



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF AMERICA**

# PROMISING PRACTICES FOR MANAGING CLUB STAFF

A bulletin series designed for Club managers to help improve the Club Experience.

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## HIRING AND ONBOARDING STAFF

When youth enter the doors of a Club, staff greet them warmly, invite them to join exciting programs, create a sense of belonging and help them find purpose. These youth development professionals are vital in creating great futures for young people. Key to your many duties as a Boys & Girls Club manager is hiring and onboarding these critical staff positions.

In addition to traditional interview questions and processes, this bulletin explores hiring and onboarding processes unique to the Boys & Girls Club environment. Gleaned from Club directors whose members indicated they routinely have a high-quality Club Experience, these management practices can help you set up your team for greater success.

To help you hire the right people, practices in this bulletin focus on two specific aspects of team building: hiring and onboarding. Featured hiring practices include suggestions for a multi-step interview process, tips to ensure a focus on relationship building and, for the many Clubs near and in schools, how to best leverage the unique staffing opportunity that certified teachers offer.

For staff to fully support the Boys & Girls Club environment, they must quickly learn about the culture. In addition, they must create fun, effective programming and ensure safety – all in your unique Club setting. Due to this complexity, the Club onboarding process can seem overwhelming. Highlighted practices offer creative solutions for orienting and training new staff. From shadowing seasoned staff, and floating among Club program areas and age groups, to targeted coaching, these practices can help your Club improve its onboarding process to ensure your team's success. ❖



# HIRE THE RIGHT PERSON

Relationship is at the heart of a high-quality Club Experience. Caring, professional staff are the key to forging these critical relationships with and between Club members. Interviews with Clubs that excel at implementing a high-quality Club Experience revealed common hiring practices that every Club manager can consider adopting to hire the right people and improve program quality.

## MULTI-PART INTERVIEW PROCESS

Managers depend on multiple interviews to identify candidates that best match the culture and needs of their Boys & Girls Club. This multi-step process may include a phone screen, a traditional face-to-face interview, a panel interview with seasoned staff, or hands-on interaction with members.

Indeed, many Clubs require interaction with youth as part of their hiring process. Such hands-on interviews during program hours often reveal strengths and skills of candidates to aid their eventual placement. In some cases, this second step of the process is a formal interview. Other Clubs require candidates to volunteer (after passing a background check) as part of the hiring process. Both the York County unit of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula in Newport News, Va., and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Georgia's Club at Needwood in Brunswick utilize volunteering as a hiring tool. While candidates volunteer, managers observe their initiative, motivation and overall comfort working with youth. Managers also closely watch behavior. For example, do they avoid cell phone use when they are with youth and use an appropriate tone?

Other Clubs use scenario-based questions to identify whether candidates have key problem-solving skills and classroom management techniques. This interview style can also pinpoint which age groups and environments will best fit the new candidate. A bank of scenario-based questions has been included as a tool to use at the end of this bulletin.

## FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Many Club managers cite the importance of uncovering candidates' views and philosophies on serving youth due to the critical staff role of building relationships. They seek individuals who support the Club's vision for youth, as well as those who possess three critical personal qualities: being dependable, flexible and willing to learn.

Rather than desiring someone who simply claims to "love kids," managers want to see individuals who demonstrate passion for working with kids. This passion may be expressed as excitement for programming, an eagerness to embrace and reinforce Boys & Girls Club culture, or understanding that relationship building is central to the mission of Clubs. In short, managers seek individuals whose dispositions naturally align to support Club values and practice.

