



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

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Essential Information for ASIST Trainer Candidates

PLEASE NOTE: Candidates must attend all sessions to complete the Training for Trainers (T4T) course.

Every sentence in this document is carefully constructed and full of meaning. Please read and reread it thoughtfully. While reading it, take time for reflection and self-appraisal. Your reaction to the process of reading this document can help you decide if you want to become involved in an ASIST T4T. The ASIST Trainer's Manual is written in this same style. Fully understanding it—and you will need to fully understand—will require similar effort to that required here, but on a much larger scale.

You will find being an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) trainer very rewarding. You will find the Training for Trainers (T4T) course, which begins your trainer preparation, one of the best you have ever experienced. Despite the rewards and benefits, you also need to know what you are getting into because becoming a good trainer is hard work. We also want your employer (if applicable) to know what will be expected of you. Your signature and your employer's signature on your registration form indicate acceptance of the commitments involved. You will also be required to sign a contract with similar content at the end of the T4T. The fact that we go to so much trouble to outline expectations and obtain initial commitments should tell you something about LivingWorks and ASIST: We take quality and commitment very seriously.

Please understand from the outset that LivingWorks reserves the right to make final decisions regarding your potential to become a trainer. Only some portion of the materials costs is returned in those rare circumstances where a candidate is not authorized to continue in the training process. The learning experience will be valuable regardless of whether you or we decide that you should not become a trainer, so long as you are emotionally prepared for either outcome. Please understand also that LivingWorks has limited resources to help trainers who have the potential to become good trainers but need extra help after the T4T. However, if the trainer can provide the required resources, such as sources of trainer support noted further in this document, LivingWorks will make every effort to realize that potential.

Consider your decision carefully. Do not let yourself be talked into attending the course if you do not feel that being an ASIST trainer is right for you. Do not let yourself be talked out of attending because of misplaced concerns about the initial costs. A T4T is initially costly as are most training programs of this distinction. However, helping to prevent suicide and saving lives is priceless.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

The aim of ASIST is to help caregivers become willing, ready, and able to provide emergency first aid to persons with thoughts of suicide. During the two-day workshop, participants will examine their attitudes about suicide, learn to effectively recognize invitations for help, work with a safety framework, develop new intervention skills, and reinforce old ones. ASIST also addresses the need to establish a cooperative network among participants since caregivers often have to work together to prevent suicide. All types of caregivers will benefit from participation in the two-day ASIST workshop. Over 2,000,000 caregivers have received this training, and more than 99.9% recommend ASIST to their colleagues. A number of major research studies provide additional evidence for the value and effectiveness of ASIST.

Overview of Training for Trainers (T4T)

The five-day T4T course is the first phase of becoming a Registered Trainer. During the first two days, you will experience (or re-experience) ASIST as any participant would. An appreciation of the participant's perspective is essential to your success as a trainer. Participation in ASIST at T4T also provides a common experience to frame the work for the rest of the course. Moreover, there is always something new to learn from participation in ASIST. This is one of the elements that make being a trainer so rewarding. Every ASIST is different, primarily because ASIST is designed to bring out and work with the particular perspectives and skills that new participants bring to each ASIST. At the end of ASIST, a brief transition session will be held to give you a quick overview of the schedule for the next three days, which is presented Wednesday morning. A copy of the ASIST Trainer Manual will also be distributed. You will be given several homework assignments for that evening. This change will clearly signal the transition from participation to training.

The third and fourth days have morning, afternoon, and evening schedules. Part of the morning of the third day is used to debrief the ASIST portion of the course and introduce you to the other members of the T4T team. (During the last three days of T4T, you will work with the training team on a ratio of one Training Coach per five to six candidates.) The afternoon and evening times are coaching sessions for the "dress rehearsal" presentations of ASIST components in the mornings of the fourth and fifth days. You will need to attend an evening coaching session on one of these days and an afternoon coaching session on the other. Your particular schedule can only be determined on-site. Prior commitments can usually be accommodated but you will find that you need your unscheduled time for informal rehearsal. The last afternoon will focus on the expectations of a trainer and the organizing, planning, preparation, and presentation aspects of conducting ASIST.

After T4T

The second phase, which begins after the T4T is completed, involves your investment in considerable preparation time prior to each presentation of your first few workshops. A new trainer often needs to devote approximately 30 hours to reading and reviewing the manual and to meeting with other trainer team members prior to each workshop presentation. The presentation of approximately three workshops may be required before you begin to feel less of a need for preparation time. However, working with trainers who you haven't worked with before or presenting parts of ASIST that you haven't presented before, increases the need for preparation time again. After five or six workshops, conducting the two-day training is usually internalized. Thereafter, even a trainer who conducts ASIST infrequently can slip back into the role fairly easily. Telephone consultation with LivingWorks or with Consulting Trainers—experience trainers who can provide support and advice—is available as needed. On-site consultation possibilities will also be discussed during the last afternoon session of T4T.

