

## Introduction

Leading a thorough new staff training and orientation is a key step that programs can take to increase program quality. Through staff training, programs can increase the likelihood that participants are safe and having positive experiences, and that staff feel confident and supported in doing their work. Below are some guidelines and ideas for implementing an effective new staff training. In order to assure the quality and steady progression of staff, the onboarding process for new staff should be intentional and allow for flexibility to address the varying needs of the new staff as well as the particular program.

## Overview

Below is a summary of the topics covered in this guide.

- ❑ Guiding principles
- ❑ Build staff knowledge
  - ❑ Knowledge of the organization
  - ❑ Knowledge of the program
- ❑ Facilitate staff relationships
  - ❑ With students
  - ❑ With colleagues
  - ❑ With partners
- ❑ Train in core competencies
  - ❑ General competencies for all employees (First Aid, mandated reporting, etc.)
  - ❑ Role-specific competencies (teaching squash, classroom management, etc.)

## Guiding Principles

Below are some guiding principles to consider as you plan your new staff training.

- ❑ **New staff training is a process.** Information should be batched and disseminated over the first few months to allow for context and mastery. Consider setting 30, 60, and 90 day goals for what a new staff member should know and be able to do.
- ❑ **Training can be a team effort.** While one person may be responsible for orchestrating the training of a new staff member, the training process itself can be a team effort with multiple people (colleagues, supervisors, etc.) involved. This team approach enables new staff to build relationships and to harness additional perspectives and experiences as they learn about the various aspects of our organizations.
- ❑ **Everyone has a learning curve.** Regardless of a new staff member's previous experience in his/her field, each program and each job has a learning curve and requires new understandings that should be intentionally cultivated. No staff will come 100% ready for

all aspects of the job. Programs must train and support staff to enable them to gain the knowledge they need to be successful.

- ❑ **Create schedules.** For the first week, create an hour-by-hour schedule for staff to follow that includes time for them to do the following.
  - ❑ Meet with others (colleagues, school partners, students, etc.). Specify the content of what they should discuss in those meetings (review the program schedule, learn the organization's history, learn about the other person, etc.).
  - ❑ Read relevant materials (employee handbook, student protection plan, website, etc.)
  - ❑ Set up their desks and learn basic office procedures (emails, printers, etc.)
  - ❑ Build relationships with students, staff, and partners
- ❑ **Use other SEA programs.** As part of a new staff members' orientation, it might be helpful for them to travel to visit a different SEA member program, or just talk with staff in those programs. SEA's Staff Travel Fund can help with the cost of travel.

## Build Staff Knowledge of the Organization and Program

Staff members need knowledge of the what, when, why, where, and how your organization functions. Providing this information and clarifying expectations from the start will help minimize potential future conflicts. Below are some areas to consider when intentionally building a staff member's knowledge.

### Organization

- ❑ **Program philosophy:** Communicate your organization's history, mission, and vision, including topics such as the typical student profile, organizational values, student selection philosophy/process, approach to balancing academics and squash, etc.
- ❑ **Employee handbook:** Share and ensure staff read and understand your employee handbook.
- ❑ **Job description:** Review each responsibility in the job description to ensure the staff member understands his/her responsibilities.
- ❑ **Other staff roles:** Review the roles of other staff members, staffing teams, and reporting structures. Explain how the team works (meetings, division of responsibilities, etc.)
- ❑ **SEA:** Explain what SEA is and what it offers/asks of member programs.
- ❑ **Finances and budget:** Share information about the organization's finances and budgeting process.
- ❑ **Office logistics:** New staff should have the equipment they need (computers, phone, email, etc.) and be taught how to use it if needed (printer, photocopier, shared drive, etc.).
- ❑ **Site tour:** Give a tour of the facilities where you operate. Make sure staff know where everything is (bathrooms, locker rooms, fire exits, first aid kits, etc.) and any rules about space usage.

- ❑ **Neighborhood/city:** Help new staff, especially those who come from outside the city, learn about the city itself. Tours help staff understand the landscape, as well as key players, landmarks, and opportunities for partnerships or outings.
- ❑ **School partners:** Present an overview of the local school district and the organization's school partners in particular (diversity, income, geography, relative student/school performance, etc.). Staff should also be introduced to key individuals at the schools.

## Programming

- ❑ **Walk-through:** Before the first practice, staff members should do a walk-through of a typical practice (from school pick-up and student arrival all the way to dismissal) so they understand the logistics of program schedules, routines, transitions between activities, safety precautions, and behavioral expectations of students.
- ❑ **Calendar:** Share a typical weekly schedule and the annual calendar of events for the program to demonstrate more clearly the flow of work. Specifically outline what the staff member is responsible for in the next 30 and/or 90 days.
- ❑ **Safety procedures:** Review your Student Protection Plan (mandated reporting, field trip protocols, etc.) and any other safety procedures and policies with the new staff member.
- ❑ **Observations:** Make time for new staff to observe fellow staff members' classes and practice sessions. Observations of similar positions at other SEA programs, when possible, can also be helpful.
- ❑ **Curriculum:** If your organization has a curriculum and/or curriculum benchmarks, review these with staff members.
- ❑ **Volunteers:** Review how your organization recruits, screens, trains, uses, and support volunteers.
- ❑ **Family engagement:** Explain how your organization interacts with students' families and go over specific expectations of for the new staff member.
- ❑ **Other aspects of programming:** Review the other aspects/requirements of the program - college visits, community service projects, team trips, tournaments, etc.
- ❑ **Student data:** Review how your organization collects and tracks student data, from entry paperwork, to school grades, to daily attendance and behavior points.
- ❑ **Squash 101** (for non-squash staff): Non-squash staff should get a crash course or lessons in squash to help them understand the game.

