



ACEing Autism PROGRAM DIRECTOR MANUAL

2021 Edition



Dear ACEing Autism Program Director!

Thank you for joining our team and generously committing your time and energy to bring our program to your city. We can't express enough how grateful we are that you reached out to start a program. It was your entrepreneurial spirit, can-do attitude, and aspiration to give back to your community that got you to this point. And it is these qualities, along with your leadership, communication skills, and a fair amount of patience that will help you through your role as Program Director. Along with your own incredible qualities, our staff will be continuously available to support you as you launch and run your program. This manual and the additional training guides you will receive serve as helpful references on getting your program running, and our team is here to support you through it all!

Time Commitment

As a Program Director, you will spend time preparing for your program launch, each session, and each individual clinic completing administrative tasks, and spending time on the court with volunteers and participants. This guide provides you with an estimated time commitment for each phase of this role, based on a 6 to 8 week program session.

Through each step of the process, please reach out and communicate with the National Office with updates about your progress. We will absolutely reach out to you, but we love hearing from you, and it helps us give you the support you need.

OUR MISSION

ACEing Autism is on a mission for children with autism to grow, develop and benefit from social connections and fitness through affordable tennis programming, uniquely serving individual needs while filling a national void for this growing and worthy population.

OUR VISION

ACEing Autism aims to be the preeminent thought leader on how tennis and sport develops children with autism spectrum disorder by reaching 50% of the 1M+ families in the autism community and helping them become aware of ACEing Autism, while impacting an increasing percentage of those reached with ACEing's unique programming.



Section 1

Program Setup

Lead Contact:
Director of Program Operations

Program Setup

(Time Estimate: 3 - 6 months)

1. Find a court location and plan session dates, cost, and times. Secure safe equipment storage (on-site or in your home).
2. Recruit participants (a minimum of 5) and volunteers (a minimum of 10).
 - Volunteers are typically 13 years of age and older, with a few exceptions. If you have a question about an interested volunteer who is younger than that, contact our Programs Coordinator.
3. Look over Program Curriculum Manuals and discuss progress with Director of Program Operations.

Find a Location for Your Program

You will want to establish a convenient, accessible location. This may be at a park, university, high school, or country club, but they must be willing to accommodate our program once per week (ideally on a Saturday or Sunday). We will provide you with a short presentation to pitch to them, and if they're on board, be sure to obtain written approval (an email confirmation will do) that identifies the dates and times that you will be using each court. Ideally, we will receive a formal commitment from the location that they will support ACEing Autism for at least two years.

- If the location requires payment for courts, please confirm the price with us first. Once approved, all invoices should be sent to the ACEing Autism National Office.

Keep in mind that we strive to keep costs low for our families, and court fees directly affect the total session fee. Many locations will donate court time to ACEing Autism or offer court time at a reduced rate—don't hesitate to ask. Also, try to keep climate in mind; outdoor or indoor temperatures should be as comfortable as possible for our participants.



Additional factors to consider

- Is it convenient for you?
- Is it accessible by public transportation?
- Are the courts secure and safe for a children's program?
- Are there restrooms nearby?
- Is there parking near or at the location?
- Our program can be large and noisy; will it be disruptive to others?
- Are the courts located in a relatively distraction-free environment?
- A hard-court surface is more practical than a clay court.
- Is there space to store equipment if you cannot store it at home?

Q. Where do I look for a location?

A. The following are suggestions for locations in order of preference according to our experience:

- **Schools and Universities**

Schools have the advantage of a potentially large pool of interested volunteers—many who are tennis players and/or required to earn community service hours, and can do so by volunteering with ACEing Autism. Most colleges have psychology or autism centers in which you can post volunteer opportunities for valuable hands-on experience working with individuals with ASD.

- **Private Tennis Clubs & Country Clubs**

Private tennis clubs often have well-maintained tennis courts and are usually quite interested in hosting our program. Over the past 20 years, autism prevalence has increased exponentially, resulting in an increased demand for adaptive programs. Hosting our non-profit program allows private clubs to give back to their communities and receive good publicity in turn.

- **Public Tennis Courts**

If you plan to host ACEing Autism on public tennis courts or parks, you may still need to obtain formal approval by the city. Check with your community for any rules or regulations on court use. Public courts are often free, which will help decrease the program cost for participating families.

Q. Where is the best place to store equipment?

A. You can store equipment in a locked area on-site if it's available, or you can store your equipment at home and bring it with you to each clinic. It's important that the equipment is stored in a safe and secure place, where other members of the facility are not able to access it. Our first shipment of Head equipment is donated to us by our sponsor—any Head equipment sent after that is not donated by the sponsor. We want to send you everything you need, and keep your equipment sturdy, up to date, and usable. We ask for your help in making sure that it's in your possession and sturdy for a reasonable amount of time.

