



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
ARIZONA

Professional Profile: Dr. Sarah Dachtyl

Highlighting professionals serving the brain injury community

BIAAZ's Chief Storyteller Keerthi Vemulapalli recently caught up with Dr. Sarah Dachtyl, a Michigan native, who came to Arizona in 2003 to attend the University of Arizona to obtain her doctoral degree. Of the scorching Arizona summers, Sarah says, "I'll take the heat over snow and ice any day!"

Sarah heard about the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona around the year 2005 from a co-worker while attending U of A, and even though she had a full work load while obtaining her Phd, she still did her best to stay active with BIAAZ. Currently, she holds a BIAAZ professional membership, which she believes is an important part of maintaining connections with other individuals who are also passionate about serving those who have sustained life-altering injuries. Sarah works with high school students with speech and language impairments due to various causes, brain injury being one of them. She is committed to providing the students with the best care possible, and connecting with BIAAZ helps her in this pursuit.

During the school year, Sarah works directly with students and coordinates with their teachers, doctors, and other service providers. She also advocates for their communication needs, and conducts their evaluations and observations.

Additionally, she runs a return-to-academics concussion management team in her school district (Sahuarita Unified School District), called CoRTE_x, which stands for Cognitive Return to Exertion. Sarah meets with students weekly to determine their symptoms and develop a readjustment plan with them. The goal is to help them feel comfortable at school and engaged in the learning process as much as possible.

In the summer, Sarah is a visiting summer faculty



member at Northern Arizona University, where she teaches master's level students about traumatic brain injury, dementia, and motor speech disorders for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. She also volunteers her time as the recording secretary for the Arizona Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Of her proudest achievement, Sarah says it's "seeing the progress my students make each day!" Her favorite experience with BIAAZ has been attending

meetings with survivors who are advocating for changes in the community, such as making events and locations throughout Tucson more accessible.

For someone interested in working with individuals who have sustained a brain injury, Sarah suggests they spend time volunteering or shadowing a variety of health care professionals. Some professionals have job responsibilities that overlap with others, and visiting with a variety of them showcases the unique contributions each of them offers. Her advice is, "this is a field where there are a lot of ups and downs emotionally, so be sure to take care of yourself while providing superior care. Read all that you can and connect with others."

Besides her involvement with BIAAZ, CoRTE_x, and working with high school students, Sarah has two children, Stella (age 8) and Anthony (age 7). She and her husband spend a lot of time traveling with them and sharing new experiences together. Recently, they returned from a relaxing beach trip to sunny San Diego. When she can find some spare time, Sarah also loves to read.

Her upcoming plans include hosting some family members during the holidays this winter. "It's always fun to show off what southern Arizona has to offer!" she shares.

Thanks for catching up with us, Sarah, and for everything you do in the community and for BIAAZ!