

Communication Skills Training

The Academy of Communication in Healthcare (ACH) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving healthcare through education and research to enhance communication skills.

ACH communication skills training programs:

- Equip learners with practical skills.
- Propel more effective communication with patients, families, and colleagues.
- Offer on-site skills training to healthcare organizations that support skill development among clinicians, teams, and leaders.
- Emphasize small group learning that immerses participants in a supportive environment.
- Provide large group presentations, develop customized programs, and offer an intensive train-the-trainer process for systems who aim to implement an internalized program.

We tailor the content and delivery methods of our communication skills training programs to the specific needs of individual healthcare professionals and the organizations that they serve. Our expert faculty devote time outside their regular duties as clinicians and medical educators to conduct on-site training delivered locally for health systems, community health clinics, academic medical centers, private practice groups and more.

All funding generated from the delivery of ACH education programs contributes to the ongoing mission of improving healthcare through better communication, better relationships, and better care.

The Fundamental Workshop

“Improving Experiences with Relationship Centered Communication”



ACH delivers an evidence-based fundamental workshop that has been proven to enhance communication skills among clinicians and across healthcare teams. Relationship-centered communication skills lead to better outcomes for patients, clinicians, teams and health care institutions.

The fundamental workshop centers around brief didactic presentations blended with live demonstrations, skills practice activities, guided feedback and coaching. Participants learn relationship-centered communication skills, which connect to core domains impacting patient experience measures of listening carefully, treating with courtesy and respect, and explaining things in a way that patients can understand.

Fundamental Skills



Features of the Program

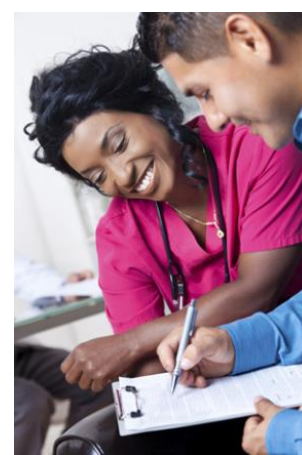
- ACH expert faculty leaders represent a variety of clinical and medical educational backgrounds. We support peer-to-peer learning environments.
- The workshop is delivered on-site at your location. Our faculty travel to you. We strive to accommodate your scheduling needs, and we will coordinate a delivery approach to meet your needs.
- Based on your goals, we adapt the delivery of each workshop to the needs of the learners. The content applies across a variety of disciplines, and we tailor the learning experience based on the participants who will attend.
- Most fundamental workshops occur as 8 hour programs; customized options may include offerings of different lengths.
- Attendees earn continuing education credits.
- Pricing varies based on number of participants, duration of the program, customization needs, and more.

Individualized Coaching

Clinicians with specific learning goals, including targeted efforts to improve patient experience outcomes, often benefit from individualized communication coaching sessions. In most cases, coaching occurs as a one-on-one appointment in which an ACH faculty member will monitor the participant by helping to set communication development goals.

The session also involves observation and feedback as an ACH faculty mentor observes the participant in real-time encounters with patients and/or colleagues. Coaching often occurs soon after a participant has attended a fundamental workshop, as reinforcement of that initial learning experience.

Most personalized coaching sessions occur on-site at the participants' area of practice. Sessions are typically scheduled as 90 -120 minute sessions, allowing for specific and supportive feedback tailored toward individual learning goals.



Advanced Communication Workshops

Challenging Conversations with Patients



Participants in this workshop will address common communication challenges, including the following themes: breaking bad news, addressing unmet expectations, and managing high emotion. This workshop will review how the fundamental skill sets apply to these scenarios and will offer strategies for communicating effectively to overcome these challenges.

Challenging Conversations with Colleagues



Differences are inherent, even necessary, in healthcare settings. However, even under optimal circumstances, conflicts inevitably and frequently arise, and complexity and hierarchy in healthcare often amplifies emotions in conflict. Without specific training in conflict management, many either engage in unpleasant confrontations or withdraw. This workshop will describe skills that move beyond these two reactions and transform conflict into an opportunity to develop effective collaboration.

