DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 136 905 PS 009 121

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TITLE Staffing and Training in Day Care: U.S.A.
PUB DATE Jul 75
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (University of Guilfor, England, July, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Day Care Services; *Early Childhood Education; Employment Interviews; *Inservice Programs; Paraprofessional Personnel; Parent School Relationship; *Personnel Selection; Staff Role; *Staff Utilization; Teacher Selection

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the selection and training of appropriate staff for day care. It is suggested that an ecological view of a day care center which considers all environmental factors helps draw attention to the importance of all staff members (including cooks, bus drivers, secretaries) in providing enriching experiences for the children. Total staff involvement may entail less hierarchical distinction between teachers and other staff members. Considerations for interviewing staff should thus include attitudes of personnel towards sharing roles and status. A variety of staff selection methods (interviewing, trial participation, and role playing) is recommended. Inservice training assumes importance once staff has been selected, and planning time and basic topics for inservice training sessions must be considered in advance. Other inservice topics of importance are interpersonal skills, conceptualization of the program, morale, and relations with parents. Communication with parents can provide information needed to understand and deal effectively with children's behavior and problems. Formative evaluation can be used as an aid to training and can help supervisors monitor the effectiveness of inservice programs. Suggestions and examples of interviewing, training, and parent involvement methods are provided. (SB)

Staffing and Training in Day Care: U.S.A.

Alice Sterling Honig

The selection and training of appropriate staff for day care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers is critical for the implementation of a developmental as opposed to a custodial program. Yet, unarticulated underlying assumptions and conditions often militate against this kind of developmental implementation. One of the ground-rules, as it were, in day care, has long been that positions are budgeted for salaries often below poverty level. Low-pay plus low-prestige have long been hallmarks of personnel in the field. Staff selection has sometimes been dictated by narrow political and economic considerations. Often there is a legitimate rationale, such as finding jobs for poor people or for parents with linguistic backgrounds of the children served. Too often, this process per se ignores the needs for growth of the young children and also of the staff.

Impetus for Changing the Staff Selection Process

The special importance of the early years in terms of laying the foundations for later cognitive and social-emotional achievements became particularly clear when Bloom's (1964) and Hunt's (1961) classic works appeared, documenting both the importance of the preschool years for mental growth and the close interrelationships of affective and intellective functions in young children. Without such conceptualizations, day care for the young child more often has been predicated on the assumption of a service rendered to parents instead of giving primary regard to the development of the children served. If a center lacks this emphasis on facilitating children's development, then cursory attention to staffing patterns and competencies can become an accepted way of life.

Paper presented at the meetings of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, University of Guilfor, England, July, 1975.

Another assumption which until recently has interfered with the setting of any special standards for staff selection and training has been that women and mothers and, in practice, often poor mothers willing to take low-paying jobs, were qualified simply by virtue of female or maternal status, to provide proper care for the young. Alas, child care sensitivities and competencies no more necessarily accrue suddenly to the status of parenthood than does artistic taste and sensitivity accrue suddenly to the status of "nouveau riche."

With regard to another of the "hidden" assumptions in selecting day care personnel Chambers (1971) has observed

> Many would say that we often expend less effort in protecting our children than in solving problems related to our other natural resources. For example, if the problem is how to counteract water pollution, it is unlikely that we would attempt to solve it by calling in well-intentioned untrained volunteers or that we would hire someone to learn to handle this problem "on the job." Instead, we would employ a person who is both accredited by training and experience to test, diagnose, and recommend solutions to the problem. However, when our problem revolves around child care many still assume that, because each of us was once a child, anyone can give adequate care to children. . . . Children away from their own parent models must be served by persons both educated and tempermentally suited for the work. (p. 395)

None of the foregoing assumptions in any way implies that with increased care in the selection and training process any economic and political goals

cannot be served in addition to the service provided for children and families. The key word is care--not only in the methods of selection and training of staff but in the conceptualization of roles and goals within the day care program.

