

American Association of Suicidology

# ACCREDITATION INFORMATIONAL PACKET



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# CRISIS SERVICE ACCREDITATION



The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) has been accrediting crisis service organizations for nearly 50 years in the United States and internationally, and is the only accreditation program in the US to focus specifically on suicidology. The accreditation process strives to recognize exemplary crisis service organizations, and to support other related programs to refine their services according to these standards. These include but are not limited to: crisis services provided over telephone, texting, or web-based application (online emotional support), mobile crisis services, and other 24/7 services that support individuals in crisis.

## Why be accredited?

AAS accreditation validates that program service delivery is performed according to our internationally recognized standards.

- ▲ Help seekers and their supporters are assured that the services they receive have been assessed to be of the highest quality.
- ▲ Provides a competitive edge and additional credibility with funding agencies and insurance providers.
- ▲ Provides opportunities for modeling program excellence to other agencies and professionals.
- ▲ Allows programs access to criteria for systematic, ongoing self-evaluation.
- ▲ Assures staff and volunteers the organization is committed to meeting the highest standards of the field.

Our accreditation is recognized and accepted by the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and a number of state and federal accreditation requirements.

Achievement of Accreditation is issued for three (3) years.

**VISIT [SUICIDOLOGY.ORG](https://www.suicidology.org) TO APPLY TODAY**

# 14TH EDITION CHANGES

Crisis intervention and suicide prevention, as a field, has undergone significant transformation in recent years. As an international accrediting body of organizations providing crisis services, the American Association of Suicidology is committed to evaluating and evolving our own Standards of Accreditation to align with these changes to ensure all support seekers at every crisis service we accredit receive the quality standard of care they deserve. The 14th Edition of the AAS Accreditation Standards Manual was released in December of 2023.

## Significant 14th Edition Changes

1

**Removal of stigmatizing and coercive language** in acknowledgement of the critical and underrepresented voices of those with lived experiences.

2

**Inclusion of InformUSA (formerly AIRS) accreditation** for the resource data component, fostering reciprocity with a trusted accreditation standard.

3

**Addition of Multi-Language Service Delivery** as a service accreditation option, to recognize the significance of linguistic diversity and cultural responsiveness in crisis intervention.

4

**Development of Trauma Informed Care and Support of Crisis Specialist** to enhance their emotional resilience and effectiveness in dealing with challenging situations.

5

**Introduction of technology and records security standards** to facilitate the secure handling of sensitive information, ensuring compliance with the changing environment of data protection.

# EXPECTATIONS & TIMELINE

## Before Accreditation Process

1. Ensure your organization is in good standing as a current organizational member of AAS.
  - a. If you are not yet a member, create an organizational profile in the AAS membership platform and pay all associated membership dues prior to your accreditation application.
2. Complete the Accreditation Readiness Checklist internally and contact Accreditation Program staff with any questions.
3. Complete the application for accreditation, which requires operational information detailing:
  - a. Organization's services, budget, and metrics
  - b. Commitment from organization to keep accreditation in good standing
4. After application approval, pay invoice to begin accreditation process, including receiving the complete standards manual and being assigned to an AAS Site Examiner.

