

Building capacity to optimize autism care

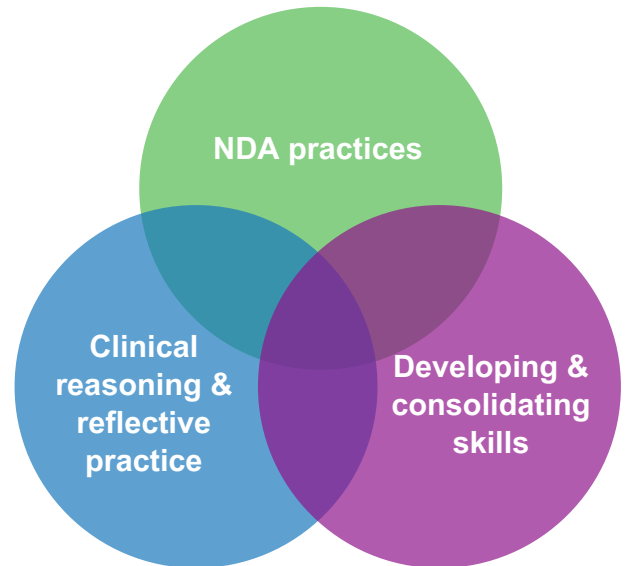
What is the Autism Occupational Therapy Coaching (AOTC) Program?

The AOTC Program is an interactive, small group virtual coaching program that can be delivered within an organization or more broadly.

The goal of the program is to help occupational therapists (OTs) develop and integrate strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming (NDA) knowledge and skills to better support the autism community.

Learning Objectives:

- Build and refine clinical reasoning skills to better support autistic children and youth, and their families
- Apply NDA principles to OT practice
- Apply reflective practices to enhance clinical practice



Core Foundational Elements

“ [The AOTC Program] provided me opportunities to reflect on my current practice and help me explore ways to enhance my neurodiversity affirming lens to better support my clients and their families. (Program Participant)

AOTC is underpinned by:

- Research evidence
- Practice-based evidence
- Kern’s Six-Step Approach to Curriculum Development
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Best practice evaluation principles

Format:

7-week group coaching program led by an OT Coach:

- 1.5 hour introductory session
- 5 x 1.5-hour consecutive small group weekly coaching sessions
- 1.5 hour final debrief and evaluation session

Includes: Suite of resources and evaluation tools to facilitate program delivery.

What do we know about autism care in OT practice?

Best autism care is personalized care!

However...

- OTs report low self-efficacy in supporting autistic people
- Professional development (PD) for supporting autistic people continues to be in demand
- Existing PD opportunities might not offer information or resources that align with current best practices that embed a neurodiversity-affirming (NDA) approach
- There can be barriers to attending PD opportunities such as cost, time, and travel

What is different about the AOTC Program?

AOTC provides capacity building opportunities that:

- Build foundational knowledge and understanding on how to best support autistic people and their families
- Employ case-based learning to support OTs with reflective thinking and enhanced clinical reasoning using a NDA approach
- Focus on strengths-based, NDA, and trauma-informed best practices
- Supports OTs in shifting their practices

What is a NDA Approach?

- Divergent ways of processing and experiencing the world are accepted and valued
- Focus is placed on human variation and the unique traits, skills, and lived experiences of neurodivergent people
- OTs aim to address the challenges that come with an autism diagnosis and also leverage strengths

“ [After completing the AOTC Program] I will change my willingness to open dialogue surrounding the use of a neuro[diversity]-affirming approach. This is a daunting task for me as a new grad, but this group has given me the confidence to enter into these discussions. (Program Participant)

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