



Effective Staffing and Management: *Management Resources*

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content:	Staff Enhancement Activities

Overview:

The following activities can help energize staff, build or enhance cultural competency, improve motivation, build team rapport, teach learning styles and increase productivity in the workplace. Encourage staff members to be creative when doing these activities. The activities should be fun and engaging. These activities can also help new staff members feel more connected with seasoned staff members and help all staff members understand the norms in the workplace. Be sure to choose activities that all staff members can participate in regardless of age, gender, or physical ability. To further productivity, you can choose activities that utilize the current skills required of staff members such as communication, writing skills and time management.

At CHOICE, these activities were executed in either all-staff meetings or individual department meetings. Recommendations for group size and time required are simply guidelines. Please refer to [All Staff Meeting_Sample Outline](#) for more information on CHOICE staff meetings.

Activity 1: Determining Solutions

Goal: To enhance problem solving skills

Time: 10-15 minutes

Purpose: This activity can help staff members learn to problem solve independently or with a group. Complicated situations can put a strain on staff members and learning how to quickly and effectively troubleshoot can be very beneficial for staff members and patients. This activity will teach staff members how to work together to determine solutions to problems or complications and help achieve new goals to further staff and patient satisfaction. This opportunity to provide feedback from staff members can help encourage problem solving and commitment from the staff to further the organization's mission.

Group Size: Dependent on staff size

Instructions: Give a brief introduction to the activity. Explain to staff members that the organization is striving for new goals and/or is experiencing a systematic dysfunction. Present the issues to the entire staff in its raw form as an unsolved problem. Explain the details of the problem itself, and give the necessary background information for everyone to understand why this particular issue is important.

Give staff members time to ask questions about the problem or new ideas and then open the floor for ideas about what could be done to help improve the current system and achieve the new goal. Be sure to inform staff members that you will receive ideas openly, using an "anything goes" atmosphere to generate new ideas. Use a marker-board or newsprint to keep track of ideas so that staff can refer back to the list. You may include your own ideas in this phase as long as others have previously been discussed. Make some decisions as a group about which ideas should be tried first, and assign tasks to individuals who can start devising and implementing solutions. Revisit progress and report updates at future meetings.

Activity 2: Learning How to Let Things Go

Goal: To develop positive coping skills

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Introduce the activity as a way for staff members to discuss challenging patients they have encountered in the past week. This activity will allow staff members the opportunity to discuss ways to cope with rude or frustrating behaviors of difficult patients in a safe, supportive environment. Staff members who contain their frustration and stress may be more likely to be unhappy in the workplace and feel disengaged from patients and other staff members. Allowing opportunities for staff members to debrief and process their stress can increase productivity and provide chances for staff to let things go.

Group Size: Dependent on staff size

Instructions: Ask staff members to share examples of difficult or frustrating experiences with patients that happened that week. Let staff members know that this activity is a way for them to debrief after disruptive and difficult patient encounters and allow them time to process the situation they were in. Once everyone listens to the staff member's story and sympathizes about how frustrating that can be, take a moment for everyone to calm down and regroup.

Next, allow enough time to ask questions that help staff members think about the situation from the mindset of the patient.

Possible questions could be: What are some possible scenarios that might have made the patient act that way? Have you ever let stress affect the way you interacted with others? What are some possible ways to help the patient feel more at ease in the office? How might you be able to recognize this type of behavior or experience in the future and work through the frustration and difficulty?

This is a good time to discuss stressful issues such as high-chaos lives, transportation barriers, economic or personal struggles, domestic violence, or cultural differences regarding pregnancy, marriage or family. Usually, patients don't walk in the door explaining these issues clearly, even though they may be acting on them. It is important to reiterate that even though the patient may be taking out their stress or emotions on the staff member, the staff member is not at fault. Patients in crisis may not be aware of their actions or tone with staff members. Remind staff members that patients in crisis still deserve the best quality of care.

One CHOICE Example: We had a participant who was particularly difficult during her enrollment visit; after displaying rude behavior toward staff, she was asked to leave. She returned at a later date and explained that her mother had recently passed away, and when we had asked for a family member's contact information, it upset her, although she wasn't able to communicate that the first time around.

