



Stroke/ Aphasia Recovery Program

FAQs for Prospective Graduate Student Members

- **What is aphasia (uh-FAY-zhuh)?**
 - Aphasia is an impairment in the ability to speak, understand, read, write, and/or calculate, usually acquired as a result of a stroke or other brain injury.

- **What is the STAR Program?**
 - The Stroke/Aphasia Recovery (STAR) Program is a community outreach program of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Health Professions (SHP). The STAR Program's primary mission is to provide a safe, supportive environment for individuals to practice communication skills and regain life participation. Currently, 4 licensed speech-language pathologists serve as supervisors for 16 graduate student clinicians who are training to become licensed speech-language pathologists. The program serves approximately 40 persons with aphasia and 25 caregivers.
 - The STAR Program involves weekly meetings for stroke survivors and their caregivers. Graduate student clinicians (under supervision) help group members establish communication goals and work toward meeting them in small-group, conversational settings. All of the individuals with aphasia have exhausted their medical insurance funds but can still benefit from enhanced communication skills and life participation. A Caregivers Network is also part of the program.

- **How did the STAR Program begin?**
 - In 1997 a group of five students in the TTUHSC Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences began the TTUHSC Aphasia Group Therapy Program. These individuals willingly put forth the efforts required for starting the group, which included organizing and producing a brochure used for both recruitment of clients and as a referral incentive for physicians. In 2010, the program changed its name to the Stroke/Aphasia Recovery (STAR) Program of Lubbock, Inc. It is now recognized as a non-profit organization. The STAR Program does not charge for membership: it is open to any individual who has aphasia and his/her caregivers/friends, whether or not they are clinical patients at TTUHSC or another facility in the Lubbock area.

- **How many groups are there within the STAR Program?**
 - Currently there are a total of 8 groups, with 2 student clinician assigned to each group. Most groups serve 2-8 individuals with similar types and severity levels of aphasia. The Caregivers Network is the largest group, with approximately 15 members who attend regularly.

- **What is the Caregivers Network?**
 - The Caregivers Network was established in 2001 for spouses, children, paid caregivers, and friends of persons with aphasia. It is 1 of the 8 groups in the STAR Program. The weekly meetings provide an opportunity for members to share weekly disappointments, accomplishments, struggles, frustrations, and coping strategies with others in the same

situation. Additionally, guest speakers and hands-on activities provide education and psychosocial support. Clinicians working with the caregivers obtain a unique perspective on aphasia and what it is like to care for persons with aphasia.

- When and where do the STAR Program small groups meet?
 - Currently, the STAR Program runs from September through May of every year. STAR Program group meetings are on Tuesday mornings from 10:00-11:00am. Each group is assigned to a room within the TTUHSC Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic. Approximately once per month, all groups merge for a larger, more social gathering.
- What are the responsibilities of each graduate student clinician?
 - The role of each student member involves a **2-semester commitment**. During the first semester (fall or spring), the student serves as an assistant to an experienced graduate student. The student gradually assumes the role of experienced clinician so that by the end of the first semester, s/he is ready to take over the group for the next semester (spring or fall) with a new assistant.

Responsibilities of Assistant Students:

- 1) Attend all planning meetings, STAR Program sessions, and staffing with supervisors.
- 2) Complete weekly, monthly, and semester paperwork for assigned STAR Program members (Training is provided).
- 3) Complete other assigned job duties as needed.

Responsibilities of Experienced Clinicians:

- 1) Attend all planning meetings, STAR Program sessions, and staffing with supervisors.
- 2) Complete weekly, monthly, and semester paperwork for assigned STAR Program members.
- 3) Coordinate weekly group sessions.
- 4) Mentor and train assistant students.
- 5) Complete other assigned job duties as needed.

- What are the benefits of being a graduate student member of the STAR Program?
 - In addition to providing a community service to members, the STAR Program provides an excellent opportunity for students to gain experience in interacting with adults who have aphasia and their caregivers. Students can earn ASHA-required clinical clock hours in the areas of adult and geriatric prevention and speech, language, and hearing assessment and/or intervention.
- How do I become a graduate student member of the STAR Program?
 - Email the STAR Program Director, Dr. Melinda Corwin, at melinda.corwin@ttuhsc.edu a 200-word essay explaining why you are interested in participating in the STAR Program and/or how you think you will be beneficial to the program. Dr. Corwin and the other STAR Program clinical supervisors (Dr. James Dembowski, Ms. Carolyn Perry, and Ms. Melissa Whitaker) will review all essays and notify you regarding whether or not you have been selected to participate prior to the semester in which you will begin. Note: If you are selected as a STAR Program clinician member, it will count toward your language lab credit during the fall semester and will not be a schedule conflict.

History of Clinicians

We are no longer allowed to post clinicians' names on the internet; however, Dr. Corwin maintains records of all students who have served the STAR Program since its inception in 1997.