



PLAY IS THE FUTURE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

July 2-4 • Chiavenna, Italy
18 hours of in-person or online classes

APTI Approved Provider #15-001
APTI Approved Provider #20-602



Earn 12 CE Hours!

Innovating Good Practice in Psychosocial Care

Scientific Director: Claudio Mochi, MA, RP, RPT-S™

An event that gathers international experts, practitioners, and researchers to exchange knowledge and good practices in the fields of play and expressive therapies, psychosocial interventions and projects.

Join us online or in Chiavenna, a strategic and charming location in northern Italy. You will be one hour from St. Moritz in Switzerland and one hour from Bellagio, on Lake Como.

Partners Confirmed:



PARTICIPANTS

Students, professionals, and researchers in mental health, education, rehabilitation, healthcare, and social work, working with individuals of all ages.

All modules are in English. Italian translation available on request once the minimum number of participants is reached.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

June 25, 2026.

EARLY BIRD

For enrollment by
January 31, 2026!
(see page 5)



Program

July 01 | Check-in from 4pm (dinner recommendations provided)

July 02 | **8am** • Breakfast

July 02 | **9:15am-9:30am** • Welcome

July 02 | **9:30am-12:45pm** • Sessions (including a 15-minute break)

July 02 | **12:45pm-1:45pm** • Lunch

July 02 | **1:45pm-5pm** • Sessions (including a 15-minute break)

July 02 | **7:30pm** • Dinner

July 03 | **8am** • Breakfast

July 03 | **9:30am-12:45pm** • Sessions (including a 15-minute break)

July 03 | **12:45pm-1:45pm** • Lunch

July 03 | **1:45pm-5pm** • Sessions (including a 15-minute break)

July 03 | **7:30pm** • *Pizza night with games and amazing prizes!*

July 04 | **8am** • Breakfast

July 04 | **9:30am-12:45pm** • Sessions (including a 15-minute break)

July 04 | **12:45pm-1:45pm** • Lunch

July 04 | **1:45pm-5pm** • Sessions (including a 15-minute break)

July 04 | Check-out (Would you like to stay an extra night? Contact us!)

Order of presentations will be announced at a later date.

We would be happy to help you plan activities and visits before or after the Conference, which will take place in a convenient location for exploring the beauty of Switzerland and northern Italy.



VENUE

Online or at Ostello al Deserto, Via al Deserto, 2, 23022 Chiavenna SO, Italy, ostellochiavenna.it.

The connection link to Zoom and the list of materials needed for the practical activities are sent 15 days before the classes start.

CERTIFICATE & CE HOURS

12 APT & APTI CE hours contact or non-contact (see details in the “Content Overview” section).

100% participation, completion of the evaluation, and passing the post-test (multiple-choice questions for online participants only) are required for issuing the Certificate of attendance.

