

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR THE INCREDIBLE YEARS GROUPS

Morrison Child and Family Services Portland, OR

OPENING MARKETING STRATEGIES

General

Begin marketing about 3 weeks in advance of start date.

Have an “elevator pitch” – a one or two sentence description of the class that will give parents just enough information. If they want more, they can ask follow up questions. Time/date/place of class should be set.

Fliers and info reflect FREE class, childcare and dinner!

Tell people what’s for dinner the first night.

When talking about the class, mention the childcare and “planned activities” for kids!

It’s educational for all!

Particularly if there is a co-occurring Dinosaur School, advertise that! Parents will sometimes attend class if they have to in order to get their child a spot in Dina School.

When talking to parents, remember to mention, “Even if you’re just thinking about signing up, you may want to reserve a spot for yourself now, as these classes tend to fill up quickly!”

For Community-Based Classes (at a Preschool, for example)

Observe your site for needs, ebb and flow, client population characteristics.

Hang out at pick up and drop off times to greet families.

Hand out crackers/fliers and have an elevator pitch about the group. Ex: “This class is a great way to meet other parents and learn skills for more effective parenting!”

Post fliers everywhere at site, put in children’s cubbies.

Have a sign up sheet posted at the site.

Post a big banner onsite the last week before class begins...“Last Week To Sign Up!”

Be sure to include what’s for dinner!

Educate teachers/other potential advocates/therapists about class and how to promote it.

Do an “infomercial” 1 hour meeting for parents, or piggyback onto other site-based events (parent nights, etc.) to advertise class.

Put an article in the site’s newsletter.

For Clinic-Based Classes

Send fliers to other therapists or referral sources letting them know you are starting a group.

Talk about your group at clinic meetings and ask for referrals.

Send out emails reminding folks to send you clients.

Invite clients on your own caseload.

CLIENT-SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT

Ask parents who seem interested, “Can I give you a call?”

Ask teachers or other advocates if they feel comfortable in talking with parents to recommend the class.

Talk to parents about how much you enjoy their child! Mention that funny thing they did the other day! Good for joining.

Ask parents who may have already taken the class to refer other folks to you.

Recruit from a current group you may be running.

Ask parents if they’d like to bring another family member or friend.

For ambivalent parents, “Well, why don’t you come just the first night and see what you think. We’re having pizza!” (The majority of parents stay on!)

Intake Interview: *This is **critical** to engaging and retaining clients.*

Do a Role Induction. Let parents know what will be expected of them in class, and what as an instructor you will do. Research tells us that the more parents know what to expect, the more likely they are to attend and stay.

Ask parents what their goal is for attending the class, and affirm for them how the class will meet their needs.

Let parents know what a valuable addition you think they will make to the class.

Problem-solve any barriers to coming; transportation, etc.

Ask if they have any questions or concerns about attending the group. Norm them and respond to their concerns by talking about confidentiality, respect, no judgment, etc.

Call all parents in the week before the class begins and let them know how excited you are that they are coming.

Bear in mind that the typical attrition rate is 25% of your initial participant list, so enroll 20 folks to get 15, or 16 to get 12, for example.

RETENTION

Midweek Calls

MAKE MIDWEEK CALLS TO PARENTS!! This has a tremendous impact on parent retention. Midweek calls are a great way to:

Let parents know how pleased you are that they are in group.

Ask how food/childcare is.

Check in about challenges that may come up with practicing skills, and offer support and problem-solving.

Follow up with parents who did not attend – find out why and problem-solve.

Address any concerns about the group or curriculum.

Help stabilize chaotic families.

In class, make a “Best time to Call You” sheet and pass it around for parents to fill in. Call them when you are most likely to reach them!

In Class Strategies

Shape parents' goals when they check in; when they present an overarching goal ("I want my kid to be well-behaved"), ask them to list one or two behaviors they'd like to see right now that we can work on. REFER to parents' goals frequently, and honor any concerns, particularly when parents doubt or dispute curriculum, even as you affirm that the curriculum will meet their goals.

Ask parents to do small jobs – pass out homework, candy, put out plates for dinner, etc. This supports meaning and belonging in the group.

Likewise, ask participants to review for others who weren't there last class what material was covered. This bonds participants and increases collaboration and connectedness.

Spend time eating/chatting with parents when possible. Ask about their children's day.

Catch them before, during and after class to check in when you see that they need to talk.

Announce to parents results of weekly evaluations as needed; norm that some folks will like/dislike various pieces of curriculum, and that it appeals to all learning styles.

Reinforce Buddy Calls! Do a surprise raffle for folks who have made their Buddy Call – these calls again bond participants and increase retention.

Use incentives as a fun and friendly way to increase attendance/timeliness. For example, "Next week we have pizza! Plus, we will raffle off a Starbucks card to everyone who is here on time!"

Pay attention to parents' "small" requests like, could our water be cold? Or, could we have some coffee? When parents feel cared for in small ways, they appreciate it and are more likely to come.

Last few minutes of class, as needed, ask parents to turn to the person next to them and say one thing that was really useful about class this week that they will use at home.