Communicating Effectively on Healthcare Teams



Enhanced team communication and collaboration leads to improved patient experiences, better clinical outcomes, and reduced patient complaints. High-performing teams also experience heightened morale among team members and increased staff retention. As team members learn to attend to the needs, strengths and diverse backgrounds of colleagues, they enhance collaborative team performance. This workshop will guide participants to apply fundamental communications skills to enhance the team dynamic.

Culture and Diversity



Communicating across differences is a mainstay of healthcare interactions. Realizing the richness of our cultural and personal backgrounds enhances our abilities to connect with patients. Inevitably, our personal or cultural assumptions include 'blind spots' that often pose challenges. In addition, there is ample evidence that differences in race, gender, sexuality, and other forms of diversity strongly influence communication patterns, not to mention the quality of medical care. This workshop conveys basic and advanced approaches to communicating across differences.

Advanced Communication Workshops

Coaching Skills for Supporting Communication Improvement



This intensive workshop series will provide opportunities to practice a model and utilize tools for coaching members of the healthcare team to achieve their potential as adult learners when working with patients, coworkers, on interdisciplinary teams and with learners at multiple levels of expertise.

Participants will strengthen their ability to coach effectively by (1) building skills related to forming strong coaching relationships, (2) diagnosing and assessing an individual's specific needs, and (3) developing and implementing effective coaching strategies for changing behaviors. Key fundamental skills related to feedback, empathy and facilitating reflection and intentional change will be emphasized.

Communication and the Electronic Health Record



Implementation of the electronic health record (EHR) has in many cases disrupted the dynamics of patient-clinician communication. Physicians train to use EHRs from a technical standpoint, giving only minimal attention to integrating the human dimensions of the patient-clinician relationship into the computer-accompanied medical visit. This workshop introduces a model that empowers clinicians to remain relationship-centered while effectively using EHRs.

Patient Engagement and Motivational Interviewing



Motivational interviewing techniques enable clinicians to offer a supportive, facilitative, and respectful atmosphere for patients to explore beliefs impacting health behavior change. Skillful communication equips clinicians to respond emphatically and collaboratively when patients voice ambivalence or reluctance about changing behavior, including risky behaviors. This workshop identifies specific skills to help clinicians explore and appreciate patients' attitudes, values, and feelings about health behavior change. Participants will be given tips to implement more effective conversations regarding recommendations and advice.

Shared Decision-Making



Truly patient-centered care involves an understanding of the patient's unique circumstances, values, and preferences in order to help patients reach decisions based on individual needs. Shared decision-making (SDM), a challenging best practice, is a learnable skill. This workshop will guide participants through the practice of eliciting patient preferences, to communicating risks and benefits effectively, and to recognize and help patients resolve decisional conflict.

Train-the-Trainer Programs: Developing Facilitators of Relationship-Centered Communication



ACH has helped institutions across the country establish internal expertise through delivering train-the-trainer programs. Growing programs with local champions as skills trainers provides institutions with renewable ways of supporting internal development and lasting culture change. The phases of the program include: preparing for implementation of the program, having program participants undergo a fundamental communication skills workshop and then understanding the theoretical and practical rationales underlying the workshop, setting up practice sessions for participants to achieve mastery, and ensuring long-term viability of a communication skills improvement initiative. Train-the-trainer programs are a viable way to create enduring communities of local experts who can implement and support institutions’ commitments to excellence in the communication skills of their clinicians.

Our approach tailors our foundational curriculum to fit the local organizational culture, so that internal leaders need not waste

time and energy to “start from scratch” or “reinvent the wheel.” We engage in a collaborative process and synergize around other internal programs and initiatives so that our partners can maximize local adoption. Our TTT partners receive permission to co-brand materials so that program reflects their local themes, logos, colors, and more.

Evidence shows that communication skills can be learned when delivered through effective adult learning practices. Trainers develop expertise in the following categories: facilitating skills-based practice sessions in small groups, providing specific and supportive feedback to participants, and fostering improved communication skills among colleagues.

Five Phase Process for Certification