In its core knowledge and competencies publication, the National Afterschool Association explains: "Although dispositions are an important part of professional practice, they are different than professional knowledge and competencies. Dispositions describe how a person perceives his or her work rather than what he or she knows or does." Managers should therefore aim to identify caring individuals who both know how to foster and sustain authentic relationships, and desire these meaningful connections with Club members. The publication describes ideal dispositions for youth development, including "delights in and is curious about children and youth and how they grow and learn," and "appreciates and supports the unique and vital role of children's and youths' family, school and community."<sup>1</sup>

## LEVERAGING TEACHERS

For Clubs located in or near schools, many job candidates are teachers. Managers recommend using teachers' positions and unique perspectives to enrich the Club. When interviewing teachers, ask what they wish they had time to do during out-of-school time. Their responses may well reveal both their understanding of student needs and their passion for serving youth. In addition to teachers' knowledge of youth, their access to the school can also be leveraged. For example, at the Union League Boys & Girls Clubs' Roberto Clemente Community Academy in Chicago, if a qualified candidate has access to the school's kitchen or media center, staff assign the new hire to assist with culinary or technology programs, thereby leveraging their school access for the benefit of Club members. ❖

<sup>1</sup> Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals (2011). (McLean, Va.: National AfterSchool Association in collaboration with National Institute on Out-of-School Time), <https://indd.adobe.com/view/f115fc53-9861-43d9-bfd1-c8bf12650e22>.

# Club Spotlight

## MARTIN K. ALLOY CLUB OF MANASSAS, VA.



The Martin K. Alloy branch, part of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, D.C., serves more than 1,500 boys and girls each year, with an average daily attendance of 193 youth. Three full-time and 14 part-time staff members provide three different types of service to youth: a traditional after-school Club program; a sports program; and a before-school and after-school child care program. Staffing this Clubhouse requires well-tested hiring and onboarding practices to ensure quality and consistency.

After a traditional one-on-one interview focused on experience with kids, especially regarding **discipline and guidance**, Branch Director Forrest Parker, Jr. uses an **interactive interview process**. This “walk-and-talk” interview provides each candidate an immersive glimpse into Club culture, and enables observations of the candidate’s interaction with youth. During the interview, Parker discusses **potential blind spots for supervision**, and asks the candidate about his or her discipline approaches and **on-the-spot fun ideas**. Strengths identified during this interactive interview inform the new hire’s placement.

In addition to standard training, this Club’s onboarding process involves **shadowing another seasoned staff member** for two weeks. Parker meets with every new hire several times during this period to answer questions, give feedback, provide clear expectations and set specific goals. The key to onboarding success is immersion into and understanding of Boys & Girls Club culture: “Kids come for the relationships, not the fun.” ❖



## ONBOARDING AT BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

Understanding and quickly adopting the culture and values of a Boys & Girls Club is key to success for all new hires. The onboarding process helps new Club staff learn this culture while adapting to their new role.

### POWER OF OBSERVATION

Managers assign new hires to shadow seasoned staff. Shadowing often lasts one or two weeks, followed by a period of co-facilitation to ensure the capability of the new staff member.

During these critical first weeks, managers observe the new hire, provide on-the-spot constructive feedback, and watch for signs of stress or confusion. Discussions about how to best monitor a space while the staff person is working in that program area, for example, can yield key insights into how a new staff member thinks. Managers observe how the new staff member interacts with youth and facilitates program to determine his or her strengths and passions for working with young people.

### VARIETY IS KEY

Many Clubs require new hires to float among different staff. This hands-on learning addresses the unique nature of Clubs. Lines of sight, problem areas and supply locations are never located in the same place, even for Clubhouses within the same organization. During these early days of onboarding, managers expect seasoned staff to cover Club basics, such as how to get kids to line up, while encouraging new staff to ask questions as they arise.

Floating among multiple staff also allows new hires to experience working with different age groups and program areas. Some managers, such as the director for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Albany’s Schuyler Achievement Academy site in New York, use this time to observe skills and personality traits to determine ultimate program placement. For instance, strong discipline and creativity skills are needed for teen staff, whereas staffing for younger members requires high energy levels and a sense of humor.

