



Teach and Train: Tools for Successful Activity Teams

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“A teacher *takes* a hand, *opens* a mind and
touches a heart.”

CMS Final Rule to Reform the Requirements for Long-Term Care Facilities (October 2016) 483.95 Training Requirements ~ Phase 3:

“Training requirements for all staff, contractors and volunteers...”

Seasoned Recreation/Activity Professionals play critical roles in the training and professional development of new team members and volunteers. These experienced veterans of the recreation industry are important resources to the overall team, as the insight and practical experience they provide pave the roads to success for future leaders, enabling them to explore new ground and take on additional challenges. For that reason, the following question is being posed to each of us: What can we do to maximize our effectiveness as Recreation/Activity Mentors?

The Stanford Social Innovation Review printed an article written by Jennifer Przybylo and Nina Vasan, dated 3 June 2013. The article is entitled Seven Habits of Highly Effective Mentors and its authors offer invaluable techniques for all working professionals. As we approach 2018 and begin implementation of Phase 3 ~ The Final Rule to Reform the Requirements for Long-Term Care Facilities, let's seriously consider Przybylo and Vasan's strategies. The below-listed topic headers and strategic points have been rephrased and tailored specifically for today's working Recreation/Activity Professional by NAAP Vice President Anthony Vicari.

A). Refine yourself

Think about all those wonderful awards, plaques and most impressive credentials and titles that follow your name. Many times these well-earned honors can make you, *the Activity Director*, seem distant and intimidating; discouraging both ‘the novice’ and volunteer from speaking frankly about specific concerns and/or problems in the department. The experienced Recreation/Activity Director should never be afraid to admit his/her mistakes. Allowing yourself to be approachable and ready to genuinely listen demonstrates a confidence that makes it easier for team members to admit their struggles and helps them see that each mistake is a learning step toward the overall team’s success. During these important times of healthcare change and revision, it is imperative to dialogue and focus the Activity Department’s attention on the federal mandates outlined in each phase issued by CMS. Being transparent with each other and having open communication is a sure way to make positive strides with your team.

B). Consistency

Mentees and volunteers deserve and expect that their mentor provides clear and consistent training throughout the work experience. Every effort should be made to provide opportunities of increasing the team member's working knowledge and skills; activity programming, resident rights, federal/state policies and procedures, and all other pertinent research and data that directly applies to the job. Stand strong in Interdisciplinary Team meetings and show the other leaders that you, the Recreation/Activity Director, promote meaningful and worthwhile training experiences for your team. Solicit support from your Executive Director and/or healthcare community's leadership division for helping fund your team members to attend local and national activity association conferences. Invite and provide opportunities for other local Activity Professionals to come share their successes and struggles with your team. Finally, conduct regularly scheduled team meetings that offer practical and proven strategies for success.

C). Honest and balanced feedback

Always provide honest feedback about each team member's performance and interaction with residents, family members and other staff. List

specific qualities that you have observed as strengths and offer constructive feedback with regards to future goals and improvements. Simply ‘telling’ team members how to improve is not enough. Provide specific and measurable recommendations and model how to implement the changes that you are looking for throughout the activity department.

D). Mutual Respect

No working relationship is one-sided. Activity Directors give a lot to each team member and volunteer, so don’t hesitate to ask your team for the same treatment in return. Having activity staff serve on a committee or become involved with other facility projects is not only a great learning experience, but a win-win for everyone involved.

E). Promote and Support One Another

Establishing a genuine sense of community is critical to a cohesive Activity Department.

Learning about the important details of each team member; family, interests, hobbies, etc. will strengthen your bond and help further team morale and communication.

Every Recreation/Activity Professional can benefit from being both a mentor and a mentee. It is critical that we continue investing ourselves with quality professional development. Specifically, be diligent with updated revisions to Section F: Preferences for Customary Routine and Activities. Review all F~Tags and discuss ways that the Activity Department can best meet each resident's highest practicable physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being. Involve the entire Activity Department with each stage of QAPI planning. Incorporate Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in team meetings and have team members contribute their experiences. Finally, prepare your team with the very best possible methods and strategies to write and implement person-centered care plans. This is what makes residents smile every day and say, "Thank you!"