Program Logistics

We will provide you with materials to present & pitch ACEing Autism. You will want to negotiate court fees & court day/time availability.

Determining your Program Time and Dates

It is important to know that, generally, individuals with autism respond well to consistency and routine. For this reason, the program must be offered at the same time and on the same day each week. Our goal is that our weekly tennis program will become a part of each family's routine.

Q. Why weekends?

A. Most children with autism have therapeutic services in addition to school during the week, leaving the weekend as the best, most convenient, and least stressful option for a recreational program.



Q. What time is best?

A. Consider hosting your program during the mid-morning or afternoon, but always keep weather in mind. For example, it may be too hot to hold spring and summer sessions in the afternoon.

For larger programs, the hour-long clinic can be held for two hours back-to-back (i.e., children ages 5 to 10 at 9:00 am, and children ages 11 to 18 at 10:00 am).

Q. Is one hour for all participants an option?

A. Yes! If there are not enough children in each age group to justify two, hour-long clinics, the age groups may be combined into one hour-long clinic. Keep in mind that combining a broad range of ages may require you to be creative when coming up with ways to teach on everyone's level while keeping everyone safe. Having access to two tennis courts for 1 hour is helpful.

Q. When & for how long does the program run?

A. Our programs typically run for 6 to 8 weeks during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Several programs run in the summer depending on weather & volunteer availability.



Recruit Participants & Volunteers

There is a huge demand for recreational programs for individuals with autism; 1 in 54 people in the US are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. But, we still have to work to get the word out and market your local program. Now that your location and dates are established, the next step is to get participants and volunteers registered. We will provide you with:

- Trifolds: These provide general information & a description of our program.
- Program Session Fliers: These will include the specific information about your program's location, dates, time, cost, and your ACEing Autism contact information.

Q. What is the cost of the program?

A. We aim to keep costs reasonable for our families. Most programs cost between \$15 to \$20 per clinic, depending on court fees. Parents will need to pay for the entire session, in full, when registering.

- **Scholarships:** ACEing Autism offers scholarships for families who require financial assistance. Local fundraising can be done to bring the cost of the program down or provide additional scholarships.

Q. Where can I market the program to recruit participants?

- A1. Word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing for our program. Contact families that you know who have a child with ASD. Once one parent registers, reach out and see if they can help spread the word.
- A2. Distribute fliers to offices of pediatricians, speech pathologists, ABA therapists, & schools that specialize in teaching children with ASD.
 - Google search: Autism resources [city name]. You will find big resource guides where you can find emails, phone numbers, & websites for the above services, and more.
 - Drop off fliers in person & send emails with the PDF flier. Many offices will include program information in their newsletters, email blasts, and waiting rooms.
- A3. Advertise the program on social media: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Encourage your followers to share your posts about the program.
 - Post to autism-specific and parent support Facebook groups.
- A4. Post fliers at the location hosting your program.
- A5. USTA: Your local United States Tennis Association section will be interested to learn about ACEing Autism's adaptive program & will gladly post information about the program on their website and social media pages.

Q. Where can I market the program to recruit volunteers?

As soon as you recruit an interested volunteer, the first and most important step is to direct them to register with us online at: www.aceingautism.org/volunteers.

A1. Colleges, Universities, and High Schools

- Many students are required to do volunteer work for community service hours. Distribute fliers and include a brief explanation of our program. Here are some tips for recruiting students from colleges, universities, and high schools:
 - Find contact information for psychology & education departments and autism research centers. They often conduct studies and work with children with autism, and students are required to put in certain hours working with individuals with autism.
 - Reach out to tennis coaches/teams, community service organizations, and school counselors.

A2. Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing for our program. Ask your registered volunteers to spread the word about the volunteer opportunity.

- If the program operates at a tennis facility, there will be junior players that may be interested in volunteering.

A3. Social Media and Volunteer Match

Advertise the program on social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and encourage your followers to share your posts. Post the opportunity on VolunteerMatch. It's free and easy!

A4. Engage with the Media in Your Community

Local TV and radio news stations are often interested in doing stories about non-profit organizations like ours! It can help to run one session before reaching out, but engaging with your local media is always a great idea.

Q. Where do I start when engaging with the media?

A. Initiating contact and building relationships with your local media involves researching the local television and radio stations in your area.

- Contact our Marketing Department, which will provide you with some basic information about our organization & some helpful pointers.
- Collect the contact information of local news journalists in your area from their station's websites, Twitter, and Facebook pages. With our Marketing Department, we can work together to reach out to these contacts.
- On air, you will provide information about ACEing Autism's mission & goals, your upcoming session details, and your story—talk about why you started a program, what it means to you, and the difference it's making in the lives of your participants, volunteers, and community.

