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Recreation Director's Handbook

A guide for recreation
delivery in Aboriginal
communities



2008

Manitoba 

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Exercise: Look at a group or program you are responsible for leading. Using the quick reference chart above, determine which style would be most appropriate for the group. Apply this style and evaluate its success.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT⁷

The best way to manage problems is to prevent them. To prevent discipline problems Recreation Directors should be skilled in four areas: awareness, overlapping activities, group focusing, and movement management.

Awareness

Communicate you are aware of everything that is happening. Aware leaders seem to have eyes in the backs of their heads. To be aware, avoid becoming absorbed with only a few participants, as it encourages the others to wander. Always scan the room, making eye contact with individuals so they know they are being monitored. Prevent minor disruptions from becoming major. Know who instigates the problems and make sure the right person is being dealt with. If two problems occur at the same time, deal with the more serious one first. For example, a leader who tells two children to share a crayon, but ignores a brief shoving match is not aware of the room. Participants begin to think they can get away with almost anything.

Overlapping and Group Focus

Keep track and organize several activities at one time. When working with children they need constant monitoring. Leaders may have to supervise a number of activities at one time. Maintaining a group focus means keeping as many participants as possible involved in appropriate activities. If they are busy, they have less time to get into trouble.

Movement Management

Keep the activities and the group moving with smooth transitions, variety and appropriate pace.

Dealing with Discipline Problems

No matter how much a Recreation Director tries to prevent discipline problems, some inevitably occur. Remember when disciplining:

- ◇ separate the person from the behaviour
- ◇ public praise, private criticism
- ◇ avoid yelling
- ◇ avoid sarcasm
- ◇ ensure the punishment fits the crime
- ◇ be sure they know the choices they have and are making
- ◇ be firm, fair and positive
- ◇ do not humiliate
- ◇ carry out consequences immediately

⁷ Manitoba Youth Secretariat. A Leaders Guide to Discipline: Manitoba: Author.

Exercise: Observe a community program. Watch the participants and evaluate the extent that awareness, overlapping, group focus and movement management are used as behaviour management tools. If behavioural issues arise, consider how they may have been prevented.

PRACTICAL PREVENTION

- ✦ Plan.
- ✦ Be organized and ready.
- ✦ Avoid making people wait around while locating supplies and equipment.
- ✦ Have something to do with a few people while waiting for others to show up.
- ✦ Model the behaviour you want to see.
- ✦ Have strategies to get everyone on task.
- ✦ Get everyone's attention before starting.
- ✦ Give clear directions.
- ✦ Check for understanding.
- ✦ Use people's names.
- ✦ Be polite.
- ✦ Have a plan for behaviour management. This may vary depending on your population. If working with kids, be sure the rules are clear. Determine 4 or 5 basic rules. It works best if they help to set the rules. Establish consequences and rewards. Make sure they are understood.
- ✦ Keep rules few and simple and forewarn in special situations where breaking rules will be tempting.
- ✦ Give the participant the opportunity to make a better decision next time.
- ✦ When working with peers and adults, set the rules together and talk about self and group policing. Avoid taking the responsibility on yourself.

Exercise: Develop a behaviour management plan for a children's program. Decide how the rules will be determined, expressed, and enforced

THE WISE LEADER...⁸

- ✦ understands it is more important to tell the simple, blunt truth than it is to say things that sound good.
- ✦ is not collecting a string of successes. The leader is helping others to find their own successes.
- ✦ knows it is more important to act on behalf of everyone than it is to win arguments.
- ✦ runs the group delicately, as if they were cooking small fish.
- ✦ uses gentle interventions to overcome rigid resistance.
- ✦ knows there are times when it seems as if one must intervene powerfully, suddenly and even harshly. The wise leader does this only when all else fails.
- ✦ knows when leaders become superstars, the teacher outshines the teaching. A moderate ego demonstrates wisdom.
- ✦ pays attention to silence. What is happening when nothing is happening in the group?
- ✦ does not intervene unnecessarily. The leader's presence is felt, but often the group runs itself.

Exercise: Identify three leaders in your community and observe their styles, qualities and traits.

PROBLEM SOLVING⁹

As a Recreation Director many circumstances arise that require careful consideration and good problem solving skills. Whether going through the process independently, or with a group, following a systematic approach to problem solving can help ensure that appropriate solutions are reached.

Step 1. Recognize and define the problem. What are the facts? How extensive is it? What is the current situation? Be sure you are identifying what the real problem is and not just the symptoms. Step back and take a critical look at the situation.

Step 2. Brainstorm possible solutions. Be creative and open-minded.

Step 3. Assess the alternatives. What would happen if you tried the different alternatives? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Step 4. Decide on the best alternative and go for it!

Step 5. Evaluate what happens. Did it work? Yes-- fantastic!! No- don't worry. Go back to step 3 and try again.

⁸ Johnson, D., & Johnson, F. (1987). Joining Together. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

⁹ Nishnawbe Aski Nation Recreation Sub Committee. (2004). Recreation Resource Manual. (p.4). Ontario: Author.

Exercise: Identify a specific problem that needs to be addressed, and approach it systematically using the five steps to problem solving.