Trainer registration and selection

Trainer candidates become Provisional Trainers upon completion of the five-day T4T. This is an internal distinction for LivingWorks' administration and procedures; externally you are a Registered Trainer who is entitled to provide ASIST to the community. Provisional Trainers become Registered Trainers when they have delivered all workgroup tasks on their own, usually in three workshops within a year of their T4T. Registration is maintained thereafter by presenting at least one workshop per year. It is strongly recommended that you set a goal of more than one workshop annually to maintain your understanding of ASIST procedures.

Expectations of an ASIST trainer:

1. ASIST is standardized. It must be presented in a manner consistent with the Trainer Manual and the T4T course. However, some elements of your own style can fit within that standard. In addition, you will find that the curriculum of ASIST is continually evolving. We welcome your suggestions for modifications and we will keep you informed of any changes that are made.
2. ASIST must be presented over two consecutive days with a minimum of two trainers. As a result, there is little point in training only one trainer in an area since a trainer cannot conduct ASIST alone. Check with LivingWorks to find out about trainers in your area.
3. ASIST workshop attendees are to be divided into two or more small groups of not less than seven or more than 15 participants. Mixed groups are strongly recommended. Think of ways to “trade off” with other trainers in other organizations within your region to create groups with the greatest diversity possible.
4. The trainer or workshop organizer must send the workshop feedback to LivingWorks following each workshop. Trainers are also expected to protect the integrity of the ASIST and not use its components in other training formats—they are specifically designed to support and synergize with the ASIST model.

While ASIST's curriculum is sufficiently structured and detailed to guarantee high levels of participant satisfaction, the trainer's skills in presenting ASIST are critical. The following information on selection criteria may help you to make a decision about your participation as a candidate in the T4T course.

The chances of a trainer conducting ASIST successfully are greatly enhanced to the degree that he or she possesses the following skills and characteristics:

1. A flexible attitude about suicide
2. Good interpersonal communication and helping skills
3. Knowledge about suicide intervention, and,
4. Established presentation and small group leadership skills.

ASIST begins with a small group discussion of attitudes about suicide. For the workshop to succeed, it is critical for participants to have permission to freely discuss, own, and work through whatever attitudes they have about suicide and about helping those who are suicidal. This portion of the workshop often involves personally sensitive and emotionally charged exchanges between group members. The trainer must have flexible attitudes about suicide and sufficient small group leadership experience so that all of her or his energies can be concentrated on facilitating the group process.

ASIST focuses on the attitudes, understandings, and skills required to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. The skills are composed of a blend of knowledge about suicide intervention and the generic helping skills that most caregivers possess. The ASIST Trainer Manual will provide candidate trainers with a knowledge base about suicidal behaviors and about the skills needed to prevent the immediate risk associated with them. The T4T course was designed with the assumption that candidate trainers already possess generic helping skills. However, we have not found a consistent relationship between professionally educated candidates, or even between those with substantial personal or professional experience with suicide behaviors, and their subsequent success as a trainer.

The T4T course and the ASIST Trainer Manual are designed to provide you with sufficient knowledge about suicide to conduct the workshop. You should recognize that a commitment to continuing education about suicide is essential if you are to remain effective in the future. While the training process will help you improve your instructional skills, it should be emphasized that the primary aim of the training course is to help you learn how to present the particular content and processes of ASIST. We assume that you enter the course with most of the essential teaching and group facilitation skills.

Notwithstanding the previously mentioned requirements, openness, perseverance, and a willingness to learn are often major factors determining the eventual success of an ASIST trainer. Self-reflection and a willingness to learn are probably most critical. You will find the T4T very challenging. We also believe that you will find it to be one of the most supportive and constructive learning environments you have ever experienced. You are likely to find yourself reviewing your commitment at several points during the T4T. Your openness to learning will increase what you get from the course and serve you extremely well as you work with ASIST and other trainers in the future.

In rare cases, a decision is made that there is not a fit between the requirements for being a trainer and the abilities of a particular candidate. In most all cases, decisions about your improvement as a trainer are a matter of consultation. The Training Coaches may require that you use certain resources after T4T if they determine that extra help is needed. It is up to the candidate to take responsibility in providing for and implementing this additional learning.

You should come to T4T with at least your first workshop already scheduled for a date within a month of returning from T4T. While this is not a requirement, you will be very thankful for having followed this suggestion.