Marketing Tips

- Always keep the ACEing Autism staff informed of any media activity made on behalf of your program. This way we can support you and work together in generating positive media coverage.
- Send your pictures, stories, and videos to ACEing Autism so we can share them within the ACEing Autism social media community.
- Always check to make sure the parents and volunteers have given written consent (in their registrations) to use videos and photos they appear in if you want to share with any media/on social media.





Section 2

Program Administration

Lead Contact:
Programs Coordinator

Program Administration

Set Up Your Program's Email Address

Each ACEing Autism program is given a unique email address from the national office. Setting up your official ACEing Autism email address will be your first step and we'll give you all of the information you need to do this. You will log in through Gmail with an official ACEing Autism domain: (city@aceingautism.org; for example, northhaven@aceingautism.org).

We request that all of your ACEing Autism related correspondence be done through this email address. Through this email address, you should set up your ACEing Autism Google Drive with digital materials specific to your local program (i.e., spreadsheets of session participant/parent contact information, PDF fliers provided, etc.). You will also have access to the ACEing Autism Intranet (our internal website available to all Program Directors).

Here, we will provide the essential documents, training guides, and information for:

- National Staff contact information
- On the court materials
- Marketing
- Purchasing
- Fundraising
- Technology

We will have many conversations with you via phone, Zoom, and email to guide you and provide additional training.

Participant Registrations

Your program location's page on our website will be updated by our Programs Coordinator with session dates, times, location, and a participant registration link, which all parents will use to register their child(ren). Parents will need to register for each session that you run; the Programs Coordinator will create each new registration form. All registrations will be housed on RegFox/Webconnex. This is where you will:

- keep track of the number of registered participants,
- find all participant information,
- and find parent contact information for your past, current, and upcoming sessions.

It's important that you learn to navigate RegFox to successfully run your session. Luckily, we have a how-to guide for everything you will need to know, and you will receive a phone/video training from the Programs Coordinator.

However, don't hesitate to reach out to the Programs Coordinator with any questions about RegFox and other administrative systems—we are here to help, support, and guide you through everything!

Review Participant Information

Participant Note Cards

Each participant's registration has valuable information that will help you and your volunteers know how to best work with them. Their registration will include: their age, handedness, receptive language skills, expressive language skills, the parent's goals for their child in the program, and general notes from their parents about their unique personalities, such as likes, dislikes, and behaviors.

You will be able to transfer your registrant information to the POMS system, which will generate this information into a note card template. Review and bring these to your volunteer orientation, where you will distribute the note cards to the volunteers you have paired each participant with. This will facilitate a smoother experience for both the participant and volunteer.

As the session progresses, encourage the volunteers to add notes to the back of the cards about the participant's progress, recognizing areas of accomplishments, challenges, and keeping them motivated & progressing from clinic to clinic, and session to session.



Your ACEing Autism email will automatically receive a confirmation email for each registration. The registration form will include the parent/guardian email, which will allow you to reach out to each registering family personally to introduce yourself and give session details prior to the session start!

Volunteer Registrations

POMS (Program Operations Management System):

The Basics

The main function of POMS is to house and organize your volunteer registrations, but you will use the system for many administrative responsibilities. The POMS User Guide is available on the ACEing Autism Intranet, but here are a few basics:

- All volunteer registrations are housed here.
- Our Programs Coordinator will keep background check expiration dates up to date for you.
- You will create a welcome email that you will send to each volunteer, orienting them to your program with dates, times, and any other relevant program information.
- You will keep it up to date with volunteer clinic and training attendance.
- You will upload participant information from Reg-Fox, generate participant note cards, and organize volunteer/participant pairings based on schedules & needs.

Background Checks

The safety of our participants is of the utmost importance to us. Please use POMS to ensure and communicate that all of your volunteers aged 18 and older have their required background check before stepping on the court.

- A completed and clear background check is valid for two years.
- ACEing Autism will administer & pay for the background check through a secure third party organization once a volunteer has registered online.
- This process takes five minutes, involves no cost to them, and the information provided will not be shared with anyone outside of the firm which conducts the check.

Q. How many volunteers should I have?

A. We want every location to have an adequate number of trained volunteers on the court each week. The recommended ratio is 1.5:1. Ideally, each participant will have one-on-one support with additional volunteers to feed balls.

- If your program serves 10-15 participants, you will need about 15 to 25 volunteers.

Reviewing each participant's registration information and getting to know them throughout the session will help you determine which volunteers to pair your participants with. Typically, the younger children require more volunteer attention, but each child is unique. So, the better you know the abilities of the children, the better prepared you will be to recruit an appropriate number of volunteers.

