



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA

TEACCH

Autism Program

Services Across the Lifespan

University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program Professional Certification

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program was established in 1972 to serve as a statewide program for serving individuals with autism, their families, and their service delivery providers across the lifespan. In addition to providing direct services to individuals with ASD, TEACCH has been committed to developing training programs for students and professionals who serve individuals with ASD. TEACCH uses a multi-disciplinary training program (TEACCH Model) that combines both traditional lecture-style activities with hands-on learning activities to train professionals to employ Structured TEACCHing techniques (see Grindstaff and Marcus, 2013 for a more detailed description of TEACCH training, including its history).

What is Structured TEACCHing?

The intervention approach created by TEACCH is called Structured TEACCHing (see Mesibov, Shea, & Schopler, 2005). Structured TEACCHing is an array of teaching or treatment principles and strategies based on our understanding of the unique cognitive abilities, learning characteristics, and social-communication abilities associated with ASD. Structured TEACCHing recognizes the unique strengths and challenges faced by individuals with ASD including difficulties with attention and executive function and strengths in visual information processing.

Given this unique profile, Structured TEACCHing includes:

- External organizational supports to address challenges with attention and executive function
- Visual and/or written information to support verbal communication

Structured TEACCHing is not a curriculum, but instead is a framework within which educational and therapeutic goals can be achieved. This framework includes:

- Physical organization
- Individualized schedules
- Activity systems
- Material structure

Need for Professional Certification Programs for ASD Providers

When TEACCH was created in 1972, the rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder was estimated to be 1 in 2500 individuals. Since that time, there has been a growing awareness of ASD across the world and the rates of ASD have risen dramatically. Indeed, the Center for Disease Control estimates that the current rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is 1 in every 88 individuals (CDC, 2012).

As the number of individuals with ASD has increased, there has been a comparable increasing demand for the use of evidence-based practices by education and mental health professionals. The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders (autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu) has listed the core components of Structured TEACCHing approaches including individualized schedules and activity/work systems as evidence-based. These techniques have been found to maximize independent functioning individuals with ASD across the lifespan and be appropriate for use in home, school, and employment settings.

The goals of the TEACCH Professional Certification Program are to:

1. Teach professionals across a number of disciplines (educators, psychologists, speech language pathologists, social workers, counselors, etc.) how to use Structured TEACCHing to enhance the effectiveness of their programs.
2. Provide educators and clinicians with a professional certification that allows them to document their use of evidence-based practices.
3. Protect the integrity and promote the quality of TEACCH intervention approaches.
4. Provide an opportunity for professionals interested in conducting their own training programs to receive an advanced certification.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

There are two levels of TEACCH Certification:

1. **TEACCH Certified Practitioner**
2. **TEACCH Certified Advanced Consultant**

For many professionals, the Practitioner (or P) level will be the terminal point of certification, largely because of interests and job requirements. For others, the P level will be a mid-point in working towards Advanced Consultant (or AC) level certification. We have attempted to create levels that are distinct in required competencies and benefits and privileges, but allow for seamless transition from the first to the second level.

The following Certification Overview documents summarize benefits and privileges, the costs, application requirements, evaluation process, and restrictions for each level.

CERTIFICATION OVERVIEW

TEACCH Practitioner Level

BENEFITS/PRIVILEGES

- Certification for 3 years
- Use the title of TEACCH Certified Practitioner
- Share information and consult on TEACCH principles/practices within own work setting and, if part of job description, within broad work setting (e.g., school district)
- Be a member of a TEACCH training team if approved by a TEACCH Director
- Demonstrate activities to professionals within their own work setting (e.g., classroom, clinic)
- Have name listed on TEACCH website as a TEACCH Certified Practitioner
- Consultative Support (2 hours per certification period—no charge)
- Discounts (10%) to TEACCH-sponsored conferences, and workshops in North Carolina

RESTRICTIONS

- Cannot train other professionals to be a TEACCH Certified Professional (but, as noted, can be a member of a TEACCH training team)
- Cannot train, formally teach or conduct workshops on TEACCH Principles/Practices

CRITERIA/PROCESS

- Complete a Five-Day University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program training led by TEACCH staff within past five years
- Complete a University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program Advanced Topics Seminar led by TEACCH staff within past 5 years
- One year of experience post-five day TEACCH training implementing TEACCH principles and practices in work setting
- Submission of a formal application including a portfolio with video samples, work samples, and performance evaluations and the certification fee of \$1000
- The portfolio will be reviewed, and a written and oral examination will be scheduled by the TEACCH review team
- If the examination is passed, applicants will receive a Letter of Acceptance, a Letter of Agreement and a certificate
- To qualify to be a trainer, complete the shadow training program described in the Advanced Consultant process