Trainer Support

Support of trainers is critical to maintaining your initial investment. Trainer support is a complicated issue, but one central principle is team teaching. As you may have noted from the requirements listed above, a minimum of two trainers is necessary to conduct ASIST. This requirement is essential to the design of the workshop, and it also ensures that trainers will always have minimal support from at least one other trainer. An allied but broader principle is networking. The goal of ASIST is not just training, but also the development of cooperation among caregivers who need to work together to prevent suicide. Similarly, the goal of the T4T course is not just to train individual trainers, but to create a cooperative network of trainers. This network is a very important source of ongoing trainer support. In many cases, new trainers will find that a network already exists in their region, and through consultation and collaboration, they can grow to become part of this network in time.

There are a number of ways to support the network after T4T, but one of the most important is the availability of Consulting Trainers. As noted above, Consulting Trainers are trainers with extensive experience in conducting ASIST who have also been trained in consultation processes. Their role is to help you before, during, and after ASIST workshops on a by-request basis and to serve as a communication link between trainers. Consulting Trainers reside in most parts of Canada, Australia, Norway, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the United States.

Another important source of support is the link between all trainers and LivingWorks. LivingWorks reviews evaluations from ASIST, keeps records, responds to trainer inquiries, makes referrals, and keeps you informed of new ideas and material updates. We also underwrite some of the costs of training Consulting Trainers. All trainers enter into a support arrangement with LivingWorks. Trainers pay an initial course fee to cover training costs and materials.

Materials used in the ASIST workshop are purchased by the trainer, and the trainer is responsible for the distribution of one full kit to each participant. Each English-language kit includes a workbook, a reminder card (prompter card), stickers, feedback form and a certificate of completion.

The contractual arrangement between LivingWorks and every trainer requires both LivingWorks and the trainers to maintain the integrity of ASIST and, hence, helps to ensure you that you have a unique, world-class workshop to offer to people in your community.

The second critical element in trainer support is the adoption of appropriate policy with regards to the time and resource commitments involved. While supportive policy can be quite extensive, at a minimum it must ensure that trainers have the time to prepare for, conduct, and review their presentation of ASIST workshops. While this should be obvious, we have experienced organizations in the past sending trainers to be trained and then failing to provide any time or other compensation for these trainers to conduct their workshops. If you are part of an organization or agency, sharing this document with your employer begins the process of sensitizing your employer to the conditions he or she will need to create in order to take advantage of your life-saving skills as an ASIST trainer.

Trainer Materials

Each Registered Trainer receives the following materials for conducting ASIST workshops:

- ASIST Trainer Manual—the complete reference
- Workshop slides—used in presenting the ASIST workshop
- Award-winning audiovisuals—designed for and used exclusively with ASIST
- Two wall posters
- ASIST Trainer Implementation Guide—detailed information on getting started as a trainer
- ASIST Organizer Guide—everything you need to know to organize an ASIST workshop

All materials are modified from time to time to make them more current and relevant.

Marketing Realities

ASIST is far and away the best suicide intervention training program in the world. The number of caregivers who would benefit from taking the workshop is immense. These two factors would seem to imply that new trainers can expect to be quite busy. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work out that way.

Of such rare significance that it almost does not warrant mention is the possibility of competition with other trainers. LivingWorks does not regulate the price trainers charge participants for attending the workshop, although we suggest that the real costs are, minimally, \$275.00 CAD per participant. Participant costs are often subsidized by a trainer's organization or by a participant's organization. We strongly recommend that real costs always be shown so that credit for subsidization can be given to those organizations. A "free enterprise" trainer would have trouble competing with a subsidized trainer if both were appealing to the same group or community. There are a few locations where such competition could occur but where it does, there are a number of possible solutions: join forces, set a common price, or agree to focus on different demographics. If you are concerned about this possibility, LivingWorks can let you know if there are other trainers in your area.

Of common mention, but actually of minor importance, is the two consecutive day format. This format often means that organizations must pay for release time unless ASIST is offered to individuals on the weekend. Organizations may object to any program that requires two days of release time. However, once the reputation of the workshop is established, this concern will move to the background.

The greatest impediment to widespread use of ASIST is the stigma that surrounds suicide. If caregivers talked openly about suicidal behavior, the high incidence of this behavior would become widely known and caregivers' discomfort in dealing with it would be widely acknowledged.

Acknowledgment of these facts makes marketing and advocating for ASIST easy. General awareness programs help to reduce the stigma, but the best way to bring the truth to the surface and to change discomfort into comfort, confidence, and competence is participation in ASIST. What this means is that the key to marketing ASIST is word-of-mouth testimony from participants who have attended ASIST. Getting started is the hard part. If you want to make your future as a trainer more certain, come to T4T with your first three workshops already scheduled and with participants booked for each one.

The rewards of an ASIST T4T are well worth the challenge.