



Training

September, 2001

"If, in the last few years, you haven't discarded a major opinion or acquired a new one, check your pulse. You may be dead."

—□Gelett Bugess

To grow is to learn. Learning is a lifelong process, and training is only one approach to gaining new information. Training sessions can take place in a variety of settings—classrooms, hotel meeting rooms, homes, outdoors, etc. To be most successful, keep in mind some basic principles of adult learning:

- **Learning depends on motivation.** Having a personal interest in the topic makes it easier to pay attention and gain new information.
- **Learning depends upon a capacity to learn.** Being open minded to new ideas and approaches and willing to try new things leads to increases in learning.
- **Learning depends on past and current experience.** Prior experiences and perceptions, as well as current knowledge and skills affect how eagerly new learning is embraced.
- **Learning depends upon active involvement.** Participants who practice new skills are more likely to remember and use them over time.
- **Learning depends on a climate of respect.** Trainers and participants recognize each other's strengths and respect each other's beliefs and skills.

Keep in mind these key components as you sponsor trainings. Effective training is:

1. **Based on a sound planning process.** Parents and professionals need to plan together. Consider what you want participants to learn.
 - How was the content of this training determined to be a priority? Who is requesting it?
 - Will parents and professionals be invited to attend trainings together?
 - Will they acquire new **knowledge**?
 - Will they develop new **skills**?
 - Is it a change in **attitudes** or **beliefs** that is anticipated?
 - What specific expectations are there for participants as a result of this training?
 - Strive for a balance between "content" trainings ("parent's rights", "third party billing", "who pays?") and "process" trainings ("grief process", "communication tips").
 - Consider how potential participants will receive information about the trainings. Personal invitations are always more effective than mailings or invitations through radio or print.

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2. Delivered by an effective instructor.

- How are instructors/trainers located and chosen?
- Is the presenter well prepared, knowledgeable and enthusiastic?
- Will a variety of learning techniques be offered?
- Will there be interaction between participants?
- Can trainings be co-presented by a parent/professional team?
Much can be learned from each other!

3. Delivered in an environment conducive to growth. Consider the space you will use.

- Is it easy to find?
- Is parking free and accessible?
- Will someone greet participants?
- Are nametags available?
- What seating options are available (round tables are more conducive to interaction)
- Does the size of the room fit the size of the anticipated audience?
- What refreshments are offered?

4. Enhanced by appropriate incentives and rewards.

- Are all potential participants offered the invitation to attend?
- What would make them want to come?
- Is childcare offered or reimbursed?
- Will a certificate of attendance or continuing education units (CEUs) be offered?
- Are people clear about what they will get at this training?
- What follow-up support is planned?

5. Evaluated for its quality and potential impact.

- How will participant reactions, learning, behaviors and impressions be solicited?
- What will happen with the information that is gathered? How will it be used?

It is always important to affirm the desire to learn more. Remember, though, that learning new things does not always lead to using that knowledge to do things differently. Sponsoring a training and sending participants to a conference are easy to do. Before selecting this approach, carefully consider **what** difference is expected as a result of this training....**why** this approach is chosen....and if a **single session training** is really the most effective strategy to choose. Other approaches to consider might be; hands-on practice, on site technical assistance and consultation, multi-session trainings with follow-up, or whole team trainings

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(not just sending a single representative).

Training can be offered within a single community or participants can attend training, specific to their needs, elsewhere. A process for accessing funds for registration and training costs needs to be in place, with funds easy to access. Look for opportunities to give others access to training, and avoid situations where the same parent or professional goes to every training. As funds are made available for training, determine ahead of time, how people who attend these conferences and workshops will bring back and share the information gained. The least effective way to change attitudes and behavior is through the attendance of one or two people at a one-day training!