COST OF CERTIFICATION

- Enrollment fees for 5-Day and Advanced Topics prerequisite trainings
- \$1000 Initial Certification Fee

RECERTIFICATION

- Within the three year period of certification, attend 16 contact hours of continuing education activities in ASD, including:
 - A minimum of 8 hours in TEACCH sponsored workshops, such as the TEACCH Annual Conference and advanced trainings that are beyond basics of Structured TEACCHing.
 - An additional 8 hours can be from any other ASD workshops or conferences
- A list and brief description of activities carried out during the certification period related to TEACCH practices plus evaluations by supervisors
- A new three year certificate will be mailed upon payment of the recertification fee
- \$225 Recertification fee plus cost of attendance at continuing education programs every three years

CERTIFICATION OVERVIEW

TEACCH Advanced Consultant Level

BENEFITS/PRIVILEGES

- Certification for 3 years
- Use the title of TEACCH Certified Advanced Consultant
- The benefits for the Practitioner Level (see Practitioner Overview for Benefits/Privileges)
- Consult on TEACCH principles and practices across work and other related settings (outside of work setting)
- Give lectures or presentations on TEACCH-related content
- Give 1-2 Day Training Workshops
- Be a contract trainer on a UNC TEACCH affiliated hands-on training team
- Have name listed on TEACCH website as TEACCH Certified Advanced Consultant
- Receive Consultative Support (up to 2 hours per certification period—no charge)
- Receive discounts (10%) to TEACCH-sponsored conferences, and workshops in North Carolina

RESTRICTIONS

- Cannot lead or direct a TEACCH Five-Day Training (but, as noted, can be a member of a TEACCH training team)
- Cannot train professionals to be TEACCH Certified Professional or Advanced Consultant (e.g., Can provide workshops based on TEACCH principle and practices. Cannot provide workshops for the purpose of TEACCH certification).

CRITERIA/PROCESS

- Hold a current Practitioner Certification within past 5 years
- Attend (1) Shadow Training at a Five-Day University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program Training led by TEACCH Staff within past 5 years
- Attend (2) Reverse Shadow Trainings (including presenting lectures) at a Five-Day University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program Training led by TEACCH Staff (discounted registration fee of 25%)
- Submission of evaluation of competence for Shadow Training
- Submission of application and certification fee is due after completion of training and evaluation process
- A certificate will be mailed to the applicant upon payment of the certification fee and completion of a signed agreement

COST OF CERTIFICATION

- Training fees apply (see Criteria/Process above) for prerequisite Shadow/Reverse Shadow trainings
- \$1000 Initial Certification Fee

RECERTIFICATION

- Within the three year period of certification, attend 16 contact hours of continuing education activities in ASD, including:
 - A minimum of 8 hours in TEACCH sponsored workshops, such as the TEACCH Annual Conference and advanced trainings that are beyond basics of Structured TEACCHing
 - An additional 8 hours can be from any other ASD workshops or conferences
- A new, three year certificate will be mailed upon payment of the decertification fee
- Submission of a portfolio of TEACCH-related consultations, lectures and workshops given, and summaries of evaluations of work performed between years 4-6. A new certificate will be mailed upon review of the portfolio, and payment of the recertification fee
- \$525 Recertification fee plus cost of attendance at continuing education programs every three years

..... QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

To anticipate possible questions and to clarify some of the details in the Certification Overview, we are providing the following supplementary information. This section will be periodically updated as we get feedback.

When can I apply for certification?

Any new applicant must start at the Practitioner level and complete all the requirements listed in the Certification Overview. Once these requirements are met, you will be eligible to complete and submit an application form after contacting the TEACCH Training Program, indicating your interest and readiness to submit the application.

What do you mean by work samples?

Work samples might include any of the following:

- Photos of general structure of classroom
- Description of 3 of your students' autism and why you have structured a program as you have for these students
- Photos of 3 sample students' schedules, work systems and teaching activities
- 5 to 10 minute video of you working 1:1 with a student or group session (with appropriate permissions obtained)
- An example of how you do group teaching, teaching within the natural environment, and/or pull-out
- Share how you communicate with the parents of these 3 students (written statement or sample provided)
- Clinicians and others who are not classroom-based teachers can submit videos and other materials relevant to their work setting using the same principles and practices as described above

The application form will provide explicit directions regarding the work samples and TEACCH staff will help guide you through the process, as needed.

How will I be evaluated?

