



## NMT Certification Process

### The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics Individual and Program Certification

#### **Overview**

The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) is a developmentally-informed, biologically-respectful approach to working with at-risk children. This clinical approach helps professionals determine the strengths and vulnerabilities of a given child and create individualized intervention, enrichment and educational plans for children. Simply, the goal is to find a set of therapeutic activities that match a child's current needs in various domains of functioning (i.e., social, emotional, cognitive and physical). Patterned, repetitive and developmentally-appropriate activities provided in context of nurturing relationships are the keys to effective intervention. Active participation of caregivers and other adults in the child's life is important to the success of the NMT; indeed, by weaving various activities throughout the child's various relationships and environments, the majority of "therapeutic" experiences are provided outside of the actual context of conventional therapy. The model has three key components – assessment, staffing/training and the array of therapeutic, educational and enrichment activities.

#### **History**

Over the last fifteen years, clinicians at The ChildTrauma Academy have been using a neurodevelopmentally-informed approach in their clinical work. The NMT is a more systematized application of this comprehensive clinical perspective. In both open and in controlled clinical studies, the NMT is superior to more conventional one-size-fits-all approaches. The advantages of this neurodevelopmental approach lead to improved efficacy with very challenging children. The disadvantage is that application of this approach requires that the clinical and program leadership are well-versed in child development, neurodevelopment and clinical work, and have the capacity to build teams that include a range of multidisciplinary partners. This multi-component expertise is required to direct the NMT assessment, staffing and intervention processes.

#### **Rationale for Certification**

Since 1991, the CTA has been working to share the NMT with colleagues and related professionals. Interest in adopting elements of the NMT is high. Unfortunately the NMT is not merely an "assessment" or an "instrument" that can be adopted and implemented in clinical practice or within a specific program without significant training and supervision. Certainly the core principles of the NMT can be, and have been, applied within practice and program development without extensive training. Experienced clinicians who hear or read about the

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NMT can easily incorporate elements of this approach. We have heard from many of our colleagues that this perspective has helped them in their work. Despite this, we have also heard many distortions of this approach and misunderstandings of the true NMT. In response to the demand and in order to ensure some element of conceptual integrity, the CTA is now offering various levels of certification in NMT.

Each level of certification indicates that an individual or institution have participated in a certain level of training and exposure to the NMT in its various applications. The outline of this NMT certification process follows. Modifications to the specific elements required for certification are possible depending upon the unique strengths and needs of the clinician or institution; the general elements of certification at each level, however, will remain similar.

### **Phase I: Introduction to the Key Concepts, Principles and Rationale for the NMT**

*Objective:* This is the basic introduction to the key principles that underlie the clinical applications. At the end of this phase, a clinician will have a working understanding of some of the major issues related to development of the brain under adverse circumstances such as neglect or exposure to violence and other traumatic stressors. This overview does not imply any specific clinical expertise and the clinician is not yet trained in use of any specific NMT tools or measures but will have been introduced to, and be generally familiar with, the application of the NMT in several clinical settings. Many of the trainings provided by Dr. Perry and other CTA Fellows throughout the country would qualify as day one of the didactic portion of Phase I certification. CTA-partner projects in several states (Illinois, Kansas, and Oklahoma) have set up onsite 2-day trainings that would qualify as the didactic elements of Phase I training. Please contact the CTA to see if trainings already attended may qualify.

For Program or Institutional Certification, all key clinical, administrative, program and consulting staff must participate in the equivalent of Phase I. This is typically provided by an onsite visit from Dr. Perry who will provide the two-day didactic training, with Day one open to the greater community (including the Program's key stakeholders, partners, funders and leaders in education, mental health, child protection); Day Two is for the Program's staff and clinical consultants.

#### *Key Elements:*

##### 1. Didactic

Introduction to the principles of NMT: One day training (six hours)

Clinical applications of NMT: One day training (six hours)

##### 2. Multimedia

CTA Multimedia Series 1: *Living and Working with Maltreated Children (seven 40 minute videos; pre and post test) and related support materials*

*CTA DVD: Early Childhood and Brain Development: How Experience Shapes Child, Community & Culture*

3. Readings

NMT Introductory Materials: (syllabus includes approximately ten hours of reading)

4. Case-based seminars

Active participation in 10 NMT case-based clinical staffings with the clinician's or program's clients (90 minutes each; webinar with audio-conference); this includes the preparation of case abstract and presenting of the client.

Participation in the NMT Case-based series for one year (Fall, Winter and Spring/Summer sessions) (30 cases)

**Phase II: Clinical Application of the NMT Approach: Case-based training**

Objective: This is an advanced, clinically-focused component of the certification process. Clinicians are exposed to, and develop experience with, the NMT as applied in a range of clinical and educational settings with children and youth at all stages of development. At the end of this component of certification, the clinician will be capable of more formal application of the NMT approach in their work. Access to and ongoing use of CTA developed assessment and staffing materials for the NMT is provided.

