

Instructions for Ministry Candidates

North Alabama Annual Conference The United Methodist Church

Congratulations!!

You are responding to God's call to enter a particular form of the ministry of the United Methodist Church. All of God's people, by virtue of their baptism, are ministers. But God is calling you and you have responded. You now seek to fulfill God's calling by becoming

an Ordained Elder,
an Ordained deacon,
or a local pastor

We know that in some other denominations you probably could be ordained right now. The United Methodist Church, however, expects a much longer and more involved period of examination and discernment. We are not the only denomination that requires a more lengthy process. It is our sincere prayer that you will not see this as a number of hurdles to be overcome (or even hoops to jump through), but that you will use this time to refine God's call, to get to know yourself better, to acquire skills and knowledge you will need in your ministry, and to receive the advice and counsel of pastors and lay people throughout this process. It is the responsibility of the District Committee on Ministry and of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to evaluate your call and your fitness for this ministry. We do this with great humility and with prayer. Please be assured that it is not our intention to erect barriers. We want help you claim God's call for ministry.

The North Alabama Annual Conference is beginning a process for candidacy that will be significantly different than in past years. Rather than being assigned to a candidacy mentor who will work with you through all of your candidacy materials, you will be assigned to a “District Candidacy Coordinator” who will coordinate all of your work. The coordinator will assign you to a relational mentor who will work with you in a number of face-to-face interviews. If you should have any questions at any time, please discuss these with the Candidacy Coordinator, with your mentor, or with the District Superintendent.

Furthermore, we have entered the electronic age. Beginning in January 2007, most forms will be filled out online. All other forms are part of a forms packet your District Coordinator will give you. You can use them as hard copies or you may request an electronic copy not only of this manual, but also of the forms.

Expectations:

Before you begin the candidacy process, we expect that you have done the following:

- ✘ You have received a genuine call from God for the ministry of the United Methodist Church and that you have discussed that call with your pastor, your friends, and your peers.
- ✘ That you have been a member of the United Methodist Church for at least one year and that you are currently a member of a congregation within the bounds of the District in which you are seeking candidacy and have served as a leader in that congregation for the last year.

The 2008 Discipline also allows for people who have been active in a Wesley Foundation or in a new church start for the immediate previous year to enroll as candidates.

- ✘ That you have graduated from an accredited high school or received a certificate of equivalency.
- ✘ That you have read the book “*The Christian as Minister*” and discussed your reading with your pastor, your friends, and your peers.
- ✘ That you have had a meeting with the District Superintendent and shared with him/her your call and your desire to enter the ministry of the United Methodist Church.

If this is not the case on any of the points above, please do not continue. Let us work together to complete these expectations before you go on.

The 2008 *Discipline* of the United Methodist Church lays out, in paragraphs 310-314 the requirements for candidacy. You may want to consult that portion of the *Discipline*. You will recognize that the process we follow is our implementation, in this District and in this Annual Conference, of the provisions of these paragraphs.

In the instructions below, please do them in the order they are listed. Do not skip one and go to the next one unless specifically instructed to do so.

Candidacy Coordinator
Name _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

District Superintendent
Name _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

Relational Candidacy
Mentor
Name _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

1. Letter to the District Superintendent

Write a letter to the District Superintendent expressing your desire to enter the ministry of the United Methodist Church and stating the reason you feel you are called to this ministry. You can send it either by “snail mail” or as an attachment to an e-mail. Send a copy to the District Candidacy Coordinator.

