


Date: February 22, 2024

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Alison King, Acting Director of Health and Human Services 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

**Subject: Status Update - Feasibility of Becoming an Autism-Certified City**

---

On December 6, 2022, the City Council requested the City Manager to work with the Health and Human Services and Economic Development Departments, as well as the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), to provide a report to the City Council on the feasibility of Long Beach becoming an Autism Certified City (ACC) with staff trained to interact with individuals with autism and other sensory disorders positively.

**Background – IBCCES and ACC**

The IBCCES is a globally recognized certification program established to set industry standards and create a worldwide community of trained and knowledgeable professionals. An ACC designation is awarded by the IBCCES to communities where key stakeholders, within six industry areas of: healthcare, education, local government, hospitality, leisure, and corporate members, are trained and certified to better serve individuals with autism and other cognitive disorders.

IBCCES is the only credentialing board working with communities to bring 20 years of industry knowledge and leadership so they become truly inclusive and accessible for all. This designation provides benefits to residents and visitors as the community comes together to ensure there are options for everyone.

**Requirements and Training to Become an ACC**

The requirements to become an ACC through the IBCCES include registering a minimum of 58 partner businesses throughout the six industry areas the for IBCCES autism training. The training process for each organization to receive certification is outlined below, and can be done online. These requirements may vary slightly based on industry and specific services provided by those stakeholder groups. For example, public safety training is specific to positions.

- Sign Up Online
- Complete Application
- Online Training
- Certification Exam
- Board Approval
- Certification Issued

The process may also include an onsite review, as well as the creation of sensory guides for attractions and interactive spaces. The goal is to better prepare staff and management to serve individuals with autism or sensory needs. Certification is required every two-years.

### **Benefits of an ACC**

The goal of ensuring that organizations and staff across the City of Long Beach are aware of Autism and sensory disorders is important and benefits of an ACC include:

- Improve quality of life for residents
- Increase tourism and visitors from an underserved market
- Increase community engagement
- Enhances workforce opportunities
- Create distinct inclusive brand, nationally and internationally.

### **Next Steps**

This certification would be a huge step forward for the city's goals of embracing and supporting each member of the community. The Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce has taken the initiative to understand the certification process and has met with representatives that will assist with this process. Within this procedure, the Chamber will work with representatives to identify businesses, partners, and other entities within the community that would like to play a role in assisting Long Beach as an Autism Certified City (ACC).

The partnership with the Chamber will be critical to seeing this initiative come to fruition. The City does not have the current capacity to take on this work, without significant additional staffing and redirection of priorities. The Chamber has offered to be the program lead and facilitator, working with the business community and communicating with the City on what the local government's role could be in assisting with these efforts. Given this shift in administration of the program, City staff will participate to the extent possible within existing time and resources, and support this noble cause and program. We expect to be able to support by attending certain meetings as necessary, training staff within existing training schedules, and providing support of the program through advocacy and communication. If the City's role needs to grow beyond existing resources, then further evaluation through the budget and priority setting process with the City Council would be needed. We look forward to this partnership with the Chamber and appreciate their leadership in taking on the program.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [Alison.King@longbeach.gov](mailto:Alison.King@longbeach.gov) or 562-570-4016.

#### ATTACHMENT

CC: DAWN MCINTOSH, CITY ATTORNEY  
DOUGLAS P. HAUBERT, CITY PROSECUTOR  
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR  
APRIL WALKER, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER  
TERESA CHANDLER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
MEREDITH, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
GRACE YOON, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
TYLER BONANNO-CURLEY, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA, CITY CLERK (FILE # [22-1424](#))  
DEPARTMENT HEADS



January 12, 2024

To: Tom Modica, City Manager, City of Long Beach

From: Jeremy Harris, President/CEO, Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce

**Subject: Autism Certified City (ACC) Support**

The Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce is recommending that the City of Long Beach support becoming an Autism Certified City.

The Chamber is on record requesting the City do so back on December 6, 2022 via city council agenda item 39 (22-1424). The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) focuses on training and certification members and cities to better serve those that are characterized by an autistic or other cognitive disorders. Through this certification, Long Beach will continue to address its goal of being welcoming and accessible to all residents.

According to IBCCES, more than \$268 billion is spent on autism services, and 1 in 6 people, including many autistic individuals, have sensory needs. The CDC reports 1 in 36 as the nationwide average, but in California, it's 1 in 22. This initiative will significantly impact the quality of life, access to services, and local employment. Moreover, supporting ACC benefits the local economy, as 7 in 10 travelers prefer inclusive destinations. Autistic travelers, known for loyalty, choose certified destinations where they feel welcomed.

This certification would be a huge step forward for the city's goals of embracing and supporting each member of the community. The Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce has taken the initiative to understand the certification process and has met with representatives that will assist with this process. Within this procedure, the Chamber will work with representatives to identify businesses, partners, and other entities within the community that would like to play a role in assisting Long Beach as an Autism Certified City (ACC).

We propose establishing partnerships and collaborations across sectors, such as but not limited to, healthcare, education, local government, hospitality, leisure, and corporate entities. This approach aims to foster inclusivity in Long Beach, supporting the ACC mission endorsed by IBCCES. Leveraging our unique position with active Chamber of Commerce Members, we invite the City of Long Beach to join us in these efforts.

Approve the concept and the designation of Autism Certified City for the City of Long Beach.