Skills, Service and Structure:

A Training Program for Crossroads for Youth

Angela Wilhelm

Oakland University

Abstract

This project details the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the "Skills, Service, and Structure" training program at Crossroads for Youth. This program was developed in response to an agency needs assessment that identified skill deficiencies relating to self-confidence, customer service, and organizational understanding which stemmed, in part, from an organizational culture that was divided. Following Dresang's (2009) systematic approach to training, a needs assessment was conducted, training curriculum was developed, the training program was implemented, and then the results were evaluated. Components from additional training frameworks were also executed when appropriate. Background information regarding the structure of Crossroads for Youth is provided, along with pertinent information concerning agency culture. The importance of training and development in meeting organizational and agency goals is discussed in detail and applied to Crossroads for Youth. The results of this study indicate that individual knowledge regarding the identified areas was increased.

Table of Contents

Skills, Service, and Structure:

A Training Program for Crossroads for Youth

Training and development are integral components of any organizational plan, and organizational success can often be tied to the competency levels of agency employees (Selden, 2009). By training employees, organizations improve employee skill sets, expand employee knowledge, and foster employee development. Training promotes communication, staff retention, and encourages learning. It even strengthens the existing agency culture (Selden, 2009). Through the analysis of current performance and the identification of skill deficiencies in employees, an organization can institute training to ensure that their general policies and procedures align properly and effectively with their agency mission.

The Crossroads for Youth "Skills, Service, and Structure" program was developed following Dresang's (2009) systematic approach to training. This approach includes identifying agency needs, developing program curriculum, implementing the training program, and evaluating the effectiveness of the program. An additional framework that was used to inform program development was Barbazette's (2006) training needs assessment. "A needs assessment is the process of collecting information about an expressed or implied organizational need that could be met by conducting training" (Barbazette, 2006, p.5). The three steps of the training needs assessment process are gathering information, analyzing information, and creating a training plan (Barbazette, 2006). These frameworks were applied to Crossroads for Youth in order to create a training program that would meet several agency needs originally identified by the organization's President and subsequently verified through the application of a needs assessment.

History of Crossroads for Youth

Crossroads for Youth (CFY) is a non-secure, private, non-profit agency, founded in 1951 as Camp Oakland. Originally founded as a place that would provide an environment where education, positive thinking, respect for others, a strong work-ethic, and discipline would be promoted amongst youth, Camp Oakland was funded primarily by Oakland County.

In 1999, Camp Oakland changed its name to Crossroads for Youth in order to reflect the fact that the institution was much more than a camp. Currently, Crossroads for Youth serves at-risk youth primarily from Southeastern Michigan and consists of six residential programs, three-day programs, one weekend overnight program, one weekend day program, and the Adventure Center. In regards to their programming, CFY states:

> We utilize a proven therapeutic model combining Choice Theory and Adventure Based Experiential Learning techniques built on a foundation of trauma-informed care. We empower youth so that they can learn how to evaluate their own behavior and actions in order to make thoughtful decisions in their lives, while also facilitating emotional and psychological healing (http://www.crossroadsforyouth.org/index.html, 2013).

Crossroads for Youth's mission statement is, "Believing all youth are at risk, Crossroads for Youth strengthens families and youth with skills and tools so they become valued contributors in their communities." In order to fulfill this mission, the agency provides children and teens with a variety of treatment components, including one-on-one therapy sessions, family sessions at the youth's home, and group sessions in each program. Specialized therapy also takes place, focusing on topics such as anger replacement therapy, trauma recovery, substance abuse, anti-bullying, and a variety of other topics, as needed. Each child receives an individualized treatment plan is tailored to his or her specific needs.

Agency Structure

The Crossroads for Youth Board of Directors makes all major decisions regarding how the agency is run, and the President of the agency reports directly to the Board. The Board of Directors currently has fourteen members, and per the by-laws there can be as many as eighteen. The below organizational chart demonstrates the hierarchical structure of Crossroads for Youth.

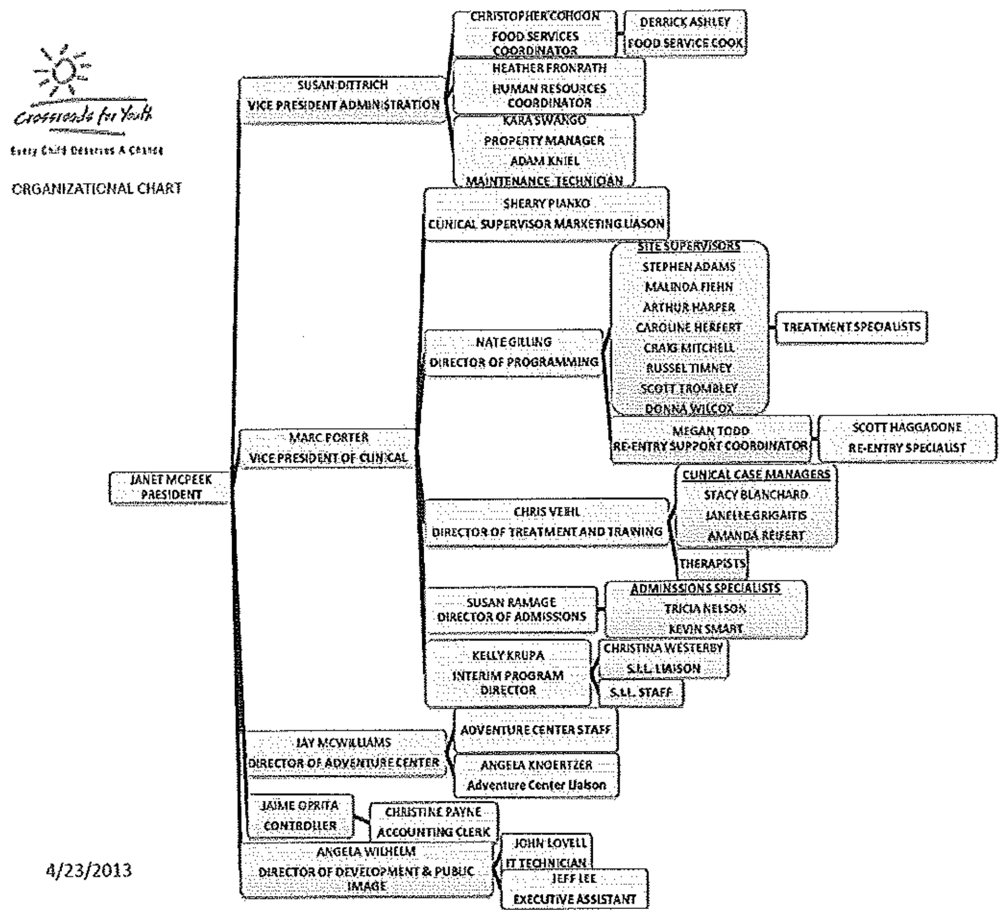

Figure 1. Crossroads for Youth Organizational Chart. From Crossroads for Youth, Heather Fronrath, Human Resources Coordinator, 2013.

The average number of employees working at Crossroads for Youth at any given time is 100, with the approximately half of those employees being employed full-time. CFY also employs a number of Emergency On-Call Treatment Specialists, known as EOCs. All Treatment

Specialists are hired as EOC employees and become eligible to be hired full-time as positions open at the Treatment Specialist level.