Activity 3: Recognizing Barriers

Goal: To develop empathy towards patients struggles to access contraception

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to allow staff members to understand the challenges that many patients face accessing contraceptive services. The barriers could include; lack of education about all available contraceptive methods, lack of support from family members or partners to get and use contraception or cost. It is important for staff to understand that individual situations may seem alike over time, but to each patient are still unique and deserve staff's undivided attention and consideration. Staff members should be reminded that some patients may face significant barriers to care.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: Read the following story to staff: *Jane is a 20-year-old college student who recently became sexually active with her boyfriend. They have been together for about a month, and haven't talked about birth control yet. She has health insurance through her parents, but is unsure about what it covers. She also is not sure how her parents would react if they found out she was on birth control. She knows friends who got pills from the campus health center. Finals are approaching, and she knows she and her boyfriend will be apart for the summer. She wants to get on something, but what? How?*

After reading the story, allow a few moments for staff to ask questions about the story or clarify any information. Then, discuss these questions as a group: What barriers does Jane face in getting on birth control? Have she and her boyfriend discussed the risk of sexually transmitted infections? Are there ways to get in contact with her insurance company to clarify questions without going through her parents? There are women who don't share anything in common with her story, but may also have different barriers. What might some of these be? Does anyone have stories of themselves or friends having trouble getting birth control? Make sure that staff members are reminded of confidentiality when sharing personal stories.

You can revisit this activity at a later date and have staff share other "birth control barrier stories" that they have heard from patients.

Activity 4: Appreciating the Positive “High of the Week”

Goal: To renew staff commitment toward the mission

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: It is important for staff members to have the opportunity to discuss the positive experiences that may happen at the office. The purpose of this activity is to allow staff the opportunity to talk about happy patient stories or good interactions that a staff member had with another staff member, as well as joyful experiences relating to the mission of the organization.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: Ask each staff member to share a positive story about a special patient or patient interaction that happened that week. Try to encourage each staff member to share a positive experience to help build rapport. Once each staff member has had a chance to share their positive experience you can then follow up by:

1. Reinforcing the actions of the staff member, with positive, reflective listening statements such as: “So you were the first person who ever really sat down with her to explain her options” or “So when she realized you weren’t going to put up a fight, she was able to relax”
2. Reviewing the barriers a woman might experience: “So something kept her from getting on reliable birth control after her last 4 pregnancies, did she talk about some of those barriers?”
3. Share in the joy: “That’s awesome.”

It is important to remember that staff members handle situations differently, so be sure to address potential judgment conflicts before staff members start discussing their stories. Make sure that each staff member has a chance to be heard if they have a story to share. Encourage multiple stories if applicable. If someone makes a judgemental statement as part of his/her story, use the opportunity to help teach how to reframe it as a positive learning experience.

CHOICE Example: A staff member shared a story about a teenage participant who was dealing with several life stressors, such as a drug-addicted mother, a recent rape that led to an abortion, and working with her father to raise her 3 young siblings. Despite the circumstances, the participant was extremely optimistic about her future. She was so excited to get the copper IUD; after the insertion, she jumped up and down in excitement stating how happy she was not to have to worry about pregnancy at all for the next 10 years.

Activity 5: Staff Expert of the Day

Goal: To build team rapport

Time: 10-15 minutes

Purpose: This activity allows the entire staff to learn about what each other's jobs entail as part of the whole team. Each staff member is given the opportunity to highlight the important contributions that are fundamental to achieving the mission of the organization because of their actions. This activity allows each staff member to recognize their own importance and learn about the importance of each other. This activity can help staff members feel more connected to the organization as well as to each other.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: A few weeks in advance, assign a staff member to be the "Staff Expert of the Day" at the next team meeting. Inform the staff member that this assignment means they will explain and present important aspects of their job to the rest of the team. Presentations can be done using pictures, PowerPoint, chalkboard, funny quotes, etc. Encourage staff members to use humorous and creative approaches when discussing their position. Have the staff member present during the first or last 10-15 minutes of the team meeting. Following the presentation, give other staff time to ask questions. To wrap up, have the team express gratitude to the presenter for the great work they do every day. Repeat this activity throughout the year to allow time for each staff member to present about his/her work.