The day care center as an ecological system. An ecological view of the day care center helps us to perceive the provision of cultural, ethnic and sex role models among personnel as necessary to ensure child comfort and willingness to participate. Conceptualization of all important environmental factors (in addition to space use, toy provision, time allocated for rest, food, etc.) when it includes the persons with whom the children will be interacting, tends to sharpen awareness of the importance of the staff selection process. Indeed, an ecological viewpoint, when combined with care in staff selection, training, and service delivery can turn what sometimes appear to be political or parochial constraints into sources of strength and facilitation of child growth. Particularly when paraprofessional selection is concerned, staff choices can be singularly enriching not only for the children involved, but for the professional staff in the program as well (Lally, Honig, & Caldwell, 1973). As Lally (1970) has noted:

> Foods, songs, games, languages, staff, clothes, sleeping patterns, holiday celebrations, and all other customs should reflect the cultural background of the children and parents being served. This is central to the socialization of all children. It is intellectually enriching and emotionally fulfilling. (p. 6)

An ecological conceptualization of the environment of the day care center additionally permits us to view the center as a place where participants all

contribute to each other's growth. One corollary of this conceptualization is that all staff members are to be chosen and treated as integral to the day care setting. Cooks, kitchen help, secretaries, bus drivers--all are members of the community of child care workers. In the United States, the Head Start program, for example, has placed important emphasis on food choosing, food preparation and food service as components of the day care curriculum. Staff persons involved with food need not only culinary and nutritional know-how but also need training in how to use food situations to help young children grow in terms of sensory discriminations, aesthetic pleasures, classification and numeration skills and even manual dexterity skills, such as are involved in flipping pancakes.

If all components and personnel selected for program are considered integral to success, a more intensively and extensively enriching program will evolve. Bus drivers and riders, for example, who are attuned to the child development aspects of their job will participate in making travel time a singing time, a sociable time, a noticing time for houses, landmarks, spatial routes taken, and interesting events such as raindrops sliding slowly or faster down the window panes of a bus.

Commitment to the total involvement of all day care staff in program brings with it the necessity of questioning the rigid separation of roles that exists in many programs. Another possible consequence of total participation of all staff as child development personnel in addition to other roles is that less rigid status differences may then pertain between "professionals" and "paraprofessionals." Indeed, a full-participation model entails a recognition and respect for the strengths and abilities of many kinds of personnel within a day care setting, and entails less hierarchical distinction between teachers and others on staff who have often heretofore been considered as less qualified or responsible or involved with the children.

Total staff involvement in program may also counteract a tendency for rotating staff in centers with very long days to feel less responsible since staff may work in "shifts" during a very long day. Lacks in physical staff continuity may lead to gaps in psychological program continuity, such that diapers remain unchanged and medicine unadministered. Staffing patterns which provide overlap of personnel may prevent such program failures.

Interviewing for New Staff Positions

If role-sharing is a day care goal, then staff selection procedures will have to take into account the attitudes of personnel toward 1) some staff fulfilling multiple roles and 2) toward a more egalitarian conception of the importance of all roles in the day care setting in terms of their contribution toward child development. The interviewer will need not only to determine a potential staff member's knowledge about and attitudes toward young children and their needs, but also whether some applicants feel threatened by sharing "status." In the United States this may become a matter of special concern if some of the recent educational propositions of teacher groups come to pass, and teachers (who may be used to classroom aides in specific narrow roles) become recruited in large numbers for retraining in early childhood work. For some personnel, distinctions of rank may not be anywhere as important as demonstrable competence and commitment on the part of fellow staff members. On the other side of this problem, some applicants may feel threatened in being asked to develop skills, create day care activities, and contribute leadership qualities which they may feel unprepared for at entry into program. If such personnel seem to the recruiter to be eminently suited by temperament and life experience with the qualities of loving patience, tolerance and enjoyment of the very young,

then the recruiter needs to ensure the development of further competencies by the provision of inservice training which is accepted and understood by all staff as a fundamental and important aspect of their participation in the day care program and as a valuable contribution toward their own growth and development.

Variety in Staff Selection Methods

Interviewing. Interviewing as a single technique for selecting staff is often not entirely adequate for ascertaining personal characteristics, such as a) non-moodiness of temperament, or b) style and tempo characteristics, such as not rushing little children who eat slowly, or c) energy levels, so necessary to sustain a worker through the long day-care day. Such personal qualities may be basic sources of sustenance for the smooth functioning of an effective day care program.