Agency Training

As mandated by Crossroads for Youth's Department of Human Services Child Caring License, CFY employees who work directly with the children and teens the agency serves must complete fifty hours of training in their first year of employment and twenty-five hours in each subsequent (calendar) year. Positions included in this mandatory training category are EOCs, Treatment Specialists, Site Supervisors, Clinical Case Managers, Therapists, Director of Programming, Director of Treatment & Training, Director of Admissions and Admissions staff, and the Vice President of Clinical Services. The only employees exempt of this requirement are those who work in a strictly administrative capacity, such as accounting or human resources personnel. However, at any time the agency can dictate that a specific training course is required of all personnel, regardless of position. The Human Resources Department of Crossroads for Youth coordinates and tracks the training of all personnel, but the responsibility for completing the required courses and number of hours lies solely with the individual employee (Crossroads for Youth Employee Policies Manual, 2012).

Upon hire, EOCs, Treatment Specialists, and other direct care staff are required to take part in a week-long "New Hire Training" course. This course, in addition to ten hours of program shadowing, provides the required fifty hours of training for new employees and must be completed before any shifts can be assigned. The New Hire Training course consists of classes relating to agency philosophy, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, CPR and first aid, reality therapy and choice theory, and administrative concerns such as the employee policy manual and shift scheduling. These classes are all taught by skilled and/or certified instructors.

In contrast, employees who have remained with the agency into their second calendar year often find it challenging to complete their required training. Crossroads for Youth provides services 365 days a year, twenty-four hours a day, and when direct care staff are scheduled to work they are almost always providing direct supervision to CFY clients. This rarely allows for staff to attend in-person training sessions. Additionally, due to the current financial status of the agency, it is not possible to incur the added payroll costs of providing training to employees who are not on shift or who may be forced into overtime as a result of training.

Regardless of these challenges, state licensing standards indicate that employees must receive their mandated training. As a result, CFY implemented a wide-range of written training packets that can be completed and submitted by employees for specified amounts of training time. The main advantage of these training packets is that they can be completed at times convenient for the employee. Staff are not expected to complete training on personal time, but the flexibility of using written training packets allows employees to finish those packets whenever they have the opportunity during their regular shifts. There are breaks during each of the three shift schedules when staff can complete paperwork and other duties while simultaneously providing oversight to clients.

For example, staff are required to be present at the school while children are in class, but they are not engaged in teaching or tutoring, allowing the staff ample time to complete training packets. Additionally, midnight staff must be present in the programs while clients are sleeping, but they, too, can complete other tasks. Some annual certifications, such as CPR and Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, require in-person instruction. By reducing training costs through the use of written materials for other courses, Crossroads for Youth is able to provide in-person classes for those required certifications.

Needs Assessment

A systematic approach to training begins with a needs assessment (Dresang, 2009). The first step in this assessment was to conduct a preliminary interview with the President of Crossroads for Youth, Janet McPeek, Ph.D. She indicated that employees were well-trained in many areas, but that she had observed deficiencies in some aspects of employee self-confidence, customer service skills, and a lack of knowledge of the overall agency structure (J. McPeek, personal communication, July 20, 2012).

Regarding self-confidence, Dr. McPeek stated that although employees know how to handle situations relating to the residents and students in our care, they do not always know how to handle a media contact or the appropriate way to act on behalf of the agency when interacting with community leaders or visitors to Crossroads for Youth. By filling in gaps in these skill sets, employees would be better equipped and more confident to deal with any situation that might arise while they are working.

Customer service was another area identified for improvement, and it was indicated that both internal and external customer service standards needed to be formally implemented. These standards would need to include the standardization of communication, including policies dictating how on-campus phones would be answered, how SharePoint would be utilized, and how agency radios would be used for on-grounds communication.

It was additionally noted that the training program needed to include a component that would outline departmental and individual responsibilities in order to reduce the likelihood of requests being sent to incorrect departments. By ensuring accuracy regarding who should be dealing with what, the agency could address the ongoing problem of people becoming involved in decisions outside of their own departments and expertise.

Following the preliminary interview, three main points were identified that the training program needed to address:

1. What skill sets are needed by employees which are not introduced in training?
2. What standards should be implemented in order to increase customer service throughout all levels of the agency?
3. Define the organizational structure for all employees with the purpose of outlining departmental and individual responsibilities.

The next step in the needs assessment was to identify the specific skills that fell under each of the three main components of the training (Dresang, 2009). Initially, skills were added that had been specifically discussed during the preliminary interview with Dr. McPeek. The purpose of gathering additional information was to determine if the needs identified during the preliminary interview were valid and present throughout all organizational levels (Barbazette, 2006). Interviews were conducted with staff from different departments which advised them of the purpose of the training and solicited their input. This informal data collection strategy, using conversation and questions in lieu of written surveys, was appropriate as the group of employees who were participating at the interview level was small (Barbazette, 2006). Several patterns arose during these interviews.

To fully understand the interview results, some additional background is required regarding the agency structure. Crossroads for Youth can be categorized as having two main employee divisions: clinical and administrative. The clinical side of the agency pertains to all personnel who directly interact with (or supervise those who interact with) the clients CFY serves. The administrative side of the agency refers to those personnel who fulfill job functions that do not include day-to-day client interaction, such as accounting, human resources, and development. Culturally, there exists a chasm between these two parts of the agency.

In arranging the interviews, the first pattern to emerge related to the cooperation of some employees in the training development process. Four key agency leaders, all of whom work on the clinical side of Crossroads for Youth, declined to participate, although three separate requests were made of each of them. These were the Vice President of Clinical Services, Director of Programming, Director of Treatment & Training, and Director of Admissions. This response was not entirely unanticipated and is one of the reasons that this training program was deemed necessary by the agency President. Rendering appropriate customer service, both internally and externally, was identified as a priority of this training.

In contrast, employees from the administrative side of the agency were eager to provide feedback. As these interviews progressed, additional patterns arose regarding topics that needed to be included in the identified training scope. The most common observation was the aforementioned customer service. Gossip, negativity, staff interaction, and professionalism were all acknowledged as being particular issues that needed to be addressed through training (S. Dittrich, personal communication, October 15, 2012; H. Fronrath, personal communication, October 12, 2012; J. Lee, personal communication, October 12, 2012; J. McPeek, personal communication, July 20, 2012; J. McWilliams, personal communication, October 16, 2012). Each participant was interviewed separately, but all referenced the informal culture of the agency. Although training can often be used to reinforce organizational culture, in this case it would also need to function as a way of fostering change to the existing organizational culture (Selden, 2009).

The next pattern to emerge was related to specific agency timelines regarding the submission of forms across a variety of departments. Two interviewees indicated that they felt as though submission deadlines were ignored for petty cash requests, recreation requests, and paid time off requests and that it would be beneficial to include information regarding these day-to-day policies in the training document. Both interviewees also requested that widespread standardization be introduced regarding SharePoint, radio usage, email usage, and telephone usage (H. Fronrath, personal communication, October 12, 2012; J. Lee, personal communication, October 12, 2012).

The focus that these two employees placed upon such similar areas can be explained by their positions in relation to the agency. Ms. Fronrath serves as the agency's Human Resources Coordinator, and as such she makes a great effort to standardize agency policies and procedures in order to provide consistent service to agency employees. Additionally, it is only with clearly defined regulations that employees can be coached regarding their actions and behaviors. Mr. Lee, the agency's Executive Assistant, originally came to Crossroads for Youth as a Human Resources intern. Although he now functions as the central "front desk" hub for all personnel and visitors, his perspective is that of an HR professional. In fulfilling the duties of the front desk, he is also responsible for routing all paperwork between departments, and late submissions can directly impact his workload by forcing him to physically track down individuals for appropriate signatures.

Lastly, all parties involved in the interview process specified a need for a clearer definition of the agency structure, not for themselves, but for EOCs, Treatment Specialists, and Site Supervisors (S. Dittrich, personal communication, October 15, 2012; H. Fronrath, personal communication, October 12, 2012; J. Lee, personal communication, October 12, 2012; J.

