



**DOGMA  
ACADEMY**

# **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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# Student Handbook

This handbook shares some of our history, details on the school, our policies and how we will help your journey as a professional dog trainer with Dogma Academy.

This document may be updated from time to time. We will announce any big changes and it is your responsibility to stay up to date on the Handbook. You can find the current version on our [website](#).

Our team is here to help you at any point throughout your learning, so do not hesitate to reach out. Ask your questions in the [Apprenticeship Student Community](#).

You can also reach us via e-mail at:  
[hello@dogmaacademy.com](mailto:hello@dogmaacademy.com)

Find us on social media at:  
@dogmaacademyyc



**Guinniss, Dogma's Canine Co-Founder  
2002-2016**

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# Welcome!

Dogma is thrilled to be offering our Dog Training Apprenticeship Programs, certificate programs and continuing education opportunities to trainers online. We are glad to have you as part of the group! Our apprenticeship programs are intensive courses designed for those individuals who are serious about a career in dog training. The first of its kind in Canada, no where will you find another program that offers you this high level of hands-on and theoretical knowledge in the world of modern dog training.

A successful dog trainer needs to be up to date on current training methods, have a thorough understanding of dog behaviour, many hours of hands-on experience and have great people skills. The Dogma Dog Training Apprenticeship Programs provide all of this and more. Upon successful completion of the program, you will obtain the Dogma Dog Trainer (DDT) certificate and/or the Dogma Certified Behaviour Consultant (DCBC) certificate based on your choice.

We have worked to develop a program that will provide you with all the tools to become a highly skilled dog trainer. Working at your own pace and schedule, you will learn about dog body language and behaviour, training dogs and humans, behaviour modification, classroom management and much more. Our goal is to provide a positive, flexible and effective program that will produce qualified and confident trainers.

Dogma is excited to welcome you to the program and we look forward to assisting you with your growth as a dog trainer. Cheers to an exciting journey ahead!



Founder & President,  
CPDT-KSA, CBCC-KA, FFCP (Trainer)



# About Dogma Training

Our story begins in 2002 when Founder, Megan Stanley, adopted her first dog, Guinniss. She quickly learned that the sweet and affectionate boy at home became a scary and reactive dog once out in the real world. Guinniss was terrified of our urban environment and demonstrated his fear through over-the-top reactions. Megan knew that through patience and the right training approach, she could teach Guinniss that the world was safe and help him integrate successfully into the busy human environment.

Guinniss was Megan's best teacher and is credited as being Dogma's Canine Co-Founder. Through her work with Guinniss, Megan learned that there were limited options for dogs with reactivity and fear concerns. All options available utilized punishment, which Megan knew put Guinniss at risk to become a dangerous dog due to the behavioural fallout from such harsh methods. Facilities were operated by well-intentioned dog owners who put far too many dogs in groups with only one or two inexperienced supervisors with little to no education on canine behaviour. She knew then that she needed to create an organization to set the standard for care and training and advocate for improving the lives of dogs and the people who love them.

Megan quickly began attending seminars, apprenticed through The Calgary Humane Society and earned her Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT-KA) designation. The first of only four in Canada to obtain her Certified Behaviour Consultant Canine (CBCC-KA) designation, she has become a leader in the industry. She was a founding member of Pause4Change Animal Rescue Foundation, was the first Canadian to sit as Chair for the Association of Professional Dog Trainers in 2018. She currently serves as Chair for the The Canadian Association of Professional Dog Trainers.

Dogma opened its doors in 2008 and quickly became the go-to place to visit for complete dog education, day school and training. At Dogma, we know that successful dog training is about relationship building. It's about communicating with your four-legged companion, building a relationship based on mutual respect and learning together. It's positive, it's peaceful and, yes, it's productive.

As part of the Dogma difference, we are the only facility to offer a variety of education programs ran entirely by reward-based certified dog trainers. Dogma was the first to have only certified trainers conduct training, segregate play groups based on size and play style, mandate an assessment before dogs were allowed to attend day school, maintain strict capacity numbers, ensure a low staff-dog ratio, and provide rubber-flooring and solid, high walls to ensure each dogs' safety.

