

Course Introduction

Currently, autism is considered one of the most visible and widely discussed human conditions, with one in 36 children diagnosed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Thanks to a growing number of studies involving those with autism, we can now confidently say that physical activity provides a wider range of benefits, including significant gains in social and communication skills.

In partnership with Exercise Connection, ACSM created the Autism Exercise Specialist Certificate to equip exercise professionals and members of the interprofessional health care team with essential, evidence-based knowledge. Supported by an independent research study and fine-tuned in the field, this specialized training empowers professionals on the role of exercise, the use of tools and effective implementation of exercise and physical activity programming for people with autism.

As exercise professionals and members of the interprofessional health care team, we have both the responsibility and opportunity to reduce barriers to physical activity and fitness. Get ready to make a profound impact with the Autism Exercise Specialist Certificate.

Who qualifies to earn this certificate?

- Athletic trainers
- NCCA-accredited fitness professionals
- Physical and adapted physical education teachers
- Physical therapists and PTAs
- Occupational therapists and COTAs
- Recreational therapists
- Speech-language pathologists
- Special education teachers
- Nurses
- Students pursuing any of the above fields

Goal Statement for the Course

The aim of the Autism Exercise Specialist Course is to empower members of the interprofessional team with essential, evidence-based information on the role of exercise, the use of tools and effective implementation of exercise programs for people with autism.

Course Overview

This interactive, six-module course is designed to take approximately 12 hours (adding 1.5 for final summative case studies).

Module 1: Welcome to the Course. 30 minutes Module 2: Overview of Autism. 2 hours

Module 3: Evidence-Based Practices for Autism. 1 hour, 30 minutes

Module 4: Modified Client Consultation & Assessment. 1 hour, 30 minutes

Module 5: Autism Exercise Program Design. 3 hours

Module 6: Adapting the Exercise Session and Session Management. 2 hours

Course Outcomes

- Use standard health assessment tools and, when available, school-based, or private assessments, to develop the foundation of client's exercise program;
- Develop exercise programs and demonstrate exercises by applying evidence-based teaching strategies for those with autism;
- Lead and motivate individuals in both an individual and group setting;
- Use various instructional (e.g., visual supports, videos, technology) strategies to promote physical activity;
- Create a positive exercise experience and enhance physical fitness and overall well-being; and
- Advocate the value of exercise for the autistic community.

Learning Considerations

- This course is designed for members of the interprofessional care team interested in the role of exercise for people on the autism spectrum. It is designed for asynchronous, self-paced delivery.