McPeek, personal communication, July 20, 2012; J. McWilliams, personal communication, October 16, 2012). For example, Ms. Dittrich indicated that she received employee requests on a regular basis relating to IT needs, but she does not supervise the IT Department. She does supervise the Operations Department, but employees did not understand the organization well enough to know that Operations and IT were two separate categories. These types of mix-ups increase the amount of time it takes to respond to requests and concerns, while also draining a greater amount of agency resources.

Following the completion of interviews with available agency staff members, the results were compiled with the original data collected from the interview with Dr. McPeek (see Appendix A, Crossroads for Youth Needs Assessment). The feedback clearly indicated that Crossroads for Youth was in need of a training program that would address the three questions originally identified as the basis for the needs assessment. A follow-up interview was conducted with the agency President regarding the new details and suggestions made for the training program. At this time, Dr. McPeek requested my feedback, as Director of Development & Public Image (note that when the project began my job title was Development & Executive Manager), and asked me to identify anything I personally felt should be included. My contribution was to echo many of the same topics already identified, including the proper handling of a media contact, submission of forms in a timely manner, specifically those relating to publication requests, and the identification of departmental responsibilities throughout the agency. Upon receiving my feedback, Dr. McPeek granted permission for that most recent incarnation of the needs assessment to be used as the basis for the training program.

Curriculum Development

The second step in this systematic approach to training is to develop the program curriculum (Dresang 2009). According to Selden (2009):

> After identifying training needs at the organization, job, and employee levels, the next step is to prioritize those needs and establish short- and long-term training and development goals and objectives. Then an organization needs to design training and development programs to meet the goals... (p.98)

Prioritizing the training was relatively simple as the training scope was extremely focused. All training areas could be addressed with a single training program. The primary goal of this training program was to increase employee knowledge in the identified areas. Short-term goals included:

- Employee compliance with phone, email, radio, and other communication standards
- Employee compliance with form deadlines
- Increase self-confidence amongst employees
- Increase knowledge relating to how public image can impact the accomplishment of organizational goals

Long-term goals included:

- Increase satisfaction of volunteers, donors, parents, caseworkers, and other visitors
- Create a culture of customer-service, both internally and externally
- Increase inter-departmental cooperation

All training strategies must evaluate existing organizational circumstances and determine the best course of action for implementation, particularly as it relates to day-to-day practicalities (Lynton & Pareek, 2011; Selden, 2009). Figure 2 shows the different dimensions that must be considered when creating a new training program. These dimensions exist on a continuum, demonstrated by the arrows between the category options. Furthermore, these dimensions overlap and interact with one another and "a decision for one then biases the choices for others.... It is most useful therefore to decide first on the dimensions *most* salient to the particular task and setting, and only then extrapolating the rest" (Lynton & Pareek, 2011, p. 50-51). Selden (2009) agrees that "the best type of training depends on the subject matter, number and location of trainees, training resources (financial and staff), geographic location, and timeline" (p.100).

Immediate Focus:	Task Performance ←——→ Personal Development
Time Frame:	Immediate ←— Pending, Planned —→ Future
Composition:	Person ←— Team ←— Organization —→ Whole System
Objective:	Problem Solving ←——→ Capacity Building
Level:	Knowledge About ←— Understanding Performance —→ Improved
Program Pacing:	By Learner(s) ←——→ By Trainers
Space:	Face-to-Face ←——→ Distance Learning
Timings:	In Blocks ←——→ Intermitent Phases

Figure 2. Major dimensions of training strategy. From "Training for development," by R.P. Lynton & U. Pareek, 2011.

Crossroads for Youth had several key dimensions that could be identified as being most salient to their training program. The immediate focus of the training weighed most heavily on task performance, although the new skills being learned would focus on communication and increase self-confidence, thereby contributing to personal development. The time frame for the implementation was immediate. The agency President indicated that providing employees with the needed skills and knowledge was considered a high priority, and should therefore commence as soon as practicable. Furthermore, the needs of the agency dictated that, although the training course would be mandatory for all staff members, Crossroads for Youth could not incur additional training expenses by providing the training in-person. This necessitated the use of distance learning (a written training packet) as a vehicle for training. This selection was further supported by the fact "distance training can respond more readily to the need to train large numbers…" (Lynton & Pareek, 2011).

Having identified those priorities in regards to a training strategy, the other dimensions fall into place along their respective continuums. The entire organization would be responsible for completing the training, but on an individual basis, as is dictated by the written training format. The objectives would include both problem solving and capacity building, indicated by the differing topics to be covered in the training. Much of the training would concern knowledge and skill sets, but would also touch on concepts that relate this knowledge to an increase in the performance of the organization as a whole. As the program would be formatted for distance learning, the pace would be dictated by the learners. Finally, the immediate implementation and use of a written training packet would distribute the information through a single training block. Figure 3 demonstrates how the Crossroads for Youth "Skills, Service, and Structure" program exists on the training strategy continuum.

Upon determining the goals and objectives for the training program, as well as the appropriate vehicles for attaining those goals, the written packet was developed (see Appendix B, Crossroads for Youth "Skills, Service, and Structure" Training Packet). The packet was intentionally written as a straight-forward guide that addressed each of the identified skill deficiencies. It was constructed to conform to the same basic principles as existing Crossroads for Youth training offerings.

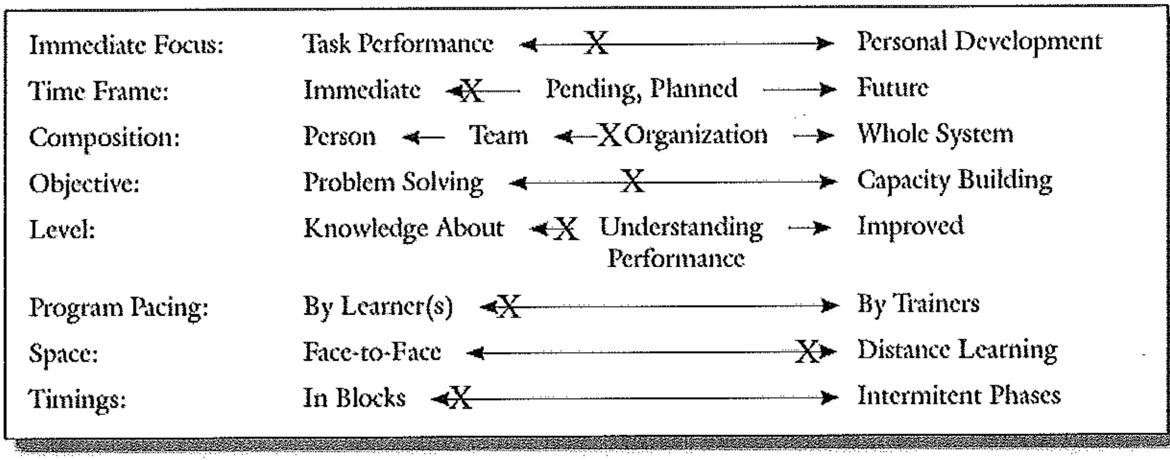

Figure 3. Crossroads for Youth "skills, service, and structure" training program on the major dimensions of training strategy continuum. Adapted from "Training for development," by R.P. Lynton & U. Pareek, 2011.

It must be noted that in order to provide an extremely low-cost training option, Crossroads for Youth compromised on quality. Although one of the primary principles identified by Dresang (2009) as being integral to information retention in training courses is that objectives should be stated clearly, "using positive reinforcement, building on motivation and interest, and learning by doing" were also identified as critical to information retention in training courses (p.224). With loss of live instruction, the program also lost the ability to provide a dynamic and engaging training session that could take advantage of role-playing and positive instructor/student interactions.

