



## **Animal Assisted Therapy Interventions**

### **Mini-course Syllabus**

University of Michigan School of Social Work

**SW 790-014, Spring/Summer term, 2016: Animal Assisted Therapy Interventions**

**Instructor:** Laura Sanders, LMSW, assisted by Ramiro Martinez

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#### **Course dates and times:**

6/24/2016 2:00 PM 5:00 PM, SSWB 2752

6/25/2016 9:30 AM 4:00 PM, Instructor's Farm in Dexter, MI

6/26/2016 9:30 AM 4:00 PM, Instructor's Farm in Dexter, MI

Because this course is experiential and will take place on a 9-acre farm where various animals and wild-life live, there are risks associated with the experience. You will be asked to sign consent and health disclosure forms in order to participate, but if you have any known health issues (i.e. allergies, asthma, etc.), disabilities, or fears (i.e. of certain animals or activities) please let the instructor know as soon as possible so we can help with accommodations. Feel free to email and/or call me.

#### **Requirements:**

Sign consent and disclosure forms

Full attendance to the class is a requirement for credit

You will have to arrange your own transportation to the farm. The address will be provided at the orientation. It is about 45 minutes to an hour drive from Ann Arbor.

**Wear:**

Layered clothing suitable for the weather

Rain gear and an umbrella if necessary

Close-toed shoes, preferably leather boots to be safe around horses

Long pants are highly recommended regardless of the heat

**Bring:**

A mat to sit on the ground outside. We have chairs for inside the barn.

A bag lunch and beverage for both Saturday and Sunday

Sunscreen

Bug-spray

Any special medications (i.e. asthma inhaler, etc.)

Notebook and pen or a journal to write in

**Course Description:**

This course provides an experiential opportunity for students to explore an array of animal assisted therapeutic activities specifically designed to further a wide range of therapeutic goals with children, adolescents, families and adult clients. Like play therapy and art therapy, animal assisted interventions, when integrated with evidence-based methods including (but not limited to) CBT and mindfulness, trauma recovery, family systems, cultural-relational and psychodynamic approaches, offer opportunities for people to work through a variety of issues and insecurities related to attachment, trauma, self-esteem and identity concerns, dysregulation, behavioral difficulties, mental illness, developmental disabilities, and family and relational problems. With selected animals as therapy partners, the therapeutic team helps people of all ages and positions foster new alliances, understand more fully existing problems and build practical life-skills to enhance confidence, effectiveness and joy. Presently, animal assisted therapy is gaining acclaim in the field of mental health intervention and there is a growing body of evidence supporting its efficacy to be explored. This course specifically teaches the theoretical foundations, standards, ethics, evidence, certifications, integration of methods, case examples, evaluation and practical skills involved in partnering with a variety of

animals – in particular dogs, cats, goats, pigs, horses and chickens (yes, chickens!)- to provide engaging and effective interventions.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

**Laura Sanders**, LMSW, U of M SSW, LEO instructor since 1996, specializes in trauma- and attachment-informed interventions and provides therapy, consultation, training, supervision and expert witness testimony in the areas of sexual abuse and trauma, attachment and adoption, gender identity and sexuality and work with immigrants and refugees. She utilizes an array of creative interventions in therapy and has recently extended her practice to include animal assisted therapy interventions with clients at her farm-office near Ann Arbor. She is a PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) Center Member, and a PATH- certified Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning, working toward a Therapeutic Riding Instructor certification. She has engaged in therapy dog training, and has practiced animal assisted interventions for the past two years.

**Ramiro Martinez** is the spouse and assistant to Laura in her animal assisted work on the farm. Mr. Martinez is currently working toward PATH certification as an Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning and Therapeutic Riding Instructor certification under the mentorship of Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center and Laura Sanders. Ramiro will be assisting with the experiential activities involving animals during the course and will reflect on his role in the therapeutic work.

### **Course Objectives:**

Include but are not limited to the following with the competencies in parenthesis:

Students will:

- 1) learn the theoretical foundations, definitions, variety of interventions and standards and associated with animal assisted therapy (engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research)
- 2) explore the ethics and guidelines for safety, and for the selection and matching of animal partners with clients (informed practice and apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice, engage diversity and difference in practice)

- 3) integrate evidence-based methods with animal assisted activities to enhance and effectiveness (engaging in research-informed practice and practice-informed research)
- 4) practice clinical engagement and assessment skills of noticing, reflecting, questioning, commenting, deepening, and interpreting in the context of interactions with animal partners and observations of human-animal relationships (competencies of engagement and assessment and applying critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments)
- 5) develop and carry out structured animal-assisted activities to further specific treatment goals with clients presenting with a variety of issues (Intervention: implement interventions that enhance client capacities)
- 6) learn the use of single subject design to evaluate the effectiveness of animal assisted therapy with clients (critically analyze, monitor and evaluate interventions)

### **Assignments:**

#### **Several options or possibilities for assignments are:**

- 1) In a five-page essay respond to one of the client scenarios using the reflection questions as a guide to your essay. Apply your learning from the course about assessment and intervention in the context of animal assisted therapy to various aspects of the scenario presented. Incorporate at least three of the course readings through quoting the sources in your paper.
- 2) In a five-page, reflective essay highlight your learnings from the course and integrate three of the course readings through quoting the sources in your paper. What were your greatest "take-aways" from the course? What have you learned about the important ethical, safety and logistical issues involved in AAT and how animal activities can be integrated with evidence-based methods to enhance client's learning and growth? What surprised you the most? How have you grown as a social worker? How does this course affect your future goals as a social worker if at all?
- 3) In a five-page narrative essay explore a specific area of animal assisted therapy that you would like to learn more about: for example, equine assisted mental health approaches – EGALA, EPONA, animal interventions with elderly clients, therapeutic riding with people who have physical disabilities – PATH, canine-specific interventions with PTSD veterans, farm

and animal rescue interventions with challenging youth. This assignment allows you to go further and expand on your learning. Incorporate at least two readings from the course and two current readings (preferably from peer reviewed journals) specific to the specific area of exploration.