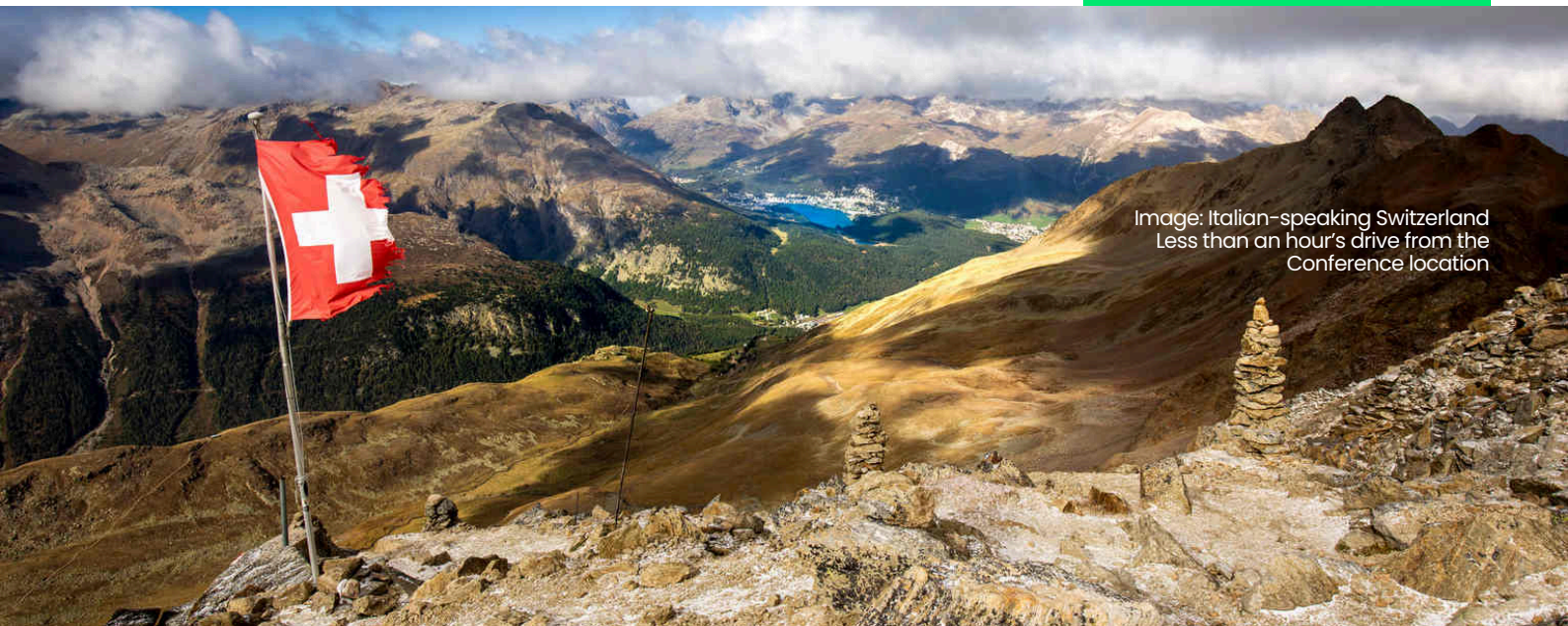


Image: Italian-speaking Switzerland
Less than an hour's drive from the
Conference location

The Academy



The International Academy for Play Therapy (INA) is an international reference for training professionals in the most effective Play Therapy methodologies, with a focus on trauma and work in crisis and high-vulnerability contexts. With a dynamic and cutting-edge structure, the Academy integrates Play Therapy training with expressive arts, neuroscience, and clinical application within sustainable and culturally sensitive psychosocial projects.

Its activities have been carried out across six continents and dozens of countries, in collaboration with leading clinicians, professors, and researchers in the field of child psychotherapy. INA is an approved provider of continuing education in Play Therapy by the Association for Play Therapy (APT) in the United States (#20-602) and by the Associazione Play Therapy Italia (APTI) (#15-001).

Founded in 2015 in Lugano, Switzerland, by Isabella Cassina and Claudio Mochi, INA is a nonprofit association recognized as being of public utility by the Republic and Canton of Ticino (N. DDC 71055). It operates for purposes of social solidarity at both national and international levels, serving individuals, families, and communities, with particular attention to the needs and well-being of children.

*We look forward to welcoming you
to “Play is the Future” to innovate
good practice in psychosocial care
and to create meaningful
connections together!*



TEACHING METHOD

The Conference features theoretical materials, images, and videos, along with individual and group practical activities. All presented in a playful, positive atmosphere of learning and sharing.

SPECIAL NEEDS

We are committed to making the training accessible to all. Please let us know if you have any special needs.

Speakers

Meet 9 out of 10 speakers in person!