Program Implementation

The third step in Dresang's (2009) systematic approach to training is the actual implementation of the training program. Following the creation of the training packet, a pre-test was developed in order to establish a baseline of employee knowledge (see Appendix C, Crossroads for Youth "Skills, Service, and Structure" Pre and Post-Test). This is a typical approach that is used to determine whether or not an increase in knowledge and skills exists as a result of a training program (J. Klemanski, personal communication, September 6, 2012; Posavac, 2011).

The pre-test consisted of fourteen multiple-choice questions that were developed to provide a thorough representation of the material that would be covered in the new training program. As a pilot test, five administrative employees were asked to read the pre-test and provide their feedback regarding whether or not they could understand the questions and answers, in addition to any general impressions they had in response to the test. The pre-test responses would only be useful if the participants understood the questions (J. Klemanski, personal communication, October 4, 2012; Posavac, 2011). The feedback indicated that the pre-test was viable as it was written. The test and written packet were then approved by the agency President, Vice President of Administration, and Human Resources Coordinator.

After careful consideration by Human Resources and the agency President, it was determined that the written training program, along with a post-test that was identical to the pre-test, would total one hour of training time for all employees. This falls within the standard range (thirty minutes to an hour and a half) that encompasses all other Crossroads for Youth written training packets. Additionally, this program was further being used to compensate for an hour and a half of regular training time that was "lost" early in the year due to administrative error. Regular written training communications and quizzes that contribute towards an individual's twenty-five hours of annual training were not distributed, which would have resulted in a training shortage at the end of 2013. This pre-test, written packet, and post-test were carefully weighed to fill in the gap this shortage created, while also considering their worth as a standalone training program.

In order to incentivize participation in this research study, the Human Resources Department and agency leadership agreed that the pre-test would be mandatory training and would be considered thirty minutes of training time, which would count towards employees' annual training requirement. Although it would require far less than thirty minutes to complete the pre-test, it was determined that, in order to make participation worthwhile to employees, it should conform to the minimum time that regular agency training programs adhere to. Dictating that a training program is mandatory within Crossroads for Youth does little to ensure participation (H. Fronrath, personal communication, February 21, 2012).

In keeping with agency policy, Human Resources distributed the pre-test to all employees with a memo indicating that the test must be completed and returned to the Human Resources Department within two weeks. Twenty-four employees responded to the pre-test. The Human Resources Department indicated that this was typical of any new training requirement (H. Fronrath, personal communication, March 11, 2013). Pre-tests were disseminated a second time to employees who did not respond to the initial request, however, these tests were circulated to employees' supervisors with a memo indicating which of their direct reports did not comply with the mandatory training. An additional twenty-six employees responded to the second distribution.

As the training program was deemed a high priority, it was determined by the Human Resources Department, in conjunction with the agency President, that although the pre-test was mandatory, it would not be beneficial for the organization to delay the distribution of the actual training course any longer. Any employee who had not turned in the pre-test prior to the dissemination of the written packet would be ineligible for the thirty minutes of training the pre-test amounted to. No other sanction was put in place for those employees who failed to comply with the pre-test requirement.

The written training packets with accompanying post-tests were distributed to all employees directly from Human Resources through the use of a memo explaining the mandatory training requirement. Once again, very few tests were returned within two weeks; only nine were submitted. As before, supervisors were notified of any direct reports who had not responded. Additionally, the agency Executive Assistant, whose duties include assisting the Human Resources Department, was charged with enforcing the training requirement as made possible by his position at the front desk. Within six weeks, a total of 40 post-tests had been submitted.

Although all employees are charged with fulfilling their mandatory training requirements, they are also aware that they have until the end of the calendar year to complete them. In spite of several communications being issued from Human Resources regarding this training program, post-test submissions ceased to be turned in. The Human Resources Department determined that it would no longer pursue employees regarding their training, as it is stated in the employee handbook that the responsibility lies with the individual. All employees who have unfulfilled training requirements will be notified in October in order to provide them with adequate time to complete their training before the end of the calendar year.

New Hire Training

Program implementation had to be considered for both existing employees and future employees, as this training course is mandatory for all personnel. Budget constraints and organizational needs dictated that existing employees receive the training via distance training.

However, the existence of a week-long New Hire Training class means that program delivery will be integrated into the existing training workshop for new employees.

All newly hired personnel who participate in the New Hire Training class will receive the "Skills, Service, and Structure" training from an in-person instructor. All direct care workers, those who work directly with the children and teens at Crossroads for Youth, are required to take part in the New Hire Training workshop, and the majority of employees at Crossroads for Youth are direct care workers. In an instance in which a new employee is hired who is not a direct care worker, such as an accountant or other administrative personnel, he or she will receive the written training packet and test at the beginning of their employment with the agency.

By requiring that the training be completed upon commencement of employment, Crossroads for Youth will be able to reduce future problems that arise when enforcing employee compliance with a new training program. "We [Crossroads for Youth] will never get 100% compliance with any training program, no matter how many times we tell people it is mandatory. The reality is that we just have to do the best we can" (H. Fronrath, personal communication, March 11, 2013). It is worth noting that, although there are difficulties enforcing training standards, any employee who does not comply with training requirements directly related to state licensing standards and child safety is placed upon unpaid administrative leave until his or her certifications are up to date.

Evaluation

The last step in the systematic approach to training is to evaluate the effectiveness of the program (Dresang, 2009). "A good evaluation program provides valuable information about the extent to which training needs have been met" (Selden, 2009, p.100). The first tools used to evaluate the "Skills, Service, and Structure" training program were the pre and post-tests that were distributed to employees. These knowledge tests were used in lieu of Likert-scale tests that would focus on how well the participant *believed* they performed a particular skill. Knowledge tests require participants to actually demonstrate their competence and knowledge of certain skills, making them superior to Likert-scale tests in many evaluation situations (J. Klemanski, personal communication, September 6, 2012). Pre and post-tests are used when organizations and stakeholders want to measure improvement (Posavac, 2011).

In addition to the traditional pre and post-test analysis, personal observations of employee behavior were also utilized to provide a greater depth of understanding regarding how individual employees processed the training information. Furthermore, an interview was conducted with the agency President so that her personal observations could be included in final assessment, as the training program was a result of deficiencies she originally identified.

Pre-Test

By analyzing the results of the pre-test, a baseline of employee knowledge can be established. A total of fifty employees completed the pre-test. The mean score employees received on the pre-test was 66%, which further demonstrated the existing need for the training program. The median score of 64% is useful in reinforcing that the mean score is an accurate representation of the data set, as it is only two percentage points from the mean. The mode of this data set was 71%, which, while higher than the mean and median, is only separated from the next percentage score of 64% by a single question on the test. Table 1 provides a full list of the scores received on the pre-test.

Table 1

Employee Scores on Pre-Test by Percentage of Answers Correct

100%	79%	71%	64%	64%	50%	43%
93%	79%	71%	64%	64%	50%	36%
93%	71%	71%	64%	64%	50%	
93%	71%	71%	64%	64%	50%	
86%	71%	71%	64%	57%	43%	
86%	71%	71%	64%	57%	43%	
79%	71%	71%	64%	57%	43%	
79%	71%	71%	64%	57%	43%	

Figure 4 breaks down the pre-test results by test question. The bar graph indicates how many participants answered the designated question correctly. Of particular note are questions two, three, five, and six, which were often answered incorrectly. These questions are not interrelated and cover the gamut from the Crossroads for Youth Media Policy to the timeline for filling request forms to personal conversations to the correct way to answer the phone. An additional observation is that many employees answered question four correctly, which refers to the appropriate place for workplace discussions to occur, but failed to answer question five correctly, which refers to the appropriate place for personal discussions to take occur. The answer to both question four and question five is the essentially the same, with workplace discussions being allowed to take place in offices and a few select other locations and personal discussions being allowed to take place in offices. The only question that was answered correctly by all participants was question fourteen. Overall, these patterns presented as further indication that staff did not possess skill sets and knowledge critical to appropriate job performance.

