

STAFF TRAINING

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Well-trained staff members are the key to providing quality child care programs. Training can help staff members improve their skills and learn how to manage a program effectively. Good training programs offer fresh and interesting ideas for activities. They also help staff members grow as professionals. Training is an important part of keeping a program alive and healthy.

Finding training that is affordable and making all the necessary arrangements can be overwhelming. Training can easily slip to the bottom of your list. You may think of it only when problems arise. To avoid this problem, take time once each year to develop a training plan. Come up with interesting events for everyone to look forward to.

Use these steps to develop a yearly training plan.

ASSESS STAFF NEEDS

Ask staff members to complete a simple survey. Include open-ended questions. Ask what they want to know more about. You can also list specific topics, and ask your staff how interested they are in these topics. You might ask: "Would you be interested in training on how to organize special events?" A range of responses such as no interest, some interest, or very interested tells you more than simple yes or no responses. Compile the results of the surveys, and report back to your staff.

Use staff evaluations to determine individual training needs. If several staff members need work in a specific area, this area may be a good training topic. If only one or two people need training in an area, find specific workshops, conferences, or readings for them.

SELECT TRAINING TOPICS

Rank the topics according to the amount of interest your staff showed in them. The topics that were the most interesting will be highest on your list - if they are feasible to present.

IDENTIFY YOUR RESOURCES

Finding the right trainer is very important. If you can afford to hire a consultant to provide training, ask other directors who they have used. Or ask consultants who gave excellent sessions at meetings you attended.

Agencies may also provide training for child care staff. Possible agencies to contact include child care regulating agencies, child care resource and referral groups, the Cooperative Extension Service, public health departments, and professional child care organizations.

Sometimes the program director or an experienced staff member can provide training. You can get variety and fresh ideas by "swapping" trainers with another facility. Plan a cooperative training event to help with costs. It will also give your staff a chance to talk with staff members from other programs. Books and tapes are useful training tools. Check with agencies and other centers for

recommendations. Book catalogues and your local library can also be sources of ideas.

DEVELOP A TRAINING BUDGET

Child care program budgets are always stretched thin. Show your staff that training is important by setting money aside for it. Some programs pay their staff members a small amount to present a workshop. This shows that you value their work, and it does not cost a lot. Other programs have asked employers or community agencies to fund their training plans. One program got \$5,000 from a local foundation to help staff attend college classes!

ARRANGE TIMES AND PLACES

Survey staff members to find the best time to offer training. There is rarely one time that is perfect for everyone. If you train outside the normal work day, you must decide whether or not to require attendance. If attendance is required, let staff know before they are hired. Also, tell everyone the dates and times of training early enough for them to plan to attend.

Training often occurs at the center. Sometimes, moving to a different location can help staff be open to new ideas and get their creative juices flowing. Libraries, civic centers, and other child care facilities could be used as training locations.

EVALUATE

After each session, ask staff members to evaluate the training. Use a simple form that can be used to plan future programs. Ask for feedback on the trainer, topic, time, and location.

Writing a yearly staff training plan can be exciting. It helps you develop a plan for improving services, and it helps staff members to grow as professionals. Staff members who have a sense of growth are more likely to continue working with school-age children.

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