

HIRING TEEN-FRIENDLY STAFF

It is often staff members who make the greatest difference in a young person's Club Experience. Staffing the Club with teen-friendly professionals in all program areas is the first step to building a strong program and fostering a high level of commitment and engagement among Club members.

There are two types of professionals who work with teens in the Club. Dedicated staff are fully devoted to teen programming and are responsible for supervising the designated teen space. For example, a teen director or a physical education director in a stand-alone teen center is a dedicated staff member. Shared/contributing staff spend part of their work time with teens and part of their time with younger members. They supervise shared program areas where there is scheduled time for teens. For example, a shared/contributing staff member could be a physical education director in a Club with an in-Club teen center and may also act as physical education director for the younger members. Professionals for teen-serving positions should be:

- ▶ Friendly, fun and flexible
- ▶ Compassionate and caring
- ▶ Resourceful and down-to-earth
- ▶ Active, approachable and available
- ▶ Patient and passionate about their work with teens
- ▶ Able to be firm, consistent and fair

RECRUITING AND HIRING NEW PROFESSIONALS

When hiring new professionals, begin by including teens in the interview process. Ask one or two active teen members to serve on the interview team. Some of the interview questions should be issues relating to teens. Make potential employees aware (regardless of the area of the Club they plan to work in) that they will be interacting with teens on a daily basis. Ask candidates to develop an activity for teens. Consider asking candidates to shadow staff in the teen center for half a day. By doing this, the teens get to interact with the prospective hire and can give valuable feedback from their points of view. Also, Club leadership can observe and monitor the interactions between the candidate and teens prior to making a commitment to the candidate. If your hiring practice does not allow teen participation, consider their participation in providing training for staff.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN TEEN-SERVING PROFESSIONALS

The most critical factors in the successful operation of a teen center are the qualities and skills of staff members. Coupled with the level of staff involvement and leadership, those professional qualities and skills determine the tone and relative success of teen programming. Understanding teens requires a basic familiarity with adolescent interests and issues, and a belief in the potential of teen members. Successful staff-teen relationships require the professional to be able to establish rapport with teens. Once established, staff-teen relationships should provide teen members with encouragement and guidance in the important areas of educational, physical, social, moral, emotional and vocational development. To identify professionals who can accomplish these things, Club leadership should look for the following:

SKILLS	QUALITY
Communication	Honesty
Interpersonal abilities	Fairness
Team-building skills	Confidence
Organization	Commitment
Professionalism	Empathy
Supervisory capability	Open-mindedness
Program planning	Community building
Community networking	Caring
Multi-tasking	
Writing and communication	

This list is not all-inclusive, but you can use it as a starting point to develop your own criteria for choosing professionals to work with teens.

CREATING JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Hiring the right person can make or break your teen program. Creating a job description that outlines the roles and responsibilities of teen staff is critical. Keep in mind that there may not be one perfect individual for this particular job. Therefore, it is important to prioritize the qualifications for this position. Start with required qualifications, then move on to preferred qualifications. Through effective training, coaching, on-the-job experience and management, an individual who meets the minimum requirements may ultimately exceed the preferred qualifications. For a sample job description, visit the Program Documents section of www.bgca.net/teens.

