

CAMP ADMINISTRATION 101

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT



Many camp programs rely on volunteers to keep them afloat. Whether it's high school students in your CIT program or adult volunteers as your counselors, recruiting and retaining great volunteers will make your camp better and your job as the camp director much easier. Larger programs can have many volunteers to manage throughout the course of camp so it is important you stay organized while putting in the extra effort in to retain them. Here are some tips to manage your volunteers and keep them coming back!



BACKGROUND SCREEN

This is a must for any youth program and paramount for the safety of your campers. Make sure to follow your states guidelines on volunteer screening. If your state statutes do not clearly define volunteer screening requirements, you should be screening all your volunteers at least once annually.

VOLUNTEER POLICIES

Have written policies for your volunteers such as background screen requirements, volunteer job description, waivers, and code of conduct. Have forms available for detailed contact information and require them to sign off on your policies on an annual basis. Many staff manuals can also apply to volunteers as they should be treated as a staff member as a part of your program.

SAY THANK YOU....A LOT

One unfortunate thing that gets over looked with managing volunteers is the simple gesture of telling them thank you for their service. They are doing the job for free, but it is an essential part of any program. Tell them how much they mean to your program any chance you get.

TRAIN AND EDUCATE

Put the necessary effort into training and educating your volunteers before they ever step foot on site in your program. Review your program goals and expectations as well as sport specific rules and policies. Provide everything you can within the time constraints of your face to face meetings as well as provide them a list of resources they can use on their own throughout the camp season. Teaching them how to work with kids, manage their groups, and run activities will go a long way in developing your volunteers.

BE FLEXIBLE

Try to be as flexible as possible with your volunteers when it comes to scheduling. Make sure they get their desired work times. If they have a known conflict prior to camp look into it and see if it can be avoided as best as you can. It should all be considered only before the camp starts and make sure they understand that it cannot always be guaranteed.

EMPOWER

Give your volunteers the tools they need to succeed and get out of their way! Don't micromanage your volunteers, let them do their own thing and have fun with it. You don't need to tell them how to do their jobs just provide them tools and help them along the way.



HOLD VOLUNTEERS ACCOUNTABLE

Have a process in place to monitor your volunteers and hold them accountable if they do not follow your policies. Make sure you set clear and concise expectations for your volunteers and if they fall short, take action as soon as possible to prevent a larger incident from occurring down the road.

COMMUNICATE

It is extremely important to communicate with your volunteers throughout the entire camp from when they sign up to the last day. Volunteers will be frustrated if they cannot find the information they need or feel like they are out of the loop on camp activities. Send weekly updates, meet regularly, make sure to listen if they have questions or concerns, and be responsive.

GIVE THEM A KEEPSAKE

One last thing to do at the end of camp is to give them something in appreciation for their service. A great example is a plaque with them and their camp group. Another great idea is to have a volunteer appreciation event at the end of camp such as a luncheon or barbecue. Anything you can do to leave that lasting impression will end camp on a high note and keep your program in their mind when it is time for the next one.

BE FAIR

Make sure to treat all volunteers equally and apply the rules the same to all. It's frustrating for a new volunteer when it is clear there are favorites within the program. If volunteers who have been there for a while are getting unequitable treatment, or not playing by the same rules, it will turn your new volunteers away and could be detrimental to your program.

Knowing how to manage your volunteers is an essential part of any youth camp program. Falling short in this area may cause the program to go away for good. Have a plan going into each camp season on how to manage your volunteers and use all the resources at your disposal to welcome your volunteers to your program and keep them there for the long haul. The better and more well equipped your volunteer base is the stronger your program will be so be creative in managing your volunteers to take your program to the next level.





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