



# Staff Report

City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.B

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**Meeting Date:** May 22, 2024

**From:** Anne V. Ambrose, Assistant City Manager

**Title:** Report on Becoming a Certified Autism Center

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

This report is for information only.

**BACKGROUND:**

At the request of the Mayor Pro Tem Ross, staff has contacted the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) to research the process our City would go through to become a Certified Autism Center. There are two types of certifications that a City can pursue: a Certified Autism Center (CAC) and an Autism Certified City (ACC). The requirements to become a CAC through IBCCES include training at least 80% of public-facing staff from the organization in autism and sensory disorders through IBCCES. The process may also include an onsite review. The goal is to better prepare staff and management to serve individuals with autism or sensory needs. Recently, the City of Palm Desert became the first City in California to receive this designation.

The Autism Certified City (ACC) designation, 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 Arizona is the first city in the nation to be designated as an Autism Certified City (ACC). [Visit Mesa: The First Autism Certified City in the world | Visit Mesa](#) In a similar vein, Visit Greater Palm Springs is currently working with local hospitality related businesses (hotels, attractions, entertainment venues, and the like) to have the region designated a Certified Autism Destination (CAD) to showcase inclusive and accessible events and activities for families with members that have autism or sensory needs.

**DISCUSSION:**

Staff received a quote from Ms. Meredith Tekin, the President of IBCCES for the cost of training necessary for our City to become a Certified Autism Center. Ms. Tekin was provided with information on our workforce and our employees' roles and made recommendations on five different types of training depending on the employee's job duties.

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A brief description of each training program is listed below:

30-minute ASA	Basic recreation/customer service type of training - what is autism, sensory needs and triggers, best practices for communication, basic safety awareness
4 CE leadership program	Includes the 30-minute ASA but more in depth - additional requests individuals may have and co-occurring needs, parent/caregiver communication, etc.
First Responder + Law Enforcement	similar base training with different scenarios based on type (FR vs LE) - will review communication best practices, sensory needs, how to approach, common signs someone may be autistic, safety awareness and sensory triggers, etc.
CNP - Certified Neurodiversity Professional	"manager" level training about neurodiversity in the workplace - challenges, strengths and how to support, as well as the importance of inclusion - covers autism, ADHD, dyslexia primarily - has modules on giving feedback/coaching, interviewing and hiring, and additional accommodations that can be made in the workplace along with anxiety and mental health impacts
Neurodiversity 30 min	"co-worker" level training about neurodiversity in the workplace - challenges, strengths and how to support, as well as the importance of inclusion - covers autism, ADHD, dyslexia primarily

If the City becomes a Certified Autism Center, the City will receive a framed certification, window cling, staff name decals and pins; a press release for distribution, validated digital certification badge for display on the City’s website, and listing on AutismTravel.com as a Certified Autism Center. [Autism Travel Directory: Your Resource for IBCCES Approved Locations](#)

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The total cost of the proposed training is \$11,287, which includes a discount of \$10,285. The certification must be renewed every 2 years with updated training provided for staff at each certified organization so it is anticipated that the training costs would need to be budgeted biannually.

**FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Goal F: Embracing, Inclusive Community

Objective: Cathedral City is valued and respected as a community that welcomes and embraces diversity, has an abundance of high quality and affordable housing options and vibrant businesses. Our neighborhoods are attractive, well-maintained, and issues surrounding homelessness have been compassionately addressed.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. IBCCES Training Quote