



GUIDELINES FOR DBT TRAINERS

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Purpose of the document

The WDBTA as the international organization for DBT seeks to provide guidance and support to practitioners and services delivering DBT and to those training mental health professionals to deliver the treatment. As a group of experts in the treatment we have often been asked who is qualified to provide training in the treatment. We are also concerned to ensure that practitioners investing in training receive high quality training that teaches them accurately about the treatment. Ultimately our goal is to ensure that people receiving DBT receive high quality treatment. With these aims in mind, the board of WDBTA asked a group of international experts in delivering training in DBT (membership of the committee is listed at the end of this document) to consider what qualities, knowledge and skills a person should have to train in DBT. The aim is to balance high quality with the reality that in many parts of the world there is limited access to training. The WDBTA has developed this guidance to encourage any person or organization delivering training to aspire to the standards outlined. We encourage anyone delivering training to be clear about their expertise in relation to these standards and practitioners seeking training to ask questions about the person or organization delivering training so that there is transparency.

How the document was developed

The intent of the committee was to thoughtfully examine and consider approaches to DBT training likely to effectively and efficiently produce DBT adherent programs and providers. Throughout the course of our investigation, we examined training models, guidelines, and standards used throughout the United States and Europe. We began with a review of DBT training models submitted from Behavioral Tech (United States) and its affiliates, British Isles DBT, the German Association for DBT (DDBT), Dialexis (the Netherlands), and DGT Vlaanderen (Belgium). These and other training approaches used by committee members were examined over the past 18 months. Given the diverse nature of settings in which DBT training occurs, and the range of economic, cultural, and national conditions where DBT is used, we ultimately decided on a suggestive framework rather than prescriptive policies.

The reviewed models generally apply a competency-based approach for determining the level at which an individual performs as a trainer, rather than a model based on completion of a curriculum within a time frame. There is also general agreement that while the roles of DBT trainer and DBT consultant rely on a common and substantial base of knowledge and of practice, they also require different kinds of competencies. Across the various training models that we reviewed, there is considerable overlap and tacit agreement about **qualifications** for those who apply to become trainers; **competencies** expected for those who become trainers; **designated levels** of trainers (applicant, trainer-in-training, trainer, and in some cases senior trainer or consultant); **processes for evaluating trainers** for movement from one level to the next, and means to **ensure continued competence** over time. There are details that vary across different training organizations, representing adaptations to local, regional, and national regulations and internal “political” considerations. The guidelines overleaf represent considerable consensus across the different models, along with some mention of adaptations specific to certain organizations.

Qualifications for Individuals Applying to be DBT Trainers

1. **Experienced credentialed therapist or mental health practitioner:**
 - a. Required registrations, accreditations, licenses, etc.
2. **Adherent to the treatment**
 - a. Certified by DBT-LBC, Society for DBT in the UK and Ireland, DDBT (Germany) or equivalent and dependent upon what options are regionally available
3. **Mastery of content of DBT** (see competencies below),
4. **Participates in DBT program/consultation team, delivering comprehensive DBT** attending team weekly
5. **Conducts DBT related work** for a minimum of 1.5 days per week (as therapist, skills trainer, team leader, teacher, researcher)
6. **Individual therapy:** has practiced for minimum of two years, treating a minimum of two cases through to completion, including telephone coaching
7. **Skills trainer:** has taught skills training for more than one year; has taught full curriculum at least twice
8. **DBT teacher:** has taught DBT locally—in consultation team, seminars, local region
9. Has training in behavior therapy
10. Engages in regular mindfulness practice
11. Is up to date regarding research findings in DBT, populations for whom DBT is a recommended treatment, suicide, and suicide prevention and treatment
12. Attends national or international meetings on DBT and related topics to stay up to date about research and clinical updates

Expected Competencies to be a DBT Trainer

1. **Engagement:** to engage and hold audience attention
2. **Delivery:** to deliver curriculum clearly, geared to audience level of knowledge, using clinical illustrations as needed
3. **Accuracy:** to answer audience questions accurately, with and without role plays
4. **Dialectical Thinking:** to conceptualize dialectically, and to handle questions and differences dialectically
5. **Demonstrations of Treatment:** to demonstrate all treatment strategies and protocols through role-plays
6. **Consultation:** to provide accurate/effective consultation on programs and cases presented by individuals and teams

Levels of Trainers, and Movement Through Levels

1. **Applicant**
2. **Trainer-in-Training**
 - a. Observes expert DBT Trainers
 - b. Presents content domains at trainings conducted by a senior trainer
 - c. Receives feedback from senior trainers, evaluations from audience
 - d. Presents along with different trainers when possible, and receives feedback
 - e. Maintains documentation of progress in meeting competencies during course of Trainer-in-Training tenure
3. **Trainer**
 - Conducts workshops alongside other trainers
 - Presents along with different trainers when possible, and receives feedback from colleagues as well as audiences
 - Continues to gain experience by training alongside advanced (senior) trainers through any of the following methods:
 - Serves as the co-trainer at trainings that teach comprehensive DBT (all functions and modes)
 - Serves as co-trainer at specialty workshops
4. **Qualifications for leading team-based comprehensive trainings.** It is expected that training organizations will set standards specific for those trainers conducting team-based comprehensive trainings covering the following areas:
 - a. Experience-based competencies
 - i. Has been a Trainer for a specified number of workshops
 - ii. Has been Co-Trainer of several comprehensive trainings, and has successfully led two comprehensive trainings mentored by an established senior trainer

- b. Knowledge-based competencies
 - i. Has a general knowledge of dissemination and implementation science and effective training methods
 - ii. Has mastered content domains and competencies as listed above
- c. Skills-based competencies
 - i. Has executive consulting skills
 - ii. Can role-play any aspect of the treatment without preparation
 - iii. Can consult to most adaptations of DBT
 - iv. Can lead advanced workshops
 - v. Can provide consultation on program implementation and development
 - vi. Can effectively apply the principles of DBT to systems and the training as a whole
 - vii. Can effectively manage dialectical tensions that arise in systems and teams
 - viii. Can effectively mitigate personal tensions that arise in organizations and teams
 - ix. Can supervise individual therapy, skills group leadership, and team leadership
- 5. **Qualities of senior trainers.** The organization sets standards for trainers who are charged with observing, training, and providing feedback to trainers-in-training
 - a. Has all of the abilities described above
 - b. Is able to evaluate performance of potential trainers
 - c. Can provide feedback in an accessible manner
 - d. Training organizations set standards to determine that the trainer is acknowledged by others as an expert in DBT

Methods for Assessing Competency of Trainer-in-Training

1. In-person observation, review, feedback
2. Review of video-recorded training segments, with feedback
3. Audience evaluations of performance

A designated “Mentor” may be assigned to support a trainer in their journey to increased competency

Membership of the Committee

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Louisa (Wies) van den Bosch, PhD, initiator and former director of the Dutch and Belgium training institute ‘Dialexis’, Clinical Director Dutch DBT treatment Centre.