## Facilitate Staff Relationships

One of the major priorities of a new staff member should be forming relationships with students and colleagues. Below are some suggestions on how to support new staff in this endeavor.

### Student relationships

- ❑ **Informal time:** Encourage and make time for new staff to engage and converse with students during informal times, such as the time before and after practice. This time will enable them to learn about each student's interests, goals, families, and more.
- ❑ **Teambuilding:** Create opportunities for the new staff member to lead and interact with students off the courts and outside the classroom.
- ❑ **One-on-one's:** Consider setting up one-on-one meetings where the staff member can get to know individual students better. For example, the staff member could pull students aside during practice to have a 5-10 minute conversation asking about the student's strengths, challenges, and goals for the year.
- ❑ **Student background sharing:** Having an experienced staff member share a brief background on each student will inform how the new staff develops curriculum and works with the student. (An opportunity to establish fresh relationships should be afforded the new staff member, so consider delaying this knowledge transfer for a couple of weeks.)

### Partner relationships

- ❑ **Families:** If your organization leads home visits, partner new and experienced staff members together to lead home visits together. If your organization does not lead home visits, think about what other ways you can introduce new staff members to students' families.
- ❑ **School Partners:** Have an experienced staff member go with the new staff member to your partner schools. Introduce them to important people to know there. Follow-up by sending an email so that everyone has one another's contact information.
- ❑ **Volunteers:** Introduce the new staff member to returning volunteers, and give them relevant background on the volunteers (ex: who is a Board member or major supporter, how to work with certain volunteers most effectively, etc.).

### Staff relationships

- ❑ **Orientation:** During the orientation process, have the new staff member set up meetings with experienced staff members to learn more about their roles and responsibilities. Give experienced staff members the responsibility of educating the new staff on specific topics such as student tracking systems or family engagement.
- ❑ **Lunch:** Encourage "get-to-know-you" lunches where the staff member has informal time to learn about other staff member's interests, background, motivations, etc.
- ❑ **Staff outings:** Arrange outings such as happy hours, trivia nights, staff teambuilding, etc.
- ❑ **Mentor/Mentee pairings:** Some organizations pair more experienced staff members with new ones as an additional resource in their first six months to a year.

## Train in Core Competencies

Staff members come to our organizations with varying levels of experience and knowledge with regard to the work we are asking them to do. Be intentional about how you support them in developing the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their roles. Here are a few areas to consider providing training to staff members - both new and experienced ones.

### All Frontline Staff

- First Aid / CPR Training
- Mandated reporting
- Mental health 101 (how to address mental health concerns in students)
- Appropriate interactions with youth
- Employee handbook policies (sexual harassment, vacation policies, etc.)
- Positive youth development, group management, and teambuilding skills
- Adolescent development
- Trauma-informed practices
- Cultural competency
- Volunteer screening and management

### Squash Staff

- Lesson structure and planning for group instruction
- Teaching skills (progression, adjustments, etc.)
- Safety on court

### Academic Staff

- Classroom planning and management techniques
- How to work with school partners and track academic progress
- School supports for students with disabilities (IEPs, 504s, etc.)

### College Access and Support Staff

- How to teach SAT/ACT prep classes
- The college application and financial aid process
- College support for first generation students

## Additional Resources

Various organizations lead or send staff to additional trainings that prepare them for the various aspects of their roles, from youth development to planning a squash practice. Here are some examples.

### Safety

- ❑ [Protect Youth Sports](#) is an online system that programs can use to conduct background checks on staff and volunteers, and to provide staff with training on how to identify and respond to signs of neglect or abuse.

## **Squash**

- ❑ [US Squash Coaching Certification](#): Some programs have found the US Squash Coaching courses to be helpful. The Level 1 course focuses on group instruction, lesson organization, safety, and general squash coaching knowledge. US Squash offers SEA member programs

## **Youth Development and Program Culture**

- ❑ [Positive Youth Development 101](#): An online course used by StreetSquash to get all staff members on the same page when approaching youth development
- ❑ [Developing Social-Emotional Skills](#) - Training toolkits with helpful videos and one-pagers compiled by Transforming Education
- ❑ [Capturing Kids' Hearts](#) - A staff training used by CitySquash to help them strengthen student connectedness to staff and create behavioral standards
- ❑ [Edgework Consulting](#) - A consulting group with expertise in sports-based youth development programming, used by SquashBusters to help them develop a strong program culture

## **College Access**

- ❑ [National College Access Network](#) - A nonprofit focused on empowering staff to help underrepresented students be successful in postsecondary education. They offer national conferences, webinars, and research.
- ❑ [A-List Education](#) - A company that provides comprehensive SAT/ACT prep support for nonprofits, including staff training, student curriculum, and student practice tests and feedback. Used by StreetSquash and SquashBusters.

## **SEA Shared Drive Resources**

- [Positive Youth Development](#) materials from StreetSquash
- [30-60-90 day plans](#) from StreetSquash
- [Sample new staff training schedules](#) from StreetSquash and SquashBusters

*This guide was written by Colin Murfee at CitySquash, with support from the 2017-2018 Academic Leadership Committee.*