Q. What should I expect of my volunteers?

A1. Experience with autism and/or tennis is not required. Having some volunteers who play tennis is helpful. They will know what the strokes and activities of the program look like, and can successfully model and help teach these skills to participants and other volunteers.

A2. Likewise, having some volunteers with experience with autism is very helpful. Pairing together a volunteer with tennis experience and a volunteer with experience working with individuals with autism is ideal.

A3. The ACEing Autism volunteer orientation, training manuals, and online video resources will help prepare volunteers with information about common characteristics of individuals with autism and strategies for working with them.

- New registered volunteers will be required to read the volunteer manual (sent to them automatically in their welcome email. They can also familiarize themselves with the videos that focus on how to work with individuals with autism and on-court drills. These videos can be viewed on our website here: <https://aceingautism.org/training-videos/>.

A4. Express the expectation that volunteers attend at least half of the clinics in a session. Ideally they will attend more than half.

Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers are essential to our organization and your local program. When we say to our volunteers, “We wouldn’t be able to do this without you,” we really mean it. Retaining volunteers and expressing our gratitude to them is both vitally important and sometimes challenging. As we see it, the key is to facilitate a sense of personal investment by fostering a strong connection between the participants and volunteers.

Q. What are some tips for retaining volunteers?

- A1. Empower your volunteers by preparing them. Hold volunteer training sessions, create participant note cards, and offer time for feedback & questions before and after clinics.
- A2. Pair volunteers with a specific participant at the first clinic and see how they work together. Try to keep the participant-volunteer pairings the same from week to week if they work well together.
- A3. Pair your new volunteers with an experienced volunteer so they can learn from each other.
- A4. Encourage volunteers to write updates on participant note cards. This way, if a participant’s volunteer is absent, the new volunteer will have information about the progress the participant has made so far.
- A5. Make sure their time is valued. It helps to schedule your volunteers so you know how many are coming to each clinic. If there are too many volunteers for a clinic, assign a volunteer to take photos and talk to the parents.



- A6. Establish a method that works best for you to support your volunteers. We encourage you to:

- Reach out via email within 1 week of their registration being cleared. The email should include a welcome message, important site specific details (when to arrive, what to wear, where to park, etc.), and asking for their availability for each clinic so you can schedule your volunteers.
 - Remember, our participants aren’t the only ones who experience anxiety surrounding new activities, people, and places.
- Reach out to returning volunteers when you set the dates of each new session.
- Send weekly reminder emails—use the Remind App! (Instructions on ACEing Intranet)
- Debrief before and after each clinic.
- Take advantage of Volunteer Leadership Roles (outlined below) & delegate.
- Go above & beyond with: thank you cards, birthday emails, gift cards, end of session celebrations.
- Keep National Staff updated with ideas, successes, and challenges you may be having with volunteer engagement.



Volunteer Leadership

Because our volunteers are vital to our mission, to the success of our program, and to the care of our participants, we want to ensure that they see their impact, are inspired to come to each session, and that we are celebrating their efforts and achievements. The five pillars of volunteer engagement that we hope to focus on are:

- Recognize personal strengths
- Provide meaningful work
- Supply the necessary tools
- Seek input and feedback
- Give appreciation & gratitude

Inspiring our volunteers to attend as many clinics as possible and continue coming back can be challenging, but it is also the key to our success. All of our Program Directors handle volunteer retention in different ways.

- Provide the tools, inspiration, and knowledge about why their presence and efforts are valuable.
- Create genuine relationships with your volunteers and speak openly with them about expectations and goals.
- Remember that life happens and schedules don't always match up, but continue to reach out.
- Remember that you are a role model and mentor.

In turn, our volunteers will hopefully begin to create relationships with the participants and with you. They will understand that their attendance is vital to the success of our participants in the program.



Volunteer Leadership Opportunities

You're going to have some volunteers who are wondering, "What else can I do, beyond my volunteer work on the court?" Volunteer leadership opportunities can help them grow, learn, and contribute to their community and future. A volunteer leader is a volunteer who:

- Can take the lead on projects by coordinating it and taking responsibility for its success
- Can communicate effectively as well as explain and plan the details
- Can organize, lead, and inspire fellow volunteers
- Is a representative of ACEing Autism

You took on a lot of responsibility when you signed on as Program Director (probably on top of your job, going to school, & caring for your family). It takes a team of awesome volunteers to ensure that you can create a safe, organized, educational, and fun space for our participants and volunteers to thrive and be successful in. It's a lot of work!

Just by showing up each weekend for the majority of the session with a positive attitude and willingness to learn means your volunteers are helping to make this program location a success, and makes them an incredible volunteer. But for those aching to do and learn more, we have plenty of opportunities. Below you will find a list of the Volunteer Leadership Positions within your local Program Team. (Don't worry, your volunteers have this list in their Volunteer Manual too!)