We maintain the highest standards of excellence through staff training, 100% supervision, the lowest staff-dog ratio, facility design, equipment used, and we make every decision to ensure the emotional, physical, and behavioural well-being of each dog in our care. We continue to innovate dog training to ensure training is easy and accessible. We have training to fit every budget and schedule and work with any breed or behaviour.

Community and giving back are extremely important to Dogma. We provide free education and training to many rescue groups around Calgary, conduct regular fundraising initiatives, and do our part to help elevate the industry and its future leaders.

# About Dogma Academy

For too many years, there were not options for people to go to school for dog training. Instead, you would apprentice under a trainer, self-educate through books, attend seminars, and hopefully go on to write your CPDT-KA exam. However, as the industry is unregulated, anyone can claim to be a dog trainer without any real education.

Many people sought out Megan to apprentice under her and she also was also a mentor trainer with Animal Behavior College. It was quickly apparent that dog trainers were not gaining the knowledge, or the hands-on skills required to be confident and successful as trainers. As a result, she launched the Dog Trainer Apprenticeship program in 2009. Since then, she has gone on to train hundreds of students and evolved the program to where it is today, the leading Canadian dog training school. The success in our program is apparent both by the quality of our graduates and by the reputation we have earned. This is not a crash course in training and/behaviour as it takes 12-24 months to complete. It's intensive, but flexible.

## Our Mission:

Dogma Academy provides high-quality dog training and behaviour education that can be done at your own pace. Our goal is to help elevate the industry by developing the most qualified, dedicated and compassionate dog trainers around. We believe in collaboration, support, and sharing resources to help grow the industry and improve society's commitment to providing humane training to their dogs.

## Our Values:

- **Lifelong Learning:** Our faculty and students have a desire to learn. We are curious and resourceful in our approach to training. We are committed to continuing education and focus on continual improvement.
- **Support:** We build meaningful relationships with our students, clients and fellow trainers based on collaboration and support. We know we can do more together to develop a more humane approach to the care and training of dogs.
- **Compassion:** We recognize the struggles dogs, dog owners and fellow trainers may face and are motivated to help. Our work comes from a place of deep empathy and understanding the complex relationships between dogs and humans with a focus on effective and easy-to-follow training to help everyone succeed.





### Why Choose Us:

- Flexible: Complete the program at your own pace, anywhere in the world. It is designed with busy working professionals or homemakers in mind.
- Experience: Our trainers are all DCBC, CPDT-KA and FFCP (Trainer) Certified with a minimum 5 years of experience as full-time professional dog trainers. Megan Stanley has been working with dogs for over 20 years.
- Committed to your success: Our program is not pass/fail. We ensure you are prepared for testing and have the knowledge and hands-on skills to be confident in your career as a dog trainer. We provide one-on-one coaching and mentorship throughout the program and beyond.
- Hands-On skills: The program may be online, but includes practical hour sessions, coaching, assignments and more to ensure you've got the experience needed. Experience the convenience without sacrificing the value.
- Depth of learning: Our training programs are not only about dog training. We cover all areas of foundation dog training and behaviour, and go in-depth on the human side of training, client service, self-care and more.
- Mentorship: Megan hosts monthly mentor sessions and is personally available to students. Our trainers also provide one-on-one coaching and support to each student. We are here to ensure you succeed.
- Leading experts: Find out more about Megan's experience on our website. Our program includes sessions from industry experts as well as discounted rates for our graduates to many popular continuing education programs.
- Lifetime access to materials: This is not too good to be true. You will have access to the course materials, including any updates, for life. This does not include the virtual sessions.
- The community: We believe in support and collaboration. Our community is there to help solve challenges, lend an ear, and celebrate successes! We promote our graduates and the community acts as a referral network to help you in your career.

# Our Instructors



**Shelley Cherniawsky,  
DCBC, CPDT-KA, FFCP (Trainer)  
Director of Behaviour & Education**

Like many trainers in the dog industry, Shelley found Dogma when she found herself with a dog of her own presenting challenging behaviours which she was unsure of how to address. At the time, Shelley owned and operated a successful business as a certified Equine Therapist practicing holistic treatments along with working with disabled youth through respite work. When a 6-week-old puppy, Gus, injected himself into Shelley's life through a client at the time her professional life changed directions. Even at a young age Gus was beginning to show behaviors such as challenges interacting with other dogs, guarding food and reactivity to people that Shelley was lost with how to handle. Through many hours of extensive research into training facilities in Calgary looking for a trainer, Dogma kept appearing as the go to experts in the industry. Rather than hire a trainer through Dogma, the apprenticeship program caught her eye and she figured why not just become a trainer! With no expectation to use a dog training certification professionally, Shelley enrolled into the Dogma Academy in 2012.

