

3 Incentives to Encourage Activity Participation

Recreation and Activity Professionals often lament that it is difficult to encourage and assist all of the Residents who might enjoy a specific activity, to get to the activity. This is especially true in large care centers. These three incentive programs have helped staff teams to add a bit of fun to the effort. It's fair to say that incentive programs can take awhile to implement and can lose their steam over time. Consider trying a new incentive program for awhile, then take a rest before trying something new.

Take a Break



"Take a Break" was developed as a way to assist greater numbers of participants to activity programs that can best accommodate a larger attendance, such as musical entertainment or a special event.

Escorting participants to programs becomes the responsibility of the entire staff team. In simplest terms, when the "time to take a break" is announced, every staff person who can leave their chair or work area takes a break to extend an invitation to potential program participants. The staff then encourages and assists the person to attend the given program. A selected time such as 10:00 am and/or 2:30 pm may be selected for just one day a week.

"Take a Break" is wonderful in action because participants have new faces, new people extending the invitations and more people taking an interest in their recreation involvement. Housekeepers, receptionists, nursing assistants, activity staff, volunteers, administrators, charge nurses, dietary staff, maintenance workers and business office personnel are all united in their attention to program preferences.

To get this program started consider the following steps to success:

1. Inquire to the various department heads to coordinate a best time and/or day for the majority of the staff to assist most safely and conveniently.
2. Request that your Administrator help to in-service the staff, on the purpose, benefits, and the procedural steps for "Take a Break".
3. Prepare the participant rosters as needed or as desired. Some care centers have all of the staff first go to look at the rosters at the nurse's stations to find out who may be interested in the given program. Roster lists can help to organize which staff should invite whom.
4. About 15 minutes prior to the onset of the program, announce the program, the location, and the time program will begin.
5. All available staff will go to find someone to invite to the program. If someone declines, the staff person should invite someone else. The rosters can be helpful to avoid having

participants invited over and over by many staff persons for the same program. A check mark can indicate if someone has already been invited. Similarly, participants' responses to invitations can be recorded onto the roster by use of a key code, such as a "D" for declined invitation.

6. A selected song might be played over the intercom as an auditory cue for the duration of "Take a Break".
7. Appreciation must be shown, in many different forms, to all of the staff who take part in making the "Take a Break" program successful.
8. Remember that key to the success "Take a Break" is the willingness, enthusiasm, and enforcement of the Administrative team. You will likely need to foster the atmosphere that the escort program is a care home administrative program, not "just" a recreation department program.

To introduce and reinforce the new escort program you might make up some flyers to put around the facility. Consider these key points for your flyer:

Taking a Break is as Easy as 1-2-3!

1. Listen for the "Take a Break" announcements.
2. Go find out which participants to invite.
3. Invite the participant and escort them to the program or, go back to step 2 to invite another participant.

Everyone takes a break and we all benefit! Thank you!

2. Mystery Resident

Mystery Resident was an idea sent to Creative Forecasting by a reader. This program has been put into action with success in skilled nursing care homes with use of the following specific steps:

Select a Resident for the day using the following guidelines.

A. On the first few days, select a Resident who essentially likes to come to programs but needs an invitation, reminder, an escort, or assistance to come to the program of interest.

B. After some measures of success, select Residents who take a bit more encouragement.

C. Select finally some Residents who present challenges to encourage or assist to programs. Announce to the staff that the recreation/activity team has selected a mystery resident for the



day. This might be done at morning meetings or by informally talking to staff as they begin their rounds.

Progressively give up to three clues, each clue a little more specific. As examples, fifteen minutes before that program you might announce that the Mystery Resident particularly enjoys the activity at hand.

Then, ten minutes before the program you could announce the general location of the Participant's room.

Finally the color clothes that the Resident is wearing could be announced right before the program is scheduled to begin if the Resident still hasn't arrived. Have a little prize ready for the staff person and for the Mystery Resident when they arrive.

3. Raffle Ticket Rewards

Perforated paper raffle tickets can be used with success for this incentive program.

The raffle tickets that work well are the type that are used for opportunity raffles and can usually be purchased at party stores.

You'll need a large interesting container such as a plastic Sun Tea container, the wheel of raffle tickets, and some good prizes.

Each time a staff person brings in a participant to a program, write the staff person's name quickly onto a raffle ticket and drop it into the container. You could also record the participants name if you want to reward your "frequent flyer" participants.



Continue to do this for any or every program and for the desired duration of time. You might start with one week at first and then later go for a full month. At the end of the week or month, sort the tickets by person. Make announcements to announce the staff person who helped to escort the most participants. Award prizes.

Consider writing a newsletter article, or making up a bulletin board, to celebrate the staff persons with the busiest feet and the most helpful hands.

Keep a tally sheet to show how many participants are assisted to programs each month. The organized data may be able to show your supervisor how well the program works over time.