



Supporting People to Get Better Lives

The Academy for Direct Support Professionals is a collaborative partnership between the two Texas Universities for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; The Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University and the Center on Disability Studies at The University of Texas at Austin.

The Academy for Direct Support Professionals (The Academy) is located at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The Academy offers three levels of certification for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) that align with NADSP requirements. Person Centered Practices is the foundation of The Academy's curriculum. Coursework is based on Person Centered Thinking Skills and the Coaches model developed by The Learning Community.

Candidates pursuing entry level recognition as a DSP are required by The Academy to take an introductory course in Person Centered Practices along with other requirements. Candidates pursuing certification as a DSP-C I or II are required to have a working knowledge of how to support a person with a disability by demonstrating Person Centered Thinking skills with a focus person who receives services. Candidates participate as a part of a cohort facilitated by a Person Centered Thinking Certified Trainer where they are encouraged to share learning from their experiences. Cohort meetings occur ongoing throughout the training process as candidates learn new skills, practice, demonstrate and share learning.

In an effort to take this training program to scale, The Academy is currently developing a program that will bring the curriculum based on Person Centered Practices to an online format. Learners will be able to access all levels of certification training offered by The Academy through asynchronous and real time learning. Candidates for DSP I and II level certification will continue to be a part of a learning cohort and required to demonstrate competency of Person Centered Thinking Skills with a focus person through online, live instruction from a Certified Person Centered Thinking Trainer.

The Academy is committed to developing a workforce of exceptional Direct Support Professionals who are skilled in Person Centered Practices to support people with disabilities to get a better life. This will be accomplished by creating opportunities for people to access training offered by The Academy anywhere through an online training program.

The Academy online program and website is in development at this time. There is currently a cohort actively meeting in the Bryan/College Station, Texas area working towards certification as a DSP-C I.

The Postsecondary Access Training in Human Services (PATHS) program is a one year certificate program based at Texas A&M University that offers extensive training for people with and without disabilities to become exception Direct Support Professionals. Students from the PATHS program receive a certificate from The Academy upon graduation that is also recognized by NADSP. The course work for the PATHS program offers training with a foundation built on Person Centered Practices. PATHS students continue learning after coursework by working in supervised paid practicum with providers of services for people with disabilities and older people who choose to live in their communities.

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The Center for Disability and Development at Texas A&M University