



Recommended Challenge Course Staff Training Plan

"Like any profession, the skill development of the challenge course practitioner should be continuous. Training should begin with a solid foundation of basic technical and facilitation skills and be updated regularly to stay current with best practices in the field and with the needs of one's program." – C. Damboise, Director, Training & Team Development

Initial Training for all New Staff

Adventure Basics: Level 1 Training 5-Day (45 hours)

This is the minimum level of training for a challenge course practitioner. Participants will learn both the basic technical skills of operating a challenge course as well as the facilitation skills essential to sequencing a program to maximize outcomes with participants. Adventure Basics provides an important first step for both understanding the flow and interplay of a group experience and for learning the skills to run an effective challenge course program.

Continued Training for Previously Trained Staff

Beyond Basics: Level 2 Training 4-Day (35 hours)

Whenever a course is in operation there should always be a staff member present that can respond to unusual or emergency situations and has been trained to Level 2. A Level 2 trained staff should always be present to supervise Level 1 trained staff. All staff operating the Challenge Course independently should be trained at this level. This training is designed to help practitioners reinforce and improve the requisite technical and facilitation skills needed to effectively operate a low and high challenge course program. Emphasis will be on developing a deeper understanding of challenge course systems, program design and facilitation skills, and cultivating a critical eye for risk management.

Managing an Adventure Program: CCM Training 3-Day (30 hours)

We recommend that all program managers attend a manager level training. This training is designed to help adventure professionals manage an adventure education program and its many facets and details. The course contains essential management skills and is intended for anyone who has primary responsibility for the management or oversight of a challenge course.

Maximize Your Effectiveness as an Adventure Practitioner: 2-Day (15 hours)

We suggest that all experienced facilitators consider this two-day facilitation skills workshop. Ready to take your adventure facilitation skills to the next level? This two-day facilitation skills workshop will focus upon participation in peer led and trainer led/supervised adventure activities involving games, initiatives and low course elements. Participants will have an opportunity to work with one another to enhance their facilitation skills and style as they give and receive feedback from one another and the trainer. This highly interactive model provides a unique setting for participants to examine their facilitation style and effectiveness in a highly supportive and engaging environment.

On-going Staff Development Plan

Regular skills training from an external professional vendor in addition to In-house skills refresher

Professional training by an outside vendor is a vital piece of every organization's training plan. Additionally, in-house training that refresh and revisit the various skill sets are invaluable to maintaining good practices among staff. However, it is not good practice for a program to conduct internal trainings only. Often a staff person who attends a professional training provided by an external vendor may want to come back to train others on her staff. Too often these efforts include only a fraction of the time and content of the original training. They also tend to focus on technical skills only with insufficient time spent on the broader but equally important topics such as program design, proper sequencing, facilitation skills, program philosophy, etc. These "second" and "third" generation trainings can result in diminished quality over time. A staff development plan that works well would consist of ongoing internal and external training that measure staff competencies and thoughtfully match staff's skills with program needs. ***We recommend that your program enlist the services of a professional vendor level training at least every other year. This could be a site-specific custom training or an off-site open enrollment workshop.***

Certification

Consider getting your staff certified at the level in which they operate on the challenge course. A well-designed certification program can be one more way to address the issue of "Do your staff know what they need to know to safely and effectively run your challenge course?" Now is a good time to get better educated about the benefits and standards of certification. Please call our office if you would like to have a discussion on this topic.

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