As with Phase I, Phase II is necessary for Program or Institutional Certification. The program participants in this level of certification are typically the clinical staff, consultants and key program leadership.

Key Elements:

1. Didactic

Advanced clinical application of the NMT (one day onsite or six hours online) focusing on the following areas:

Neurodevelopmental assessment

Clinical staffing process

Intervention assembly (identifying and engaging practitioners in a range of therapeutic activities)

Parent and community engagement

2. Case-based seminars

Onsite: (One day): CTA Fellow focusing on advanced clinical area (e.g., therapeutic touch, infant mental health, play therapy)

NMT Case-based staffings using LiveMeeting: 20 staffings with clients (either individual or institutional)

NMT Case-based series: participation in one year of CTA Case-based series (Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer): 30 staffings

3. Multimedia

CTA Series 3: *Introduction to the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics*

4. Online courses

The Amazing Human Brain

Surviving Childhood

Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children

5. Readings

NMT Phase II Reading List (approximately 12 hrs of reading)

**Phase III: Systems Implementation: Integrating the NMT with Existing Programs and Practices**

Objective: This component of certification is directed to institutions rather than individual practitioners. The entire staff is provided Level I and key clinical staff are provided Level II certification experience. In addition, an institutional review of existing practices is included as part of the process of making modifications in the institutions selection, training and support of staff; modifications of existing assessment, staffing and intervention practices. At the end of this phase of certification an Institutional site is capable of using the NMT as a regular organizing component of their clinical programs. Institutional certification is maintained by demonstration of ongoing training and capacity-building practices (e.g., participation in CTA NMT Case-based training series). Often an internal Train-the-trainer component is included to facilitate the ongoing training of new staff.

Key Elements:

1. Onsite program evaluation, consultation and training (This process begins during the onsite visits required for Phase I and Phase II training).

2. Program review and analysis of intervention capabilities (This includes both onsite and distance consulting models)

Review of assessment process

Review of client populations

Review of infrastructure

Review of information management model

Review of intervention capacity

Review of systemic neurosociology

3. Case-based seminars (Participation in Phase I and Phase II fulfills elements of this)

Program staffing  
CTA Network seminars

4. Capacity Building

Staff  
Consulting clinicians  
Related community professionals (e.g., education, child protection, juvenile justice)

5. Integration of NMT with existing program

Assessment  
Staffing process  
Therapeutic intervention, education and enrichment activities  
Outcomes measurement

6. Participation in NMT Collaborative

Integration of key NMT psychometrics into assessment process  
Consent and assent for use of key data for outcomes and program evaluation

**Phase IV: Senior Clinician Training: Advanced NMT Certification**

Objective: This is the advanced clinical certification for individuals who have completed Phase I and II and wish to be the senior clinician guiding NMT staffings in their clinical work. This component involves a range of training and practice elements including observed teaching of the NMT Phase I content and leading NMT staffings. By the end of this advanced training, the clinician should feel comfortable directing NMT staffings and leading clinical teams applying the NMT.

For Institutional or Program certification, senior clinical leaders at the institution would be expected to develop Phase IV certification. The key elements of this level of certification for Institutional participants can be modified to complement to elements of Phase III Institutional Certification.

Key Elements:

1. CTA Institutes

Institute 1: Advanced CTA Institute: participant  
Institute 2: Advanced CTA Institute: supervised faculty  
Institute 3: Advanced CTA Institute: faculty

2. Case-based Seminars

Supervised leadership of NMT case-based seminars

### **Post-certification Advanced Training**

#### 1. Train-the-trainer

The CTA Train-the-Trainer (TTT) programs are created with the institutions or programs and will result in the creation of internal capacity to train new and incoming staff about the NMT and its various clinical applications. The specific elements of a TTT program are defined between the CTA and the partner organization.

#### 2. CTA NMT Fellowship

This is an individualized advanced clinical research or clinical training experience. Specific elements are defined between the CTA and the respective institution or individual.

### **Maintaining NMT Certification**

The CTA is contacted on a regular basis by individuals all across the world seeking help from either CTA or CTA-trained clinicians. We would like to be able to direct families and colleagues to individuals who have been exposed to and trained in the NMT approach. Once a clinician or program become certified, the CTA will maintain a list of active individuals and Programs certified at the various levels of the NMT. Individual certification will be for a two year period with participation in one quarterly NMT-staffing series per year required for ongoing certification as a Level IV NMT supervisor. For Levels I and II, one quarter of participation each two years is required for active certification.

Program certification will require a sustainability plan for ongoing Level I and Level II training for key staff due to turnover. In addition Program certification will require ongoing clinical leadership to maintain individual certification either in context of the sustainability plan of the institution or with the CTA.