

PlaySafe and Live Well!

Welcome to PlaySafe, LLC's informational column. Every month we will work hard to provide you with up-to-date information on topics related to parks, recreation, health, wellness, and physical education. Our hope is that by providing you with detailed information, you will go forward and positively change the world. If you have questions or comments, or if you would like to share your thoughts, please contact us through this web site. Thanks. Now PlaySafe and live well!

Training With a Limited Budget

By Butch DeFillippo

With Special Guest Nancy White Ph.D.

In order to provide safe, quality services, facilities and programs to your users it is critical that staff and volunteers are well trained. Having the right people in the right positions, with necessary experience and education is a great first step. The next key step is providing continual training and education that is needed to keep personnel operating at the highest possible level.

With today's budget constraints, it is necessary to develop training programs that are effective and low cost. The good news is that many low cost or free training opportunities are available across a broad spectrum of topics. Parks and recreation, school, and child care staff members and volunteers need training on safety, new or revised legislation, risk management, best practices, supervision, programming, maintenance, emergency plans, and more.

Online Webinars and Training Classes

Many training opportunities are provided online, which cuts out travel costs and enhances accessibility. Agencies can schedule a room for their staff to view a webinar together, or individuals can watch from their work stations. Participants can benefit from viewing webinars in real time, when they can submit questions and have them answered during the webinar, or can view recorded webinars.

An increasing number of conference sessions are available for remote access, both live and recorded. Although the experience and networking opportunities are impacted, the information can still be absorbed and the cost of virtual attendance is lower than attendance in person. The National Swimming Pool Foundation provided live streaming of the World Aquatic Health Conference in October, 2013 for those unable to attend the conference in person. Access could be purchased for one low cost and the sessions could be viewed in one location by an unlimited number of team members.

Archived sessions are available following many conferences for purchase at a low cost. The Professional Convention Management Association held the Convening Leaders Conference in January, 2014. Participants could participate virtually in every session, and had the ability to ask questions during educational sessions. Recordings of the sessions

were available to purchase following the conference for those who couldn't attend. The recordings can also be purchased by attendees who want to view their favorite sessions again or felt cheated when multiple sessions were held at once and they had to miss some.

Blended Learning

Blended learning is beneficial when the goal is to reduce costs and add flexibility to a training program. This type of training allows participants to work online independently to view videos, read materials, and complete assignments/quizzes/tests. Following the online portion of the training, participants must attend one or more face-to-face sessions where concepts they have learned are practiced and applied.

The American Red Cross is a good example of an agency that provides low cost blended learning opportunities. Certification courses including CPR/AED, First Aid and Lifeguarding can be completed with a portion of the work completed online, followed by a classroom session to practice and master the required skills. The flexibility in choosing how and when to complete the online portion of the training makes this training popular with both agencies and trainees. The time spent in the classroom is reduced significantly while maintaining quality and allowing plenty of hands-on training.

Traditional Training

Conferences, workshops, and class sessions that individuals attend in person will continue to be popular for the richness of the experience and networking opportunities. Costs can be reduced by sending staff and volunteers to training held within the local or regional area. Conference organizers often move their events annually to different geographic areas. Agencies can plan their training programs well in advance to take advantage of conferences scheduled in their area.

Provide your own agency training with the use of experts, highly trained staff, or outside trainers. You can put the years of expertise from professionals to good use by requesting that they provide training to your staff and volunteers. Some experts are willing to provide training for a reasonable fee; a few may even do so at no charge on a one-time or limited basis.

An additional training method that makes an investment in your agency's future is by having one or more of your staff members become a certified trainer. The expense of sending staff members to become trainers and purchasing the materials needed to conduct the training are justified given the long-term savings that are possible. This is particularly true for ongoing types of training that require frequent retraining or recertification, such as CPR/AED and First Aid.

Agencies can contract out for provision of quality training to their staff members and volunteers. This method is more costly than provision of in-house training, but less expensive than sending personnel to outside training and conferences. Check references

prior to contracting with a business or consultant, and ask for detailed information about the knowledge, expertise, certifications, and education of the speakers.

You spend a lot of money to hire the correct person for your agency and we all know that having trained staff members and volunteers working in our organizations is vital. Provision of good customer service, attention to safety, using best practices, knowing the standard of care, and keeping up with new legislation in the field of recreation requires all of us to actively participate in training. Lifelong learning is vital to stay current in our profession and to be effective in our positions (children and adults literally put their lives in our hands). With some planning and careful consideration, ongoing training opportunities can be provided to our personnel.

A few of the organizations offering webinars and online training in the recreation profession include:

American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org>)

American Therapeutic Recreation Association (<http://www.atra-online.com>)

California Parks and Recreation Society (<http://www.cprs.org>)

Human Kinetics Publishers (<http://www.humankinetics.com/webinars>)

National Recreation and Park Association (<http://www.nrpa.org>)

National Swimming Pool Foundation (<http://www.nspf.org>)

* Phone: 505. 899.9532 * Toll Free: 1.877PlaySafe

Web Site: <http://www.play-safe.com> * **E-mail:** PlaySafe@play-safe.com