

Animal Control Officer Training Continuing Education Course Requirements and Procedures
Texas Department of State Health Services, Zoonosis Control
Effective 1-1-2023

Mandated Animal Control Officer (ACO) Continuing Education (CE) Training

The following document pertains to entities outside of Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Zoonosis Control (ZC) seeking to meet standards and curricula as prescribed by Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 829, Animal Control Officer Training, and by DSHS in this document for ACO CE courses. It does not pertain to courses being conducted by DSHS ZC.

To be in compliance with Texas Health and Safety Code (TH&SC), Chapter 829, Animal Control Officer Training,* a person may not perform the duties of an animal control officer unless

(1) the person:

(A) completes a basic animal control course under this chapter not later than the first anniversary of the date the person assumes animal control duties; or

(B) completed a personnel training course on or before June 30, 2008, under Section 823.004 as it existed on that date; and

(2) the person completes 30 hours of continuing education under this chapter during each three-year period following:

(A) the date the person completes the basic animal control course; or

(B) June 30, 2008, if the person completed a personnel training course under Subdivision (1)(B).

This statute defines an animal control officer as a person who is employed, appointed, or otherwise engaged primarily to enforce laws relating to animal control; it does not include peace officers.

To satisfactorily complete an ACO CE course, the participant must attend the entire course, plus satisfactorily complete any testing if required by the course sponsor.

Requirements for ACO Training Course Implementation

According to Section 829.003, the training course curricula for the CE courses must include at least one of the following topics:

- (1) state laws governing animal control and protection and animal cruelty;
- (2) animal health and disease recognition, control, and prevention;
- (3) the humane care and treatment of animals;
- (4) standards for care and control of animals in an animal shelter;
- (5) standards and procedures for the transportation of animals;
- (6) principles and procedures for capturing and handling stray domestic animals and wildlife, including principles and procedures to be followed with respect to an instrument used specifically for deterring the bite of an animal;
- (7) first aid for injured animals;
- (8) the documentation of animal cruelty evidence and courtroom procedures;
- (9) animal shelter operations and administration;
- (10) spaying and neutering, microchipping, and adoption;
- (11) communications and public relations; and
- (12) state and federal laws for possession of controlled substances and other medications; and
- (13) any other topics pertinent to animal control and animal shelter personnel.

Please note that it is the course sponsor's responsibility to be aware of law amendments and ensure that, in presentations referencing a law(s), the most recent version of the law(s) is being presented. Links to many of the laws pertinent to animal control can be accessed at <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/health/zoonosis/laws/rules/> (all the Texas statutes are located at <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/> and all the Texas Administrative Codes are located at <https://www.sos.texas.gov/tac/index.shtml>).

Continuing education courses must pertain to one or more of the 12 topics listed in TH&SC Section 829.003; however, according to statute, other topics are acceptable if they are pertinent to animal control and animal shelter personnel. **It is the CE course sponsors' responsibility to retain their exam results (if applicable) and attendance rosters for courses they conduct.****

It is the CE course sponsors' responsibility to provide certificates of completion to participants; the certificate must contain, at minimum: the participant's name; that it is a continuing education course; the length of the course in hours; a statement that the course sponsor attests that they have "read and adhered to standards and curriculum prescribed by the Texas Department of State Health Services"; the course date and location ("virtual" or "online" may be substituted as applicable); and the sponsor's name and contact information. Failure to include the required information on a certificate of completion will result in the course sponsor issuing corrected certificates at their own expense. **It is the participants' responsibility to retain this certificate as proof of their training.**

The ACO basic course is distinct from ACO CE courses; the basic course cannot be used to acquire CEs.

Euthanasia training courses approved by DSHS to meet training mandates set forth in Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 821, Treatment and Disposition of Animals, are also approved to meet CE requirements set forth in Chapter 829.

Course sponsors must include the following statement in a legible format and visible location on course material:

"If a participant wants to provide feedback on this course and/or its sponsor, the participant can mail comments to the Texas Department of State Health Services, Training Course Coordinator, Zoonosis Control, MC 1956, P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas, 78714-9347 or email them to The.Vet@dshs.texas.gov."

Course sponsors who are interested in obtaining Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) credits for their participants should contact TCOLE at 512-936-7700.

Requirements for ACO Training Course Instructors

Course sponsors must have documentation of each instructor's relevant education, work, and/or training backgrounds. The documentation must address the instructor's expertise and qualifications for effectively instructing participants on the topic(s) covered at the CE course.