A good leader is best when people barely know (they) exist.
-Lao Tzu

DECISION-MAKING¹⁰

Decision-making is by far the most crucial skill required for individuals and groups to reach their goals and to move successfully through the problem solving process. Decisions can be made in many different ways, each having their own advantages and disadvantages. It is important to choose a method that seems most appropriate to the situation.

Leader makes all the decisions without discussion.

Advantages: It is easy, simple and takes little time. This method is good for routine decisions, when group members lack skills and expect the leader to make decisions. E.g. making safety decisions or emergency responses.

Disadvantages: If not involved in making the decisions, there may be little commitment by others to implement them. This method does not use other member's resources, may cause resentment, and creates a power imbalance.

Person with the most expertise makes the decision.

Advantages: This method is beneficial when one person is the expert. E.g. The financial manager is the best person to make money decisions.

Disadvantages: Again, little commitment to the decision by others if they are not involved. It does not use the resources of others and it may be difficult to determine who the expert is.

Asking everyone's opinion and averaging them.

Advantages: This method is good when it is difficult to get a group together to talk, when there is little time for group discussion, when member's commitment is not essential to implementing the decision, or when the group has no skills to make decisions any other way. E.g. A youth committee deciding the age restrictions for a dance.

Disadvantages: There is not enough interaction for the group to gain from each other. Unresolved problems could damage the group, and there is little commitment by others to implement the decision.

¹⁰ Johnson, D., & Johnson, F. (1987). Joining Together. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Leader makes the decision after hearing the group discussion.

Advantages: This method uses the resources of the group and gains benefits from the group discussion. E.g. As the winter carnival planner it is beneficial to solicit ideas on scheduling, but ultimately s/he can decide.

Disadvantages: This method does not develop commitment, resolve controversies and often creates situations where members compete.

Majority vote

Advantages: This method is best when there is not enough time to use the consensus method, when it is not important to have consensus, or when it is not necessary to have all members committed. E.g. Deciding who will cater the youth feast.

Disadvantages: This method may lose good resources, alienate people, and does not fully benefit from the group interaction.

Consensus. (Where everyone, despite continued differences of opinion, agrees upon the decision.)

Advantages: This method produces innovative, creative, high quality decisions. It builds commitment and uses all resources within a group. It is useful when making decisions, which need all members to be committed. E.g. Deciding how the youth committee will run- goals, attendance, etc.

Disadvantages: If not experienced, this method may seem to require a great deal of time, energy and skills. It cannot be used in emergencies.

CONSENSUS TIPS

- ✦ Listen.
- ✦ Ask questions.
- ✦ Reflect back on what you hear and test for accuracy.
- ✦ Look for common interests.
- ✦ Identify options that meet the interests.
- ✦ Confirm agreement.
- ✦ Make sure everyone is and feels heard and understood.

Exercise: Identify three decisions that need to be made for your work. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages, determine which styles would be most appropriate for the situation.

TO HELP OR HINDER

Different factors affect the success of the decision-making process. Be aware of, promote and practice the positive; be aware of, discourage and eliminate the negative.

Factors That Help

- ◇ Listening to other people's ideas and concerns.
- ◇ Trying new ideas.
- ◇ Using a system. Going through the steps to problem solving in a way that allows everyone to be heard.
- ◇ Getting commitment from others.
- ◇ Considering other points of view.

Factors That Hinder

- ◇ Inability to work together.
- ◇ Failure to communicate. Some people do not participate, listen to others, etc.
- ◇ Closed minded members, "my way is the right way and the only way."
- ◇ Everyone is alike so there are no new skills, ideas or perspectives.
- ◇ The group is too big.
- ◇ People change the subject or talk too much.
- ◇ Decisions are being made little thought, "Let's just do it."
- ◇ Limited time.

TIPS

- ✦ Agree on the process.
- ✦ Clarify who has the responsibility for the decision.
- ✦ Communicate honestly and effectively.
- ✦ Be clear on the problem or decision to be made.



CONFLICT

If managed appropriately, conflict can increase the quality and creativity of group decisions and actions. To help ensure it is constructive, keep in mind:

1. It should be a cooperative effort to find the best solution. It is not who is right or who is wrong.
2. People have different views, ideas, and conclusions. Try to find inadequacies and have productive disagreements.
3. Every member should be involved in the discussion.
4. Everyone's opinions should be respected, valued and taken seriously.
5. Open, honest, accurate, complete, and effective communication should be a continual goal.
6. Members should not take it personally if people do not agree with their ideas.
7. Members who disagree should try to understand both the other's position and where they are coming from.
8. Members should be critical of ideas, not people.
9. Members should be encouraged to express their feelings during the debate, positive or negative.
10. After getting all the information, members should make rational arguments and conclusions.
11. Every member should feel free to argue his or her points. Groups should help all members speak out confidently.

COMMUNICATION¹¹

Communication is the process of transmitting information and meaning. People communicate in different ways: words (spoken, written, sung), art, drama, and dance. Body language makes up 65 per cent of all communications within groups. Gestures, posture, and facial expressions all send messages.

Without strong communication skills it is difficult to connect with others; to understand what each other wants and work together to create it; and for people to learn from you, be inspired by you, or follow you.

¹¹ Nishnawbe Aski Nation Recreation Sub Committee. (2004). Recreation Resource Manual. (pp .21-24). Ontario: Author.