

Top Tips

Contents

Top Tips for Successful Advocate Training and Management

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Top Tips

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Compiled by MECASA member center client services coordinators

RECRUITING ENOUGH PARTICIPANTS FOR ADVOCATE TRAININGS

- Use multiple online outreach tools: Facebook, email, social media, Twitter, newspapers, websites, jobsinme.com, etc.
- Learn who contacts are at local colleges, etc. that can help post/recruit
- Discuss volunteer program at tabling and outreach events, and provide printed materials
- Advertise on volunteer-oriented websites
- Alert current volunteers, staff, board and contacts of upcoming training, using multiple means of contact
- Consider newsprint, cable access, and local or community radio
- Reach out to Chamber of Commerce websites and local businesses with pull-off tab posters
- Lower your standards - occasionally
- Ensure your training is engaging and run effectively - so participants stay motivated once they get there and your training doesn't fizzle out.

RECRUITING QUALIFIED & COMMITTED VOLUNTEERS

- Have printed material available with the scope of the job and rewards (tangible, like volunteer experience, and intangible as well) that you can share in advance
- Be very honest about the work process from the beginning so that volunteers truly commit to workload and time
- Connect with other similar trainings and trainers for interested participants (i.e. Family Violence Project)
- Don't rule out very busy people
- Explain other volunteer opportunities if one seems too overwhelming to interested volunteers
- Ask volunteers if they had similar experiences - with other anti-violence or crisis/hotline type work, etc. - it could be a good way to gauge if they have experience with the level of commitment
- Have current volunteers recruit new candidates

MANAGING GUEST SPEAKERS

- Have a ready-to-go guide for speakers with overall objectives and logistics for the training
- Be clear in advance how much time they will have and what to cover, and share the overall agenda so they are clear on what other important issues must be addressed. Remind them of importance of leaving time for role plays, etc.
- Send speakers the manual section that is pertinent to the topic, so they know what other materials trainees have

- Encourage them to incorporate activities into their allotted time
- Use tools that measure time to make speakers aware of how long they have at all times - a visible clock, timer, notecards with time remaining, etc.
- Build relationships with speakers who are committed and reliable
- Be consistent across all speakers, and all trainings, with your scheduling, sending reminders, and identifying expectations on what to cover.
- Ask what their needs are for their presentation and try to meet them
- Invite speakers to come again if they have more to say (after their allotted time is up)
- Send email reminder with attendee numbers, time, and location
- Send thank you notes, and share any positive feedback from participants

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT IN THE TRAINING

- Use a variety of activities and different speakers from different resources (movement, role-plays, videos, discussion). Use multiple formats for **every** training: use speakers, AND games, AND group discussion, within each night.
- Use the time to share experiences, bring in scenarios and work at solving problems together
- Bring in seasoned advocates to share their experiences to help ease tension of new advocates
- Ask participants to keep a journal or share each week (i.e. one news article/story they noticed and their thoughts)
- Include clear examples of how they will interface in various situations to show the relevancy of each section
- Don't do all the talking
- Encourage participation and recognize past experience/expertise of participants
- Act excited and energetic yourself
- Keep your training fresh, and do something different for all sessions, so that YOU stay interested and engaged
- Use adult learning principles - never lecture for more than 20 minutes at a time before breaking to let them do interactive activities

INJECTING HUMOR

- It's a serious topic - but not everything has to be depressing. There are actually lots of funny and/or blooper moments in this work, and it's okay to share that with trainees
- Use fun - but relevant - icebreakers
- Be real, admit if/when you have a blooper moment or make a mistake
- Include occasional appropriate cartoons or examples
- Use humorous videos/clips, and be relevant: ask your educators for funny or satirical SV-related media
- Be okay with making fun of yourself
- Do case studies and bring in funny stories about them
- Find ways to highlight the exciting parts of the work - feeling like part of a team, community-building, volunteer connectedness - which will lighten the atmosphere

KEEPING VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED OVER TIME

- Remember volunteer birthdays or some similar events (such as anniversary of joining the team) with a card, email, or phone call

- Always follow up with their contacts and give them encouragement
- Send thank you notes, provide encouragement, validate volunteers; follow-up with contacts
- Offer flexibility as much as possible
- Constantly include volunteers as members of the whole team
- Give incentives: Food and snacks; Utilize SASP stipend to honor their time
- Remind volunteers of mission of agency to keep them motivated
- Rewarding volunteers with certification and giving them more job shadowing sessions in order for them to become successful in the field