

Developing Safe and Effective Psilocybin Facilitator Training in New Mexico

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Purpose of Presentation

Thank you to the New Mexico DOH for the invitation to present today about...

- Training model for psilocybin facilitators
- Treatment framework for client care
- Proposed practicum structure for state training programs
- Suggestions for equitable and safe implementation in New Mexico

Goal: Contribute practical ideas for building a safe, ethical, and culturally aware state program



Catherine's Professional Background

- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor – New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas
- Founder – Mariposa Counseling Center, Las Cruces NM
- Director of Education – Psychedelic Assisted Therapy Association (PATA)
- Secretary, Decriminalize Psychedelics New Mexico
- Psychedelic-assisted Therapy (PAT) facilitator, educator and trainer
- PAT author and documentary filmmaker

Focus of my work:

- Ethical and safe psychedelic practices
- Practitioner training and supervision
- Client preparation and integration frameworks using clinical model

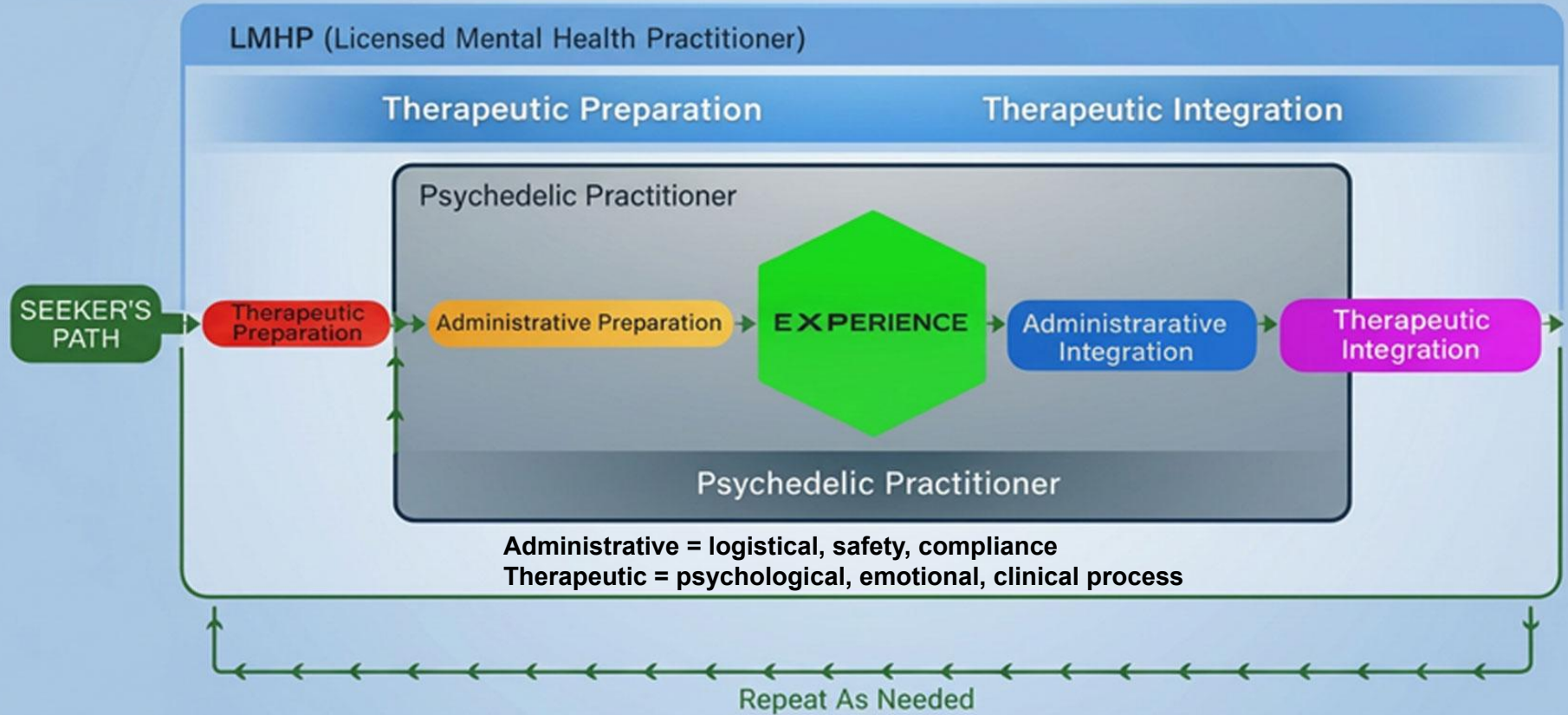


Core Pillars of Psilocybin Facilitator Training



The PATA Model

EDUCATION



Administrative vs Therapeutic Preparation

Administrative Preparation

- informed consent and documentation
- medical and medication review
- scheduling and coordination
- review of policies, expectations, and procedures
- environment setup and safety planning

Therapeutic Preparation

- rapport building and trust development
- intention setting
- exploring history, themes, and goals
- preparing for emotional and psychological experiences



Administrative vs Therapeutic Integration

Administrative Integration

- scheduling follow-up sessions
- documentation and record keeping
- coordination with other providers if needed
