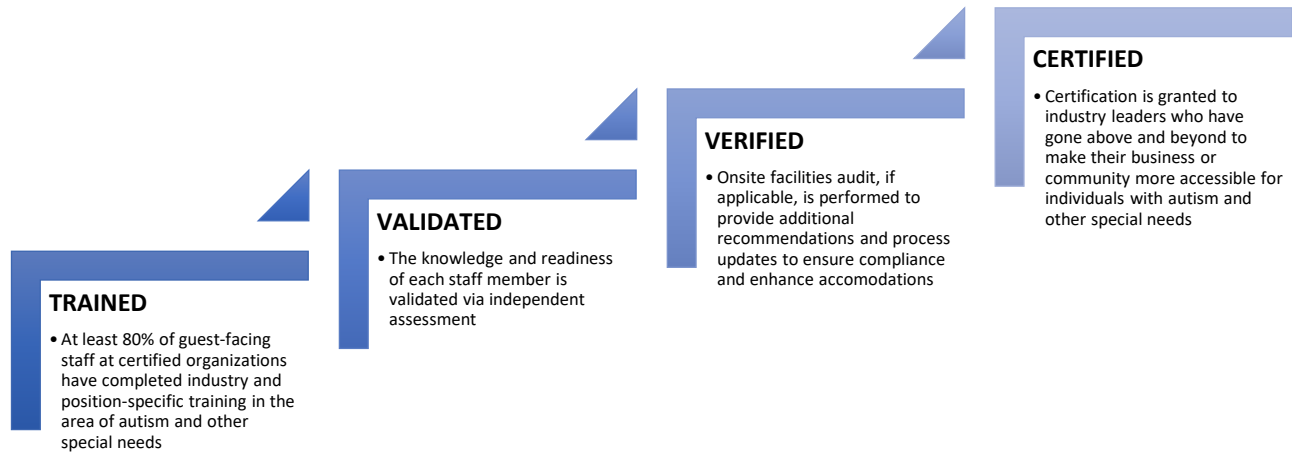


## WHAT ARE THE IBCCES CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS?



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is an Autism Certified City?

The ACC designation, awarded by IBCCES, is given to communities where key stakeholders, including healthcare, education, local government, hospitality, leisure, and corporate members are trained and certified to better serve individuals with autism and other cognitive disorders. Mesa is the first city to be designated as such.



### What is a Certified Autism Center?

The requirements to become a CAC through IBCCES include training at least 80% of guest or public-facing staff in autism and sensory disorders through IBCCES. The process may also include an onsite review, as well as the creation of sensory guides for attractions and interactive spaces. The goal is to better prepare staff and management to serve individuals with autism or sensory needs. The certification must be renewed every 2 years with updated training provided for staff at each certified organization.



### 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.
- The IBCCES certification does not give individuals license to practice medicine in the state of Arizona (although some IBCCES credentials are approved for billing of therapy services in other states).
- 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.
- Corporate staff working toward workforce diversity and inclusion are trained on how to better attract and manage a neurodiverse staff in a professional setting.
- Fire and Medical and Law Enforcement staff are trained on autism sensitivity, empathy and understanding what autism is, communication strategies, as well as specific scenarios where they may encounter a person with autism and how to de-escalate or manage those interactions.
- Staff in settings such as recreation therapy, residential programs, and healthcare or education settings receive more extensive training specific to autism, cognitive effects, co-occurring conditions, communication and behavioral strategies, as well as supporting research.

### **Why become an ACC or CAC? 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 Mesa and the City of Mesa 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 Mesa, 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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