2. Candidacy application

- ✘ Go online to the following address
<https://public.gbhem.org/candidacy/default.aspx>
Read the introductory page. When you have gathered all the materials you will need, click on “Begin Candidacy Application” at the bottom of the page.
- ✓ Note the “User Name” at the top of the page and record it. If for some reason the system should shut down before you have finished the form, you can get back to it through this user name. Before you complete the form you will be given an opportunity to choose your own “user name” and password. Be sure to write these down and save them. After that you will use these to get into the system so that you can fill out further forms.
- ✓ Begin to fill out the required boxes. Note that you cannot go on to the next page until each page is finished.
- ✓ When asked for, select the following information:
 - Select Conference → North Alabama
(the system will pause for a few seconds while it loads information specific to the North Alabama Annual Conference)
 - Select Superintendent Name → Click on the name of your District Superintendent
 - Select District → click on the name of your district
 - Select Your Assigned Mentor → click on the name of the District Candidacy Coordinator
- ✓ When you have completed the application, click on “Submit”
- ✘ You will receive e-mail confirmation of your application. If you do not, something went wrong and you will need to find out what it was.
- ✘ Your District Superintendent and the District Candidacy Coordinator will receive copies of your application for their approval. When they have “signed” your application,
- ✘ You will receive an e-mail notifying you that your application has been approved and instructing you how to pay the registration fee (\$75).

3. IRAI (Inventory of Religious Activities and Interests)

The IRAI contains 240 questions related to your background, your family, and your interests. It will be useful to your mentor to get to know you better and as you discuss what sort of ministry areas you would be best suited for. You will also discover some aptitudes and gifts for ministry you may not have been aware of! Be honest with yourself; this is not a pass-fail test. Do not paint an overly optimistic picture of your interests, but don't be too negative either.

- ✘ You will receive an e-mail telling you how to access the test and how to take it. Follow the instructions.
- ✘ The results of the test will be e-mailed to the District Candidacy Coordinator. You will have an opportunity to go over them at a later time.

4. Candidacy Guidebook

You will receive a candidacy guidebook (through the mail from the Board of Higher Education and Ministry).

- ✘ Your relational candidacy mentor is someone you will be working closely with over the next several months. You will probably have six to ten sessions with this person as you go through portions of the Candidacy Guidebook and explore what it means to be a pastor in the United Methodist Church. Your District Candidacy Coordinator will have the names of the approved mentors in your district. Consult with the Candidacy Coordinator to select one that you feel comfortable working with. Under special circumstances a mentor from another district may be assigned, but this is discouraged.
- ✘ If you have not already done so, contact the District Candidacy Coordinator to agree on who your mentor will be. You should not contact the prospective mentor until he/she has been approved. The Candidacy Coordinator will be in contact with the District Superintendent and with the prospective mentor before giving final approval.
- ✘ Your mentor will receive copies of your IRAI and of the psychological report to help in your mentoring process. When your candidacy is completed, these will be destroyed.
- ✘ When approval has been given, you should be the one to contact your mentor and schedule your first interview together. This work will continue for several weeks. It will only be complete when both you and the mentor have agreed that it is complete. He/she will then write a report to the District Committee on Ministries.
- ✘ Besides discussing the Candidacy Guidebook, there is a written paper you will need to write. You will want to take a session with your mentor to go over these questions. When you have written it, send it to the District Candidacy Coordinator. You may send it either through the mail or electronically as an attachment to an e-mail.

Submit a written response providing evidence of understanding and expectation concerning the following:

1. The most formative experiences of your Christian life;
2. God's call to licensed or ordained ministry and the role of the church in your call;
3. Your future usefulness as a minister in the United Methodist Church;
4. Your personal beliefs as a Christian;
5. Your personal gifts for ministry;
6. How your personal relationships may affect your future ministry;
7. Give your understanding of the ministries of local pastors, deacons, and elders in the church.
8. Agree, for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of your influence as clergy, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in paragraphs 102-104 and 160-166 [see the file "Discipline"]. Will you exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

The answers to these questions should be at least half a page (single spaced) in length (except for the last one) and should reflect where you are in your Christian journey at this point in time.



Note: please proceed with the instructions below while you are working with the mentor. Do not wait until you have completed this step before you continue on.

