



Stroke & Aphasia Recovery Program

FAQs for Prospective Graduate Student Clinician 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. Aphasia does not typically affect a person's intellect, but it does affect a person's ability to have a conversation.
- What is the STAR Program?
 - The Stroke & Aphasia Recovery (STAR) Program is a community outreach program of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Health Professions. The STAR Program's primary mission is to maximize communication abilities and life participation for persons and their families who are affected by aphasia and other communication challenges. Currently, 6 licensed speech-language pathologists serve as clinical instructors for 24 graduate student clinicians who are training to become licensed speech-language pathologists. The program serves approximately 60 persons with aphasia and 25 care partners.
 - The STAR Program involves weekly meetings for stroke and traumatic brain injury survivors, people with primary progressive aphasia, and care partners. 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/communication challenges have exhausted their medical insurance funds but can still benefit from enhanced communication skills and life participation. The program also involves two groups for care partners. There is no charge to members for this community outreach program. The program is funded through generous donations to the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Patient Services Endowment Fund.
- How did the STAR Program begin?
 - In 1997, Dr. Melinda Corwin and a group of five students in the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences began the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center 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 and his/her family members and friends who want to learn more about stroke, traumatic brain injury (TBI), aphasia, or primary progressive aphasia and how to improve communication. The STAR Program is not a medical or therapy program; rather, it is a community outreach program. Thus, members may or may not be clinical patients at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.
- How many groups are there within the STAR Program?
 - Currently there are a total of 12 groups in the STAR Program, with 2 student clinicians assigned to each group. Most groups serve 3-8 individuals with similar diagnoses and severity levels or similar interests. The Care Partners Network is the largest group, with approximately 25 members who attend regularly. Care Partners Connect is specifically for members whose loved ones have a degenerative condition.
- What are Care Partners Network and Care Partners Connect?
 - The Care Partners Network was established in 2001 for spouses, children, parents, paid care providers, and friends of persons with stroke- or TBI-induced aphasia. It is 1 of the 12 groups in the STAR Program. Care Partners Connect is one of our newest groups and is for family members and friends of people with primary progressive aphasia (PPA) and/or early frontotemporal dementia (FTD). Caring

for individuals with these conditions involves a different trajectory compared to stroke- or TBI-induced aphasia, and we strive to meet members' unique needs. 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 these groups obtain a unique perspective and report that it strengthens and enhances their overall clinical skills.

- 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 Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic. Approximately once every 6 weeks, 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 clinician.

Responsibilities of Assistant Students:

- 1) Attend all planning meetings, STAR Program sessions, and staffings with clinical instructors.
- 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 clinical instructors.
- 2) Complete weekly, monthly, and semester paperwork for assigned STAR Program members.
- 3) Coordinate weekly group sessions.
- 4) Mentor and train assistant student clinicians.
- 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 post-stroke communication difficulties (including aphasia) or other diagnoses such as right hemisphere syndrome or primary progressive aphasia, as well as adults who serve as care partners. Students (under supervision) 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 **maximum 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 (Ms. Carolyn Perry, Ms. Melissa Whitaker, Ms. Katie Moss, Ms. Sarai Granados, and Ms. Brooke Ward) 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 as one of your clinical assignments and will not be a schedule/class conflict. You must be in good standing clinically and academically to participate in the STAR Program.
Application Deadline: July 7.

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.