### COACHING SUPPORTS

Learning the Boys & Girls Club way can take time, but Clubs lack time in abundance. On-the-spot coaching enables managers to share the philosophy of how Clubs develop youth in a time-efficient manner. This coaching may employ a short motto to reinforce a desired practice, such as “never fun before safety,” used to guide new staff at the Dana Middle

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School Clubhouse of Boys & Girls Clubs of Los Angeles Harbor, Calif., or may simply involve encouraging staff to take initiative. Above all, one-on-one coaching provided by managers should help new hires understand and carry out the expectations of their role.

This coaching process should always allow time for questions, and use mistakes as opportunities to learn. Coaching also takes full advantage of teachable moments, such as sharing member history when dealing with behavior issues to demonstrate the

importance of considering not just consequences but also root causes. In such a case, a manager can model for both the youth and new staff member a more caring, developmental approach to discipline.

An example of a new hire onboarding checklist from Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield, Mo. has been included at the end of this bulletin for Clubs that want to standardize their onboarding process and develop a similar tool. ❖



## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The following insights were culled from a 2017 professional literature review focused on the management practices found in high-quality out-of-school time programs.

### Building Staff Relationships From the Onset

Our youth development mission calls on staff to engage youth in a sincere, meaningful way. Managers must do the same with their own staff, beginning on their first day. The practice of relationship building should be defined as not just connections between staff and kids and between kids and their peers, but also as relationships between and among staff members. Research indicates that programs that excel at staff engagement use the same positive youth development practices to grow staff, creating a culture of learning and support. The most common positive youth development practices include: 1) tapping into staff interests to help shape programming and professional development; 2) creating safe spaces for staff to take risks, reflect on their work and share personal experiences; 3) matching staff with peers from whom they can learn; and 4) encouraging staff to embody a growth mindset and use data to support their ongoing learning, program planning and improvements.<sup>2</sup>

### Staff Diversity Impacts Program Quality

A review of out-of-school time evaluation literature and interviews with two programs considered elements of program quality critical for recruitment, engagement and retention of youth. Findings included recommendations to hire diverse staff with varied expertise and interests who can connect with youth through humor, kindness and support.<sup>3</sup> A similar review supports this connection between staff diversity and program quality, finding that successful programs hire staff who represent members' backgrounds and ethnicities, and who enjoy participating in activities instead of just supervising them.<sup>4</sup> ❖

<sup>2</sup> Youth INC and Algorithm (January 2017). *The Art & Science of Creating Effective Youth Programs*, <https://www.youthinc-usa.org/reports-and-guides>.

<sup>3</sup> Lauver, S. and Little, P. (2005). "Recruitment and Retention Strategies For Out-of-School-Time Programs," *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 105, pp. 71-89, doi:10.1002/yd.108.

<sup>4</sup> Lauver, S.; Little, P. and Weiss, H. (2004). *Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in Out-of-School Time Programs*. Harvard Family Research Project Brief Series: Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation, No. 6, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED483274.pdf>



# TOOLS YOU CAN USE

Clubs should review their own policies and procedures, as well as all applicable state laws, before adopting any new tool to ensure full compliance.

## Interview Question Bank

### CLUB-SPECIFIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions target a candidate's knowledge of or experience related to the work of Boys & Girls Clubs.

- What interests you most about this position?
- Tell me about a time when you had to take action to deal with a potentially unsafe situation. What did you do? What was the result?
- Describe an improvement you identified and how you implemented it.
- What strategies have you used to build and maintain positive relationships with youth?
- What strategies have you used to influence others to gain support and participation for a program or activities?
- Describe actions you have taken to create a positive environment in your workplace.
- Describe your experience with measuring and evaluating program progress.

### SCENARIO-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These scenario-based questions help reveal a candidate's experience, key skills such as classroom management and problem solving, and thought process regarding various situations they may encounter at a Club. Many thanks to the Paukukalo Boys & Girls Club in Maui, Hawaii; the Ira Samuelson Boys & Girls Club in Memphis, Tenn.; and the Newtown Estates Recreation Center Club in Sarasota, Fla. for sharing these interview ideas.