## During Accreditation Process

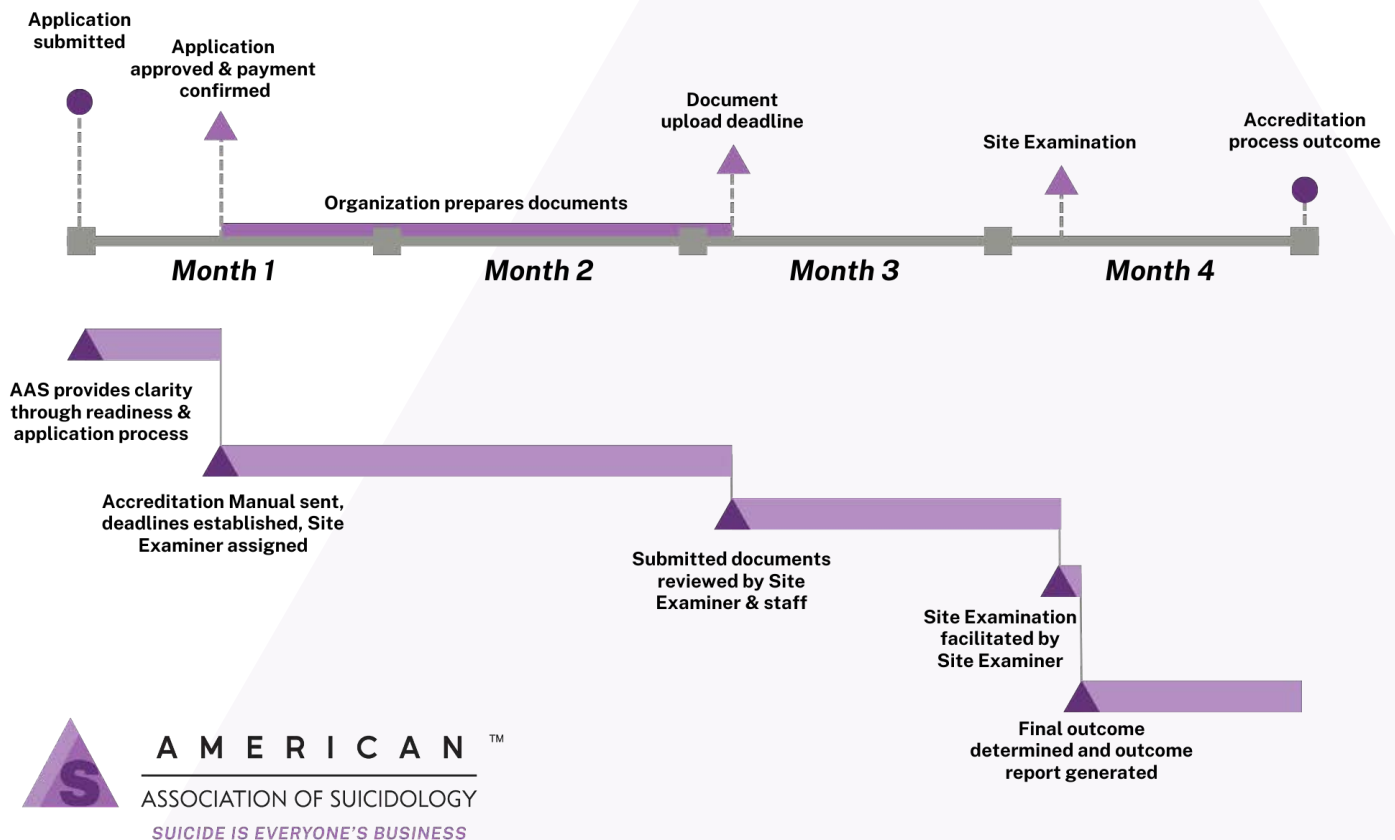
Accreditation Process Step	Expected Timeline
1. Organization submits accreditation application, which is then reviewed by Accreditation Program staff, who may reach out to listed point of contact for any follow-up questions.	1-2 weeks after receipt of application.
2. Application is approved and organization is invoiced for application fee and accreditation process.	1-2 weeks after receipt of application
3. Payment is confirmed. Accreditation sends organization complete standards manual, provides link to cloud document upload folder, assigns a Site Examiner, and confirms Site Examination date.	1 week after confirmation of invoice payment.
4. Organization prepares for Site Examination by uploading all documentation to be reviewed into the provided cloud folder by the document upload deadline.	2-5 months from the time of application approval.
5. Site examination facilitated with organization's program director or point of contact, and other relevant employees. Virtual site visits vs. in-person may be adjusted to meet the needs of 24 hour operations.	4 weeks after document upload date, 1-2 day duration.
6. A scheduled meeting will be set with Accreditation staff, Site Examiner and organization's point of contact to discuss the outcome of the examination and next steps/recommendations.	2 weeks after Site Examination.
7. Organization receives outcome letter.	1 week after Outcome Meeting.
8. Organization completes accreditation feedback form.	1 month after Site Examination.