(alphabetical order)

Ferdoos Abed Rabo Al-Issa, PhD • Head of the MSW Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She served as chairperson of the Social Science Department at Bethlehem University. She has presented at numerous international and local conferences on mental health, psychology, and social work. She serves on the editorial board of the Bethlehem University Journal and on the Class and Status Journal of Critical Approaches to Social Divisions.

Isabella Cassina, MA, TPS, CAGS, PhD Cand. • Director of project management at the INA, University lecturer. APTI board member, founding member of IC-PTA. Editor-in-chief of the Italian Play Therapy magazine. Social worker specialized in Therapeutic Play and expressive arts with 15 years of international experience in humanitarian interventions and psychosocial projects for children and families in crisis contexts.

David Crenshaw, PhD, ABPP, RPT-S™ [*The speaker will join online*] • Clinical Director of the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie, University professor. Psychologist and Registered Play Therapist Supervisor™ (APT US). Honorary member of the APA, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychology, Past-president of the New York APT. Excellence in Psychology Award in 2009, APT Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021.

Mimma Della Cagnoletta, psychologist, psychoanalyst, art therapist • Co-founder of Art Therapy Italiana, trainer and supervisor, director of the advanced training program in art therapy. Founding member of the EFAT, member of the Editorial Board of Creative Arts in Education and Therapy, honorary member of the Professional Association of Italian Art Therapists.

Lisa Dion, LPC, RPT-S™ • Creator of Synergetic Play Therapy, founder of the Synergetic Play Therapy Institute, and co-founder of the Synergetic Education Institute. She teaches internationally, hosts the Lessons from the Playroom podcast, authored Aggression in Play Therapy, and received the 2015 APT Professional Education and Training Award of Excellence.

Sylvia Ketelhohn, MA, CAGS, PhD Cand. • Founder of the Asociación Artística ASART in Costa Rica with over 20 years of experience in human and social development through artistic and cultural programs. She has collaborated with numerous international organizations contributing to projects across countries in Central and South America.

Josephine Martin, RPT-S • Founding president of APPTA, she has been very supportive of the growth of Play Therapy locally, nationally and internationally. With a background in Child Protection and experience as an Associate Lecturer in Play Therapy at Charles Darwin University, she brings extensive knowledge and passion to her work.

Clair Mellenthin, PhD, LCSW, RPT-S™ • Creator of Attachment Centered Play Therapy, University professor. Renowned clinical supervisor, international speaker, and acclaimed play therapist. Author of best-selling books like Attachment Centered Play Therapy. She is a sought-after expert in media, frequently sharing insights on children and family issues at both local and national levels.

Claudio Mochi, MA, RP, RPT-S™ • Director of the University Master's Program in Play Therapy (INA/UER), founder and president of the APTI. Expert in Emergency intervention with 25 years of international experience in trauma management. He received the 2015 Family Enhancement & Play Therapy Center, Inc. Award for "Outstanding contributions to the practice and teaching of Filial Therapy".

Brandy Schumann, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S™ • Clinical Professor at Southern Methodist University with over two decades of experience helping children and families find healing and hope. International speaker and advisor, founder of Brandy's BOA, a therapeutic punching bag (Bobo) company designed to help children express themselves in healthy, healing ways through play. Past President of the Texas APT.

Content Overview

Reading Children's Drawings in Gaza and the West Bank after a Genocidal War

Speaker: Ferdoos Abed Rabo Al-Issa, PhD

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

Description: The study presented explore how children in Gaza and the West Bank perceive and represent their daily lives through drawings following a genocidal war. It examines how children navigate destruction, loss, displacement, and deprivation, while continuing to construct their inner worlds and understand social relationships through expressive practices such as play and drawing. The drawings address themes including home, school, family, social events, and the future, reflecting both lived experiences and imagined possibilities. Rather than being interpreted as signs of trauma, the drawings serve as a unique language through which children organize experiences, represent their social environment, and respond to profound changes caused by violence. Guided by social symbolic theory, the study analyzes the meanings assigned to these drawings within their social, cultural, and political contexts. Findings suggest that drawing provides children with a vital space to maintain symbolic continuity, construct understandings of self and world, and exercise creative resilience even under violent conditions.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss how children use drawing to represent daily life in contexts of war and genocide.
2. Apply social symbolic theory to interpret children's expressive practices.
3. Explain the role of creative expression as a form of resilience and resistance in situations of violence.