Once your application has been reviewed and is complete, you will be contacted by TEACCH and you will be scheduled for an evaluation that consists of two components: a written test and an oral examination. Both evaluations will assess you in the following domains:

- Knowledge of TEACCH Philosophy (understanding autism, strengths-based, using interests, developmental approach, working with parents)
- Application of strategies for working with parents
- Individualization through assessment
- Individualization of the elements of Structured TEACCHing
- Problem solving around issues related to autism and learning style

Can I receive any guidance during the application process?

Yes, part of the certification process includes support from TEACCH staff who, based on our review of your portfolio and other information, can answer questions, make suggestions, and offer resources to help promote your development.

When will I be certified?

If you pass the evaluation process (examination, portfolio review and oral assessment), you will be notified as soon as possible that you have been accepted at the TEACCH Practitioner Level. There will be two evaluation periods each year: in the fall and in the spring. For applicants who are accepted in the fall, the three year certification period will be from January 1 through December 31; for applicants who pass the evaluation in the spring, the three year certification period will be from July 1 through June 30.

Why can't I train others with whom I work, or give lectures on TEACCH outside my work setting?

The process of becoming proficient in TEACCH principles and practices requires extensive training and experience. Advancing to the level of proficiency in training other professionals requires even more experience, including supervision. In our own program in North Carolina, we expect our autism specialists to work for two years in our model before they move into trainer and consultant roles; and these are professionals immersed in the model on a daily basis. We do not require the same level of commitment for those in the certification program, but do require considerable advanced training as described below.

Can I become a TEACCH Five-Day Trainer for TEACCH-Sponsored Programs at the Practitioner Level?

Yes, you have the option of pursuing additional training through our shadow training process. Typically this involves at least three supervised experiences working with a TEACCH team during a five-day training. Not everyone who goes through this process attains status as an independent trainer. Those who meet criteria for this role, based on a TEACCH Director approval, can then be part of a TEACCH training team.

How do Practitioner and Advanced Consultant Levels differ?

The Advanced Consultant has independence in providing lectures, workshops and trainings. The Certified Practitioner Level can provide consultation and share information on a more limited scale and can be part of a training team, led by TEACCH staff, but cannot lecture or train on TEACCH principles and practices on his/her own.

What skills will be evaluated in the Certified Advanced Consultant process?

The primary skills that will be evaluated pertain to consultation, training, and lecturing. With respect to consultation skills, you will be evaluated on your ability to convey knowledge of autism and the Structured TEACCHing approach through consultancy to teachers, parents and other professionals around autism and the Structured TEACCHing model. The focus during the shadow training experience will be working with the groups, doing model work presentations, leading some small group activities during training and other activities.

With respect to skills specific to training, applicants will be evaluated by TEACCH faculty and staff on their knowledge and abilities based on direct observation of performance as a trainer, including lectures. For example, your ability to present through lecture information on autism, Structured TEACCHing and the application of Structured TEACCHing to areas such as communication, social, play and vocation.

Why is this level called Advanced Consultant and not Trainer?

We believe that this term more fully and accurately reflects the scope of activities for this level. Consultants are viewed as professionals who provide expert advice including training and lectures. Having the descriptor of “Advanced” enhances the status at this level.

What is the process for renewal after the first Advanced Consultant recertification period has been completed?

Unique to the Advanced Consultant Level, there will be a more intense review of your work and skills at the second renewal of your certification (years 4-6). This will include either direct observations of TEACCH Trainers and Directors, and submitting video samples or other materials similar to the initial evaluation process. For those who have been part of a TEACCH training team, we will be able to handle the evaluation process as a natural part of the training week.

Can the 2 hours of complimentary consultation be carried over to the next recertification period?

No, the hours must be completed within the three year period of certification.

Can parents become TEACCH certified?

If a parent is a professional providing services to individuals with autism (e.g., a teacher, speech therapist, psychologist), he or she can participate in the certification program as any other professional. However, if the parent is home schooling their child or is not professionally credentialed, then the certification program is not an option.

Do you anticipate changes in the program? If yes, how will I be informed about the changes?

We expect, based on our experience with the program and feedback from participants, that we will make adjustments/changes as we go along. We hope that these are not major, but will enhance the quality of what we are trying to accomplish. We will keep our website training page updated with regard to any changes in the program. If the need arises, we will develop a listserv, a newsletter, or other means of maintaining ongoing communication with our Certified Practitioners and Advanced Consultants.

REFERENCES

Grindstaff, J. & Marcus, L. (2013). Multidisciplinary training (TEACCH model). In Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders (Online Version), Edited by Volkmar F. New York: Springer
Mesibov G.B., Shea V, Schopler E (2005). The TEACCH Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

For additional questions or more information, contact:

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