

Autism Foundation of Tennessee



General Information

Nonprofit
Address
Phone
Web Site
Facebook
Twitter
Email

Autism Foundation of Tennessee
6515 Holt Rd
615-866-4477
www.autismcareertraining.org
<https://www.facebook.com/AutismCareerTraining>
N/A
info@autismcareertraining.org

Mission & Impact

Statements

Mission

Autism Career Training (ACT) is a nonprofit providing center-based vocational and prevocational training for individuals ("trainees") on the autism spectrum. Our mission is to identify the abilities of our trainees and to transform those abilities into job skills desired by employers. We use research-based curriculum and hands-on programs designed to prepare our trainees for success in the workplace.

Background

ACT Founder, Karen Blake always sought the best for her son Matthew. Matthew was diagnosed with Autism at 18 months while living in Atlanta, Georgia. Karen and her husband, Steve, moved to Nashville in 2005 and realized there was a great need for center-based Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy in Middle Tennessee. ABA Therapy teaches a variety of important skills for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In response, Karen founded the Autism Foundation of Tennessee, which later became Autism Education & Therapy Center (Autism ETC) in 2006. That organization became the premier provider of center-based ABA therapy in Middle Tennessee. During Karen's time with Autism ETC, she began to take notice of another missing piece of the autism community in Middle Tennessee. The area lacked a center-based program bridging the gap between the traditional school system and the work environment for students with ASD. She believed that a vocational tract should be available for teenagers and young adults with autism. In 2020, under a new name, the Autism Foundation of Tennessee became Autism Career Training (dba ACT). ACT now serves trainees from across Middle Tennessee helping them develop their abilities and transform them into vocational and prevocational skills.

Impact

ACT's biggest accomplishment in 2022 was expanding our programs from "center-based" to include "community-based" programming. This means that we have been able to take our trainees out into the community and through partnerships with local businesses, they have opportunities for additional job coaching, job sampling (to determine best fit) and practicing real-life skills in the workplace outside of the "mock environments" they participate in at our center. We are also excited to have expanded to a second location in 2023, now offering our programs in Williamson County and serving more in the southern Middle TN region.

Needs

In the U.S., more than 70,000 teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) enter adulthood every year. These youth oftentimes have difficulty finding employment as they face unique challenges related to their disability. In fact, less than 20% of people with ASD participate in the workforce and the unemployment is as high as 85% among people with ASD. We need donations (both cash and in-kind) to keep our programs affordable and accessible for everyone who would benefit from our training program. Our families pay out-of-pocket in order to help their trainee to receive instruction that has the ability to change their life forever. The programs offered by ACT are highly sought after and are a proven need in the greater Nashville community. Donations are used directly to offset the expenses of our training program to keep the tuition affordable. Donations given to ACT not only allow our trainees to learn valuable vocational skills which they will carry for life, but it also supports local businesses and the local economy by creating beneficial and diverse additions to the workforce. In-kind donations from the center wish list which include office supplies, paper products, school supplies, cleaning supplies and gift cards to stores where additional supplies may be purchased.

Statement from CEO/Executive Director

Autism Career Training (The Autism Foundation) was established by the parents of a young adult with autism resulting in an agency culture that emphasizes the importance of providing quality, affordable supports and training. Autism Career Training is highly unique in its approach to providing for the needs of each family as it struggles to adapt to employment and living with an adult with autism. In the next 10-15 years, I would love to see ACT have some residential housing and also a community center concept where young adults and adults with autism have somewhere where they belong and also have an independent living place to call home outside of their family home. We fundraise about 50% of our budget as well as fundraise for scholarships for trainees who otherwise would not be able to afford the program. No two people with autism are the same. We believe each trainee has unique gifts to offer. At ACT, we help our trainees discover those gifts.

Statement from Board Chair

Our employees perform an important and honorable service by helping to meet the specialized needs of young adults with autism spectrum disorders. There is an ever-increasing need in our local communities and we are excited to be able to provide training services to the community.

Service Categories

Primary Category
Secondary Category
Tertiary Category

Employment - Job Training
Education - Special Education
Education - Adult Education

Areas Served

Autism Career Training accepts trainees from all areas of middle Tennessee. We have two locations-our primary center is in south Nashville, Davidson County and our recently added (in 2023) secondary center is located in Franklin, Williamson County.

TN - Williamson,TN - Davidson,TN - Marshall,TN - Maury

Programs

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy

Description

ABA is a type of therapy that focuses on targeting specific challenging behaviors and teaching replacement behaviors that serve the same function. ABA therapy consists of improving a variety of different skills such as social interaction skills, communication skills, and adaptive learning skills. Therapy tailors to each individuals' specific interests, skill-level, and goals to

help them reach their highest potential in their everyday lives. The goal of ABA is to target and develop individualized skills that will help them build more independence in everyday tasks.