## Expectations + Timeline (continued)

### After Becoming Accredited & Maintaining Accreditation

1. Organization receives Achievement of Accreditation packet, which includes a letter of congratulations, certificate of accreditation, and guidance on how to publicly share organization's accreditation status.
2. AAS organizational membership must remain in good standing with the annual dues renewal based on organization's membership anniversary date. All AAS members are billed 30 days prior to their expiration.
3. Organization is required to complete the annual accreditation self-report every year unless they have completed an accreditation cycle that year. Self-report will request information on:
  - a. Annual volume and service metrics
  - b. Compliance on various AAS accreditation standards from manual editions 9-14th
  - c. Quality assurance procedures
  - d. Significant organizational/service changes (if applicable)

### Standard Timeline



# ASSOCIATED COSTS

## Accreditation and Application Fees

We view accreditation as an investment to your organization in order to support your crisis services operating by best practices and with high quality. Organizations can expect to be invoiced between \$3700 and \$4750 which includes preparation work, documentation assessment, a virtual site examination, and access to Accreditation Program staff for process support. If an organization requires time beyond the six month deadline to complete accreditation, additional fees will be applicable.

If organization requires an in-person site examination, costs associated for travel and lodging will be their financial responsibility in addition to the accreditation fee.

	New Accreditation(s)	Re-Accreditation(s)
Application Fee	\$250	\$100
Accreditation Fee	\$4,500	\$3,600
TOTAL	\$4,750	\$3,700

If multiple service or sites need to be accredited, a fee of \$750 for each additional service will be assessed.

## Other Associated Fees

### Late Application Fee

If an organization submits their application for reaccreditation after their accreditation expiration date, a late application fee of \$250 will be invoiced.

### Site Examination Rescheduling Fee

If an organization requests to move or cancel their site examination date less than 30 days from the scheduled date, a fee of \$500 will be invoiced. This includes needing to push back the site examination date due to late document submission or the need for further documentation review after the submission deadline.

### Late Annual Self-Report Fee

Organizations that submit their required annual self-report after the established deadline will be invoiced a late fee of \$150 for processing.



# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## Accreditation Program Staff

AAS program staff oversee the accreditation process and coordinate with organizations to establish the accreditation process timeline, deadlines, Site Examiner assignment, and Site Examination scheduling. They are the point of contact for all questions about the accreditation process and hold responsibility for final determinations of accreditation achievement. Accreditation staff support the Site Examiners with documentation evaluation. Accreditation staff are highly qualified individuals with years of experience in the crisis service field, with a demonstrated expertise in crisis program operation and process development. They may have additional qualifications and degrees that contribute to their knowledge of the field of Suicidology and crisis services.

See Page 13 to learn more about AAS Accreditation Program staff.

## Accreditation Site Examiners

Upon completion of the accreditation application and payment of services, Accreditation staff will assign a Site Examiner to carry out the examination process who will assess the program(s) for accreditation achievement. Site Examiners are contracted qualified professionals in the crisis field who have been vetted and trained in this process and are familiar with crisis service operations. Examiners are assigned to organizations based on familiarity/experience with the type of program seeking accreditation, availability, and confirming there is not an existing relation/conflict of interest with the applicant. The Site Examiner facilitates the Site Examinations and communicates with Accreditation staff throughout the process, including final accreditation recommendations.

## Organizations Seeking (Re)Accreditation

Organizations seeking accreditation or reaccreditation are an integral participant in the accreditation process. They are responsible for preparing and submitting all needed documentation prior to the Site Examination and participating in the Site Examination and related activities. Organizations are responsible for reading and understanding all documents they receive as part of the accreditation process, which include this information packet, document upload instructions, the Summary and Minimum Standards, the Standards Manual, and any other documents provided by AAS. Organizations are also responsible for promptly contacting Accreditation staff with any questions that may arise before, during, and after the accreditation process.

# ACCREDITATION READINESS CHECKLIST

Utilize the checklist internally to assess your organization's readiness to start the accreditation process. Contact Accreditation Program staff with any questions.

- ☐ Organization is a current organizational member of the American Association of Suicidology and is in good standing
- ☐ Organization has operated all services for which they are seeking accreditation for a minimum of six months
- ☐ Organization has received and reviewed this information packet
- ☐ Organization has received and reviewed the Summary and Minimum Standards document
- ☐ Organization has documented policies and procedures that can evidence all minimum standards for services they operate for which they are seeking accreditation
- ☐ Organization has staff at every level that can speak to those policies and procedures being the current standard operating procedure
- ☐ Organization records, stores, and can produce for review data that can speak to the use of those policies and procedures, as applicable
- ☐ Organization provides a minimum of 40 hours of pre-service training to staff and volunteers and can provide training schedules, content, rubrics to evidence that protocol
- ☐ Organization's current technology supports operation of their services in accordance with minimum standards