5. Psychological Assessment

You will be expected to take a psychological assessment. This assessment comes in four parts:

1. A Personal Data Inventory and list of references. This will be done on-line
 2. Two psychological tests including the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2), and “Incomplete Sentences Blank”. These will be done at a place designated by the District Candidacy Coordinator.
 3. The “Sixteen Personality Factor” (16PF), an inventory that describes personality dimensions and how they relate to work, family, and life situations. This will also be done on-line
 4. An interview with Dr. David Barnhart, in his office in Huntsville.
- ✘ You will receive an e-mail instructing you on how to proceed with the Personal Data Inventory and References. Before you begin this, you will need names and addresses for references in the following categories:
 - ✓ Most recent local church pastor
 - ✓ Most recent employer **or** (if you are in school) the name of a professor or academic dean who knows you well
 - ✓ Two of the following three
 - A parishioner (if you are now serving or have recently served a church, name a parishioner who knows you well)
 - A friend/colleague who knows you well
 - Another reference of your choosing
 - ✘ Keep a copy of these references. Contact each of these people and tell them that you have listed them as a reference. Tell them they should receive a letter from the Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville with a form for them to fill out. The District Candidacy Coordinator will have access to this list and will probably send a letter to them as well. **The process is usually held up because these references are not sent in. It is up to you to be sure that this is done.**
 - ✘ Contact the District Candidacy Coordinator for an appointment to complete the other tests that are part of the Psychological assessment package. At this time you will also go over the results of the IRAI. You will need to schedule 3-4 hours for this session.
 - ✘ The 16 Personality Factor Inventory will require an online connection in a location that is comfortable, appropriately lighted and ventilated, and without distractions. The average time to complete this test is 35-50 minutes. Be sure that you will have this amount of time to dedicate to this project before you begin. You will receive the passwords and instructions for this test when you do the written portion of the tests
 - ✘ About 3 weeks later (if the references have been sent in) call Dr. David Barnhart for an appointment.
 - ✘ Dr. Barnhart will issue two copies of his report. One will go to the Conference Office of Ordained Ministry. The other will go to the District Candidacy Coordinator. You will not get a copy of this report but your mentor will.
 - ✘ Schedule an appointment with the District Candidacy Coordinator to go over the results of the Psychological Assessment.

Dr. David Barnhart
256-833-3231
Trinity Counseling Center
7500 Memorial Parkway, SW
(Suite 215-C)
Huntsville, AL 35802

6. Legal Background Check and Credit Check

It is very important that we have both a legal background check and a credit check on you before we complete candidacy. This will be done through the Annual Conference. The forms are included as part of a forms packet that will be available from the Candidacy Coordinator.

- ✘ We highly recommend that you request a credit check PRIOR to requesting one for the Annual Conference. Often there are mistakes on a credit report that you can clear up prior to submitting a report to the Conference. Seeing your credit report may also give you an idea of areas where you may need to seek financial counseling.
- ✘ The forms packet has two documents in it:
 - 3 statements related to instructions, policy, and procedures for the background checks
 - RELEASE FORM For Criminal And Legal Records and Credit Report of Candidates For Ordained Ministry
- ✘ Read then instructions and follow them as you fill out the Release Form. Don't sign the release form until you can get it notarized.
- ✘ Mail the release form and the fee to the address at the right. You will not hear from these unless there is a problem that must be addressed

Mrs. Cindi Patsios
898 Arkadelphia Road
Birmingham, AL
35204

7. Charge Conference Recommendation

You will need the recommendation of your Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and of the Charge Conference of your church.

- ✘ The form for this is included in the forms packet. Fill out the top part of the form.
- ✘ Ask the pastor of your church and/or the chairperson of the Pastor—Parish Relations Committee to schedule a time when you can be interviewed by the committee. Have them fill out the second part of the form.
- ✘ Mail the completed form to the District Superintendent
- ✘ Be sure that your name is brought up for a vote when the Charge Conference meets in the Fall. Otherwise a special session will have to be scheduled.

8. dCOM meeting

Be sure all the above has been completed by the first of December. The District Committee on Ordained Ministry will not interview you until everything has been completed.

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry will interview you to certify and complete your candidacy. This meeting usually takes place around the middle of December. Sometimes the District Committee on Ordained Ministry will schedule a special session to interview those persons who can not complete the process by mid-December.

