

SIMmersion Offers Free Training to Help Healthcare Providers Fight Childhood Obesity

The free comprehensive training includes educational materials, access to a virtual role-player, and ongoing and summary feedback.

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Obesity is at historically high levels and constitutes an important health problem in the United States. The [prevention of childhood obesity](#) remains a priority and the healthcare setting has an important role to play in addressing obesity. Healthcare

providers should have an understanding of the complex causes of obesity, including factors that are more readily modifiable, such as dietary intake and activity patterns. A child's weight can be a sensitive topic when talking with parents, especially if their children are overweight or obese. It

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Our goal, in making this training free, is to support providers in their fight against childhood obesity.”

Dale Olsen, Ph.D.

can therefore be helpful to talk about weight and body mass index (BMI) as they relate to a child's growth over time.

The Free [Comprehensive](#) Training

The virtual role-player simulation is designed to support practicing conversations that are expected to occur over a

series of appointments. Providers can prepare for a variety of experiences. Topics covered in this training include:

- Discussing a patient's activities and diet openly and collaboratively without judgement
- Utilizing the Motivational Interviewing process of engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning with a client
- Developing a collaborative client-centered therapeutic relationship



Figure 1 Provider talking with child about healthy habits

- Demonstrating respect by being culturally sensitive
- Effectively utilizing Open-Ended Questions, Affirming, Reflective Listening, and Summarizing (OARS) during an intervention
- Using rulers to have a client self-assess and communicate their motivation
- Eliciting change talk to strengthen a client's motivation
- Expressing empathy during a session in an appropriate manner
- Communicating concerns and setting achievable goals while offering continued support for the future

Practice Applying the Training Material

Providers can practice this difficult conversation in a safe environment where any mistakes will be a learning opportunity and do no harm. They will be talking with virtual role-player, Kelly Robinson, mother of a four-year-old daughter named Mattie.

Kelly has memory and simulated emotions so she can be programmed to behave like a real person. Her behavior is scripted to reflect the experience of experts who have held many similar conversations. During each session with Kelly, her attitude, family routine, and motivations will change. Each conversation with her will be unique, so that users can get a variety of experiences similar to those they could see when talking with real parents.

Feedback

Feedback on what the user said, and Kelly's response is provided after each exchange. Next steps are suggested to help support learning. Comprehensive feedback is provided at the end of



Figure 2 Provider practicing talking with role-player Kelly Robinson



Figure 3 Role-player Kelly Robinson, mother of an Overweight Child

each practice conversation. Transcripts are color-coded, to make it easy to find great statements and those where alternatives would work better.

Concluding Remarks

The free training is comprehensive and is designed to help healthcare providers learn a variety of different skills, not all of which will be used in any one appointment.

Funding & Research Partners

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