Keeping Hope Alive for Children's Future through Play Therapy

Speaker: David Crenshaw, PhD, ABPP, RPT-S™ *[The speaker will join online]*

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

APT & APTI CE Hours: 2 (non-contact only)

Description: Jane Goodall in her last interview before her death, said that we must find a way to keep hope alive. The challenge is formidable as emphasized in the report, The State of World's Children published annually by UNICEF. Progress has been noted but still at least 425 million children worldwide wake up to extreme poverty each morning. The spread of armed conflict and threat of war has contributed to the harsh environments of children, in addition to sociocultural impingements such as domestic and neighborhood violence, racial, ethnic and gender discrimination in all its forms. Play therapy is uniquely equipped to meet this challenge of keeping hope alive in children, even those children who grow up in unusually harsh environments. Play offers inherently features that engender hopefulness starting with the therapeutic relationship with the play therapist who offers human and potentially healing connection.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify at least three endemic features of Play Therapy that engender hope.
2. Discuss at least two essential tasks of the play therapist to keep hope alive in themselves.
3. Describe at least one Play Therapy strategy for a child who refuses to play.

From Scribbles to Stories: Empowering Imagination and Communication in Clinical Practice

Speaker: Mimma Della Cagnoletta, psychoanalyst, art therapist

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

Description: Our journey will start with a brief exploration of the meaning of sign as expression and communication in a social context and its connection to the realm of imagination. We will talk about scribbles and how to use them to contact inner sensations and give them an outside form. We will analyse their functions in different situations. According to the need of the users and the modality of their creative process, scribbles can serve to release somatic tensions, to contain anxieties by building structured and repetitive forms, to discover a figure or a form in the middle of chaotic lines. In each of these cases, the use of scribbles facilitate the meeting with clients and among family members by matching a common level of expression and by finding a potential middle ground where to establish a two-way communication. Building on the technique developed by Winnicott (1971) in his consultations with children, called “squiggle game”, we will have a direct experience of playing with scribbles. We will proceed from incoherent lines to recognized objects and by linking them together, we will generate stories. With our journey from lines to images to stories, we aim to create dynamic relationships, which contain symbolic meaning, shared through myths and tales.

Learning Objectives:

1. Use scribbles to develop communication with clients and among family members.
2. Discuss the powerful tool of imagination in the clinical setting.
3. Analyse how scribbles develop into stories and the benefits of this process.

The Inner World of the Therapist: A Synergetic Foundation for Play Therapy and Psychosocial Work

Speaker: Lisa Dion, LPC, RPT-S™

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

APT & APTI CE Hours: 2 (contact or non-contact)

Description: This experiential workshop explores the inner world of the therapist as a foundational and practical element of effective play therapy and psychosocial work across diverse environments. Grounded in the principles of Synergetic Play Therapy, the session invites participants to examine how a practitioner’s internal state—emotional awareness, nervous system regulation, and authenticity—directly influences their capacity to connect with others. This capacity for connection is presented as the essential gateway through which attunement and creative responsiveness emerge, particularly in settings that extend beyond the traditional playroom, including crisis response, medical and healthcare contexts, educational environments, and work with families. Through guided reflection, gentle experiential exercises, and clinical examples drawn from real-world practice, participants will gain insight into how cultivating internal awareness supports meaningful connection, allowing attunement and creativity to naturally unfold within play-based and psychosocial interventions across settings.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe at least two ways in which a play therapist’s inner world shapes connection and influences therapeutic relationships in Play Therapy and psychosocial settings.
2. Identify at least three key internal cues that impact a play therapist’s capacity to connect, attune, and respond creatively when working in diverse environments such as crisis, medical, educational, and family contexts.
3. Explain how cultivating greater internal awareness supports connection as the foundation for attunement and creativity within Play Therapy and psychosocial interventions beyond the traditional playroom.