9. Licensing School

Licensing School is not part of the candidacy process, but this is included for your information.

- ✘ If you expect to receive an appointment as pastor of a church you will need to attend licensing school (unless you have completed 1/3 of the educational requirements toward an MDiv degree — or its equivalent — at a seminary recognized by the University Senate as well as Ministerial Integrity Training.
- ✘ You may not attend licensing school until you have completed all phases of candidacy.
- ✘ The North Alabama Licensing School is held at Camp Sumatanga late in February. There is significant amount of pre-work that needs to be done. This is usually available to be downloaded from the Conference website after December 1 of each year. The School also

- requires a Test of Basic English (TABE). You should make arrangements to take it before the school starts.
- ✘ You may attend a licensing school in another conference. The North Alabama Annual Conference recognizes most (but not all) of the licensing schools held elsewhere. If you are going this route, you will need the approval of the District Committee of Ordained Ministry and of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to attend that particular school. A list of schools and their dates is available at http://www.gbhem.org/site/c.lsKSL3POLvF/b.3742847/k.8F43/License_Schools.htm

List of Terms

Glossary

Annual Conference: An administrative Unit of the United Methodist Church.. The North Alabama Annual Conference comprises the north half of Alabama. It is presided over by Bishop William Willimon. The Office of Ordained Ministry is headed by Rev. Don Neal. Mrs. Cindi Patsios is the administrative assistant. The term also applies to the annual meeting held the first weekend of June.

Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM): The Annual Conference Board responsible for ministry matters. The chairman of the Board is Rev. Bill Brunson; the Associate Registrar for Candidacy and Mentoring is Rev. Sherill Clontz.

Certified Candidate: One who has completed the candidacy process.

Charge Conference: A meeting of the Church Council (or equivalent structure) that is presided over by the District Superintendent (or his/her designee) for the purposes of dealing with matters that pertain to the larger church — such as recommending candidates for ministry.

District: The North Alabama Annual Conference is divided into eight districts for administrative purposes.

District Superintendent (DS): A clergy person appointed by the Bishop to administer the district.