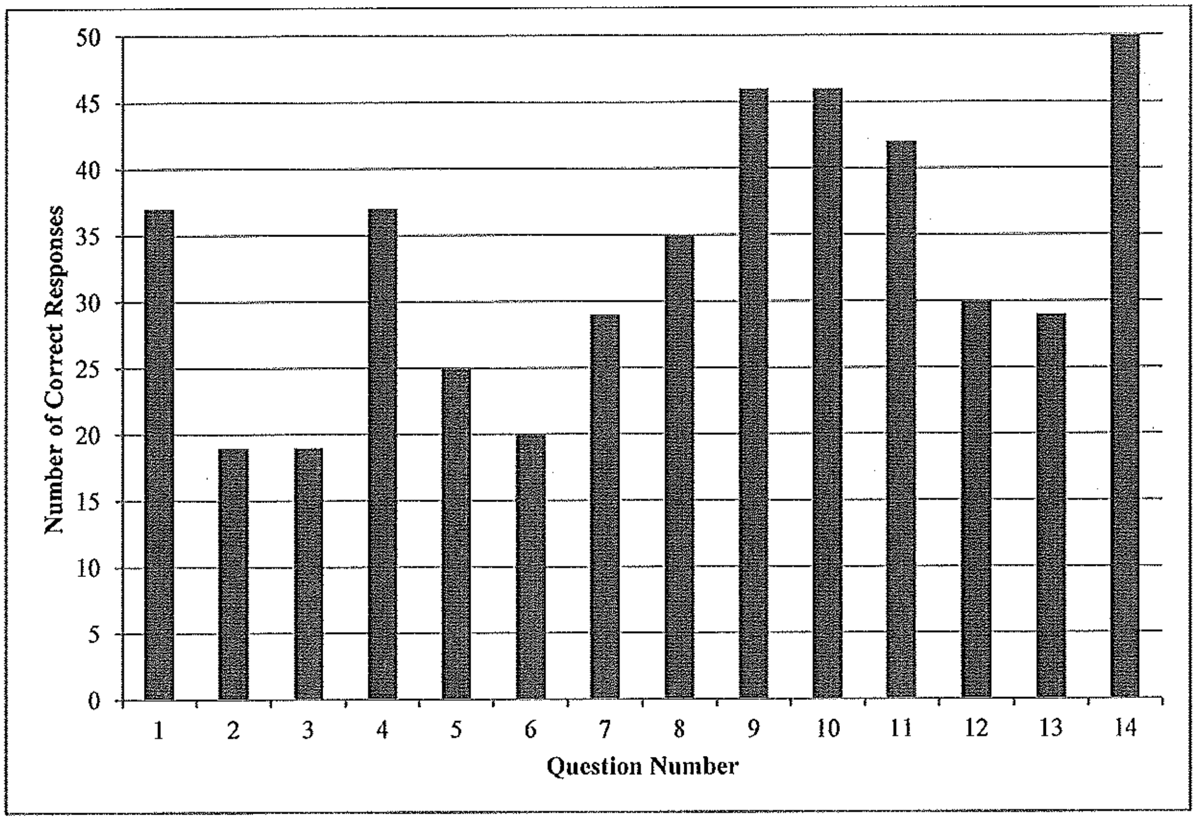

Figure 4. Correct answers on pre-test (out of 43) by question. This figure illustrates the questions answered correctly by employees who completed the "Skills, Service, and Structure" training pre-test.

Post-Test

Although useful in reiterating the need for the training program, the pre-test results are most helpful when viewed in relation to the post-test results. At the time of publishing, a total of forty employees had submitted the post-test following their completion of the written training packet. The mean score employees received on the post-test was 88%, which was an increase of 21 percentage points from the pre-test. The median score also increased to 86%, an improvement of 22 percentage points. It should also be noted that the median score is within two percentage points of the mean, further validating that the mean is an accurate representation of the data. Lastly, the mode increased by 15 percentage points to 86%, which also aligns with the mean and median. Table 2 provides a full list of the scores received on the post-test.

Table 2

Employee Scores on Post-Test by Percentage of Answers Correct

100%	93%	93%	86%	79%
100%	93%	93%	86%	79%
100%	93%	86%	86%	79%
100%	93%	86%	86%	79%
100%	93%	86%	86%	79%
100%	93%	86%	86%	79%
100%	93%	86%	86%	71%
100%	93%	86%	86%	57%

Figure 5 breaks down the post-test results by test question. The bar graph indicates how many participants answered the designated question correctly. Improvements were made in accuracy on every question, with the exception of question ten and question twelve. Question ten saw a reduction in correct answers by 3%. Question twelve's reduction was much greater, at 12%. Participants overall struggled with question twelve, whether on the pre or post-test, with only 60% answering it correctly on the pre-test and 48% on the post-test. The drop in both questions is inexplicable, as those who took the post-test had access to the training information that would allow them to correctly answer the question.

Question fourteen, which was answered correctly by all participants who participated in the pre-test, was also answered correctly by all post-test participants. Gains were experienced in all other questions, as illustrated by the breakdown in Table 3. Massive improvement was seen in questions two, three, six, and seven, with gains of 48%, 65%, 55%, and 37%, respectively. These increases are significant, as two of those four questions cover information that can be considered not just important, but critical to agency function. These questions pertain to the

Crossroads for Youth Media Policy and the appropriate situations in which to call 911. Additionally, questions two, three, and six were identified in the pre-test as being three of the four questions that were most often answered incorrectly. The extreme increase in correct answers on those three questions could be partially explained by the fact that those questions provided the greatest opportunity for improvement.