Be open and speak to your volunteers about these positions and the opportunities available to them during your volunteer training and clinics.



Volunteer Leadership Roles

Title: Assistant Program Director

Key Responsibilities: Learn the ins and outs of the Program Director role, be a leader on court, run the program in Program Director's absence, help identify volunteers that would be good court leads.

Time Commitment: 1 - 2 hours per week

Qualifications: You have or want to learn leadership skills & tennis teaching skills. You're energetic, organized, and you love interacting with parents, volunteers, and participants. You've been volunteering for ACEing Autism or a similar organization for at least 2 sessions.

Training provided: Your Program Director will be training & leading you during the sessions. You will also receive support from the National Office Programs Coordinator.

Title: Volunteer Coordinator

Key Responsibilities: Recruitment and retention of volunteers, main point of communication contact for volunteers, liaison between Program Director and Volunteers, ensure volunteers are registered, background checked, and scheduled for each session.

Time Commitment: 1 - 2 hours per week

Qualifications: You have great organizational skills, excellent written and verbal communication, and an understanding of technology.

Training Provided: You will be provided a tele-training with the Program Coordinator and/or your Program Director. You will also be provided with the tools & training guides necessary.

Title: Marketing & Social Media Coordinator

Key Responsibilities: Participant recruitment, highlighting program via social media.

Time Commitment: 1 - 2 hours per week

Qualifications: You're energetic and passionate about the mission, enjoy photography, and have a knowledge & understanding of social media platforms

Training provided: You will be provided with marketing brand guidelines from the National Office, information from your Program Director on whose image can be posted online, and you will be given information to recruit participants.

Title: Fundraising & Philanthropy Coordinator / Director

Key Responsibilities: Help raise funds by organizing fund-raisers for the program for the purposes of providing scholarships to participants or reducing the cost of the program.

Time Commitment: 1 - 2 hours per week

Qualifications: You love talking to people, you're organized and motivated, you're creative, and you're looking to learn about fundraising.

Training provided: You will be provided with brand guidelines, the necessary materials to use our "Racquet Run" fundraiser template, and plenty of support from our team.

Administrative Workload

Program Administration (Total time: 1 - 3 hours per week).

Whether the administrative side of things is your bread & butter or the part of this job you weren't expecting, it's a big part of what helps each program run smoothly. We've already gone over a lot of the administrative work and how you can enlist volunteers to help. This is a brief overview of the things you should organize and think about in the week or two before your first clinic:

1. Track participant & volunteer registration, background checks, and scheduling.

A. All participants must be registered online (for the waivers and valuable participant information). Participant registrations are available to view in RegFox.

B. All volunteers must be registered online. Volunteer registrations will be available in your Program Operations Management System (POMS).

- Trainings on RegFox and POMS will be conducted with you and the Programs Coordinator. How-to guides will also be available for referencing on the ACEing Intranet.

2. Reach out to all parents and volunteers. There will be a lot of communication before & during the session about scholarships, registration, and the details of the session.

A. Inform past participant families & volunteers of upcoming session dates when they are scheduled so they have time to plan ahead.

B. Directly notify parents and volunteers of any cancellations that may occur during the session (due to weather, for example) and any subsequent make-up dates that are scheduled.



3. Stay in close contact with the National Office during this time.

A. Our Programs Coordinator will be in touch to check in about supplies (more on this later), so keep an eye out for that email. But also feel free to send a list of what you need when your session is approaching!

B. Every new volunteer & participant receives a T-shirt. You will have access to shirt sizes through participant & volunteer registrations. After year one, we can send returning volunteers & participants new shirts.

Payment

Payment is collected through RegFox at the time of registration. Currently, we do not accept checks or payment plans, except for special circumstances. Please speak with the Director of Program Operations for special circumstances.

Scholarship Information

ACEing Autism offers a scholarship for families who are in need of financial assistance. If you have a family that you feel could benefit from the scholarship, please connect them with the Programs Coordinator, who will send our application. For more information about scholarships, please contact the Programs Coordinator in our national office.

Supplies

Office Pack

ACEing Autism will provide you with a starter office pack for your launch, and resupply when needed. Included in the office pack will be:

- Generous supply of wristbands (distribute freely!)
- Tennis ball name tags
- Large visual schedules & lanyard visual schedules
- Over-the-net banners
- First Aid Kit
- Program Director shirt(s)

Tennis Equipment

As soon as we have a shipping address for you, we will order the tennis equipment needed to run your sessions. Generally, sending equipment to your home is the most reliable, so as to not have the equipment get lost at the tennis facility.