- **Ensuring Fair Play** – Two boys are playing a Two Square game. A line of members is waiting for their turn. Both say the other boy is out. The members call for you – who did not see exactly what happened – to come help. What can you do or say to ensure fair play?
- **Engaging Youth** – You are excited to facilitate a new program, but one of the members refuses to participate. How would you deal with this situation?
- **Resolving Conflict** – While two girls are working on an art project at the same table, one messes up and bangs on the table, unaware her actions just upset the artwork. The girls begin to argue and are about to become physical. How might you resolve this conflict?
- **Managing Safety** – You are the only staff in the gamesroom. On your left, you observe a couple of boys shoving each other, about to fight. Meanwhile, on your right, you see a girl running with scissors. How do you handle the situation? Which issue do you handle first?
- **Empowering Honesty** – Two teens are playing Air Hockey in the games room. After the game, one teen puts down her bag and coat and goes to the restroom. When she returns, her items are missing. No one will say anything. The teen director did not see who took them. What are some ways the teen director can figure out what happened and retrieve her bag and coat?
- **Addressing Bullying** – While supervising outside, you observe a small group of youth making fun of a boy for his religious beliefs. What would you do? What might you say to the small group?
- **Handling Cheating** – Two teams of members each are playing in a relay race. Staff are standing at each end, waiting to reward the winning team. One team, however, is cheating, which staff have not noticed. The other team is trying to share this information. How can the situation be handled properly if no adults saw what happened? What are multiple solutions? ❖

## Sample Onboarding Checklist



# NEW HIRE ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

Welcome to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield. Before beginning your journey with the Movement, the following must be completed with your Program Director.

- Complete New Hire Packet (everything on that checklist must be complete)
- Review Staff Paperwork
  - Behavior Report
  - Incident Report
  - Maintenance Request
  - Vehicle Maintenance Log
  - Weekly Report
  - Paperwork Expectations
  - Average Daily Attendance Sheets
  - Check Request
  - Employee Absence Form
  - Supply Request
  - Medical Food Substitution Record
  - Staff Write-Up
  - Program Area Evaluation
  - Cleanliness Report
  - Job Descriptions
- Review Club Policies
  - Discipline Policy
  - Summer Field Trip Expectations
  - School Year Field Trip Expectations
  - 8 Simple Rules for the Bus
  - Unit Money Handling Procedures
  - Parent Handbook
  - Add/Change Contact Form
  - Mike Williams Scholarship
  - Rental Procedures
  - Specific Unit Information
  - Medical Forms
  - Payment Plan Agreement Form
- Review Emergency Plans & Procedures
  - Evacuation plan
  - Duty Schedule
  - Nutrition Information
  - Fire Exits
  - Master Schedule
  - Arrival and Dismissal Procedures
  - Teacher List
  - Staff Handbook
  - Crisis Management Manual
- Training
  - Why Are You Here?
  - History of the Club
  - Programs
  - Safety
  - Formula for Impact
  - Boys & Girls Club of Springfield History
  - Safety & Supervision
  - Abuse & Neglect
  - Intruder Drill Protocol
  - Classroom Management
  - Sample Program Plan
  - Love & Logic
  - Pre-Suspension Procedures
  - Tools for Teaching
  - Aquatic Safety
  - Vehicle Safety
  - Unit Programs & Descriptions
  - Area Schedules
  - Stalaker @ a Glance
  - Manuals
  - Emergency & Crisis Manual
  - Part-Time Manual Quick Information Sheet
  - Part-Time Manual
  - Manual of Operations
  - Volunteers and Procedures
  - YEO
  - Activity Sharing. Idea Binder
- Other
  - What to do now?
  - Shadow Your PD in Action
  - Shadow a Staff at your new Club
  - Shadow a Veteran Staff at another Club