

Best Practices in Intergenerational Programming: Practice 1

Staff members of the adult and child programs collaborate to plan activities.



Practice 1 • Collaboration

Intergenerational programs are most effective when staff members of the adult and child programs collaborate to plan activities.

Practically speaking, collaborating takes a concerted effort. Merely setting aside time to discuss plans is a hurdle. Children and adults of different ages have different interests, strengths, and needs. Staff members can review the developmental strengths and needs of children and adults in the program to inform activities for the two age groups.

Staff members benefit from their partner's expertise, which makes planning easier. Participants will benefit from plans that best match their interests and abilities.

Benefits of Collaboration

- Sharing of expertise and knowledge among staff.
- Creation of activities reflecting the interests of both generations.
- Clarification of staff member responsibilities within intergenerational activities.
- Sharing a pool of resources and ideas.
- Development of a team process that saves time and advances the goals of intergenerational programming.

Application of the Practice

Involve families in the collaboration once or twice a year to elicit their ideas. Family members love to talk about their child or adult family member. They can offer ideas about the child's interests at home or the adult's past skills and interests that can lead to enriched program activities.



Use of Photography

Some programs find that taking photos of the participants, then sitting together to review the photos and discuss what occurred, helps staff from both programs reflect on the activity – what worked, what didn't work, and what they might change if a similar activity were planned in the future.

Project TRIP

Transforming Relationships Through Intergenerational Programming

A Children's, Youth, and Families at Risk project of Virginia Tech with the Jefferson Area Board for Aging and the YMCAs of Charlottesville and Louisa County, Va.

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This is one of 11 fact sheets on the emerging best practices associated with intergenerational programs.

Intergenerational programs are those that connect younger and older generations to foster positive experiences. Research continues to grow, noting that when successfully delivered, intergenerational programs result in positive health effects, child learning, and appropriate socialization for both young and old (Jarrott 2011).

The first practice relates to **collaboration**.

Program Ideas

- Start by setting aside 30 minutes a week for staff members to plan together.
- Rotate leadership in the planning team.
- Brainstorm and record ALL ideas on an easel pad.
- Consider the participants as well as the setting. Does the environment need to be adjusted in any way?
- Revisit the easel pad each week and start a notebook (on paper or online) to capture great ideas that come to people outside of scheduled planning time.
- Compile a calendar of activities to try.
- Take turns documenting the activity in each session to use for later reflection.
- Use reflection time to identify common elements of successful activities and repeat those characteristics.
- Praise each other for great ideas and celebrate successes together.



Reference

Jarrott, S. E. 2011. "Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going? Content Analysis of Evaluation Research of Intergenerational Programs." *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 9:37-52. doi:10.1080/15350770.2011.544594.

Best Practices for Intergenerational Programming

1. **Staff members of the adult and child programs collaborate to plan activities.**
2. Participants are *involved in decision-making* about the activity and during activities.
3. Participation is *voluntary*.
4. Participants are *prepared* ahead of time and reflect on the activity afterward.
5. *Activities reflect interests, backgrounds, and social histories* of program participants.
6. Activities are *age- and role-appropriate*.
7. Activities support *interaction* among intergenerational participants.
8. Facilitators skillfully *stage the environment* to promote interaction.
9. Facilitators *consider the social environment and the role of staff members*.
10. *Adaptive equipment* is used as appropriate.
11. Facilitators *document and communicate* experiences to build on in future activities.