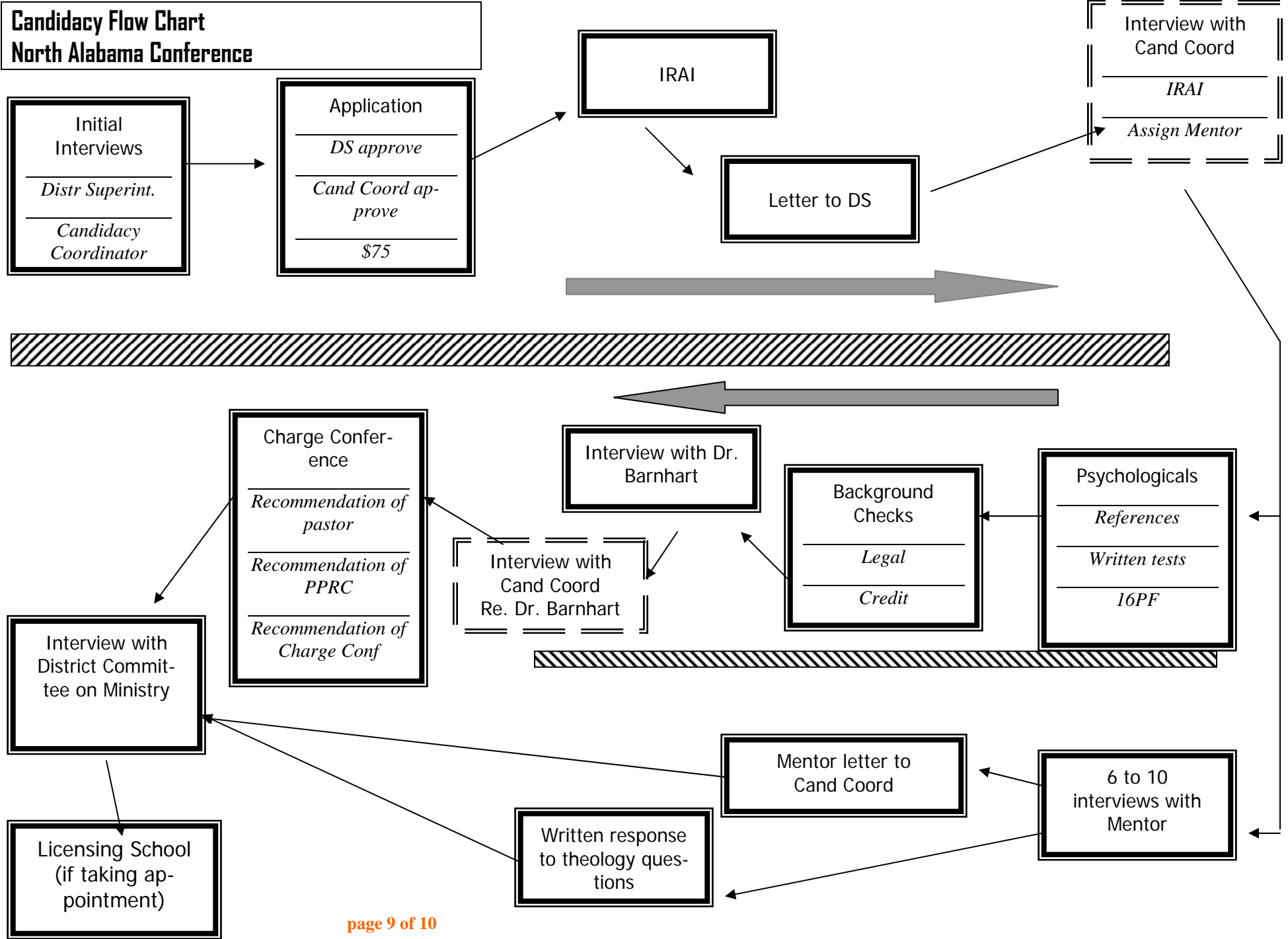
District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM): The district committee responsible for ministry matters, particularly candidacy, continuation of local pastors, and recommendation of persons for provisional membership.

District Candidacy Coordinator (DCC): a person designated by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to coordinate the candidacy process for all persons in the district.

Candidacy (or Relational) Mentor: A clergy person who will provide counseling and mentoring to the candidate during the candidacy process

IRAI: Inventory of Religious Activities and Interests, one of the online tests taken early in the candidacy process. It asks questions about your background and about your interests in certain activities commonly associated with pastoral ministry.

Candidacy Flow Chart North Alabama Conference



Candidacy completion form

Candidate Name: _____

1. Expectation
The expectations on p. 2 have been completed _____
Initial interview with Candidate _____
2. Letter to DS _____
3. Candidacy application completed (Form 112) _____
4. IRAI test completed _____
Interview with mentor _____
5. Candidacy guidebook [*Mentor name*] _____
Mentor assigned (consult DS, Candidate) _____
Theological/Disciplinary papers submitted _____
Process, complete, letter from Mentor _____
6. Psychological Assessment
Form 112 completed (GBHEM) _____
Personal Data & References online _____
Letter to references _____
Sentence completion & MMPI-2 in office _____
16PF Completed online _____
Candidate interview with David Barnhart _____
Interview with candidate _____
7. Background check
Background check form mailed to Conf Office _____
\$20 fee mailed con Conf Office _____
Positive response from Conference office _____
(or negative matters resolved) _____
8. Charge Conference Recommendation
Declaration of Candidacy for Ministry Form completed _____
& submitted to the DS prior to Charge Conference _____
9. Check with Cindi Patsios to be sure everything is done _____
10. dCOM approval _____
11. Completion of online form to GBHEM (form 113) _____
12. If planning to attend Licensing School & seeking appointment
Take Test of Basic English _____
Complete Licensing School _____
Complete Ministerial Integrity Training _____