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

## 1. What does a site examination consist of and how long can we expect it to take?

A site examination will take place virtually with one or more Site Examiners. Organizations can request an in-person site examination if needed - additional fees apply. Documentation must be submitted to AAS through a cloud-based folder for review by deadline before the Site Examination. An initial accreditation can take 1 to 2 full days, while a re-accreditation will be completed in 1 day. Virtual site visits can be spread out over more than one day, if preferred. Organizations can expect to provide documentation and/or speaking on the following topics:

- ▲ *Administration and Organization Structure*
- ▲ *Screening, Training, and Monitoring of Crisis Workers*
- ▲ *Crisis Intervention Services & Delivery*
- ▲ *Community Integration*
- ▲ *Program Evaluation*
- ▲ *Outcome Measures & Objectives*
- ▲ *Evaluation Content & Scope*
- ▲ And other relevant information that supports the examination process

## 2. Do Accreditation Program staff and Site Examiners provide consultation?

The accreditation process is not consultative. Organizations are responsible for reviewing the standards and assuring their provided documentation and evidence complies. Organizations are encouraged to ask for clarity around the accreditation process, but Accreditation staff and Site Examiners are unable to provide guidance to how best to evidence standards. The process is designed to be objective and as free of bias or inequity as possible.

We acknowledge that some organizations do not have equal access to resources that would aid preparation for accreditation or reaccreditation. The Accreditation Program does provide a separate consultation service for organizations who are not currently accredited with AAS. Organizations must wait six months after their consultation service to apply for accreditation, which has associated costs independent of accreditation.

## 3. What is the maximum amount of time our organization can take to submit documents required for the site examination?

Accreditation can be a tedious and lengthy process for some organizations and the timeline laid out is what can be expected from AAS if an organization is moving quickly through each step. We recognize that some may need longer windows of time to organize required documents – the maximum amount of time permitted to complete the accreditation process is six months from time of application submission and invoice payment.

If an organization requires time beyond the six month deadline to complete accreditation, additional fees will be applicable.

### 4. Why are 40 hours required for pre-service training, and what activities count towards that?

Experience has shown that crisis programs will receive a wide variety of crisis contacts, despite their advertised focus in areas such as suicide prevention, mental illness, domestic violence or child abuse. Thus, the ability to deliver effective crisis intervention services in a broad range of problem areas must be developed in addition to an appropriate amount of time to cover them. The following activities could be considered towards the 40-hour training:

- ▲ Role playing and other experiential based methods
- ▲ Use of audiovisual materials, such as simulated recorded calls and videotape
- ▲ Opportunity to function as a co-crisis worker with experienced staff before assignment to work on an independent basis
- ▲ Observation of trainee while handling a crisis call, e.g. silent monitoring
- ▲ Didactic presentation and reading assignments
- ▲ Evidence-based training that supports the work (QPR, ASIST, etc.).

### 5. In previous years for accreditation, we were required to request online emotional support (OES) accreditation as an add-on. Can I still request this?

With the ever-changing landscape of crisis services and how we evolve in offering them, “online emotional support” accreditation is considered as part of the AAS Accreditation starting Spring 2023. Accreditation site visits for all organizations will include those standards (if indicated on the application). Organizations that have been previously accredited by AAS and were not evaluated by online emotional support standards at the time of their site visit will need to go through the re-accreditation process to receive an updated Achievement of Accreditation for their text or web-based services.

### 6. What happens if our organization receives a recommendation to delay or suspend our accreditation after a site examination? Can we appeal this decision?

On occasion and by the recommendation of a Site Examiner (in consultation with the Accreditation Program staff), an organization may experience their accreditation being delayed or suspended until specific recommendations are implemented or improved.

You have the right to request an appeal through the following steps:

- 1) Submitting written documentation to clarify a possible misunderstanding
- 2) Requesting a virtual consultation with the Accreditation Program staff to present grievances
- 3) Based on the appeal, a second opinion may be sought, and a new site examiner assigned to reevaluate the organization. The organization bears the cost of this reevaluation.

In all cases, the decision of AAS is final.

# AAS BACKGROUND

## About The American Association of Suicidology

The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) is the world's largest and nation's oldest membership-based suicide prevention organization. Founded in 1968 by Edwin S. Shneidman, PhD, AAS promotes the research of suicide and its prevention, public awareness programs, public education and training for professionals and volunteers. Learn more at [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org).