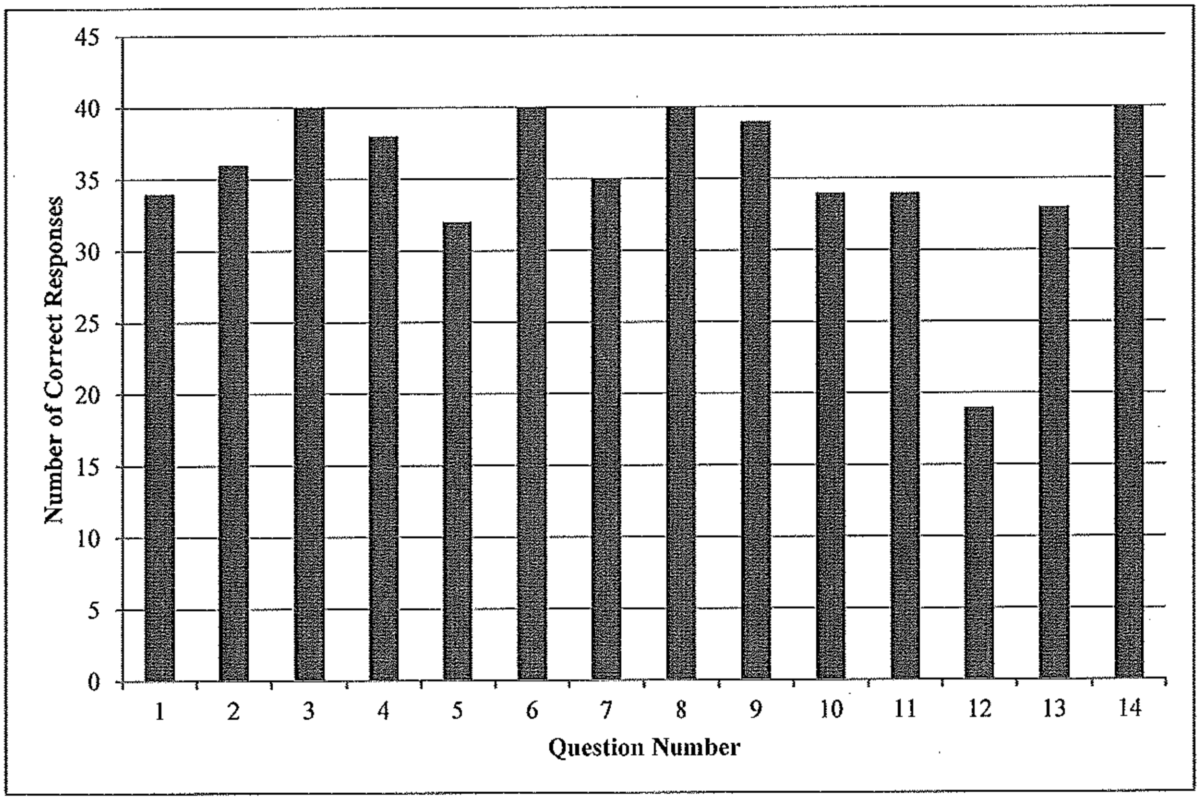

Figure 5. Correct answers on post-test by question. This figure illustrates the questions answered correctly by employees who completed the "Skills, Service, and Structure" training post-test.

Table 3

Percentage Increase in Correct Scores, by Question

Q1	13%	**Q5**	27%	**Q9**	10%	**Q13**	11%
Q2	48%	**Q6**	55%	**Q10**	-3%	**Q14**	0%
Q3	65%	**Q7**	37%	**Q11**	8%		
Q4	11%	**Q8**	33%	**Q12**	-12%		

Observations

Following the completion of the training packets and tallying of post-test information, personal observations were used to perceive whether or not individuals put the skills taught in their training program to use. In order for a training program to be deemed effective, "employees must demonstrate competencies and a willingness to take on new responsibilities" (Selden, 2009, p.103). Although it would not be possible for a single individual to witness every scenario covered by the training program, several situations were observed over the course of two weeks.

I observed six visitors to the administration building during this time period, an extremely small sample of the actual number of visitors to the Crossroads for Youth campus. Each visitor was greeted or acknowledged by all staff members who passed, including both clinical and administrative staff. In addition, at no time during the week did I observe any personal conversations taking place in any location they should not have been. However, there were seven instances I witnessed in which extended workplace conservations were taking place in the lobby, as opposed to individuals' offices. This was specifically prohibited in the training packet.

Of the four different forms that were discussed in the training program, the publication request form is the only one that routes to me. Two publication requests were received during the observation period. One of the requests was submitted two weeks prior to the date it was needed (in keeping with the policy), while the other provided only a few days. It should be noted that publication request forms are not submitted very often and receiving two requests in two weeks is extremely rare.

I can receive anywhere from twenty to seventy-five emails on a given day. During the observation period there were only three agency emails received that utilized the reply all function in instances where it was not necessary. This was a marked improvement over past weeks when non-essential group emails would be circulated many times a day.

At no time during this time frame did I observe unprofessional or informal conversations taking place on agency radios. However, phone extensions were only answered appropriately 32% of the time. Although phone etiquette was discussed in the training packet, the excessive non-compliance with the policy can be partially explained by the phone system infrastructure. Every extension, with the exception of the phones located directly in the treatment programs, is connected to the individual user's computer. Not only do the computers utilize caller ID for outside calls, but they also identify internal extensions calling each other. Each individual receives their extension assignment through the telephone software so that when they call another extension it displays their full name. This fact makes it extremely difficult to determine whether or not the phones are only being answered inappropriately for internal calls or if the same issue exists when people call from external lines.

Interview with Agency President

In addition to personal observations, an interview was also conducted with the President of Crossroads for Youth in order to garner her feedback. As the needs assessment process started with her, it was important to determine what her final impressions were of the training program and its impact:

> I think the program was tremendously beneficial. Although we will never have every employee compliant with every behavior-based Crossroads policy, this program has opened the eyes of several key employees whose example is followed by other staff. As part of an over-reaching professional development

> effort, this training program has accomplished the goals I desired (J. McPeek, personal communication, May 24, 2013).

Dr. McPeek further stated that she believed the program had impacted staff in other ways not directly addressed in the training packet. Specifically, she noticed an increase not only in professional demeanor, but also in professional dress. Although these types of changes are difficult to quantify, they signify a subtle shift in agency culture that the training program was intended to foster.

Limitations

Evaluation methods and tools will generally have some inherent limitations built into them (Posavac, 2011). The approaches used to evaluate the "Skills, Service, and Structure" training program are not exempt from these limitations. According to Lynton and Pareek (2011), "Such tests [post-tests] at the end cannot show what really matters, which is whether they can use the knowledge and skill in their home setting" (p. 224-225). The post-test results must be considered in light of the fact that employees had immediate access to the information required for the test, in the form of the training packet. The scope of the training does not allow for a monitored testing environment, meaning that employees were partaking in an "open notes" test. Furthermore, as employees were not being supervised during testing they could have consulted each other and shared their answers. The implication being that the test may be limited in its ability to measure individual knowledge and skill levels. On the other hand, as training packets must be completed while on-shift, any employees engaged in direct client supervision would have been unlikely to have the opportunity to collude with each other in order to complete the test.

The personal observations provide only a miniscule snapshot of the effectiveness of the training. Many of the topics covered in the training curriculum were not witnessed at all. Those scenarios that were witnessed took place only a handful of times. Furthermore, there were no pre-test measures that were tracked in relation to them. The usefulness of these observations lies with the greater organizational picture they provide. When viewed in conjunction with the pre and post-test measures, along with the viewpoints of the agency President, these observations can be beneficial in weighing the success of the program. Their scope may be small, but they support the greater evaluation effort.

Lastly, the interview with the agency President suffers from limitations similar to those of the personal observations. As part of the program evaluation, the opinions of a single person provide little hard evidence of improvement. However, it was the agency President who originally identified the need for this training program. She recognized the gaps in knowledge, and surveying her satisfaction with the training can in turn provide insight into the training program's efficacy as it related to her original request.

Conclusion

Crossroads for Youth's "Skills, Service, and Structure" training program is but a small part of the overall training plan of the agency. This plan is focused greatly upon the state licensing requirements and direct care needs of CFY's clients. However, direct care workers do not exist in a vacuum. They must be ambassadors of the agency, confident and competent in their abilities to act appropriately, whether dealing with internal agency personnel or external individuals.

Moving forward, the agency will continue to utilize this new training curriculum. Evaluation, in spite of the existing limitations, has demonstrated that the program is effective. It is also useful to consider the three criteria for assessing training efforts (a) cost; (b) change in knowledge and skills; (c) impact on organization's ability to fulfill its mission (Selden, 2009). This training course can be provided at a negligible cost. It has also increased employee knowledge and skills. It is too soon to measure the long-term influence the training program will have on the organization's fulfillment of its mission, but it is reasonable to predict that increased self-confidence, improved customer service, and a greater internal understanding will translate to a positive impact in regards to meeting organizational goals.