Instructors subject to Ch. 829 who teach a CE course or provide a presentation at a basic course may apply that instruction time toward their Ch. 829 CE training requirement. However, they may only apply a maximum of 15 CE hours per 3-year CE period through either of these means, separate or combined:

- The topic must be different for each CE course taught for which they are applying toward CE credit per 3-year CE period. This does not apply to presenting at basic courses.
- For presentations at basic courses only, the same topic can be presented a maximum of 6 times per 3-year CE period for credit.

Virtual Courses

Virtual CE courses: In addition to meeting the requirements already described for in-person courses, the course sponsor of a virtual CE course must incorporate a mechanism for ensuring the ACO's actual attendance. Examples of possible options include using a virtual program in which the course participant can be visually seen, using a virtual program that can electronically document actual participation, implementing quizzes/tests or sign-in sheets within the course, and/or issuing a Texas-specific certificate of attendance in which there is a space for the participant's supervisor to sign verifying the participant's attendance.

Training Waivers Issued by the Office of the Governor*

Background: On May 14, 2020, the Office of the Governor issued a waiver pertaining to the temporary suspension of Chapter 829 training requirements for animal control officers (ACOs) and a waiver pertaining to the temporary suspension of Chapter 821 (and associated Texas Administrative Code) training requirements for euthanasia technicians as a result of the March 13, 2020, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) disaster declaration. Extensions to these waivers were granted on August 10, 2020, and would be in effect until terminated by the Office of the Governor or until the March 13, 2020, disaster declaration was lifted or expired.

Update – below is the notice issued on July 19, 2021, pertaining to the withdrawal/termination of training waivers from the Office of the Governor:

- Effective 12:01 AM on September 1, 2021 withdrawal of waivers (*These are the animal control officer and euthanasia technician trainings*)
 - 25 TAC § 169.84(g), extension approved on August 10, 2020
 - Texas Health and Safety Code § 821.055(a) and (d), extension approved on August 10, 2020
 - Texas Health and Safety Code § 829.002(1)(A) and (2)(A), extension approved on August 10, 2020
 - Texas Health and Safety Code § 829.004(a) and (b), extension approved on August 10, 2020

Update on Maximum Number of Online Continuing Education (CE) Policy*

Current status of maximum number of online/virtual CEs effective September 1, 2022: the decision on an ACO's maximum allowable number of online/virtual CEs per 3-year period will be at a local level, for instance by the ACO's supervisor or agency policies (or possibly the individual ACO depending on the AC agency's structure and policies).

Background: Chapter 829 of the Texas Health and Safety Code mandates that 30 hours of required CE training for ACOs be completed every 3 years. Of these, DSHS policy had been that a maximum of 10 hours per 3-year period could be obtained via satisfactory completion of DSHS-approved online/virtual training; this was partly in recognition of the value of in-person instruction, plus the benefit of creating contacts and developing networking resources and skills. However, due to the number of in-person course cancellations and the limitations on travel created by the COVID-19

pandemic, the following temporary exception to this limit was implemented: for ACOs whose 3-year period ended between March 15, 2020, and March 15, 2021 (inclusive), up to 30 of the required CE hours could be earned via satisfactory completion of DSHS-approved online/virtual training. With the continuance of this disaster, DSHS extended the CE exception period to coincide with the dates of the ACO training waiver issued by the Office of the Governor, as mentioned above. This CE exception period was then made effective from March 13, 2020, until the training waiver was terminated by the Office of the Governor or until the March 13, 2020, disaster declaration was lifted or expired. Please note that certificates of completion from sponsors of online/virtual courses may still include the statement about the 10-hour limit; that does not mean that this temporary exception did not apply.

Although the training waivers were terminated by the Office of the Governor effective September 1, 2021, due to continued issues associated with COVID as described above, DSHS temporarily extended for one year from the waiver effective date (September 1, 2021 - August 31, 2022) the policy that up to 30 hours of required CE could be earned via satisfactory completion of a DSHS-approved online/virtual training.

*** For information on temporary training policy modifications and suspensions/waivers due to COVID-19, go to**

<https://dshs.texas.gov/IDCU/health/zoonosis/education/training/ACO.aspx>

<https://dshs.texas.gov/IDCU/health/zoonosis/animal/control/shelters/Euthanasia.aspx>

<https://dshs.texas.gov/IDCU/health/zoonosis/education/training/ACO-Courses-By-Outside-Sources.aspx>

** The advised retention period for ACO basic and continuing education course exam results and attendance rosters is a minimum of 3 years beyond the end of the calendar year in which the course was given; the results can be retained either in hard copy or database format.

Disclaimer: During any disaster declaration, it is the responsibility of the course sponsor to determine if there are any applicable restrictions in place to which they must adhere, including those associated with an emergency declaration(s) or a local order condition(s).

Revised 11/15/2022