Arts, Imagination and Play: Working with Children in Vulnerability in Costa Rica

Speaker: Sylvia Ketelhohn, MA, CAGS, PhD Cand.

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

Description: This lecture explores the use of expressive arts, imagination, and play as powerful therapeutic pathways for working with children living in situations of vulnerability in Costa Rica. Drawing from community-based practice and culturally responsive approaches, the presentation highlights how play and creative expression support emotional regulation, resilience, and meaning-making in contexts marked by social, economic, and emotional challenges. Expressive arts and play offer children a symbolic language through which they can communicate experiences that may be difficult to verbalize. Through case examples and experiential reflections, this lecture emphasizes the role of imagination as a protective and healing resource, allowing children to restore a sense of agency, safety, and connection. Special attention is given to ethical practice, cultural sensitivity, and the therapist's attuned presence when working in diverse and underserved settings. This presentation invites participants to reflect on creativity not only as a technique, but as a relational and transformative process that honors children's inner worlds and strengths.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the role of expressive arts, imagination, and play in supporting emotional expression and resilience in vulnerable children.
2. Identify culturally responsive and ethical considerations when applying play-based and expressive arts interventions in community contexts.
3. Integrate imaginative and creative approaches into therapeutic practice to expand the professional toolbox.

Working with Indigenous Australian Children: A Child-Centered Play Therapy Approach

Speaker: Josephine Martin, RPT-S

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

APT & APTI CE Hours: 2 (contact or non-contact)

Description: This presentation will highlight and honour the work undertaken within the Northern Territory of Australia. It will explore the evolving landscape of delivering Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) intensives in remote communities, with a focus on supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous children. The framework for organising and delivering CCPT intensives in the Northern Territory dates back to 2009, when foundational work was documented by Dr Rochelle Ritz. This was further developed by Dr Joanne Wicks in 2014, marking the first formal implementation of an intensive model within a remote community setting. Since that time, more than 35 Play Therapy intensives have been delivered across the Northern Territory using what may be described as traditional intensive models. In 2025, however, a significant shift in planning and delivery occurred to meet the unique needs of a different remote community. Rather than a single concentrated intensive, the model transitioned to a longitudinal approach, with approximately 20 visits undertaken to the same community across the year.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how CCPT intensives can be adapted and applied across diverse and remote settings.
2. Explain at least three practical and ethical limitations of CCPT intensives, including logistical considerations, timing, and program structure.
3. Discuss how to practically translate and apply at least two key learning within one's own professional context.

A Transcultural Approach to Involving Parents in Attachment Centered Play Therapy

Speaker: Clair Mellenthin, PhD, LCSW, RPT-S™

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

APT & APTI CE Hours: 2 (contact or non-contact)

Description: Parents are a powerful force to be reckoned with and inviting them to be a part of the play therapy process is a critical component to creating lasting change in the child's world. So why is this so hard to do? Clinicians new and seasoned alike struggle with allowing and inviting parents to participate in play therapy for a multitude of reasons. Learning transcultural skills in building a strong alliance with the parents is a must in child and family therapy. In this dynamic workshop, participants will learn the how's, why's, when's, and what-to-do's of parent-child Play Therapy utilizing Attachment Centered Play Therapy. You will learn transcultural Attachment Centered Play Therapy interventions, as well as take a look at your own roadblocks in a hands-on, experiential, nurturing learning environment. Get ready to learn and play!