We are lucky to have a generous corporate sponsorship from Head Penn. They will donate the necessary equipment to run a successful program. If you require replacement Head Penn equipment in following years, we will buy that equipment for your program from Head Penn. From them, you will receive:

- Orange-dot, low-pressure Penn tennis balls
- Head racquets
- 3 Ball hoppers
- A set of 12 lines
- 3 mini-nets
- A racquet bag

You will also receive equipment from OnCourt OffCourt, including: rubber tee stands and a set of dots. Below is a guideline for which racquet size is typically most appropriate for each participant, based on age:

- Ages 4-5: Size 19
- Ages 6-8: Size 21
- Ages 9-10: Size 23
- Ages 11-13: Size 25
- Ages 14+: Size 26/27

Shirts

All ACEing Autism Program Directors, participants, and volunteers will be provided with a program t-shirt. You will be provided with a full equipment checklist with all available sizes. T-shirts are color coordinated as listed below.

Program Director: navy blue (runs large)

Participant: light blue

Volunteer: white

Review participant and volunteer t-shirt sizes in the registrations and send your order to the Programs Coordinator at least two weeks before your first clinic. It's always a good idea to order a few more of each size for participants and volunteers that will join your program later on. It is important that Program Directors and volunteers wear their ACEing Autism shirt at every clinic.

Closing Festivities & Participant Medals

The last clinic of the session is a great time to recognize the participants for all that they have accomplished in this session. We send medals to you for each of the participants to receive at the final clinic, but otherwise, we leave it up to you to decide how you want to celebrate the session with your participants & volunteers.

About halfway through your session, our Programs Coordinator will reach out to you to ensure that we send the correct amount of medals for your participants. Keep an eye out for that email!

About two weeks before the last clinic, you can begin planning your end of session celebration for families, participants, and volunteers. Many program directors have a pizza party on the court following the last clinic, some organize thank you notes to be written by the family to give to volunteers, many have the volunteers present medals to the participants. Feel free to make this event your own! We will reimburse you for these expenses.

Cancellations, Reschedules, & Refunds

Sometimes a clinic will need to be canceled due to inclement weather. As the Program Director, this will be your determination to make.

- Once you have decided to cancel a clinic, the first priority is to notify parents and volunteers by email, phone, or text.
- Decide if you will be able to schedule a make-up clinic, and notify parents and volunteers of this as well.
- Some sites, in areas with unpredictable weather, have a built-in make-up day at the end of the session.
- Following this, please notify the Programs Coordinator about the cancellation and whether or not you will have a make-up clinic.

If a clinic is canceled & cannot be rescheduled, our Programs Coordinator will process a refund to the parents for the cost of the canceled clinic. Please note, our policy states that refunds will not be issued for participant cancellations.

Insurance

All ACEing Autism programs are covered by a USTA general liability insurance policy. The policy covers commercial general liability on damages to rented property and personal injury. You may need to provide a copy of the ACEing Autism insurance policy to the location hosting your ACEing Autism satellite program. If you need an insurance document specific to the dates of your session, contact the Programs Coordinator.

Liability Waiver

A big part of having the parents & volunteers register is signing the liability waivers. Prior to anyone stepping onto the court, even for a trial clinic, parents & volunteers must sign the non-negotiable liability waiver.

Photography and Filming Release

Parents must also sign the photography and filming release. Please note that they can participate regardless of whether we are able to use their image.

It is not uncommon for a parent to decline to allow their child to be photographed or recorded, and especially to decline having ACEing Autism use their image for any posts or marketing.

Before posting any photography or film content online, and before sending images and videos to the National Office, please look through your participant and volunteer registrations to decipher who has declined.

Professional and Personal Photography & Filming

Telling the stories of our programs is one of our favorite parts of the job! Filming and photography by Program Directors, volunteers, and parents is encouraged! For photos and videos with volunteers and participants who have allowed their image to be used, we can post these on ACEing Autism's social media pages to share the work we are doing with a larger audience.

Social Media

Social media platforms are a great way to raise awareness about your local program and engage potential participants, volunteers, and supporters. Please contact us if you are interested in creating a social media account for your local program. We will discuss the option with you and provide you with training, brand guidelines, and ensure that your messaging is in line with ACEing Autism's national voice. You will find additional information on the ACEing Intranet.

Head/Penn Sponsorship

We are so grateful for the generosity of our partners at Head/Penn for their corporate sponsorship. It's very important that when we post any photos or videos, our participants and volunteers are using Head and Penn equipment (racquets, balls, hoppers, nets, lines, and racquet bag).

Our Newsletter

We send a quarterly newsletter called "Courtside with ACEing Autism." We send this out to a national audience of over 2,000 supporters, partners, volunteers, friends, participants' families, and our Program Directors.

