Chapter 12:
Staff Training

Well-trained staff can transform the food service operation from average to outstanding.
Employee training is both a rewarding and challenging responsibility faced by every adult day care provider.

Employee training is important because well-trained staff can transform the food service operation from average to outstanding.

There are many obstacles to a well-trained staff:
- Rapid employee turnover in the center’s food service staff
- Doing more and more with fewer employees
- Expectation for food service staff to work in other areas such as personal care or housekeeping (These employees must be properly trained to prevent cross-contamination of food when their work responsibilities vary during the day.)

Training sounds like a simple task, but thought and preparation are required to determine the level of performance expected from trained employees.

Developing a good training program begins with understanding the different types of learning required.

**Types of Learning**

Training involves three types of learning, each essential for food service employees to master:
- Knowledge or intellectual
- Attitude or emotional
- Manipulative or hands-on skill development
Knowledge Learning

Most food service employees need to know more than basic facts about food preparation and safety.

- Employees need to understand the reason(s) they are doing something. For example, a food safety fact is that employees should not cut up raw meat and then ready-to-eat food, such as raw vegetables for a salad, on the same cutting board without properly cleaning and sanitizing the cutting board first. Employees need to understand that the reason for this food safety fact is that raw meat can contain dangerous microorganisms that can contaminate the ready-to-eat food. If consumed, the dangerous microorganisms can cause older people to become very sick or even die.

- Employees also need to know how to use facts to make decisions and solve problems. For instance, they must be able to use food safety and food preparation facts to determine what food can or cannot be served safely to older people.

Attitudinal Learning

Attitudinal learning defines employee feelings or attitudes in a work situation. The adult day care center may designate as a job requirement that employees have a certain attitude toward participants, staff, and family members.

Manipulative Learning or Hands-On Skill Development

Manipulative learning emphasizes the skilled use of hands.

- In food service, manipulative skills include tasks such as cutting, chopping, and garnishing foods.
- If food service employees assist participants at meals, feeding techniques also require manipulative skills.

Developing a Training Plan

The steps in developing a training plan are:

**Step 1: Identify training needs.** Answer the following questions when developing a training plan:

- How would you like employees to perform their jobs differently than they do now?
- What educational topics are required by either your center or regulatory authorities?
- Do employees know all the requirements of the CACFP?
- Do employee job descriptions define specific job skills and attitudes?
- Do you want to change employee attitudes?
- Are employees expected to know a lot of facts or are they expected to solve problems?
- What changes are needed in the food service operation?
- Do employees work in more than one area such as personal care, housekeeping, and food service?
- What are employees expected to be able to do after training?
Staff Training

Step 2: Set up an educational calendar.
- Schedule training at the same time each month.
- Plan time to prepare for the in-service training programs.
- Start with all required training topics.
- Look at problems that have occurred in the last year or complaints by families. These may be good topics to include in the training calendar.

Step 3: Identify educational resources.
- Many training tools are available from food service distributors, professional organizations, government agencies, and nutrition communication businesses.
- Invest some time to review these products in print or on the Internet.

Step 4: Evaluate the usefulness of these training tools.
- Read the objectives carefully to determine if the program is suitable.
- Look for fun and creative learning activities to reinforce learning. Remember that some adults have unhappy memories of school.
- Adults learn more from doing than from listening.
- Adults enjoy and learn from the use of humor in training programs.

Step 5: Develop a system to evaluate employee skills gained from training.
- Hold employees accountable to perform at the level expected.
- Skills checklists are helpful to document that employees have been trained to meet the standards set by the adult day care center.

Step 6: Schedule training programs and be sure employees know they are expected to attend.
- Document attendance at training programs according to the policy at the center and CACFP regulations.
- A sample attendance form is available in appendix 14.

Step 7: Keep records of training.
- Keep copies of training objectives, handouts, and evaluation tools used.
- Keep documentation of employee attendance at training programs.

Step 8: Evaluate the success of the training program. Ask yourself:
- Are employees performing as expected after the training?
- Have you documented participation in training programs and new skills demonstrated?
- Do employees demonstrate different attitudes at work?
- What areas require additional training and follow-up?
Training is an ongoing job for all food service employees.

- Learning new techniques of food preparation or presentation takes time.
- Usually more than one training session is required.
- Not all employees learn at the same pace.
- Trainers should:
  - Follow up with employees who need one-on-one instruction
  - Use educational tools like mini-posters in the kitchen to reinforce knowledge or skills covered in training sessions
  - Reinforce training by complimenting employees’ positive behaviors
  - Remember that all manipulative or hands-on skills need to be demonstrated, and competency should be documented on a skills checklist

Sources of Educational Materials and Training Tools

American Dietetic Association
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60606-6995
800-877-1600
http://www.eatright.org

Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857-0001
888-463-6332
http://www.fda.gov

National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive
P.O. Drawer 188
University, MS 38677-0188
800-321-3054
http://www.nfsmi.org

National Restaurant Association
1200 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-331-5900
http://www.restaurant.org

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302-1500
http://www.fns.usda.gov