



Cal Corps Public Service Center

Education for Justice

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After orienting volunteers to their site and your group, you become a supporting anchor for them as a coach.

COACHING: a dialogue between individuals that aims to transform a problem, situation or opportunity into improved work performance and increased personal satisfaction.

Coaching involves a high degree of support for the volunteer, especially through listening and providing direction. As a leader of your organization, you are likely to have more knowledge and skills pertaining to the challenge at hand – do not hesitate to share it with your volunteers. Coaching others definitely has its rewards and challenges. You develop your communication skills, empower volunteers' leadership development and witness the fruits of the labor through exceptional programming and others' personal growth. At the same time, you are challenged to give sincere feedback, manage conflicts and establish authority. These coaching guidelines will facilitate a positive experience for you and the volunteers.

What is your role as a coach: myths versus reality

| <i>Myths</i> | <i>Realities</i> |
|--|---|
| I make people choose appropriate behavior. | No one can make someone else do anything. |
| I am the enforcer of punishment consequences. | You offer choices. The person chooses |
| Setting limits means getting others to listen to me. | You have to listen and react to what you are hearing. |
| If I don't get compliance, I failed. | Individual chooses. You give structure for learning. |

Helpful Coaching Techniques:

- Most importantly, listen
- Sandwich negative/delta between two genuine affirmations
- Emphasize individual strengths and assign tasks according to strengths
- Offer challenges to help people realize their potential
- Create a friendly constructive atmosphere; be playful and invite humor
- Show enthusiasm and smile
- Check-in and follow thru regularly
- Reinforce and remind the shared goals and vision
- Attend the Cal Corps training on Communication Skills

Establish Good Communication with Volunteers:

- Listen! Understand and value the volunteer's insights and concerns.
- Be aware of your unspoken communication: tone, body language and overall presentation
- Be available and accessible to them. An absent supervisor is as good as no supervisor.
- Provide your contact information and schedule.

Coaching Peers

- Establish a regular, feasible communication time (ex. weekly meetings, end of week emails, etc)
- Commit to agreed communication expectations for both you and the volunteers.
- Consistently respond to emails and phone calls. Meet your standard of reliable communication.
- Ask for feedback! Provide too. Use it. Maximize opportunities to improve and grow together.
- Offer Assistance. Ask too. We need each other.
- Take time to get to know the volunteers through one-on-one interactions and genuine ‘how are you’s’

Conflict will inevitably arise between volunteers, with volunteers and community partner staff. When conflict is effectively managed, relationships and work performance are improved and strengthened.

Coaching through Conflict:

Assume conflict is not inherently negative, rather it is natural, inevitable and unavoidable.

- Deal with it in private
- Clearly identify the issue at hand
- Identify and examine the related facts, feelings, & behaviors
- Search for commonalities; identify and clarify differences
- Explore alternatives; be solution-focused.
- Weigh and balance the consequences of each alternative
- Avoid demanding compliance, arguing, interrupting, and consequences without explanation

Effective Feedback:

It is impossible not to give feedback though it may not be conscious. For example, you stop giving certain assignments

- Praise your volunteers in public and only provide negative feedback in private
- Acknowledge progress in all areas
- Use every opportunity to thank your volunteer for their contribution.
- Sandwich constructive criticism between two compliments
- Always give volunteers the opportunity to give you feedback

Giving Feedback Specifics

- Descriptive rather than evaluative
- Focus on actions not the person
- Specific current situation rather than general
- Directed toward behavior the receiver can act on
- Well-timed
- Checked to ensure clear communication
- Use other people when appropriate
- Helpful phrasing: “When you ____, I feel ____ because _____.”

Further Coaching Resources:

Attend a Cal Corps training on Communication Skills.

Getting Feedback Specifics

- Focus on the current actual situation
- Assume the problem is solvable
- Communicate a desire for input and impact
- Use “How do I...” statements