- ensuring participant has appropriate supports in place
- tracking outcomes or progress

Therapeutic Integration

- processing insights and emotional material
- identifying patterns and new perspectives
- translating insights into behavior change
- supporting continued psychological growth
- reinforcing self-awareness and new understandings



How the Training Is Delivered

Didactic Instruction

- science and pharmacology
- legal and regulatory context
- contraindications and risk awareness

Clinical Skill Development

- preparation and screening
- non-directive facilitation
- integration practices

Experiential Learning

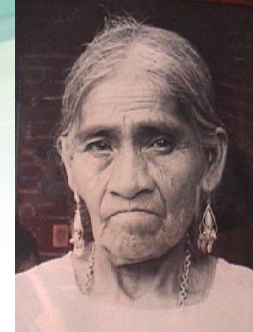
- participant journey experience
- supervised practicum guiding others
- observation of multiple client sessions
- online integration post training



Foundational Knowledge for Safe Practice

History and Cultural Context

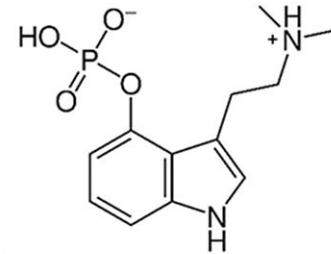
- Indigenous and ceremonial use of psilocybin
- Historical suppression and modern research resurgence
- Ethical awareness of traditional medicine origins



Maria Sabina

Science and Pharmacology

- How psilocybin interacts with serotonin receptors
- Default Mode Network and ego dissolution
- Dosing ranges and pharmacokinetics



Foundational Knowledge for Safe Practice, cont.

Legal and Regulatory Landscape

- Federal Schedule I status
- Emerging state-regulated programs
- Responsibilities within medical frameworks



Risk Awareness and Participant Screening

Participant Suitability

- Psychological Stability
- Readiness Assessment
- Physical Health Consideration/Exclusions

Medication Interactions

- Antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anti anxiety medication
- Benzodiazepines, opiates and other interfering medications
- Medical consultation when appropriate



Risk Awareness and Participant Screening, cont.

