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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Paid Autism Fellowship Program, Funded by Ohio House Bill 33, Launches  
*Five Professional Autism Teams to Receive Paid Training  
Applications Due April 15, 2024***

Wickliffe, Ohio --- The \$200,000 in state funding awarded to a local autism non-profit is being utilized to train local teams as part of the SUCCESSful Fellowship Program signed into law by Governor DeWine in July. Twenty qualifying professionals will be chosen to participate in this first paid autism training program of its kind.

The board of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for Autism, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting people with autism and their teams, is utilizing the state dollars received in 2023 as part of Ohio House Bill 33. The non-profit is currently accepting applications for five teams of four professionals representing their program, agency or district to participate in the fellowship program, which will begin in mid June of 2024 and will be completed in a 14 month, 3-phase approach.

“The value of this program is to ignite a change in the paradigm for autism intervention and education,” said Lisa Welsh, project manager for the SUCCESSful Fellowship Program.

“Demand for autism services is significantly higher now for children with autism and it continues to rise. According to the CDC, prevalence of autism is now one in 36 and Northeast Ohio does not have the ‘brick and mortar’ buildings with programs or trained staff equipped to

serve this population. Every program has waiting lists, and these waiting lists continue to grow longer.”

Welsh explained that the goal of this program is to train already-existing autism teams to know, understand and use The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach<sup>SM</sup>, a best-practice, neurodevelopmental model that has been used for 28 years to help hundreds of children and adults with autism at Integrations Treatment Center in Wickliffe, Ohio.

“This program brings expert training to where children and adults with autism are being served and provides an effective and efficient model for intervention,” Welsh added. “This model yields unbelievable results and significant reduction in autism symptoms. This program aims to empower professionals in becoming master clinicians using The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach<sup>SM</sup>, an evidence-based, neurodevelopmental model for autism intervention.”

The ideal teams will consist of four professionals from the following fields: occupational therapy, speech language pathology, special education and psychology, The five autism teams chosen to participate in the pilot program will:

1. In Phase I: Learn The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach<sup>SM</sup> history, theories, and methods
2. In Phase II: Participate in 20 collaborative hands-on method application sessions
3. In Phase III: Design/implement/modify programming alongside master clinicians to be applied to a summer program slated for 2025 with part-time involvement from participants.

Aspects of the training program are flexible so that participants can continue with current responsibilities. Teams consisting of four professionals (an OT, SLP, SPED and Mental Health Expert (ex. psychologist, social worker, counselor) should submit their applications by April 15th and intend to stay employed at their work setting for the duration of the program

On a first-come first-serve basis, the program leadership team will review applications, conduct interviews and select five team finalists to participate in the program. Teams will be announced in mid May of 2024.

The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach<sup>SM</sup> intervention model has been used primarily in northeast Ohio for the past 28 years to educate and treat thousands of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder since it was first coined in 1998. It is a research-based model, uniquely grounded in the science of brain development that has shown predictable and rapid results.

“Our goal has always been to understand and best-serve people with autism and to support their families, caregivers, and professional teams to do the same,” says Dr. Scotese-Wojtila, board president of SFA and a pediatric occupational therapist who has been assessing and treating individuals with autism for 36 years, primarily through Integrations Treatment Center, located in Wickliffe, Ohio.

Within Ohio, roughly 185,000 individuals are diagnosed with ASD, 21,000 of which are school age, and remainder or which are not. As the incidence of ASD rises, so does the need for schools, therapy centers, residential centers, county boards, and government programs to provide comprehensive, accessible, and impactful autism intervention. However, there are barriers to providing these impactful interventions to Ohio students. These barriers include workforce shortages, limited team collaboration, team burnout, and limited team autism expertise.

The *SUCCESSful Training for Autism* Fellowship Program aims to directly address the latter, and to increase the accessibility of the model to teams serving both children and adults in various settings across Northeast Ohio.

“The goal of the 3 phase pilot program is to train autism teams to bring The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach<sup>SM</sup> to where children and adults with autism are within their programs and communities rather than them having to come to The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach” Scotese-Wojtila said. “As a consultant in Ohio-based programs, I see too many loving and skilled Intervention Specialists, psychologists, and rehab services personnel struggling in their current settings to properly meet the demands of this very diverse and complex population.”

Scotese-Wojtila and her team believe this program is a way of contributing to the workforce shortage and burn out situation with many autism teams looking to adopt a well-rounded and effective program if they just had access to learning it and the support of their workplaces to implement it.

“We know districts don’t have a lot of money to train their autism team, so our 501(c)(3) can now help those teams directly, thanks to Ohio House Bill 33.”

SUCCESS for Autism is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that supports people with autism. Integrations Treatment Center (ITC) is an education setting, day treatment center, and research facility. Both organizations are located in Wickliffe, Ohio. Established in 1995 by Dr. Lynette Scotese-Wojtila, ITC has helped thousands of individuals with autism and their families.

For more Information visit: <https://www.thesuccessapproach.org/tsafellowship>

[6 Minute Information Link- Click Here!](#)

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