

A. K. RICE INSTITUTE
for the Study of Social Systems

Training and Certification Program

**INTRODUCTION TO THE AKRI
TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
November 2008**

The A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI) invites applications from those who wish to pursue training and certification as group relations conference consultants. The application process and an outline of the training sequence are described below.

Format of the Training

The training process is competency-based and has three stages, including a preliminary application phase and Stage 1 and Stage 2 of competency development. It is designed to provide individual latitude in the selection of learning methods to achieve the required competencies. This means that applicants may develop the competencies through a variety of learning approaches including, but not limited to, attendance at group relations conferences. Throughout the training, the achievement of the competencies will be assessed by the applicant her/himself, her/his mentor, Training and Certification Committee members, and, in Stage 2, by AKRI group relations conference directors.

Benefits of the Training

The primary goal of this training process is to prepare those who want to practice consultation in group relations educational conferences through (1) learning about the conceptual framework underpinning this approach and (2) developing the skills to provide excellent consultation to participants who attend such conferences. The end result of successful completion of the training program will be certification to consult at any A. K. Rice Institute or Affiliate-sponsored conference.

However, the A. K. Rice Institute's premise is that the knowledge and skills acquired in the training program will prove valuable to anyone with a serious interest in understanding the many dynamics affecting the exercise of leadership and authority in groups and organizations. Mentored development of the competencies addressed in this training, the receipt of criteria-based feedback during training, and then assignment to a role as a Consultant Candidate in conferences provide excellent preparation for a variety of work roles. Those considering the training may find that the additional benefits broaden their effectiveness in their work lives.

Application Phase/Preliminary Competency Assessment

This phase includes the individual's self-assessment of six competencies that are designed to indicate whether the person has the basic observational skills that form the foundation of group relations consultation. Examples of these preliminary competencies are:

- Demonstrates general curiosity about what is happening in the group as a whole.
- Demonstrates the ability to be reflective and self-examining.

Two other people, at least one of whom must be an Associate in good standing of the A. K. Rice Institute, will also assess the applicant's abilities against the preliminary competencies.

The applicant will also be required to submit a narrative statement describing her/his interest in the training and certification process and indicating any previous group relations conference experience s/he has had. Payment of a \$200.00 processing fee is required at this time.

Applications will be screened for meeting the preliminary competencies by the Chair of the Training and Certification Committee. When the Chair approves acceptance, the applicant will be notified; then s/he will contact the Committee Member designated to assist the applicant in finding an available mentor and negotiating an agreement with her/him. Within three months of acceptance, the trainee will be expected to have selected a mentor and begun the competency assessment process for Stage 1. (Should the Chair decide not to accept the applicant into training at this time, s/he will be given recommendations about what s/he can do to prepare to apply at another time.)

A fee of \$600.00 is required upon acceptance into training.

Stage 1 of Training — This stage of training focuses on the development of introspective and intrapsychic skills needed by consultants to support good boundary work in their consultation to members of groups.

Once an applicant is accepted into the training process, s/he will do a self-assessment, applying the Stage 1 Competencies, and will then confer with her/his mentor to develop an individual development plan (IDP) for pursuing mastery of all of these competencies. The activities necessary for the applicant to develop the Stage 1 competencies may be varied, depending on the applicant's developmental needs. The Stage 1 IDP will be submitted to the Training and Certification Committee for review and approval before the applicant and her/his mentor implement the plan. The Stage 1 IDP is expected within a six month timeframe after acceptance into the program. Crucial to the acceptance of the IDP is the applicant's narrative evidence of having thoughtfully considered the level of mastery s/he already has of a given competency vs. the degree of mastery s/he is striving for in group relations conference consulting.

Examples of the Stage 1 competencies include:

- Demonstrates the capacity to maintain role and task boundaries in the face of positive or negative responses from others.
- Demonstrates the ability to recognize that individuals “carry” or express some aspect of the experience of the group as a whole.

During the learning in this stage, the mentor will be in contact with the applicant as s/he develops these more specialized competencies. At the end of this Stage, when the applicant and her/his mentor believe s/he has met the Stage 1 competencies, the applicant will apply for Consultant Candidate status by submitting a Stage 1 self-assessment with narrative descriptions of how each competency has been developed. Based on this, the Training and Certification Committee will determine whether the applicant is ready to move to Stage 2 of training. (If for some reason the applicant is not advanced to Stage 2 of training, s/he will be given guidance on what else s/he needs to develop before reapplying for Stage 2.

A fee of \$800 will be required when the applicant is advanced to Stage 2.

Stage 2 of Training — This stage of training focuses on mastery of the system-level competencies necessary to work in conference events, such as the Institutional Event, Application Group and Role Analysis Group, provide intergroup consultation, and be an effective work colleague with other staff.

In this Stage, the applicant will work in at least two group relations conferences as a Consultant Candidate in order to achieve mastery of this final set of competencies. Examples of these competencies, specifically focused on the skills related to conference consultation and leadership/followership work, include:

- Demonstrates the ability to follow those in leadership roles and to express differences in a responsible manner.
- Demonstrates the ability to examine how the dynamics of the staff group affect the conference as a whole.

Prior to receiving Consultant Candidate status, however, a trainee will need to submit a Stage 2 IDP, including narrative assessment of competencies for Stage 2, and will need to become an Associate of AKRI if s/he has not already done so. When the IDP is approved, the trainee’s name will be placed on the list of Consultant Candidates eligible to be appointed to conference staff roles by AKRI directors. After at least two conference experiences, when the Consultant Candidate submits a request to be certified, the assessment process for this stage will include: the Consultant Candidate’s self-assessment, including narrative, on the final group of competencies; an assessment of her/his competencies from two AKRI conference directors; and a supporting statement for certification from the mentor.

The Training and Certification Committee will decide on certification, and the applicant will be notified of certification or given advice on how to further pursue developing the competencies required at this stage.

A final fee of \$400.00 must accompany the request for certification.

Time Requirements for Training

There is a flexible time frame for meeting the competency requirements, up to a maximum of five years. However, the initial requirement of three months to get connected with a mentor and begin the process of assessing Stage 1 competencies will be monitored by the Training and Certification Committee in order to assure trainees get off to a good start. Likewise, the Committee will expect submission of the Stage 1 IDP within six months after acceptance into the program. Failure to comply with these timelines or to pay fees in a timely manner will nullify one's acceptance.

This approach assumes that people will enter training at various stages of capability to do conference consulting work and that their training will proceed at differing rates, based on their readiness and the intensity with which they pursue achievement of the competencies. In general, two to three years is sufficient time for most trainees to complete the program. A maximum of no more than five years is authorized for completion.

Cost of the Training Program

Applicants will submit \$200.00 with their initial application for training. After that, they will pay \$600.00 upon acceptance into training, and another \$800.00 upon moving from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of training. A final \$400.00 will be required when the applicant requests certification. These fees cover the training program along with a training weekend at the end of the program. It also covers the administrative costs incurred by AKRI in supporting the training process and provide mentors with a modest honorarium in recognition of their contributions. Fees are subject to change.

How to Apply

Inquiries or a request for an application form for the training program may be addressed to: The Training and Certification Program, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems, P.O. Box 1025, Rainier, WA 98576, or you may call (360) 539-5867 or email at akriceinst@aol.com.