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss a plan for parent involvement in Play Therapy that incorporates at least two strategies informed by a transcultural perspective.
2. Explain what Play Therapy is to parents in an easy to understand language.
3. Identify three transcultural Play Therapy techniques that parents and children can do together inside and outside of the session.
4. Discuss attachment theory and different attachment styles that impact parent's ability to engage and be involved in their child's treatment.

Protecting the Play Space: Managing Therapist Bias, Culture, and Values in Play Therapy

Speaker: Brandy Schumann, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S™

Presentation Duration: 2 hours

APT & APTI CE Hours: 2 (contact or non-contact)

Description: Play Therapy is designed to be a protected space where clients can express meaning through play, free from adult agendas and expectations. Yet therapists inevitably enter this space carrying their own culture, values, assumptions, and lived experiences. When unexamined, these internal influences can shape responses to play themes, limit curiosity, or subtly redirect the therapeutic process. This experiential presentation invites participants to explore how therapist bias, cultural identity, and personal values show up in the playroom. Through guided reflection, brief play-based activities, and case vignettes, participants will examine moments when therapist "stuff" can enter clinical decision-making. Emphasis will be placed on increasing self-awareness not as self-criticism, but as an ethical responsibility that protects the child's autonomy and the integrity of the play therapy process. Participants will leave with concrete reflective tools and experiential practices that support cultural humility, ethical presence, and value containment in Play Therapy across diverse clinical contexts.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify personal cultural values, biases, and assumptions that may emerge during Play Therapy sessions.
2. Describe at least two play-based activities designed to increase play therapist self-awareness and cultural humility.
3. Apply at least two reflective strategies to manage personal values and protect the client-led nature of the Play Therapy space.

Play and Play Therapy as Catalysts for Sustainable and Multilevel Community-Based Projects

Speakers: Claudio Mochi, MA, RP, RPT-S™ & Isabella Cassina, MA, TPS, CAGS, PhD Cand.


Presentation Duration: 2 hours

APT & APTI CE Hours: 2 (contact or non-contact)


Description: The world is facing a growing number of challenges that call mental health professionals to critically reflect on the most effective ways to contribute to the wellbeing of society as a whole. So-called “drop-in interventions” are often costly and ineffective in the long term. This workshop presents a vision along with the benefits and limitations of multilevel, long-term structural change as a sustainable and replicable response to an increasingly dynamic and complex world. Special attention is given to play as a cornerstone of human development and collective wellbeing, and to Play Therapy as a key field of intervention from which highly effective ways of interacting, activities, and methodologies can be drawn, applicable across the lifespan and in a wide range of settings extending beyond the traditional playroom. The workshop will be enriched with experiential and reflective activities.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the main benefits and limitations of using Play Therapy in community-based projects.
2. Identify at least three levels or contexts in which Play Therapy can be effectively integrated within a psychosocial project.
3. Describe at least three Play Therapy activities applicable in a community setting.



Reading Children's Drawings in Gaza and the West Bank after a Genocidal War



Ferdoos Abed Rabo Al-Issa, PhD




Play and Play Therapy as Catalysts for Sustainable and Multilevel Community-Based Projects




Claudio Mochi, RPT-S™ & Isabella Cassina, MA

Earn 2 CE Hours!

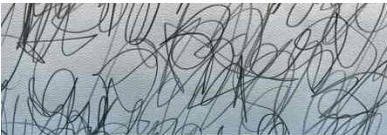


Keeping Hope Alive for Children's Future through Play Therapy




David Crenshaw, PhD

Earn 2 CE Hours!



From Scribbles to Stories: Empowering Imagination and Communication in Clinical Practice



Mimma Della Cagnoletta, Art Therapist



The Inner World of the Therapist: A Synergetic Foundation for Play Therapy and Psychosocial Work



Lisa Dion, RPT-S™

Earn 2 CE Hours!



Arts, Imagination and Play: Working with Children in Vulnerability in Costa Rica



Sylvia Ketelhohn, MA



Working with Indigenous Australian Children: A Child-Centered Play Therapy Approach



Josephine Martin, RPT-S

Earn 2 CE Hours!