**Required Readings: posted on Canvas**

\*Dietz T.J., Davis D. & Pennings, J. (2012). **Evaluating Animal-Assisted Therapy in Group Treatment for Child Sexual Abuse**. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 21(6): 665-683.

\*Fine, Aubrey H. (2010) **Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice**. Third edition. Chapter 3, **Animal-assisted interventions in Mental Health: definitions and theoretical foundations**, Chapter 11, **Application of animal-assisted interventions in counseling settings: an overview of alternatives**. Department of Education, College of Education and Integrative Studies, California State Polytechnic University Pomona, California, USA, Academic Press.

\*Kamioka, H., Okada, S., Tsutani, K. et al. (2014). **Effectiveness of Animal-Assisted Therapy: A Systematic Review of the Randomized Controlled Trials**. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* 22(2): 371-390.

\*Parish-Plass N. (2008). **Animal-Assisted Therapy with Children Suffering from Insecure Attachment Due to Abuse and Neglect: A Method to Lower the Risk of Intergenerational Transmission of Abuse?** *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry* 13(1): 7-30.

\*Pedersen I., Ihlebaek C. & Kirkevold M. (2012). **Important Elements in Farm-Animal Assisted Interventions for Persons with Clinical Depression: A Qualitative Interview Study**. *Disability & Rehabilitation* 34(18): 1526-1534.

\*Risley-Curtiss C., Rogge M.E. & Kawam E. (2013). **Factors Affecting Social Workers' Inclusion of Animals in Practice**. *Social Work* 58(2): 153-16

**Additional/optional readings: Posted on Canvas:**

Karol J. (2007). **Applying a Traditional Individual Psychotherapy Model to Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP): Theory and Method**. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry* 12(1): 77-90.

Klontz, B.T., Bivens A., Leinart D. & Klontz T. (2007). **The Effectiveness of Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy: Results of an Open Clinical Trial.** *Society and Animals* 15: 257-267.

Fine, Aubrey H. (2010) **Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice.** Third edition. Chapter 7, ***Animal selection procedures in animal-assisted interaction programs.*** Department of Education, College of Education and Integrative Studies, California State Polytechnic University Pomona, California, USA, Academic Press.

Moretti, F, De Ronchi D. Bernabel V. et al. (2011). **Pet Therapy in Elderly Patients with Mental Illness.** *Psychogeriatrics* 11: 125-129.

Morrison M.L. (2007). **Health Benefits of Animal-Assisted Interventions.** *Complementary Health Practice Review* 12(1): 51-62.

Rosetti, J. (2010). **Use of Animal-Assisted Therapy with Psychiatric Patients.** *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing* 48(11): 44-48.

Schultz P.N. & Remick-Barlow G.A (2007). **Equine-assisted Psychotherapy: A Mental Health Promotion/Intervention Modality for Children who have Experienced Intra-Family Violence.** *Health and Social Care in the Community* 15(3): 265-271.

Walsh F. (2009). **Human-Animal Bonds II: The Role of Pets in Family Systems and Family Therapy.** *Family Process* 48(4): 481-499.

White, D.J. (2010). **Raising Arizona's Homeless Children with my Canine Companion.** *Social Work* 55(3): 283-284.

## The Course Agenda

### Friday, June 23 – 2:00-5:00

This is an afternoon orientation devoted to getting to know each other, introducing the key concepts and definitions of Animal Assisted Therapy, preparing students for the farm experience and expectations, exploring the ethical and safety considerations associated with Animal Assisted Interventions and filling out consent paperwork.

**Saturday, June 24 – 10:00-4:30 (working lunch)**

The first full day of the course will be devoted to exploring relationships with animals as therapy partners, increasing awareness and mindfulness in relating to animals and the natural world, and understanding the ethics of animal selection in Animal Assisted Activities. We will focus on the skills of engagement, observation, noticing, questioning and reflecting on relationships between people and animals and exploring the roles and recommended models of animal assisted interventions. Methods of documentation and evaluation will be reviewed.

**Sunday, June 25 – 10:00-4:30 (working lunch)**

The second full day of the course will be devoted to continued skill development in engagement, observation, questioning, and therapeutic interpretation and commenting on relationships between animals and people. Discussion of case examples and activities will highlight the Integration of Animal Assisted Therapy with evidence-based and best practices in mental health including trauma-informed principals, attachment theory and Cognitive/Behavioral methods. Cultural considerations, limitations and contraindications for Animal Assisted Activities will be explored through case example and discussion. We will focus specifically on Equine Assisted Activities, getting started with therapy dogs and other certification information in the afternoon.