Shortly after enrolling into the Academy, a part-time position as a group class trainer assistant was posted by Dogma and Shelley jumped at the opportunity to join the team. As she progressed through the apprenticeship program it became evident that dog training, specifically working with trainers and clients in the industry, was her true passion and should be turned into a career. The once part-time assistant role quickly turned into a full-time trainer position and following successful completion of the DCBC certification, she progressed to Head Trainer at Chinook, then Manager and is currently Director of Behavior and Education. Continued education has always been important to Shelley and throughout her journey she has achieved her CPDT-KA and is a certified Fear Free Trainer.

Shelley currently shares her home with her two dogs, Gus and Ferro, husband, Nick, and two daughters, Hannah and Isabelle. Although Gus was not what many would traditionally define as a dream dog, he is Shelley's soul dog that continues to inspire and influence her work with fear and reactivity cases to unlock every dog's full potential. Gus being on the more extroverted side, it seemed fitting that Ferro found Shelley as a shy, under confident 6 months old dog. Learning firsthand the challenges, and subsequently the joys, of living with fear and reactivity behaviors with a family dog has been the driving force behind Shelley's passion for dog training.

Through a mentorship with Megan, Shelley found an additional passion in the industry helping others starting their journey to become certified dog trainers. She is devoted to teaching other trainers and making fear free training/handling the industry standard. Her values and mission have always aligned with Dogma's, and she is beyond excited to continue making a positive impact on the lives of dog's and those that love them.

### [The Dogma Training Team](#)

Through the community, events, and workshops, you'll have access to Dogma's entire team of certified trainers. Our trainers work full-time and have all completed at least the DDT program. They are all devoted to the Dogma Difference and are highly skilled, committed individuals who are here to help you succeed!





# Student Agreement

By enrolling in a Dogma Dog Trainer Apprenticeship program, I understand and agree that:

- Any form of client, Dogma team or dog abuse will serve as grounds for dismissal with no refund of program fees.
- Inappropriate, disruptive, profane, or argumentative behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated towards Dogma staff or your fellow students. Violation of this policy may result in dismissal from the program.
- Dogma will dismiss any student found under the influence of or in possession of drugs or alcoholic substances while working.
- Appropriate dress while representing Dogma is required. This includes looking clean and professional, not wearing ripped or soiled clothing, and wearing close-toed shoes.
- The student shall provide any services to the best of the student's ability to use positive motivational training methods and represent Dogma in a professional manner. The student shall adhere to Dogma's philosophy and training methods.
- Attendance in the program sessions is recorded. You will get out of the program what you put into it. It is expected that students will actively participate in all classes, workshops, and mentor sessions.
- A minimum grade of 80% is required for graduation. Tests can be redone for \$175 CAD each.
- The student will obtain their CPDT-KA/CBCC-KA or CDBC designation within 2 years of graduation. The DDT and/or DCBC designation can no longer be used by the student if they do not obtain these designations. It is the student's responsibility to report their certification status to Dogma Academy.
- All program materials including, but not limited to written materials, CD's and DVD's may not be copied or duplicated without the express written consent of Dogma. This contract does not give or imply said consent. The student further agrees that under no circumstance will she/he sell any portion of the Dogma curriculum either during or after the program.
- The students will not exchange any personal information, or socialize with, existing or perspective clients, of the company in person, over the phone, e-mail, or via social media.
- Attendance in each workshop session is mandatory. If a student must miss a session, they are required to make up this class and complete the required assignment.
- A leave of absence may be requested. These will be granted for a maximum of 2 intakes. During this time, the student will not have access to the program materials and sessions. Account will be deactivated.
- All program fees are non-refundable. If program fees are paid in full, and the student is inactive for 12 months, they will be considered a drop-out and the account will be deactivated.
- The student agrees to the payment plan selected on their registration form and understands that all fees are non-refundable. You are responsible to pay your full program fees before joining an intake.
- By accepting our terms & conditions, you agree that this contractual agreement must always be followed. Any violation of this contract will serve as grounds for dismissal from the program and may even lead to necessary legal action.
- This is an exciting time, enjoy it and have fun!