Our newsletter includes a letter from Richard, our executive director and founder, program launch announcements, special events and highlights, and a "Spotlight" section featuring a participant and/or volunteer whose story we would like to tell. Please be sure to send us stories from your program so that we can highlight and appreciate the impact your program & volunteers are making in your community.

- Send our Programs Coordinator their name, a photo, and a short paragraph about them, their story, their impact, what you think is awesome about them!

Tagging Us

ACEing Autism's official social media tags are as follows:

- Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: **@aceingautism**
- Hashtags (#) to use are:

#autismacceptance #Sponsor2Serve

#AutismRacquetRun #ACEingAutism

#Connectingkidsthroughtennis #AutismAwareness

#volunteerappreciation

Communication & Feedback

Just like we do over at the National Office, remember to keep an open mind about new ideas for the program, and always ask for feedback from the parents and volunteers about their experience. While the National Office sends out parent and volunteer feedback surveys twice a year, your relationship with them is much closer. Nothing can replace a face-to-face conversation with a parent, so whenever possible, try to communicate in person. Parents are our greatest resource when learning about each child's interests, behaviors, challenges, and preferences.

Word of mouth is also our biggest asset in growing the program, so please remember to be open, honest, and respectful when discussing a child's progress and challenges within the program with his or her parents or guardians. Whenever you need support or people to bounce ideas off of, reach out to us. We love to hear from you about your successes, challenges, and anything we can do to support you! Both positive and constructive feedback should be welcomed, as we are always looking to improve the delivery of our program and meet reasonable expectations. We hope that you will find your experience as an ACEing Autism Program Director to be fun, educational, and rewarding.



Donations to Your Program Location

All donations to an individual site, as designated by donors either via the online donation checkout page or other written expressed intent, will be reserved for the Program Director's discretion to be used to support the program's quality and growth. Acceptable use of donated funds include:

- Tuition discounts and scholarships
- Local marketing efforts to recruit new participants
- Fundraising events
- Organized tournaments for participants
- Additional equipment not included in the Office Pack
- Training for staff and volunteers (conference or certified trainer)
- Volunteer appreciation events or gifts
- Discretionary donations for local businesses that have gone above and beyond in supporting our mission

All purchase requests and requests to use donated funds must be made through the google request form on the Intranet:

<https://forms.gle/ZhsAHDWZKVd12m2S9>

All requests must receive written approval prior to any written/verbal commitments and orders.

ACEing Autism highly prefers to pay directly instead of reimbursing staff. Therefore, we request that all details necessary to process payment be included in the purchase request. Purchases made directly by the individual site without a purchase request and written approval may not be reimbursed, and is at the discretion of management.

We also encourage you to consider using funds to improve our programs across the country. If you have a great idea that you would like us to consider implementing, and you would like to use donated funds, we would be happy to discuss the opportunity. We want to hear from you to help us grow ACEing Autism and continue to improve our programs!



Section 3 On Court & Program Quality

Lead Contact:
Quality Control Manager

On Court & Program Quality

Volunteer Training

Holding Volunteer Training Sessions before the first clinic of each session will be key to the success of your volunteers. Successful volunteers will continue to return, and ultimately, will be able to help you train new volunteers. This training will be used to familiarize your volunteers with our mission, curriculum, and how to work with the participants in our program. For the launch of your program, one or two members of our staff will be on court with you to present & conduct the Volunteer Training/Orientation. This will be a great starting point for when you run the next volunteer training session at the start of the next session on your own.

You will also receive:

- Our Volunteer Training Guide
- A presentation to bring on court with you
- A Behavioral Training Guide and Behavior Strategies Checklist (specific to working with individuals with autism)

Every one to two years, we will send out a staff member to conduct an in-person training session and help out with your local program needs.

Running the Session

On-Court Time {Total time estimate: 2 to 3 hours per week}.

- Plan to be on site at least 15 minutes before and after each clinic for set-up/teardown, volunteer briefing/feedback & questions, and introductions.
- Run each clinic according to ACEing Autism's program curriculum, but be flexible and adaptive with activities.
- Always ensure participant and volunteer safety.

Q. Do I run volunteer training for every session?

A. Short answer: Yes.

Long Answer: Yes, especially if you have new volunteers (highly likely). But remember, you will have volunteers who are returning to each clinic and each session. They can help you run your volunteer trainings! Giving responsibilities to your volunteers will show that you value them and encourage them to show up.

As a Program Director yourself, you have a unique opportunity to help our volunteers learn and offer them guidance, support, and opportunities that they can bring with them into the world.



Quality Evaluation Checklist

The quality of our programs directly affects the impact of our program for each participant, as well as the experiences of everyone involved. We see it as essential to our mission to have a developed and tested method of delivering our program and a way to maintain that excellence through constant teaching, learning, and support. The Programs Team has developed a Quality Evaluation Checklist in order to lay out the elements of and methods of delivering a high quality program.

