



## insuring ministry

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■ by Kyla Pinto

# Training All Summer Long

Henry Ford once said, “The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay.”

You can take his quote a step further and say that even after you train them, you’re doing yourself a disservice by not *continuing* to train them. For summer camp staff members, this means providing ongoing training all summer and giving them multiple opportunities to build their skills.

## Focused training

Staff members should be practicing their less-used technical skills, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for lifeguards and transfers for ropes course staff to maintain their knowledge and confidence in the use of those important skills and procedures.

It’s also vital to practice less tangible skills, such as behavior management and abuse prevention. You can prepare staff members at the beginning of the season for how they can manage camper behavior, but until they experience it firsthand, they won’t fully understand it. Behavior management is an ongoing skill that depends on reaction to individual circumstances.

## Careful observance

For anyone managing other staff members, establish a regular schedule of observing employees and be prepared to offer additional training if someone isn’t meeting expectations. Additionally, encourage everyone on your staff to pay attention to what else is going on. Give team members permission to report any actions veering from how the team has been trained to leadership.

Deficiencies will help shine a light on areas of training that may need to be revisited more frequently or in greater depth. There can be a big difference between the beginning of a camp season and the end, and much of that difference is in how you react to unexpected challenges and deficiencies.

## Document, document, document

Of course, all the training in the world won’t make much of a difference, risk management-wise, if you don’t put it in writing. Let’s say a major incident involving an employee occurs, and when your insurance company (and other involved parties) investigate, there’s no proof you provided the necessary training. Leadership at the camp may be just as liable as the employee, if not more so.

You should meticulously record all training measures, observations, skill updates and corrective actions taken. Additionally, after taking corrective action, document how you followed up with the employee. Encourage all team members to own training. How can the team help improve training; how can peers train one another?

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If you establish a culture of continuous training throughout the season, staff members will become more adaptable and flexible when managing unforeseen circumstances. The extra training will also increase their confidence, improve your program delivery and, most of all, reduce the likelihood of accidents and increase safety. ■



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