



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AUTISM CERTIFICATION PROGRAM AND HOW IT HELPS YOUR FAMILY GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR VISIT.

What is a Certified Autism Center?

Visalia has been certified by IBCCES as a Certified Autism Center. The designation is given to businesses that are trained and certified to better serve individuals with autism and other cognitive disorders. Visit Visalia is the first destination marketing organization in California to be designated a Certified Autism Center.

What are the Certification Requirements?

1. Trained

At least 80% of guest-facing staff at certified organizations have completed industry and position-specific training in the area of autism and other special needs

2. Validated

The knowledge and readiness of each staff member is validated via independent assessment

3. Verified

Onsite facilities audit, if applicable, is performed to provide additional recommendations and process updates to ensure compliance and enhance accommodations

4. Certified

Certification is granted to industry leaders who have gone above and beyond to make their business or community more accessible for individuals with autism and other special needs

Who is IBCCES?

IBCCES is an independent credentialing organization that was founded in 2001 with the goal to provide specialized training and certification to professionals working with individuals with autism and other cognitive disorders. IBCCES is a social impact company with the mission to provide training and certification to corporate, education and healthcare professionals in order to improve the experiences and outcomes of individuals with autism and other disorders. IBCCES is a leader in the training and certification for cognitive disorders, including autism. We work in over 70 countries across the globe.

IBCCES works with an advisory board of clinical specialists with expertise in neurology, psychology, behavior therapy, special education, travel, and other disciplines, as well as individuals with autism. This advisory board is actively involved and participates in creating the training programs offered by IBCCES, which is evidence-based and promotes best practices from experts in multiple disciplines.

IBCCES does not believe there is a “one size fits all” approach and thus brings together the expertise and learnings from multiple areas as well as the viewpoints and experiences of individuals on the spectrum.

What does it mean when an individual has been trained as part of the CAC process?

IBCCES offers industry and position-specific training, as well as individual professional credentials. Depending on an individual’s position within an organization, their training may have focused on guest service in a recreational space and building empathy and understanding of what visitors with autism may need, or it may have been more extensive (up to 14 credit hours) and include specific techniques and strategies for professionals working within educational or healthcare environments, or specific to scenarios law enforcement or first responders may encounter.

The credentials and training are meant to supplement or build upon existing departmental and organizational regulations and rules, particularly in a safety or healthcare setting where professional protocols for patient or individual health and safety are already in existence.

All staff that complete training through IBCCES complete a competency exam specific to their training program to ensure comprehension.

What are staff at CACs being trained to do?

The training and certification provided by IBCCES are specific to industry and position.

For travel and leisure-related organizations, such as hotels, attractions, and visitor services, staff are trained to better understand what autism is (and isn’t), how to empathize and understand how individuals with autism experience the world, communicate more effectively, and be aware of common sensitivities and concerns in a recreational environment.

Why become an CAC, CAD or ACC? What are the benefits?

The purpose of the training and certification programs offered by IBCCES are to ultimately improve the experience and outcomes for individuals with autism and other related disorders.

The focus is on building understanding and empathy, as well as improving processes and options for individuals with these needs, and ensuring staff have appropriate tools and strategies when engaging with a neurodiverse population.

With 1 in 59 children diagnosed with autism (according to the Centers for Disease Control), along with millions of individuals who were never diagnosed but are on the spectrum, and 1 in 6 individuals having a sensory need or sensitivity, the need has never been greater.

Specifically, the goal for Visit Visalia and the City of Visalia is to ensure there are options for visitors and residents and that their experiences are as positive as possible when engaging with those community stakeholders, leaders, and entertainment options.

For Visit Visalia, the goal of certification is to protect and serve its customers, visitors, community and enhance its brand as an accessible and welcoming tourism destination and city.

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