Budget \$80,000.00

Vocational Day Program

Description

The Center based day program operates from 9:30 - 3:30 Monday through Friday. For families seeking this program there are 3 different options. Full time, two days a week or three days a week . This program works on pre-vocational, vocational and independent living skills .

Autism Career Training uses the Six Outcome Domains as a framework to establish baselines and set goals. The six domain system is derived from research reviewed by the Institute of Educational Sciences. This is an evidence review protocol for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and the research denotes which interventions will be effective in improving the six domain areas.

These interventions are designed to improve the six areas of mental health: academic, behavioral, communication, intellectual, social, and emotional. Our programs use this framework to adapt the existing abilities of our trainees and transform them into vocational and prevocational skills.

Budget

Population Served Adults
At-Risk Populations
People/Families with of People with Disabilities

After School Social Groups

Description

These social groups are offered two days after school from 3:30 - 5. These groups are lead by a BCBA. They are set up to facilitate appropriate social interactions between students and staff. This is done through incidental learning and facilitated in a fun atmosphere.

Budget

Population Served People with other disabilities and/or are neurodivergent
Adults
People/Families with of People with Disabilities

Speech and Language Services

Description

Autism Career Training Center offers comprehensive Speech and Language Services for young adults who are transitioning into adulthood, as well as adults of all ages on the spectrum. We specialize in improving social cognition and communication skills. We provide a variety of services including speech language evaluations, individual therapy sessions, social groups, and opportunities to improve communication via Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) methods. Goals include helping individuals maintain their uniqueness while learning the communication skills needed to navigate the workplace, learning how to develop positive social relationships, increasing self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and improving communication and language skills across various settings to increase independence and positive social experiences.

Budget \$50,000.00

CEO/Executive Director/Board Comments

The programs offered by ACT are highly sought after and a proven need in the greater Nashville community.

Governance

Board Chair
Company Affiliation
Term
Email

Karen Blake
Community Volunteer
August 2008 to August 2024
autismcenter@gmail.com

Board of Directors

Name	Affiliation	Status
Mrs. Karen Blake MA SLP	Autism Education and Therapy Center	Voting
Cameron Grier	Cushman and Wakefield	Voting
Asad Hammeed	HCA	Voting
Todd Maggart	Maggart & Associates	Voting
Dr. Tandy Taylor	Trevecca Nazarene University	Voting
Henry Terrell	Raymond James	Voting

Board Demographics - Ethnicity

African American/Black	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	0
Caucasian	5
Hispanic/Latino	0
Native American/American Indian	0
Other	1

Board Demographics - Gender

Male	4
Female	2
Unspecified	0

Governance

Board Term Lengths	
Board Term Limits	
Board Meeting Attendance	100%
Does the Organization have written Board Selection Criteria?	Under Development
Does the Organization have a Written Conflict of Interest Policy?	Yes
Percentage Making Monetary Contributions	100%
Percentage Of Board Members Making In Kind Contributions	0%
Does the Board include Client Representation?	
Number of Full Board Meetings Annually	4

Risk Provisions

Commercial General Liability and D and O and Umbrella or Excess and Automobile and Professional
Commercial General Liability and Medical Malpractice

CEO/Executive Director/Board Comments

The Autism Foundation of Tennessee/Autism Career Training relies primarily on a volunteer Board who cares deeply about the mission of the organization. The challenge is to grow the board to include individuals who also have such passion but who also possess fund raising and development skills to also enable the organization to grow and prosper.

Management

Executive Director

Mr. Matthew Powell M.Ed

Email

mpowell@autismcareertraining.org

Term Start

April 2019

Matthew's Experience: Matthew Powell Program Director Matthew Powell obtained his Bachelor of Science, Special Education from Trevecca Nazarene University. In 2018, he obtained his Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from Trevecca. Prior to joining the ACT team, Matthew started his career at High Hopes Development Center as a teacher and sports coordinator. He later taught at Independence High School in Williamson County and served as Special Education department head and assistant football coach. Matthew most recently worked for Maury County Schools' district office serving as Special Education Coordinator. Matthew is married to his wife Elizabeth, and together, they have two-year-old twins, Lucy Pearl and Walker. When not serving our ACT community, Matthew enjoys time with friends and family. He enjoys outdoor activities like camping, kayaking, football, and fishing.