Trial participation. Asking a worker for a few days of trial participation in a classroom provides a second technique which can help a recruiter make decisions about hiring. Can the caregiver put out smiles, positive voice tones, responsive conversation, and other desirable behaviors at the end of a day care day as he or she did at the day's beginning? Is he or she apt to distribute more negative or critical remarks to male children than to females (or vice-verse), or to children of one ethnic group compared to another? If the day care center uses an open education model with differentiated settings (such as small muscle, creative expression, sensory experiences and large muscle areas) does the prospective staff member spend as much time during the trial-participation interacting with children in each area or does the adult tend to cluster and socialize with other workers when children are in more open spaces such as outdoor play areas and large-muscle activity areas? If there are less preferred chores, such as changing diapers, does the

prospective caregiver tend to leave more of these chores to the other workers? Staff harmony may depend on the alertness of hiring personnel in observing these interactions in a trial-participation situation. Optimal caregiving may depend on building in optimal opportunities for selecting effective staff for work with children.

Role playing. A third selection procedure which can be very informative is role playing. The prospective caregiver may be asked to pretend that the recruiter is a parent who is concerned with finding out whether the day care center will be a good place for his or her child. The potential caregiver may be asked, for example, to role-play a day care center director who is trying to inform, to reassure, and to convince a parent about the center. The kinds and qualities of experiences for children and interactions with children which are mentioned in the role-play situation can give a recruiter valuable insights into basic attitudes, values, and emphases in child-rearing as they are expressed by the potential day care worker.

Katz (1970) has defined three possible roles for day care workers--therapeutic, maternal, and instructional. Whether there is congruence in the role conceptualizations of the center director and a prospective caregiver may prove very important to the ease and satisfaction each feels vis-a-vis the other in the job situation.

In-service Training: a Key to Continued Program Success

Once staff selection and/or replacement decisions have been made, the role of a supervisor becomes particularly important. Staff supervision is often the responsibility of the day care center director. However, where burdensome economic conditions prevail, sometimes a center director is so busy with budget problems, that little time or importance is allocated to in-service training. Such neglect can ultimately entail serious problems since supervision includes responsibility for sustaining staff enthusiasm for work, for heading off personal or other misunderstandings, and clarifying staff knowledge about safety rules or routines such as those involved in setting up and storage of cots for naps.

Planning time for training. A supervisor may need to recruit community volunteers to release staff for in-service training sessions on special topics such as language development. The ingenuity of a supervisor in planning time for small-group, large-group, and even individual sessions with staff members when necessary, may be a critical factor in determining whether in-service training becomes a regular, expected, and accepted part of the day care program. In this writer's experience as a consultant, centers which cannot solve the logistic and personnel problems involved in releasing staff for training sessions, for case conferences particularly with regard to youngsters in difficulties, and for toy or book designing and making sessions, often have serious morale problems. Day care work is then often seen as just a job--and a not-particularly appealing job. Staff commitment to program goals often seems diffuse and enthusiasm or cheerfulness is often lacking. The kind of caregiving offered then seems unthoughtful and responsive only to troubles as they occur rather than thoughtful and purposeful in advance in terms of how the program can optimize opportunities offered for learning, for positive social interactions and for interesting and manageable encounters with the daily environment.

Planning topics for training. In order to use time as economically as possible, training should be planned in advance and topics clearly set up for each session, whether ten minutes or two hours of toddler-nap-time are available. Table 1 shows a typical list of training topics which have proved useful in working with caregivers of infants and toddlers during training at the Children's

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Center in Syracuse, New York (Honig & Lally, 1972).

In staff training for work with young children basic topic areas need to be covered:

1. Information about how a young child develops: in language understanding and usage as well as sensory, perceptual, cognitive, social, moral, and motoric abilities

2. Piaget's stages of sensorimotor and preoperational development: characteristic ways in which children reveal at what stages they are operating.

3. The ecology of day care: a. the uses of and arrangements of space, of time, and of materials in order to promote child development.

b. the ways cognitive, language and sensimotor experiences can be carried out or offered as aspects of daily care routines including toileting, shepherding down hallways, and feeding times.

