



**Question and Answers about Accreditation Process
For Incredible Years Group Leaders
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“learning through guided experiences”

Accreditation/Certification

These two words are used interchangeably in this document. Our European sites commonly refer to the process as accreditation and our US sites prefer the word certification. Both indicate the same review process!

Why should I get accredited in one or more of the Incredible Years programs?

Accreditation as a group leader in each of the Incredible Years programs is a process that maximizes the quality of the performance of the group leader and fidelity of program delivery, which in turn leads to more effective outcomes. We believe accredited group leaders implementing the full dose of the program will achieve improvements in parenting, teaching and child behavior similar to those reported in the published literature. Moreover, the process of working toward accreditation is considered part of the group leader’s continued training process after the initial 3-day workshop. This on-going training process involves telephone consultation with accredited Incredible Years coaches, mentors, and trainers, individual video review of group sessions, and group consultation meetings where leaders share videos and self-reflection of their sessions using group process checklists with other leaders and an accredited mentor.

Once a person has achieved accreditation as a group leader in one of the Incredible Years programs, he or she is then listed in our database as an accredited group leader for that program. IY may then share your name (with your permission) to agencies for possible employment as a group leader for a particular IY program (parent, teacher or child prevention or treatment program). Accredited leaders are invited to update-workshops and consultation days. Accreditation in the basic parent program permits the individual to be eligible to take the advanced course in the parent program. Accreditation in any of the parent, teacher or child programs allows this individual to be eligible to be nominated for accreditation as an IY peer coach or mentor in the designated program. *This progression allows an agency to develop a supportive infrastructure and sustainable training plan with internal coaches and mentors who will help new group leaders become accredited and will assure quality control and assessment of program delivery.*

How long does it take to become accredited in the program as a group leader?

This depends on the candidate’s prior experience running groups and knowledge of the content. Group leaders come from a variety of educational backgrounds and experiences and the length of time to become accredited will vary according. The aim of accreditation is to help the person deliver the program with fidelity and quality. The feedback from IY mentors and trainers is given until the person is able to achieve a competent level of skill. Some individuals are able to do this after delivering the complete program to 3 different groups of individuals while others may take 4-5 groups of participants. The length of time also depends on how soon the group

leaders seek feedback on their DVDs and how much time they spend in peer review and consultation. We find that group leaders with access to IY coaches and/or IY mentors are accredited more quickly because of the internal support they get.

If I want to train others in this program do I need to be certified as a group leader?

To be eligible to begin the process of becoming an IY coach or mentor it is necessary to first be accredited as a group leader. It is our strong belief that the best coaches and mentors are those who have worked personally in delivering the programs themselves and understand intimately the content and group processes needed. Coach training precedes mentor training. **Only accredited mentors and trainers are authorized to deliver workshops in the Incredible Years programs.**

***What is an IY Coach:** An IY coach is first accredited as an IY group leader. This person is recommended for becoming an IY coach because s/he is someone who is learner-centered and supportive, builds on a group leader's strengths, observes and monitors their skills and interpersonal processes with parents, teachers or children, prompts or models skills/thoughts and self-reflections according to the learner's goals, sets up behavioral practices and promotes learners' use of strategic behavior plans, and encourages, praises and reinforces learner steps in the right direction.*

Coaching is a method of teaching and learning that draws on social constructivist learning theory. As such, coaching promotes learning that occurs through social interactions involving understanding of learner needs and skills.

***What is an IY Mentor:** An IY mentor is first accredited as group leader and coach. Notions of coaching are central to mentoring but the mentoring process is usually a longer-term active professional relationship with the mentee/learner. This teaching-learning process involves further modeling and encouragement of a self-reflective practice, which includes an understanding of the underlying theories of cognitive, affect, and behavior change. Mentors are expected to provide expert knowledge to mentee/learners as needed and to explore and explain the rationale for why things are done a particular way. They use a collaborative learning process focused on specific mentee/ learner needs and goals. They understand the principles of evidence-based practices and are committed to helping group leaders' fidelity delivery of the program and to supporting their accreditation.*

Summary

The process of accreditation is not meant to be an arduous examination. Rather it is meant to provide adequate scaffolding, modeling, coaching and mentoring. The aim is to provide a supportive and rewarding process whereby leaders can self-reflect on their process, get feedback on strengths, obtain support for their efforts, and receive suggestions for facilitating groups more effectively. The initial 3-day training workshop is a bit like learning to swim on dry land. You learn about IY skills and techniques but haven't tried them out yet. Once you jump in the water (or start your first group) you will want support as you learn to apply the techniques in the pool (or your group room)! All of this scaffolding is part of the learning process, which will then lead you to swim on your own, perhaps first with some water wings to be sure you don't sink. Indeed the fading of coach or mentor scaffolding should not be too abrupt but rather gradual as the learner feels increased confidence.

This accreditation process is a *reflective experiential learning process* which is parallel to the process the group leader will also use with parents, teachers or children in their learning process. Group leaders provide modeling for the skills, break down the steps, and provide enough scaffolding and support so parents, teachers or children can be successful using the skills they are learning. Gradually group leaders increase the complexity and challenges and look for any difficulties. As parents and teachers experience group leader scaffolding, modeling, and coaching, they will understand its relevance for promoting children's learning. Group leaders seeking consultation and support from those who have had experience with Incredible Years programs is a strength, and soon they will be independently swimming and able to provide that support for others.