

TEAM BUILDING

Building an effective team can lead to an enriching and effective work environment, but it doesn't happen without some intentional practices.

1. If you want to build a team you have to identify what skills and talents you need to have represented and hire people that will provide you with those basics. You might have one staff person who is very good at creating crafts projects, and another who works very effectively with behavioral problems. As the manager you need to know where the gaps are and hire appropriately.
2. All the members of the team must understand the vision or objectives of the Centre. They can then identify how they can contribute to the overall success.
3. The staff need to have an opportunity to get to know one another so they can build trust. These times together should provide an environment where they get to know one another's gifts and talents and work creatively to identify ways that they can build on those strengths. Get creative when thinking about how to make these times effective; have them create masks that identify who they are, draw pictures of what the ideal environment would be like, develop a jingle to represent the Centre's unique service.
4. Have regular team meetings. Ideally, once a week, but that may not be realistic. At least once a month the staff need the opportunity to do a beefs and bouquets so that you can fix problems and identify new possibilities. While it can be very difficult to plan and pay for these events it will more than pay off in a better working environment and richer programming for the children.

Build trust with your team members by spending time with each of them one-on-one regularly. If you demonstrate that you trust them to work toward the goals they will be responsive in helping where they can. Let them know that you value their participation.

If you have a member of the staff who is not willing to participate in a team environment or is disruptive, you need to deal with that problem expediently. The one bad apple adage is true – if the other staff don't perceive that you are providing the appropriate leadership the team will break down.

Working in an environment where there is an effective, supportive team is one of the most rewarding experiences one can have in the workplace. It will create an ambiance that will be reflected in staff behavior and both the parents and the children will notice. When everyone is enjoying what they are doing it makes for a rich work environment.

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