4. Information about health care, nutrition and safety factors.

5. The young child's emotional growth including Erikson's stages and ideas about how caregivers, for example, can nourish the development of basic trust. How can one nurture autonomy and initiatives given the routines to which many day care centers often strictly adhere?

6. Observational skills. How can caregivers learn to find out and notice where a child is "at" developmentally so that they can match offerings, arrangements, suggestions, questions and teaching styles to a particular child's level of understanding, personality, and his or her discoveries at a given point in time?

Not only topic choice but opportunity for feedback by trainees needs to be planned. Staff members who are confused, who feel a topic area needs more coverage with more specific examples must be given their fair chance to feed back to training staff their concern and their needs. A diary notebook for each staff member may be a practical solution to the problem of how to allow for ongoing feedback if more than verbal interchanges are desired, or if some personnel are more comfortable writing out criticisms and confusions.

Formative evaluation as an aid to training. Another role of the training supervisor is to give ongoing feedback during the year to staff about how program goals are being implemented, and where more or better implementation is needed. Such formative evaluation may be carried out on an informal basis as a supervisor moves during the day from area to area. Perhaps the method of choice is more objective, and involves time sampling or observational checklists. In any case, there should be operational definitions of the behaviors of caregivers which the center wants to encourage (such as modeling and expanding on language for young children) and those which the center wants minimized or eliminated (such as harsh scoldings, physical punishment, or ignoring children who clearly express needs for care). Such checklists should of course be sensitive to the developmental level of the children served in specifying behaviors that reflect optimal caregiving. One set of such checklists, for teachers of infants, toddlers and preschoolers in day care has been developed for use at the Children's Center, and has proved easy to use and reliable for monitoring the quality of the day care program (Honig & Lally, 1973, 1975).

Formative evaluation techniques also help a supervisor to monitor the effectiveness of a given in-service effort. For example, the staff may have been working on how to use field trips, outdoor play spaces, etc., to help preschoolers learn more classification skills than can be learned through play with conventional preschool commercially available supplies and materials. Or workers with infants may have been taught how to choose large appropriate pictures of juice, a ball, a dog, a baby, etc., to create 5-page books for use with babies. Does book-use with babies increase in the weeks after such an inservice training workshop compared to the time prior to the specific inputs?

Further Training Topics

Interpersonal skills. Training should help day care workers become attuned to young children's development in all areas and become able to nurture the curiosity, the exploration, the sociableness, the perseverance at interesting activities that are characteristic of healthy growing youngsters.

Training also needs to help workers develop personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivity. Just as important as games and seriation tasks for the repertoire of day care personnel are techniques for helping children and each other feel appreciated, unique, helpful and successful participants in the day care world. Interpersonal skills include coping with displeasure or anger through verbal expression rather than through sulking or physical assault. Many effective ideas are offered by Gordon (1970) and by Ginott (1965) to help parents and caregivers find ways to communicate feelings, to solve social skirmishes, and to cope with emotionally non-adaptive responses that occur.

One of the most difficult aspects in improving interpersonal skills may prove to be a change to more positive ways of communicating rules, ideas, wishes and goals. How often are "No-no" and "Stop that!" used in a center? How often do teachers keep a promise to a child? For example, does a day care worker promise Joey that he will get a turn on the new tricycle in the play yard, after Lynn has had a turn--and then forget to go find Joey and remind him that he can now have his turn when the time does arrive?

Staff needs to learn to offer explanations, both cognitive and emotional explanations, rather than just expressing day care rules and regulations per se. Adults who provide reasons also provide models for young children to learn the use of reasoning and the importance of considering people's feelings, those of others as well as one's own. The use of rules with reasons, or statements of wants

accompanied by reasons, provides alternatives to trying to get one's way by yelling orders or by assaulting others. Discipline techniques that are firm and positive need to be talked about and clarified in in-service sessions.

One possible training technique is to pose everyday, familiar problems and conflict situations between child and child or between child and adult. The caregivers tell how they feel such a situation could be handled and what could be said to a child. Differences in suggestions by staff can be used to spark discussions on positive methods. If Jerry (five years old) is, unbidden, very vigouously rocking Angela (three years old) in a rocking chair, which of the following kinds of comments are caregivers likely to use?