Staff

Number of Full Time Staff	7
Number of Part Time Staff	1
Volunteers	50
Contractors	1
Staff Retention Rate	100%

Plans & Policies

Fundraising Plan?	Yes
Strategic Plan?	Yes
Years Strategic Plan Considers	15
When Strategic Plan Adopted?	
Management Succession Plan?	No
Policy and Procedures Plan?	Yes
Nondiscrimination Policy?	Yes
Whistle Blower Policy?	Yes
Document Destruction Policy?	Yes

Formal Evaluations

Is there a formal evaluation for...		Frequency
CEO/Executive Director	Yes	Annually
Senior Management	Yes	Annually
Non-Management	Yes	Annually

CEO/Executive Director/Board Comments

Autism Foundation of TN has reached many goals. There are still challenges ahead which include: A mandate for insurance to cover services in the state of Tennessee was recently approved. This should help families that previously were unable to have coverage for ABA services. Tennessee was the last state in the United States to have this type of mandate. The need for more therapeutic staff: We are constantly hiring new Board Certified Behavior Analysts and Registered Behavior Technicians. This is an area of greatest need

for our organization. A marketing director has been hired whose primary goal is to recruit staff. Plans for expansion: Due to the unmet needs for services throughout the entire state of Tennessee, Autism ETC foresees replicating its program with centers in other areas of the state. This will be accomplished to address the needs of the estimated 25,000 individuals under age 18 and their families that are affected by ASD in Tennessee.

Financials

Financials

Fiscal Year Start

01/01/2024

Fiscal Year End

12/31/2024

Projected Revenue

\$744,085.00

Projected Expenses

\$728,212.00

Detailed Financials

Revenue and Expenses

Fiscal Year	2023	2022	2021
Total Revenue		\$421,474.00	\$240,490.00
Total Expenses		\$442,800.00	\$392,967.00
Revenue Less Expense	(\$-0.00)	(\$21,326.00)	(\$152,477.00)

Revenue Sources

Fiscal Year	2023	2022	2021
Foundation and Corporation Contributions		\$0.00	\$0.00
Government - Federal		\$0.00	\$0.00
Government - State		\$0.00	\$0.00
Government - Local		\$0.00	\$0.00
Government - Unspecified		\$0.00	\$0.00
Individual Contributions		\$101,076.00	\$29,714.00
Indirect Public Support		\$0.00	\$0.00
Earned		\$280,192.00	\$158,301.00

Revenue			
Investment Income, Net of Losses		\$8,726.00	\$39,999.00
Membership Dues		\$0.00	\$0.00
Special Events		\$31,480.00	\$12,476.00
Revenue In-Kind		\$0.00	\$0.00
Other		\$0.00	\$0.00

Expense Allocation

Fiscal Year	2023	2022	2021
Program Expense		\$370,091.00	\$314,877.00
Administrative Expense		\$72,709.00	\$78,090.00
Fundraising Expense		\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Revenue/Total Expenses		95%	61%
Program Expense/Total Expenses		84%	80%
Fundraising Expense/Contributed Revenue		0%	0%

Top Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	2023	2022	2021
Top Funding Source & Dollar Amount	\$0.00	Contributions, Gifts, and Grants - \$280,192.00	Program Revenue - \$158,301.00
Second Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	\$0.00	Contributions, Gifts, and Grants - \$101,076.00	Interest Income - \$39,999.00
Third Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	\$0.00	Fundraising Events - \$31,480.00	Contributions, Gifts, Grants - \$29,714.00

Assets and Liabilities

Fiscal Year	2023	2022	2021
Total Assets		\$685,181.00	\$813,359.00

Current Assets		\$87,396.00	\$105,733.00
Long-Term Liabilities		\$0.00	\$0.00
Current Liabilities		\$7,746.00	\$4,900.00
Total Net Assets		\$677,435.00	\$808,459.00

Endowment Info

Do you have an endowment?

No

Capital Campaign Info

Currently in a Capital Campaign?

No

Solicitation Permit Info

State Charitable Solicitations Permit

Yes

CEO/Executive Director/Board Comments

Like any nonprofit service organization, we have relied very heavily on revenue generated from payment for services by insurance companies to cover the cost of operations. Very few families can afford to pay for services if they do not have insurance or if their insurance company will not pay for services related to autism. The cost of providing behavioral therapy is driven by high personnel costs due to the salaries commanded by professionals in these fields. The agency has obtained its goal of operating on a balanced budget and becoming debt free. This was achieved by implementing various strategies, primary of which is by diversifying its sources of income. Emphasis is being placed on increasing revenue from two additional sources: fundraisers and grants. A second strategy has been to decrease personnel costs by employing fewer full-time employees and increasing the number of part-time employees. Income from payment from insurance companies continues to be a moving target for those providing services for children with autism as we have to work to negotiate reimbursement rates for insurance companies.