

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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I. Statement of Purpose

Communication Skills training will enable staff to:

- Understand the importance of communication and how it is used in every facet of a persons life.
- Recognize that communication takes many forms; every action is a form of communication.
- Recognize the critical impact their listening skills have on relationships with individuals, families and community members.
- Develop an awareness of diversity issues (cultural, religious, disability and others) to enhance clear communications.

II. Time Frame: 2 hours

Note: Communication Skills should be a part of all training. Emphasis needs to be placed on situations that may require different techniques.

III. Methodologies

A variety of methodologies may be used to teach this material:

1. Role play
2. Active discussion
3. Group exercises with case studies
4. Discussion of personal accomplishments, and how they were obtained

IV. Outcomes/Competencies

A. Staff will demonstrate knowledge of the importance of communication

1. Staff will recognize communication challenges in their own personal life, and the importance of communication.

Exercise: *Trainer will have staff quickly list 5 situations where they feel communication is important to them, share the reasons, seeing that communication is used in all aspects of life.*

2. Staff will identify factors that can influence communication style:

- Personal style
- Emotions
- Cultural background
- Given situation

Exercise: *Trainer will have staff think of how they would communicate while at a family picnic, in a meeting with their boss, with their physician. Note differences.*

3. Staff will understand that everyone communicates. (in some form)

Exercise: *Trainer will ask if staff know anyone who does not communicate. Assist staff in understanding that actions of all individuals are a form of communication.*

B. Staff will understand of the different types of communication

1. General communication skills:

- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Listening

2. Additional ways individuals communicate:

- Sign language
- Tactile sign language
- Expressive language through body posturing (invented)

Exercise: *Trainer will hand out phrases that are easy to express. Each staff person selects three different methods to express their phrase, and demonstrates for the class. Trainer provides examples if necessary.*

C. Staff will discuss the 3 elements of communication as defined by Communications experts:

- Words
- Sounds
- Body language

Exercise: *Trainer will have staff guess what percentage of communication is each element.*

. Words =10%, Sounds =30%, Body Language =60%

Exercise: *Trainer will have staff discuss what relevance this communication holds for the individuals they support.*

2. Poor listening skills .bad habits

- Ignoring
- Pretending
- Selecting
- Rehearsing
- Interrupting

Exercise: *Trainer will have staff demonstrate each of these qualities. If staff does not know quality, trainer will demonstrate.*

3. Intentional listening
 - a. Repeat the content
 - b. Rephrase the content
 - c. Reflect the feeling
 - d. Rephrase content and reflect the feeling

Exercise: *Trainer provides a simple statement; staffs take turns demonstrating the four skills (with trainer coaching if necessary)*

4. Listen First

Exercise: *Trainer distributes situation cards to pairs of staff one person plays staff role, partner plays other role. Situations could involve parent, service provider, neighbor who are upset.*

D. Staff will develop an appreciation of assistive technology

1. What types are available from low tech to high tech?
2. List technology we use everyday to assist in communication.
3. List types of low-tech technology: pointing to pictures, battery operated toys, etc.

Exercise: *Trainer asks staff who they know that uses low-tech technology and what type they use.*

4. Discuss high-tech technology: liberator, environmental controls that can operate a home just by voice input.
5. Where to obtain information on technology:
 - Maryland Rehabilitation Center
 - Maryland Technology Assistance Program
 - CAMA (clearinghouse for variety manufacturers of technology)
 - Your local school district; every school district has a technology policy
6. How to use technology to enhance other forms of communication

E. Staff will embrace the link between communication and disruptive behavior

Exercise: *Give participants a thought to get across to the group without words, statements of need, wants, urgency. Something that you know will frustrate a person. Discuss times when people have acted out, and could it have been that they were possibly trying to tell you something*

F. Staff will develop sensitivity to different cultures

1. What happens when staff are from different cultures than individuals they are supporting? Differences may include: religious, ethnic, age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic, disability.
2. Staff will explore strategies for learning about the person's culture and providing supports in a culturally sensitive manner.
3. When is it appropriate for staff to share information about their background, culture and personal beliefs?

G. Staff will understand that how we communicate effects our jobs

1. How do we represent the people we support in the community?
2. How can we increase the communication between our community and the people we support?

Resources for Communication Skills Training

Michael Smull, *“How to Communicate With Those Who Do Not Have Verbal Language”*

V.M. Durand, *Severe Behavior problems: A Functional Communication Training Approach- Communicative Alternatives to Challenging Behavior*

P. Mirenda, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*

Support Organizations:

Maryland Technology Assistance Program, 1-800-TECH-TAP

Young Adult Institute, New York City, New York; Helen Keller Institute, <http://www.hki.org>

TASH, <http://www.TASH.org>

NCIP, (National Center to Improve Practice) <http://www.edc.org/FSC/NCJP>

CAMA

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
POST TEST

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. List four types of communication.

2. Describe the link between communication and behavior. Provide an example of the link between a specific non-desirable behavior and potentially what the individual is communicating.

3. Describe how you will initiate communication with an individual you work with who does not use words.

4. Provide three examples of effective listening strategies you will use when communicating with families or other service providers.

Score/Comments:

Instructor: _____ Date: _____