Core Elements of Adventure Therapy Training (AT)

Training that does not include integration of adventure therapy practices, principles, or philosophies will not count towards the training hours requirement for certification. Training that typically meets standards for the Core Elements of AT Training will incorporate learnings about, but are not limited to, the following:

- 7 Adventure Beliefs
- Models of Adventure Therapy (e.g., Facilitated Wave Model, CHANGES)
- Philosophies of Experiential Education
- Overlap of AT with SAMHSA's key principles of a trauma-informed approach
- Resources for helping practitioners remain current with best practices in AT

AT Technical Skills

Definition: This element focuses on the knowledge of technical skills competencies and limitations related to AT interventions, risk management protocols specific to adventure therapy populations and settings, and environmental practices of adventure therapists.

- Practicing within one's own competencies based on technical skills training and assessed competency. Competency can be assessed either by having a certification, or an assessment of skill competency from a reputable training organization, or employer.
- Conducting risk analysis of sites and activities that are utilized
- Minimizing and recognizing the impact of AT on the environment

Facilitation and Processing in AT

Definition: This element focuses on the effectiveness of the adventure therapy experience, assists clients in finding direction and sources for functional change, and creates changes that are lasting and integrated into the clients' lives

- Establishing norms
- Engagement and cohesion building strategies
- Awareness of trauma responses in AT
- Adapting intervention to incorporate isomorphic metaphors
- Utilizing models for stages of change and group development while conducting AT services
- Generalizing adventure experiences to everyday life.
- Matching and facilitating an activity towards a clinical goal with transfer of skills

Organizational/ Administrative Policies in AT

Definition: This element focuses on the organizational processes and policies surrounding adventure experiences used by the adventure therapist.

- Designing and maintaining policies that reflect an awareness of standards in the field
- Laws and regulations impacting AT services
- Development of crisis management response plans
- Medication and medical monitoring
- admission protocols, treatment, discharge, and referrals from AT services
- Supervising client behaviors and safety during AT activities
- Supervision and consultation to maintain ethical practice and AT certification
- Resources for seeking consultation about AT practices
- Logistics of planning AT interventions
- Assumption of Risk and Liability Releases appropriate for Adventure Programming
- Incident and Accident reporting

Conceptual Knowledge of AT

Definition: This element focuses on the ability of the adventure therapist to use specific models, practices, philosophies, and applications of adventure therapy for the unique needs of treatment issues with clients

- History and foundations of the development of AT
- Connecting interventions with the therapist's theoretical orientation
- Key components of AT interventions
- AT Models

Therapeutic Alliance Building in AT

Definition: This element focuses on the ability of the adventure therapist to co-construct an effective therapeutic alliance with clients. The building of this positive form of therapeutic relationship incorporates the use of natural environment elements and adventure programming concepts. Special attention is paid to the specific and diverse context of various clients (e.g., social, cultural, systemic, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation, etc

- Respecting and honoring inclusivity and diversity when providing AT services
- Recognizing impact of AT on client-therapist relationship
- Awareness of the breadth of interaction and communication styles during AT services
- Demonstrating empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard
- Repairing ruptured therapeutic relationships during AT interventions
- Ensuring clients' rights when receiving AT services.

Assessment in AT

Definition: This element focuses on how the adventure therapist examines clients in mental health settings through adventure experiences and uses supportive documentation for screening and creating potential interventions.

- AT interventions as part of ongoing client assessment
- Adventure-based assessment to inform clinical facilitation decisions
- Seeks information about client from multiple areas to deliver effective AT services
- Assessment and management of risk (emotional, physical, environment, trauma-informed)

AT Interventions

Definition: This element focuses on the implementation of adventure therapy treatment strategies and processes to produce functional client change in an appropriate, culturally relevant, lasting manner.

- Activities and techniques used in AT programming
- Selecting culturally relevant adventure experiences
- Interaction with the treatment environment as an integral part of the treatment process
- Selecting and conducting AT interventions that are appropriate and individualized to the client.

Therapeutic Monitoring in AT

Definition: This element focuses on the continual connection to clients involved in adventure therapy programming, including ongoing evaluation of therapy, maintenance of treatment gains, ongoing treatment planning, and termination.

- Monitoring transfer of learning from adventure activities to “daily life” over time
- The use of adventure activities for formal and informal outcome evaluation purposes.
- Detailed/formative treatment planning that supports development of appropriate AT interventions
- Co-creation and/or assessment of progress on treatment goals using AT intervention

Professionalism in AT

Definition: This element focuses on the expected professional behavior of an adventure therapist.

- Will follow all professional regulatory laws and ethics of the region, state, province, or country in which one practices.
- Ethical Standards specific to AT services
- Knowledge of commonly accepted practices in AT
- How to use clinical supervision for developing specific AT interventions.
- Use of clinical language in notes to reflect intent of AT interventions and client progress.
- Privacy and confidentiality considerations of providing AT services (e.g., storage of AT documentation and files in the field and in the office, HIPAA)

Socio-Cultural Considerations in AT

Definition: This element focuses on the awareness and practices related to diversity needs, power, privilege, and environmental stewardship.

- Recognition of practitioner biases and controlling countertransference.
- Practicing reflection to increase awareness and manage bias.
- Advocacy for diversity, equity and equality, and environmental conservation and protection with an awareness of climate change and the history/traditions of indigenous peoples.

Environmental Considerations in AT

Definition: This element focuses on environmental practices and stewardship.

- Practice environmental safety and ethics appropriate to your setting, activity, and region of practice.
- Advocacy for environmental conservation and protection with an awareness of climate change and sustainability.

Trauma Informed Practices in AT

Definition: This element focuses on integration of Trauma Informed practices and considerations throughout screening, assessment, intervention, and processing in Adventure Therapy.

- Facilitation of client choice and client ability to set the level of their own participation or change their mind.
- Tracking of client arousal, anxieties, and vigilance.
- Integration of regulatory activities/options.
- Adapting AT services to meet client immediate, short-term, and long-term needs upon experiencing trauma responses.
- Attune to environmental factors/variables which may induce trauma responses
- Recognition of personal trauma responses as a practitioner.
- Recognition and appropriate balance of power differentials inherent in AT programming
- Promoting trustworthiness, transparency, mutuality, and collaboration during AT programming