

## 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 ongoing needs of one's program."*

- Chris Damboise, Director of Training & Team Development

### **Initial Training for All New Staff**

#### **For those who have a Low Elements Challenge Course only:**

##### **Spotters Ready: Low Challenge Course Elements Programming:** 2-Day (16 hrs.)

Low challenge courses provide programs with many creative programming options. Come and explore this valuable group development tool. Participants new to the field will learn the technical, facilitation, and safety management skills required for a quality low elements challenge course program. Seasoned practitioners will leave with new ideas and variations for using low challenge course activities.

#### **For those who have a Climbing Wall or Climbing Tower only:**

##### **Belay Skills and Climbing Structure Training:** 2-Day (16 hrs.)

**Our introduction to belaying & climbing structure operations** is a two-day hands-on training that introduces the fundamental belay, supervision, and management skills necessary for conducting effective indoor climbing wall and outdoor climbing tower programming. It includes a belay skill verification.

#### **For those who have a combination of a Low Elements, High Elements and Climbing Wall/Climbing Tower Course:**

##### **Adventure Basics: Level 1 Training:** 5-Day (40 hrs.)

***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**

#### **For those who have 40 hrs. of previous Level 1 Training:**

##### **Skill Refresher: Level 1 Review:** 2-day (16 hrs.)

**If you have taken a Level 1 training in the past**, you may be able to identify areas of your skills that could use some updating and refreshing. High 5's Skill Refresher: Level 1 Review is an opportunity to review essential skills that are taught at Level 1 training that focus on facilitated challenge course operations, without the need to repeat the entire workshop.

##### **Beyond Basics: Level 2 Training:** 4-Day (32 hrs.)

***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, work-at-height protocol, rescue systems, program design and facilitation skills, and cultivating a critical eye for risk management issues.

### **Managing an Adventure Program - Course Manager Training:** 3-Day (24 hrs.)

***We recommend that all program managers attend manager-level training regardless of your current training level.*** 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 program.

### **For those who have 32 hrs. of previous Level 2 Training:**

### **Advanced Technical Skills: Level 2 Review:** 2-Day (16 hrs.)

**This workshop is geared to the practitioner who has taken Beyond Basics within the previous 2-3 years and needs a refresher.** It gives the skilled challenge course practitioner the opportunity to review and add to their foundation of technical skills. Emphasis is on practicing and improving technical skills while developing what we call a quiet competence as an adventure practitioner. At the beginning of the first day, specific participant needs will be assessed and then factored into the daily agenda. The content of this workshop builds upon the content from Beyond Basics: Level 2 Training and also provides a framework for you to review and prepare for the Level 2 Challenge Course Certification exam.

## **On-going Staff Development Plan**

**Regular skills training from an external professional vendor in addition to an in-house skills refresher is ideal:** Professional training by an outside vendor is a vital piece of every organization's training plan. Additionally, in-house training that refreshes and revisits the various skill sets are invaluable to maintaining good practices among staff. However, it is not good practice for a program to conduct internal training exclusively. Often a staff person who attends a professional training provided by an external vendor may want to come back to train others on their 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 professional training that measures staff competencies and thoughtfully matches 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 site-specific custom training or an off-site open enrollment training.***

## **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 at 802-254-8718 if you would like to discuss this topic. We're here to support you.