### Mission Statement

To promote the understanding and prevention of suicide and support those who have been affected by it.

### Vision Statement

We are an inclusive community that envisions a world where people know how to prevent suicide and find hope and healing.

## Membership

By becoming an AAS Member you will be among the ranks of the world's leading suicidologists and suicide prevention experts. AAS offers both Individual and Organization membership options. Explore all the benefits and consider which membership meets your unique needs. Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/memberships](http://www.suicidology.org/memberships).

## Accreditation Program

The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) has accredited crisis service organizations for nearly 50 years in the United States and internationally. The Accreditation process strives to recognize exemplary crisis service organizations, online emotional support programs, mobile crisis services, and other services supporting individuals in crisis. Achieving accreditation defines an organization's standard of practice, through the review of several areas including but not limited to administration and organizational structure, service delivery, and services in life threatening crises. Crisis Centers that comprise the National 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline often engage with AAS for Accreditation recognition, closely connecting AAS Accreditation services to a critical and growing national support network.

Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/accreditation](http://www.suicidology.org/accreditation) and for a complete listing of AAS Accredited Crisis Services Organizations, visit [www.suicidology.org/crisiscenters](http://www.suicidology.org/crisiscenters).

## Training & Certifications Program

The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) is a world-leader in the development, implementation, and facilitation of research supported training and certification programs. Courses are evidence-supported to uphold the highest standards of care and equity for those impacted by suicide. Dynamic curricula developed by leading researchers offer an array of advanced clinical training for professionals and introductory-level courses for a variety of sectors and disciplines.

Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/training](http://www.suicidology.org/training).

## AAS Background (continued)

### Research Program

The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) research program focuses on advancing the understanding of suicide and suicide prevention through the promotion of scientific research and the dissemination of evidence-based information. The AAS Research Program has several key objectives, including:

- ▲ Supporting and promoting scientific research on suicide, suicidality, and life-threatening behavior
- ▲ Disseminating information on suicide prevention and intervention strategies to researchers, academics, and the general public
- ▲ Developing and implementing research-supported policies and programs to prevent suicide
- ▲ Providing training and resources to researchers, clinicians, and other professionals in the field of suicidology
- ▲ Advocating for increased funding and support for suicide prevention research

Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/research](http://www.suicidology.org/research).

### AAS Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior Journal

The AAS Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior journal provides the latest research, theories, and intervention methods for suicide and life-threatening behaviors, including research from biological, psychological, and sociological approaches. Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/journal](http://www.suicidology.org/journal).

### Annual Conference

The American Association of Suicidology Annual Conference, held each spring, is the largest gathering of the Suicidology community; including clinicians, researchers, attempt survivors, crisis service professionals, public health and government officials and more. With attendees from all over the world, the AAS Conference features training and certification days, keynote addresses, poster presentations, paper presentations, hundreds of workshops and panel sessions, an Annual Organizational Meeting, award ceremony, multiple networking opportunities, and an exhibit hall featuring industry leaders, academic and training programs, resources, and community advocates. Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/aas24](http://www.suicidology.org/aas24).

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## AAS Background (continued)

### Community Resources

The American Association of Suicidology provides comprehensive resources to help navigate your journey with suicide and mental health. AAS also offers a national directory of support groups that focus on a variety of survivors of suicide. Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/resources](http://www.suicidology.org/resources).

### How To Make an Impact

The American Association of Suicidology has several ways for you to get involved in supporting the AAS mission to promote the understanding and prevention of suicide and support those who have been affected by it. Your gift – in any amount – supports AAS as we provide training, education, and information to researchers, clinicians, and survivors working in the field of suicidology. Learn more at [www.suicidology.org/makeanimpact](http://www.suicidology.org/makeanimpact).

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# STAFF

For an additional staff listing visit <https://suicidology.org/about-aas/#staff>

**Samantha Nadler, MSSW** | Senior Director of Programs | [snadler@suicidology.org](mailto:snadler@suicidology.org)



Samantha has been working in crisis services and suicidology for nearly 15 years, starting as a volunteer for a Nashville crisis line in 2009. She has experience in carrying out front-line work in addition to leading various crisis services through her career, most recently working as Senior Manager of Clinical Quality at a national text-based crisis service. Sam uses her lived experiences to advocate for change and improvement in the mental health field. She holds a Master of Science in Social Work with a concentration in trauma treatment from University of Tennessee.

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