The two core classes from the Oakland University Master of Public Administration program most integral to the completion of this project included Human Resources Management in the Public Sector and Program and Policy Evaluation. The Human Resources course covered the various aspects of training, from needs assessment, to planning and design, to implementation, to evaluation. This format was followed in the creation of the Crossroads for Youth training program and defined the major aspects of the project itself. In addition, in order to measure the impact of the training program, specific evaluation tools were employed that were discussed in the Program Evaluation course. These included the pre and post-test, observations, and interview with the agency President. The textbooks from both courses were used extensively in the design and execution of this project, and the knowledge gained from these courses directly impacted the project itself.

References

Barbazette, J. (2006). *Training needs assessment: Methods, tools, and techniques.* San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

Crossroads for Youth. (2012). *Crossroads for youth employee policies manual.* Oxford, MI.

Crossroads for Youth. (2013). *Crossroads for youth home page.* Retrieved from: http://www.crossroadsforyouth.org/index.html

Dresang, D.L. (2009). *Personnel management in government agencies and nonprofit organizations.* New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.

Lynton, R.P., Pareek, U. (2011). *Training for development* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Posavac, E.J. (2011). *Program evaluation: Methods and case studies* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Selden, S.C. (2009). *Human capital: Tools and strategies for the public sector.* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Appendix A

Crossroads for Youth Needs Assessment

What skill sets that relate to public image and day-to-day policies and procedures do employees need?

- How to approach and interact with a stranger on campus
- Representing Crossroads for Youth in the community
    - Interacting with volunteers, donors, or other visitors on grounds
    - Interacting with community groups or leaders (community service)
    - When to call the police or 911 and how to interact with them (obtain policy and procedure from clinical and include those times to call that are not related to incidents with clients)
- How handle a media contact
- Following existing procedures regarding timelines for:
    - Petty cash
    - Rec forms
    - Publications
    - PTO requests
- How to work with other departments or units
    - Lead by example
    - Work cooperatively to accomplish goals

What standards should be implemented to increase customer services throughout all levels of the agency?

- Internal communications
    - Face-to-face communications should take place in offices and not the lobby or hallways
    - Standardization of email signatures, etiquette, and usage – no reply all unless absolutely necessary, no emails to praise or thank your direct reports that include other recipients
    - Standardization of memo formats
    - Review of employee communication forms, IT request forms, publication request forms, work orders, petty cash
    - Review radio communication and procedures
    - SharePoint procedures and standardization
    - Boundaries
        - Socialization outside of the workplace
        - Personal life discussion in front of clients

        - Reducing negativity and gossip
        - Address informal culture
            - How staff interact
            - How visitors are greeted
            - Viewing parents and caseworkers as customers
            - What we say and how we say it; formality vs. informality
- External communications
    - Standardize how every phone on campus is answered
    - Interacting with parents or caseworkers
    - Outward presentation – awareness of body language and tone of voice
    - Interaction Client – how it is set up and how we all use it; out of office, out to lunch, etc.
    - Cell phone etiquette – when with clients, around staff, in meetings

Define the organizational structure for all employees with the purpose of outlining departmental and individual responsibilities.

- Who will this affect?
- Who needs to know?
- Who does not (or should not) need to know?
- Where do I go with my concerns?
- Essentially cover what information you share, who you share it with, and how is it shared

Appendix B

Crossroads for Youth "Skills, Structure, and Service" Training Packet

Public Image

As a non-profit agency, Crossroads for Youth depends upon the support of community members in order to complete our mission. As such, every employee of Crossroads for Youth can be seen as an ambassador of the agency. It is extremely important that all employees understand and follow the policies regarding appropriate interaction with volunteers, donors, and other visitors on grounds, along with following those same rules when you are out in the community representing the agency.

When, during the course of your duties, you cross paths with a visitor to our campus, it is appropriate to respectfully acknowledge them, even if this is simply done by saying hello as you pass. Visitors should never be ignored. The term "visitor" refers to parents, caseworkers, volunteers, Board Members, and anyone else who you may see being given a tour or escorted through our campus. If visitors engage you in conversation regarding the agency, give them your full attention (as client supervision permits) and respectfully answer their questions as appropriate. Visitors should not be made to feel as though they are imposing on us.

The same basic principles apply when you are off-grounds with a group of clients, whether it is for a rec or community service. Treat people respectfully and answer their questions as appropriate and you will be directly contributing to a positive community view of Crossroads for Youth.

It must also be noted that there are times when you may see an unescorted stranger on the Crossroads for Youth campus. If this occurs, notify the Site Supervisor on duty immediately. If you are a Site Supervisor or hold a position that is of a Director's level or higher, you have received the appropriate training to approach the individual yourself and you are permitted to do so.

Media Contact

It is possible that during one of your shifts you may answer a phone call from or come in direct personal contact with a member of the media. Crossroads for Youth's Media Policy should be followed precisely. It is as follows:

Every media call coming into Crossroads for Youth should be forwarded to our media relations consultant (Mort Crim Communication) for initial screening.

When a member of the media calls or comes on campus to speak to anyone at Crossroads for Youth, obtain the individual's name and phone number and tell them that someone will be in touch with them soon. There are no exceptions to this policy.

After speaking with the reporter, immediately contact one of our media consultants at Mort Crim Communication. Dial the numbers in the following order until you reach someone.

1. Daphne Hughes
   248-358-4700, ext. 220 (office)
   248-417-4309 (cell phone)

2. Terry Oprea
   248-358-4700, ext. 215 (office)
   313-909-4700 (cell)
   248-288-0004 (home)

After you inform Mort Crim Communication of the media contact, immediately contact a CFY administrator to advise them of the situation. Dial the numbers in the following order until you reach someone. Once you have reached someone, you do not need to continue down the list.

1. Janet McPeek
   Ext. 200
   248-459-1464 (cell)
   248-693-1817 (home)

2. Angela Wilhelm
   Ext. 249
   248-766-1056 (cell)

3. Marc Porter
   Ext. 202
   810-728-6320 (cell)

4. Susan Dittrich
   Ext. 299
   248-330-3309 (cell)

Timelines for Agency Requests

All petty cash and rec form requests must be submitted at least 5 business days prior to the date they are needed. As these forms must be signed by multiple people prior to their approval, it is imperative that there be enough time to not only fill the request, but to acquire the signatures from people who may be off-grounds sporadically.

Any publication request forms must be submitted a minimum of two weeks prior to the date they are needed.

Planned PTO requests must also be submitted at least two weeks prior to the time requested off.

Customer Service and Communication

For the purposes of providing the most professional and confidential services possible, face-to-face communications, particularly as they pertain to clients or personal matters, should take place in offices and private spaces only. They should not take place in the Moore Hall lobby or hallways, or any other public space that visitors may pass through. All employees should be especially mindful when in the Moore Hall lobby, as the individual at the front desk can find it difficult to hear people on the phone when there is noise present.

Agency email should be treated as though it can be read by anyone. Emails can be subpoenaed in any Crossroads for Youth legal matter, and care should be taken to keep emails professional and accurate. Email etiquette should also be followed. The "reply all" function should be avoided unless absolutely necessary as this can greatly decrease efficiency in handling electronic correspondence. Additionally, emails praising a direct report that include other recipients should be avoided. These types of emails can cause misunderstandings and hurt feelings, along with congesting recipients' email boxes. Praise of a direct report should take place between a supervisor and the individual directly, with any other special recognition arranged to take place in a manner that does not include group emails.

Radio communications should also conform to the same professional standards of face-to-face and email communications. Broadcasts should be done in a respectful tone that is restricted to the business that needs to be handled via the radio. These standards should be observed at all times and not only when Moore Hall is open. For confidentiality, residents' names should never be stated on air, only initials.