# Code of Conduct

The Dogma of a Dogma Dog Trainer/Certified Behaviour Consultant (DDT/DCBC) Dogma Dog Trainers and Certified Behaviour Consultants (DDT/DCBCs) will be responsible to conduct their services to the highest level of professionalism and in an ethical manner. The below outlines enforceable standards and requirements which DDT/DCBC's must agree to abide to retain their designation. A DDT/DCBC agrees to represent themselves by following and conducting business in accordance with the below guidelines:

## Position Statement:

Dogma Dog Trainers and Certified Behaviour Consultants (DDT/DCBCs) believe that dog-friendly, reward-based training methods are the most efficient and effective. It is our philosophy to educate and improve the human-dog relationship based on mutual respect, and to do so with the least intrusive methods. We do not support any use of force, intimidation, or physical manipulation in training, as we see these methods as unethical, inefficient, and ineffective. They risk harming and deteriorating the human-dog bond. Our training is taught with [LIMA](#) compliant methods and focuses on showing the dog how to be successful. We are committed to using only modern science-based methods.

## DDT/DCBC's Believe in:

- fostering and enhancing the human-canine bond
- developing a solid, positive relationship with your dog
- rehabilitating behavioral issues through education, awareness and reward
- preventing surrenders and improving canine reputations through education, positive training and socialization
- providing comprehensive dog owner education, training and support to enhance their relationship with their dog while helping create well-manned canine citizens
- supporting local animal rescue groups through fundraising efforts, sharing of knowledge and donations

## Responsibilities:

- A DDT/DCBC is responsible to their canine clients by working only through the most humane methods. All training is to be conducted based on mutual respect and should not cause physical or emotional distress toward the dog. All training and behavior modification methods must be based on accurate and current scientific research.
- A DDT/DCBC is responsible to their human clients by providing the highest level of service in the most ethical way possible. All services shall be rendered without discrimination. Clients shall be shown respect and the trainer should understand that they are not dog trainers. All services shall be delivered through integrity and honesty.
- A DDT/DCBC is responsible to colleagues, including competition, through conducting honest and professional business practices. Public defamation of other trainers will not be tolerated. Even for those that utilize different training methods, a DDT/DCBC's primary role is to focus on leading by example and educating others on the most efficient and humane methods possible.

- A DDT/DCBC shall be dedicated to continuing education through attending conferences, seminars and workshops. They will stay up to date on the latest methods by reading books, researching online, and holding professional memberships such as the APDT.
- If conducting private training, group classes, or running a dog training business, a DDT/DCBC will obtain their CPDT-KA designation within two years of obtaining their DDT designation.
- A DDT/DCBC will take part in Dogma's referral network and conduct themselves in a professional manner. This will include a listing on the Dogma academy website at [www.dogmaacademy.com](http://www.dogmaacademy.com) and the online community.

A DDT/DCBC will have their designation revoked for any, but not limited to, the following:

- Is found guilty of animal cruelty
- Uses any of the following tools in their training: choke chain, choke collar, prong collar, freedom collar, illusion collar, shock collar, vibration collar or a pinch collar
- Uses any of the following training techniques in their training: dominance-based, physical force, fear, intimidation, alpha rolls, or anything that has been proven to cause harm to the dog physically or mentally

As a dog trainer, it is our responsibility to ensure the overall well-being of the dogs in our care. We understand that their owners do not share our same level of knowledge/experience with dogs and are seeking our expertise. A DDT/DCBC will conduct ourselves professionally and be empathetic towards our clients' needs and limitations. We will support fellow dog trainers and encourage learning and growth. We will represent our profession proudly and with integrity. We are lucky to be able to do what we do and are grateful to be trusted to train the dogs in our care.

Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life



# Privacy Policy

Students' personal information collected by Dogma Academy will only be used for the purpose for which it was originally collected or for a use consistent with this purpose, unless the student consents otherwise.



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