

CREATING A STAFF AGREEMENT

LENGTH: 30-45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED: Large tablet paper or flip charts, markers, tape.

OVERVIEW: Designed to help a team develop a Staff Agreement- a set of expectations for how individuals will attend to communication, problem-solving, and delivery of their work product. Participants leave with a master list of strategies that contribute to an ideal workplace and an accompanying Staff Agreement to drive the collective team to fulfilling those strategies.

DIRECTIONS: Prepare large sheets of paper by writing one question at the top of each page and hanging these questions around the room. Instruct participants to move around the room and, under each question, share thoughts, ideas, and answers. Insist that participants visit every question and offer multiple suggestion under each. Encourage the room to remain largely silent throughout this writing exercise. Challenge participants not to repeat answers already written and to contribute multiple responses to each paper.

Questions:

HOW WILL WE SOLVE PROBLEMS?

HOW WILL WE ENSURE INFORMATION IS SHARED?

HOW WILL WE MAKE DECISIONS?

HOW WILL WE DEAL WITH CONFLICT?

HOW WILL WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND NEW MEMBERS?

After the writing portion is complete spend 5 minutes reviewing each sheet as a group. Ask for clarification or expanded discussion as needed. Ultimately identify common themes and use them to come up with simple statements of behavior or conduct that everyone can subscribe to. Add these to a master "Staff Agreement" list. Once all question sheets are reviewed and discussion is exhausted, review the master list and tweak as needed to finalize. Remind participants that these are not rules. They are guidelines designed to express partnership, inclusion, support, mutual regard, and of course: dignity and respect. Also be explicit that these are not standards to hold others to. They are expectations each individual agrees to apply to themselves. Acknowledge that no one is perfect and that these agreements WILL be broken. Everyone is human and life happens. Adoption of the agreement is not a solemn vow to never break them. Encourage participants to acknowledge when an agreement is broken, reaffirm the commitment to the agreement, and move on. Identify a volunteer to type up the list, distribute to all participants, and post in an appropriate area where it can be viewed by members of your team. Revisit and revise once every 3-4 months.