SharePoint, like email, should be treated as though all posts could be subpoenaed. Although we use the information internally, it provides a legal record of shift updates and pertinent campus information. All posts should reflect accuracy and professionalism.

All telephones on grounds should be answered in a consistent manner. The appropriate way to answer an extension is, "Crossroads for Youth, this is [insert name or unit]." It is also important to adhere to appropriate cell phone etiquette. When with clients or caseworkers, cell phones should be on silent and only answered in cases of emergency. When attending Crossroads for Youth meetings, the same rule applies whenever possible, although this cannot always be done in a facility such as ours. In all cases, professionalism and politeness should be the focus whenever a call must be taken on a cell phone.

Boundaries

As it is natural to develop friendships with the people you work with every day, employees may choose to socialize with each other outside of the workplace. Regardless, CFY is a licensed and accredited children's services agency and is held to standards regarding the "moral character" of our employees. Therefore, we recommend that a few guidelines be followed for the protection of the employee and CFY. When socialization takes place in a public forum, remember that you are still representing Crossroads for Youth. Employees are expected to act in a way that would reflect positively on themselves and CFY. We ask that CFY logo wear not be worn in bars or places you will be consuming alcohol. Socialization can take place in a private forum with fewer restrictions. Just remember that one photo or video on Facebook or YouTube can ruin a career.

Appropriate boundaries should also be maintained between staff and clients. Personal life discussions should never take place within hearing of any resident or student of Crossroads for Youth and negativity and gossip should be avoided at all times.

In addition, while at the workplace staff should interact professionally with each other and visitors. Parents and caseworkers should be viewed as customers, and an overly informal culture does not promote confidence in the work we do. All staff should be aware of what they say and how they say it.

Departmental Responsibilities

There may be instances in which you do not know who within the agency you should communicate your questions or concerns to. In these cases, the best course of action is to fill out an Employee Communication Form, which will be routed to the appropriate person within the agency. If the concern is more immediate, such as witnessing another staff member breaking a serious agency policy, you can take your concern directly to your supervisor. If a co-worker attempts to engage you in a negative conversation regarding an agency policy or another employee, the appropriate response is to direct them to speak the correct person within the agency, most often their supervisor. You can also suggest they fill out an Employee Communication Form.

When determining what you are communicating with co-workers, ask yourself whether or not the person you are speaking with needs to know the information you are communicating. For instance, if you are sharing information about a specific client acting out, does that information need to be shared outside of your unit staff? The answer may depend on the situation, but sharing personal or private information that is not necessary to fulfilling your job duties (whether that information is about other staff members or our clients) is a form of gossip.

If you have a specific question that you wish to take directly to the appropriate department, follow the below guide governing who to contact for specific situations.

Janet McPeek	Agency-wide ideas and questions, potential media concerns
Marc Porter	Clinical ideas and concerns
Susan Dittrich	Maintenance (building and grounds), Food

	Services, and PQI
Angela Wilhelm	Development (special events, fundraising, publications, social media) and IT
Jaime Oprita	Finance
Chris Veihl	Training, Choice Theory, NVCPI, trauma-informed care
Nate Gilling/Kelly Krupa	Program ideas and concerns
Susan Ramage	Admissions related information (records, census)
Jay McWilliams	Adventure Center activities and scheduling
Heather Fronrath	Human Resources

Emergency Situations

There are some situations when it is appropriate to not only call the police, but to dial 911 for emergency services. Although these situations are often thought of as pertaining to the residents (a resident choking, even though the Heimlich was administered and they can breathe, or a resident harming him/herself), there are also instances relating to staff that could make it necessary to call emergency services. If a staff member faints, has a serious allergic reaction, or is in any kind of accident that requires immediate attention, 911 should be dialed. One way to determine if you should dial 911 is to ask yourself what you were taught in CFY First Aid Training.

Appendix C

Crossroads for Youth "Skills, Service, and Structure" Pre and Post-Test

1. What is the first thing you should do when you see a stranger on campus?
    a. Approach them and ask who they are and why they are on our campus
    b. Notify the Site Supervisor on-grounds
    c. Nothing
    d. Call the front desk
2. Someone from the Oxford Leader calls your extension (or unit) and asks you about a kid who recently truanted. What is the first thing you should do?
    a. Tell the reporter you can't comment and then continue to follow the steps in the CFY Media Policy
    b. Forward the call to the front desk per the CFY Media Policy
    c. Answer the reporter's questions in a way that does not breach confidentiality, as indicated by the CFY Media Policy
    d. Take the reporter's contact information and advise him/her that someone will call them back and continue to follow the steps in the CFY Media Policy
3. How many business days are required to fill a petty cash or rec form?
    a. 1
    b. 3
    c. 5
    d. 7

4. Where should workplace discussions to take place?
    a. In offices, conference areas, or group gathering places, such as in the case of staff meetings
    b. The lobby and hallways
    c. Anywhere that is not in front of our clients
    d. All of the above
5. Where should personal discussions to take place?
    a. In offices
    b. The lobby and hallways
    c. Anywhere that is not in front of our clients
    d. All of the above
6. What is the correct way to answer any phone extension (with the exception of the front desk)?
    a. "Unit [or name]"
    b. "Crossroads for Youth, this is [insert name or unit]"
    c. "Thank you for calling Crossroads for Youth, this is [insert name or unit]"
    d. "Crossroads for Youth"
7. Select the appropriate situations in which you would dial 911 (circle all that apply):
    a. A resident was choking, but staff administered the Heimlich and the resident can breathe
    b. A resident inflicted serious harm upon him/herself
    c. A staff member faints
    d. All of the above

8. If you have a concern that you would like to raise regarding any aspect of the agency, what is the best course of action?
    a. Contact the supervisor of the applicable department
    b. Tell your supervisor
    c. Bring it up during a staff meeting
    d. Fill out an employee communication form
9. You pass a visitor who is touring the campus with a staff guide. What should you do?
    a. Ignore them; they don't have anything to do with you
    b. Stop to chat with them in order to make the visitor feel welcome
    c. Make eye contact and nod
    d. Smile and say hello as you pass
10. You witness another staff member break a serious agency policy. Who do you tell?
    a. Their supervisor
    b. Your supervisor
    c. Everyone it could effect
    d. None of the above
11. If you are an employee with an agency email address, which of the following is true?
    a. N/A – I do not have an email address
    b. You should always write emails professionally and as though anyone could read them; their contents can be subpoenaed or read by designated people within the agency who monitor computer usage
    c. Their contents are protected internally by HIPAA, and they can only be read externally if court-ordered

d. Once items are deleted, they are gone forever

e. Your email is entirely private; no one inside or outside of the agency has a right to read it

12. Socialization outside of the workplace should:

a. Never take place

b. Reflect appropriate "moral character" for employees of a licensed and accredited children's services agency

c. Be recorded and posted on Facebook

d. Be restricted to non-alcohol establishments

13. A parent enters the Moore Hall lobby or one of the programs on campus. You and some co-workers are involved in an informal, personal conversation. What do you do?

a. Leave the conversation and greet the parent

b. Facilitate an immediate end to the conversation and greet the parent

c. Finish the conversation

d. Call your co-workers' attention to the parent and see what happens

14. A co-worker mentions being frustrated or unhappy with an agency policy or another employee. You should:

a. Listen, then offer a solution

b. Give them your opinion and offer to see if others feel the same way

c. Listen so that they know you care

d. Avoid engaging in a lengthy negative conversation and suggest they talk to the correct person regarding their concerns