Activity 6: Two Truths and a Lie

Goal: To build team rapport

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: This activity allows staff members to get to know each other better. It encourages communication, creativity, and builds team rapport. The purpose of this activity is to get staff members to learn more about one another, build new relationships with staff members, and strengthen current ones.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: Have each staff member write down three things about themselves. Two things should be true statements or facts, and one should be a lie. Then give each staff member time to read his or her three statements to the group. Give the group some time to discuss the statements and work together to determine which statement is a lie. Once the group has made their guesses, have the staff member reveal the truths and lie. Remember to inform staff members of confidentiality and appropriateness of statements.

Activity 7: Dream Vacation

Goal: To build team rapport

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: This activity allows staff members to talk about their interests outside of the office. Describing a dream vacation allows each person to share their interests, travel history, external activities and talk about what makes them happy. Staff members can learn more about each other and discover additional connections to each other.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: In this activity, have each staff member tell the group about their dream vacation. Staff can describe where they want to go, what they plan to do, interesting things they plan to see and delicious foods they plan to eat. After each staff member has had a chance to describe their dream vacation give the groups a few minutes to discuss their vacations.

Activity 8: There's no I in Team

Goals: To enhance effective communication skills, Increase staff motivation, Renew staff commitment toward organizational mission, Celebrate milestones

Time: Varies

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to allow individual staff members to understand how each task accomplished benefits the whole team. It is important for staff members to realize that individual efforts at work can benefit the whole organization. Even the most menial tasks are important to running an organization or clinic smoothly. This activity allows each staff member to feel like a crucial component of the success of the organization through recognition of the little victories.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: Count up and quantify what the whole team and individual staff members do on a regular basis. Some ideas for quantifying tasks include: counting incoming phone calls every day/week/year, the number of blood pressure readings taken, number of methods dispensed, women served, or even the number of trash cans emptied. Counting up these smaller instances helps illuminate the big and little tasks every team member does on a daily basis. Keeping ongoing records is best, but organizations need to estimate if this is necessary. It helps to print out certificates for members of your staff with these numbers, so they can track their progress over time as well. Use a staff meeting or another type of gathering to express gratitude to the staff and point out that it takes a whole team to accomplish the organizational goals.

Activity 9: Potluck

Goal: To build team rapport

Time: One Hour

Purpose: Having a potluck in the office is a relaxing way to increase team rapport and allow staff members the opportunity to socialize and show off their culinary talent. It's a relaxing and inexpensive way for staff members to socialize at the office. The potluck can also be used as a way to celebrate important office events or exciting events such as birthdays or anniversaries for very little money.

Group Size: Dependent on staff

Instructions: Inform staff members that there will be time off the schedule on a convenient day for the majority of the staff. Let staff members know that if they would like to participate, there will be a potluck taking place to celebrate someone's birthday, an important office achievement, acknowledge departing staff members, or just to celebrate the end of the week. Let staff members know there will be a sign-up sheet in a convenient location (such as the office kitchen, or supply room) and have staff members sign up to bring in a dish of their choosing. This added step can help increase anticipation for the event and help avoid repeat dishes. Remind staff members that they don't have to bring in a dish in order to participate. Finally, make sure that each staff member has some time off their work schedule during the potluck to attend.

Activity 10: Learning Styles

Goals: To enhance effective communication

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is for staff members to educate themselves about their learning styles and discover the best and most effective ways to be productive at work. This activity will allow staff members to learn about themselves and their co-workers and discover important traits about their learning styles and professional life. This activity can help staff members be more productive at the office and understand the best ways to learn, understand and absorb new information

Group Size: Dependent on Staff

Instructions: There are many adult learning style assessments available online. An assessment tool we found to be helpful is the VARK Learning Style Assessment (<http://www.vark-n.com/english/page.asp?p=copyright>)