"Jerry, don't rock Angie so hard. You are scaring her and that chair might tip over and hurt her!"

"Jerry, let's rock Angie gently--like this. Good. Angie feels comfortable when you rock her gently. She can really enjoy your giving her a rocking chair ride when you do it gently like this."

Conceptualization of program. During the year, some inservice training topics should be directed at helping staff understand more subtle dimensions of their program. Lay & Dopyera (1971) have suggested some of these dimensions. Variety is one. Does the day care staff feel that children are encountering enough diversity and variety in their daily encounters with available toys and people and places?

Complexity and sequence of program are other important dimensions. Many day care centers do not provide a wide enough range of complexity for all the children participating, although variety may be very prevalent. As far as sequencing is concerned, some programs do balance an unsequenced general program with special provision for tutorial, carefully sequenced sessions daily for smaller groups of children.

Balance between "open-ended" and "closed" kinds of materials provided for children might be another inservice topic area which staff could explore. Puzzles and ring stack toys have high demand characteristics. Water play and finger paint, for example, are less"closed"in the sense that no specific particular play technique or end-result is inherent in the materials themselves. Are caregivers providing day care children with a balance among kinds of materials available for play? Recent work by Karlson & Stodolsky (1973) suggests the importance of children's interactions with more open-ended materials for cognitive growth.

In-service sessions and morale problems. Some special in-service sessions need to be scheduled every year. Otherwise, there are apt to be lags in motivation as the day care year rolls on and on. Speical topic sessions, outside speakers, such as puppet-making experts or a child psychiatrist may perk up a staff and may inspire new ideas for creative expression activities on the one hand and new ideas for discipline on the other.

Sometimes films or videotapes of other programs give staff a good feeling about how they themselves are conducting their own program and also may provide some new ideas for adoption. One of the most exciting in-service sessions this writer has conducted occurred after the presentation of a film where tongue-depressors were handed out as tokens (to be traded in later for rewards) to children. The staff at the Children's Center waxed eloquent in response and showed unified staff feelings in their dislike of what they termed an "automatic" and "impersonal" token reward system for young children. The film served as a catalyst for the expression of and sharing of staff values with respect to treatment of and rewards systems for young children. Even usually-silent staff members spoke up with vigor.

Parent Involvement

An ecological view of day care comprises not only the relation of young children to each other, the staff, toys, foods, and day care spaces, but also their relation to a "hidden component"--the family. A child's relations within the family may very markedly affect behavior within the center. Experienced caregivers learn to read facial and postural signs that tell them that Johnny's older sisters and brothers have been hounding him since he got up early this morning, and he looks like he needs a breathing space and a time for special consideration before he will be ready to play with others today. Sometimes signs that day care staff gets are sudden increases in angry behaviors; sometimes the signs are withdrawn behaviors. Unless there is some kind of active liaison between staff and home, it may be hard for staff to understand why Tina, for example, has started to use scatalogical language quite strongly and to strike out at others. It is harder to reassure a child or to restate his or her fears and feelings accurately when stressful home conditions can only be conjectured. In the above case, it turned out that Tina's beloved grandfather had died and the family had told her only that grandpa had gone away for a long time.

Parents need to be assured of the Center staff's genuine goal and desire to help children become able to handle feelings and troubles better (as well as to help children learn the social and school-type skills which parents expect from the center) if the parents are to become more comfortable at communicating difficult family times to staff. This requires staff consideration and sensitivity. Gossip among staff in the center about families is not acceptable. Staff can easily be helped to understand why gossip can hurt both children and their families.

Sometimes centers develop techniques for improving communication with parents. At the Children's Center, a "Memo to Mommy" note pinned to each child's clothing at going-home time helped keep parents informed of progress, interests, joys and achievements of children: "Susie finished a 5-piece puzzle all by herself today." "Todd loves to build with blocks when his friend Rick is building too." "Sula didn't bite anyone today!"

