the Lakewood facility is Barking C.A.A.T. Ranch (*Center for Animal Assisted Therapy*), Linda still thinks of it as Mazey's Place.

The organization relocated to 7275 Kipling Street in Arvada in July 2018 since the current facility was too small to see more clients and rescue more animals. The property has just over 3 acres. We utilize three of the 4 buildings on the property. Our hope is to renovate the “cat apartment” and to build a bar and indoor arena that includes office and training space.

Our hope is to grow as an organization to be able to provide superior counseling services to people of all incomes, all with the assistance of our wonderful animals.

THERAPY PROGRAMS & SERVICES

SASHA'S PAWS

This program's name is inspired by Ellen's co-founder dog Sasha. Clients with the ability to pay a standard are considered part of this (aka Professional Counseling) Program.

MAZEY'S DREAM

Inspired by Linda's co-founder kitten Mazey, this program provides AAP to people who would normally be unable to afford it. Clients who qualify for Mazey's Dream are those without insurance and who make under \$40,000 a year, or who have Medicaid. Their fee is based on their ability to pay. Generally, the fees range between \$15 - \$80 per session, but we will see a client for \$5 if that is all they can afford.

VIRTUAL PET LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

This group provides a safe place for those who have lost a pet or anticipate losing a pet to grow, support, heal, and learn from one another.

ANIMAL CARE SUPPORT GROUP

This support group provides mental health support to all different types of Animal Care Workers.

- *"These groups not only have helped many who are touched by the human-animal bond, but also have served as a springboard from which lasting, supportive friendships have grown. Our groups are facilitated by licensed mental health professionals and master's level internship students. The facilitators are there to keep the conversation safe and inclusive."*

VETERINARY COUNSELING PROGRAM

AATPC offers counseling services to Colorado-based veterinary practices on an organizational basis. Animal-assisted psychotherapeutic services are paired with various modalities to provide individual and group counseling to veterinarians, veterinary technicians, administrative staff, or others employed in animal care worker positions.

PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION SUPPORT

For clients needing to be assessed and supported with psychiatric medications, we have a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Allie Thysens, MSN, PMHNP-BC. Allie will complete a full assessment and then have follow-up appointments with AATPC clients at our Barking C.A.A.T. Ranch, Arvada location. Allie currently sees patients on Mondays. All patients being treated by Allie will need to be attending regular counseling at AATPC.