A Transcultural Approach to Involving Parents in Attachment Centered Play Therapy



Clair Mellenthin, PhD

Earn 2 CE Hours!



Protecting the Play Space: Managing Therapist Bias, Culture, and Values in Play Therapy



Brandy Schumann, PhD

Earn 2 CE Hours!

COSTS & DISCOUNTS

The fee includes: 18 hours of Conference, post-test and CE Hours, Certificate of attendance, 3 nights in shared accommodation, meals (3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners).

Transportation fee is not included. Upon request, transportation to and from the airport can be arranged. We recommend flying into [Milan Malpensa Airport](#).

Rooms are assigned in order of registration, starting with double rooms (unless otherwise specified). A double room is therefore not guaranteed for all participants. Each room has a private bathroom with double facilities. The accommodation is not equipped with air conditioning; fans will be available for guests.

If the facility's rooms are fully booked, information on alternative accommodations nearby will be provided. Please note that these are likely to cost more than the Conference venue.

PROFESSIONALS

Before January 31, 2026:

- On-site training, double room & board = €650
- On-site training, 3-4 people room & board = €600
- Online = €250

After January 31, 2026:

- On-site training, double room & board = €750
- On-site training, 3-4 people room & board = €700
- Online = €300

STUDENTS & GROUPS

Before January 31, 2026:

- On-site training, double room & board = €600
- On-site training, 3-4 people room & board = €550
- Online = €200

After January 31, 2026:

- On-site training, double room & board = €650
- On-site training, 3-4 people room & board = €600
- Online = €250

VOLUNTEERS

Only 3 spots! Handle breakfast and coffee break setup, as well as training room arrangement.

- On-site training, double room & board = €450
- On-site training, 3-4 people room & board = €400

The registration fee of €150 confirms registration and is non-refundable. Exceptions are when the participant proposes a suitable professional as a replacement; in that case, any amount already paid by the initial candidate are refunded in full.

In the event that the Conference is cancelled or postponed by the organizers, INA guarantees a full refund of the fee paid. Participants are responsible for any additional expenses incurred or losses of any kind.

The balance is due by July 1st, 2026 (the registration fee of €150 is included in the total cost).

The Conference will be confirmed with a minimum number of registrants and no later than February 15, 2026. We invite you not to purchase non-refundable tickets before this date!

Enjoy the early-bird discount. Sign up by January 31, 2026!!!

Would you like to attend only part of the program, either in person or online? Contact us!

HOW TO ENROLL IN 2 STEPS

1. Send an email to info@play-therapy.ch. Let us know whether you would like to attend in-person or online, if you have any dietary restrictions, and if you are a professional, student or group. You can also apply as a volunteer (only 3 spots available)
2. Pay the registration fee of € 150 by bank transfer or PayPal. You will receive a confirmation email from us as soon as possible (balance due by July 1st, 2026)

BANK REFERENCES & PAYPAL

International Academy for Play Therapy, Via General Guisan 2, 6962 Lugano, Switzerland.

IBAN: CH34 0900 0000 9122 4447 3 • BIC (SWIFT-Code): POFICHBEXXX.

Bank name and address: PostFinance SA, Mingerstrasse 20, 3030 Bern, Switzerland.

Subject: "Conference 2026." Any transfer fees must be borne by the payer.

For PayPal [click here](#).



CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This training and its faculty have no conflict of interest or competing interests in presenting the Conference. There is, moreover, no commercial support of any kind.

CREDENTIALS

The number of **Contact or Non-Contact CE Hours** contributes to obtaining or renewing Registered Play Therapist (RPT) credentials. APT credits are awarded to mental health professionals only. APTI credits are awarded to mental health, educational, rehabilitation, health, and social work professionals.

Image: Chiavenna, Italy
Location of the Conference