In-service planning can help day care staff develop techniques for relating to parents and relating parents more to the center. For example, in one open-education preschool program, staff

> set out to establish a successful parent involvement program in our classroom . . . through making home visits of the children . . . . The things we learned really could fill a book. Some examples are: (1) a child with rather severe small muscle coordination problems comes from an ultra immaculate home where we are sure no "messy" work is ever done and he is an only child of a very protective mother, (2) a very stubborn, attention-getting little girl comes from a home where mother consistently talks about how superior the other children are to the kindergartener--meanwhile the 5-year-old is being completely obnoxious and refuses to do anything the mother says. . . In connection with fostering positive parent-teacher relationships we held a get-acquainted-night, dish-to-pass supper for the child and his or her parents. The children really "sold" the idea and over 250 parents or relatives turned out (98% attendance). In preparation, we role-played the parent-child supper-sharing situation so the children would know how to show their parents around and explain different centers and areas of our room. Next year we are going to make it a

point to provide transportation and personally contact the parents we feel might not come. (Puit & Totman, 1974, pp. 25-27).

Staff may want to discuss ways in which their goals, practices and expectations for children coincide with or differ from those of parents. Studies by Prescott (1965) and by Elardo & Caldwell (1973) have investigated domains in which parents and day care staff disagree and/or agree on child care goals, practices, and expectations for children as a function of family income status and of child age. In-service training may have to address itself to differences of concern, such as possible parental desire for physical punishment by caregivers and center policy against physical punishment with children, and how staff policy can be calmly and firmly articulated and implemented while parents' opinions are attended to and their rights respected.

Many publications are not available to help staff learn ways of improving communications and understandings with parents (Honig, 1975, p. 77). A resource center from which day care staff can freely borrow materials may be a useful long term aid for staff in their personal involvement with their own professional development.

Conclusions

Selection, pre-service, and in-service training of staff are key elements in the transformation of custodial care situations into positive living and learning experiences for young children in day care. Training, to be effective, must be relevant to the goals of the day care program and to the needs of the staff and the children. Topics for inclusion in a training program, if training is to be thorough, must include not only all aspects of child development but all aspects of the children's environment in relation to their growth--peers, play materials and equipment, foods, physical spaces, and the important adults in the children's lives, both day care staff and parents.

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Table 1

Major Topics Covered in Preservice Training Sessions for Infant Caregivers

Developing a Healthy Personality

- The importance of responsive feedback
- Consistent care and the growth of trust
- Teacher tempo and timing
- What "No-No" means
- The distraction technique
- Needs for grasping and biting
- Physical punishment and why not
- Use of positive reinforcers
- Independence and initiative
- Ways to end learning games happily

Nutrition

- Sucking
- Solid foods appropriate for babies
- Meals: A sociable time
- Finger foods
- What baby learns with feeding

Large Muscle Skills

- Description of motor skill development
- Body games with babies
- The inactive baby: do's and don'ts
- Readiness for learning motor skills

Pick-up and Handling Skills

- Description of infant small muscle development
- Small muscle toys and games: what they are and how to make them
- Finger games for finger control

Sense Experiences

- Ways in which babies experience the world
- Sensory stimulation: dosage cautions
- Sensations and body feelings
- Taking advantage of daily routines to provide sense experiences

Understanding Piaget

- Sensorimotor period: 0-2 years
- Concrete operations period: 2-11 years
- Diagnosis: how a caregiver learns to make good "matches"
- Discovery games
- Trainees make-up Piagetian games

Infant Language

- How vocalizing and talking develop
- Words as tools to make things happen
- Words as symbols
- Varieties in adult voice and tone
- Tape recorder use
- Making sounds and music; songs to sing
- Appropriate action words, quality words, and when-where-how-why words
- Name games
- How to promote interest and joy in books
- Making books for babies
- Role-playing reading skills

Use of Living Spaces

- Feeding space; toileting space; storage space
- Places for play; places for privacy; book places
- Wall decor; mirrors
- Rug and furniture defined activity areas
- Taking advantage of building and room features for adventures
- A place for sick babies; sleep spaces
- A space for living and growing creatures
- Outdoor worlds to explore

Assorted Extra Topics for Teachers

- Who does what?
- How are young infants assigned to caregivers?
- Who keeps records? What kinds of records need to be kept?
- Caregiver clothing
- How do we communicate with parents?
- Whom does a caregiver see when she has a problem?
- Beginnings and endings of days; bus experiences