Contraindications

- pregnancy
- severe psychiatric disorders
- certain medical conditions

Risk Management

- preparing participants for challenging experiences
- setting realistic expectations
- ensuring appropriate support systems and matrix



Stages of Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy

Preparation

- participant assessment and rapport building
- intention setting and expectation management
- establishing set, setting, and matrix



Medicine Session

- non-directive facilitation
- supportive presence and monitoring
- psychological and emotional containment

Integration

- processing insights and emotions
- translating experiences into meaningful change
- supporting continued psychological growth

The Non-Directive Facilitation Model

Facilitators support the participant's inner process **NOT** direct the experience

Core principles

- encourage curiosity and acceptance of all emotions
- maintain calm, attentive presence
- avoid interpretation or unsolicited advice
- support participant autonomy and meaning-making

Participant Intentions

- intentions are identified during preparation
- reflect areas of healing the participant wishes to explore
- may be gently revisited during the session if the participant requests support

NOTE:
Intentions provide
direction without
imposing control on
the experience.



Managing Challenging Experiences

Prepare facilitators to respond safely to intense psilocybin experiences

Common Experiences

- anxiety, fear, or panic
- emotional release or trauma activation
- confusion or disorientation

Facilitator Response

- maintain calm, grounded presence
- provide reassurance and orientation
- support the participant in staying with the experience for therapeutic outcomes
- adjust environment when needed



Integration: A Core Clinical Skill

Role of the Facilitator

- guide reflection without imposing meaning
- support emotional processing
- help translate insights into action

Integration Practices

- structured reflection and discussion
- identifying patterns and new perspectives
- supporting behavior change

Ongoing Support

- insights may unfold over time
- follow-up sessions reinforce outcomes
- continued support improves safety and effectiveness

Participants often process insights for weeks after the session, making integration essential



Practicum Training Model

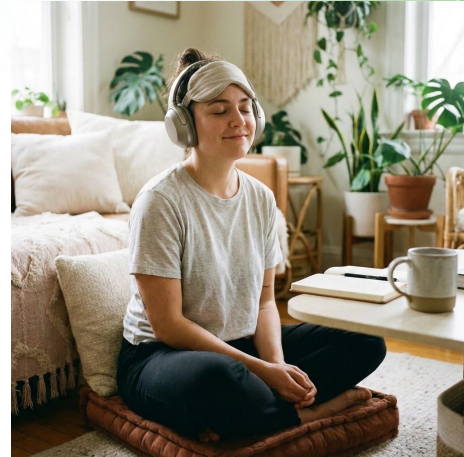
Supervised, real-world application of facilitator skills

Purpose

- bridge knowledge and clinical application
- develop competency in real-time settings
- ensure safe and ethical facilitation

Training Components

- supervised facilitation experience
- participant (journey) experience
- observation of client sessions
- structured feedback and integration of learning



Practicum Option 1: Dose & Guide

Practitioners-in-training engage as both participant and facilitator

Structure

- participate in a guided psilocybin experience
- observe facilitation in real time
- practice facilitation under supervision

Purpose

- engage in personal healing work
- develop a relationship with the medicine
- understand the internal experience
- build confidence in facilitation



Practicum Option 2: Immersive

A structured, multi-day practicum focused on real client work and observation

Structure

- prepare assigned clients in advance (virtual)
- facilitate client sessions during practicum
- conduct post-session integration

Expanded Learning

- observe 10–16 additional client journeys
- group supervision and case discussion
- exposure to a range of participant experiences

**Exposure to multiple
client experiences
accelerates competency**



Program Development Considerations

Access Pathways

- educational pathway for individuals without behavioral health licenses
- structured training to ensure competency, ethics and safety

Cultural Inclusion

- inclusion of Pueblo, Tribal, and Nation communities
- consideration of representation based on population

Recognition of Prior Experience

- grandfathering individuals with existing training or certifications
- requirement for NM-specific program and jurisprudence training



Program Priorities

Ethics and Professional Responsibility

- clear boundaries and scope of practice
- protection of participants in vulnerable states

Harm Reduction and Safety

- screening and risk awareness
- preparation and support throughout the process
- ongoing integration and follow-up care

Experiential Training

- personal experience supports responsible facilitation
- understanding altered states improves safety and effectiveness



Closing

Well-trained facilitators are the primary safeguard in any psilocybin program.

Thank you for the opportunity to present!

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