

## Experienced Program Staff Certificate Of Added Qualification Overview

Welcome to the Experienced Program Staff certificate course!! This course assumes you have already had some experience working with children in some type of organized youth programs, so you will likely not only learn new knowledge and skills but will also find ways to build on your past experiences to become an even more qualified program staff member! So get ready to enter into your own world of learning and professional development!

### General Course Description

This certificate course is specifically designed for people like you who are interested in working with young people in a camp or other kind of youth setting. This course is a 15 hour course designed around the ACA thirteen core competencies. The course is built on the assumption that you have had past youth work experiences, so you can apply the lessons to your own past experiences working with youth programs while learning new knowledge and skills. The final component of the course, “Special Interest Experience”, is designed to give you the opportunity to focus on some aspect of particular interest to you. For example, you might be interested in working with a particular clientele (i.e., youth with special needs), a special setting (i.e., wilderness tripping), or a specialized activity (i.e., ropes courses). You then design the learning experiences that allow you to explore your chosen interests. You could attend a special training or conference, complete an online experience, select additional readings, or create some other unique learning opportunity for yourself. At the end of the course, you will have completed learning experiences that help you offer quality experiences to the youth you serve as well as enhance your own professional development.

### Where to Start

This course was designed for experienced program staff who have prior camp/youth work experience. We recommend that you work through this course in the order designed, because some of the activities will build on lessons in other competencies. (Note: If you feel that some of the material is beyond your experience, you may want to consider taking the “Entry-Level Program Staff” Certificate of Added Qualification first, then coming back to this course.) Be sure to complete the self-assessment at the end of each competency. When you complete the final competency module, you will qualify for certificate completion.

### Course Expectations

The online format of the course leaves much of the responsibility for learning and assessment to the integrity of the individual learner. The following list of expectations is important for the learner to accept:

- We assume that each of you has an interest in becoming more skilled in working with youth.
- We expect that you will complete all the required activities in the lessons.
- We expect you to design the In-depth Experience as a two hour (minimum) opportunity to explore more completely some topic that interests you.
- We expect you to complete the self-assessments with honest, thoughtful effort.
- We expect you to be responsible for your own learning, which means that you will seek help from appropriate sources if necessary.

## **Assignments and Evaluations**

### A Word About the Assignments....

Generally, you will be asked to read articles, watch short video clips, or listen to audio files. Many times you will be asked to respond to a set of questions in your journal, talk about what you learned with a friend or colleague, or to just reflect on the information. At times, you will be asked to complete sample forms often found in many youth programs, and sometimes you are asked to complete a process that you will likely encounter in your job as youth program staff. We also believe that learners should be encouraged to complete the optional “Just for Fun” activities. While not required for certificate completion, these optional activities offer learners additional valuable, often in-depth, experiences that extend the learning of that competency.

### The Self-Designed Special Interest Experience

This learning opportunity is designed by you. The template for this experience needs to be completed by each learner and includes such aspects as: topic and why, learner outcomes, the actual activities and descriptions, and an evaluation reflection. When possible, some type of verification is desirable (i.e. conference program, certificate, authority signature, etc).

### A Word about Evaluation...

Remember that assessment is about learning. We expect that adult learners are responsible for self-reflection and critical self-assessment that reflects your understanding of a topic or subject. The required assignments for each lesson are designed for the learners to complete as self-reflection in a learning journal, through quizzes, and checklists. After completing each competency, you are expected to complete a self-assessment for that competency. As you complete this checklist, it is important that you recognize not only the new level of skill you have gained, but that you are also ethically accountable for these new skills. Upon completion of the entire certificate course, you will have the opportunity to receive a certificate of completion for the Experienced Program Staff Certificate of Added Qualification course.

## **Course Schedule**

This certificate is an intensive 15 hour course. There is a recommended order to the courses, because some competencies build on knowledge and skill development and learning experiences from earlier assignments. While the In-Depth Experience can occur at any time, it is recommended that you consider this learning opportunity as a culminating experience.

## **Course Outline**

1. Youth/Adult Growth & Development
  - Inclusion
  - Apply it! (developmental concepts)
2. Learning Environment and Curriculum
  - Learning & the Bigger Picture of a Camp/Program’s Goal
  - Camp & the Bigger Picture of Learning in a Child’s Life
3. Program Planning
  - The 4 Ps of Program Planning
4. Evaluation
  - What Evaluation Can Do!
  - Logic Models

5. Professionalism & Leadership
  - Professional Development and Your Career Path
  - Establishing Career Goals
  - “Staying in the Know”- Staying Relevant and Current
6. Health & Wellness
  - Incident & Accident Analysis for Prevention
  - Critical Health & Wellness Issues for Staff
7. Risk Management
  - “Whew! That Was Close!”
  - Crisis and What To Do!
8. Cultural Competence
  - Developing Self- and Group Awareness
9. Family and Community Connections
  - Camp Communities For All
10. Nature and Environment
  - Nature Appreciation Through Experiential Learning
  - Designing Activities for Nature Connection
  - Share Your Love of Nature
11. Business Management and Practices
  - Budgets and Staying Within Them
12. Human Resource Management
  - “Mean What You Say, Say What You Mean” : Keys to Effective Communication
  - Build Respect & Acceptance With Your Co-Workers & Participants and Mean It!
13. Site and Facility
  - Staff Roles with Maintenance and Facility Plans

**Special Interest Experience** can be completed at any point in the course but is optimal if used as a culminating experience. See the description under assignments and access the planning template to guide your efforts.

**Learning Contract for the Special Interest Experience  
Experienced Program Staff Certificate**

Complete this form once you have decided on your Special Interest Experience. Be specific and thorough in this learning contract (so add space where you need it). If you have additional components you feel are important to this contract, add as you want. Be clear about the time involved- this experience **MUST BE A MINIMUM OF TWO HOURS OF ENGAGED LEARNING!** While academic coursework is critical to your development, this experience can **NOT** be met with formal college/university courses.

Topic and Justification:

Learner Objectives (minimum of three- and remember they should be specific and measurable):

Description of Activities and Timing:

Completion Requirements/Evaluation:

Other Materials (documentation materials, organizer signature, etc):