Initially, this checklist will be given to you before your first session as a guide to help you stay focused and provide you with goals—as with any new endeavor, some of these items will take time and practice to include in the delivery of your local program. At the end of your session, we will ask you to use this checklist as a self-assessment, which will be discussed during the end of session follow-up call with the Director of Program Operations and Programs Coordinator. The follow-up phone call allows us the space to discuss areas of strength, as well as areas that need improvement so that, as a team, we can better address the ways in which we can support the specific needs of your program.

We aim to have one of our Quality Control Managers visit each program, during which they will also complete the evaluation. They will discuss the evaluation at length with you, followed by a call with the National Office staff in order to give the necessary support for your program. Our ultimate goal is to help you create an environment for a successful program.

Safety and Injury Prevention

Emergency Action Plan: Be Prepared

Emergency situations and/or life threatening conditions may arise at any time during athletic events, and quick action must be taken in order to provide the best possible care. Developing and implementing an emergency action plan will ensure that these situations are handled appropriately. The ONLY way to effectively respond to an emergency is to be prepared. To be adequately prepared requires:

- An emergency plan
- Proper training of personnel
- Maintenance of appropriate medical equipment
- Utilization of appropriate medical equipment
- Adequate means of communication
- Continuing education in emergency medicine for all personnel

We ask that all Program Directors use our Emergency Action Plan Form to prepare. This will be available on the ACEing Intranet. Please complete the form for your specific location and print out the completed PDF, as well as the 911 Script to keep on court with you at all times.

After a medical emergency, an Incident Report Form should be filed with the ACEing Autism's Incident Report Form, which can be found (you guessed it!) on the ACEing Intranet.

On-Site CPR and First Aid Certified Program Directors

As a Program Director, it's your job to teach the children how to play the sport of tennis to the best of their ability. It's also your job to keep them safe while they are doing it—First Aid is a big part of that equation.

We ask that every site location has at least one on-court Program Director who is CPR and First Aid certified. This is not only so that you can treat those minor cuts and scrapes, but also so that you can assess injuries and make informed decisions regarding whether a participant should continue to play or not. While serious injuries are rare, the moment they happen, they are often catastrophic and very scary. Even relatively minor injuries, like strains and sprains, can be less scary if you know what to do when they happen.

If you are not already CPR and First Aid certified, ACEing Autism will pay for your certification.

First Aid Kit

All program locations must have an up-to-date first aid kit on the court at all times. ACEing Autism will provide you with a first aid kit when your program begins and anytime you are in need of a new one.

Protecting Yourself & Others

- Treat all human blood and body fluids as infections
- Always use personal protective equipment (this always starts with gloves, but may include face shields, eye protection, and pocket masks.)
- All decontamination must include the use of an appropriate disinfecting solution, such as one part bleach to ten parts water.
- When performing CPR, always use a pocket mask equipped with a oneway valve to prevent contact with potentially infected body fluids.
- Contain spills immediately, then clean up and disinfect the area. Clean up contaminated broken glass with tongs, forceps, or a brush and dust pan. Never use your hands, even if protected with gloves.
- Handle all trash as if it contains sharp and/or infectious items.
- When removing contaminated clothing, carefully turn inside out as it is removed to contain contaminants. Dispose in appropriately labeled bags or containers.
- After removing personal protective equipment, wash hands or other affected body parts with soap and warm water. Vigorously scrub all areas to remove a potentially infectious contamination.
- Place all potentially infectious materials and contaminated items in closeable containers or bags.

Preventing Exposure to Blood-borne Pathogens

Q. What are blood-borne pathogens?

A. Pathogens are disease-causing micro-organisms. Blood-borne pathogens are viruses or bacteria present in human blood and body fluids, which can infect and cause disease in humans. The two most notable of these are: Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, and the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV). Any contact with infected blood or body fluids carries the risk of potential infection.

Protective Equipment

- Gloves
- Face shields
- Eye protection
- Pocket masks

What to do if you are exposed

Despite your best efforts, there is a possibility that you may be exposed to blood or body fluids during an emergency response. An exposure incident is defined as a specific eye, mouth, nose, or skin contact with potentially infected materials.

- Flush the area on your body that was exposed with warm water, then wash with soap and water. Vigorously scrub all areas. It is the abrasive action of scrubbing that removes contaminates from the skin.
- If you have an open wound, squeeze gently to make it bleed, then wash with soap and water.
- Seek emergency medical treatment following an exposure incident.

You will be counseled by a physician regarding the risk of HIV or HBV infection and any other follow-up treatment needed.



Thank you for your time and your contribution
to ACEing Autism. Welcome to the team!



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