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Shut It Down: Affirmative Management

Being on duty and conducting emergency/crisis response is an important role that helps to keep residence halls safe. Student staff must be able to understand their decision makings skills and conduct thorough incident reports to communicate effectively with their supervisors, with the conduct office and the institution.

Objective: Help student staff evaluate their surroundings during a party response and help build their competency of writing incident reports.

Shut It Down: Affirmative Management

Online Training: Student will watch a movie party scene from Project X. Student staff will be instructed to assume that the party scene was occuring in their residence hall and a call was reported about the scene.

The student staff will write an IR about the movie party scene following the seven steps of decision making. Student staff will submit the incident report to their supervisors for review and gain feedback.

Got Bias? Uncover Your Implicit Bias

Implicit Bias refers to the attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understandings, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner.

Objective: RA's will be able to understand what implicit biases are and how they can impact their interactions with their residents. RA's will evaluate their implicit biases and reflect on the implicit tests in an online community discussion post.

Got Bias? Uncover Your Implicit Bias

Online Training: Student staff will be instructed to take one or more of the Project Implicit IAT test. Student staff will write a one page reflection on their results on the IAT test(s). The purpose for this training is for RAs to understand how bias may impact how they interact and address residents in the residence halls. Reflections from this training will allow students to assess where they are at and how they can improve.

Conflict Style Zoo

Conflict management is a skill that student staff will learn and improve upon in the position. Student staff are tasked with mediating and resolving many student issues and it is pertinent for them to understand that there is no one way of managing conflict.

Objective: Student staff will be able to understand which conflict management style they associate the most and least with. They will be able to explain the strengths and weaknesses of their individual conflict management style.

Conflict Style Zoo

Online Training: Student staff will take Brent O'Bannon's conflict management style assessment which will sort student staff into one of the five categories. They will explore the strengths and weaknesses of their specific category, then they will respond to a scenario with their conflict management style and their approach to resolving the issue.

Purpose: Student staff will be conducting roommate mediations and possibly have peer conflict within their staff. By understanding their own conflict mediation style, they will be able to assess how they can help others with conflict.

CommUNITY Building

Understanding campus environments equips our student staff with the knowledge they need to best serve their residents and recognizing the various student populations on campus can help with the development of community building.

Objective: In this session, students will learn about the needs of various student populations and how to use that information to build community within their residence halls.

CommUNITY Building

Online Training: Module 1: RAs will evaluate a diagram that depicts the different student populations on campus.

Module 2: RA's will list their own communities and identify experiences they had that made them feel included. Research has shown that the first six weeks of the semester are critical in helping residents build connections with one another, so RA's will then fill out a goal sheet that will list the things they will do every week to start forming a community with their residents.

Purpose: Residents are more susceptible to feeling alienated, homesick, and lonely when they are not a part of a community, which can lead to them leaving the university. Student staff have a hand in shaping students' experiences by cultivating that sense of belonging in their residence halls. When RA's are able to identify the needs of their residents, then they are better able to develop programming and provide resources that cater to their needs.

Don't Stop, Believin': Hold on to that feeling!

Student staff can often become overwhelmed juggling many responsibilities in their lives, so we propose a session on avoiding burnout. For many students, this may be their first job or first leadership experience. New experiences can bring stress and worry. Returning student staff can also often get complacent or lose thier motivation.

Objective: In this session, students will learn about the importance of self-care in order to avoid getting too overwhelmed and losing their passion and motivation for the position.
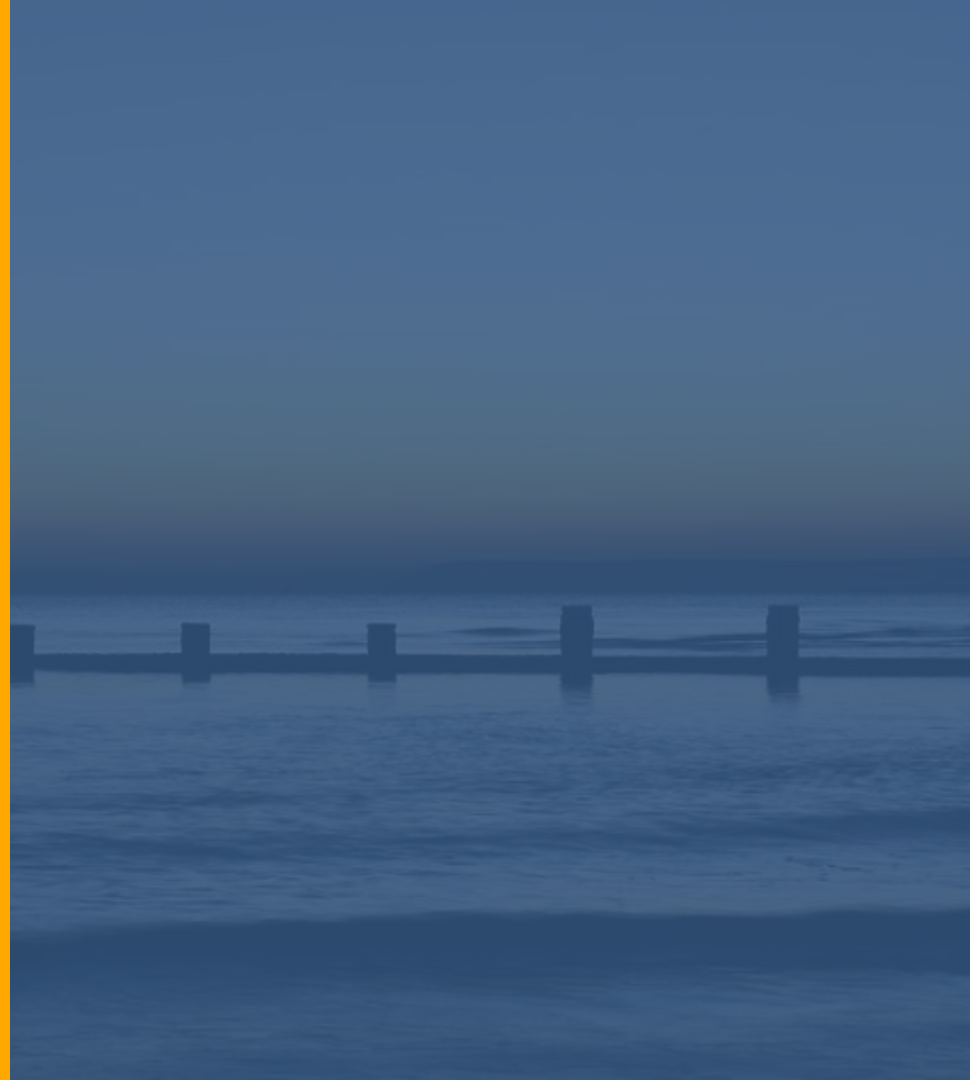
Don't Stop, Believin': Hold on to that feeling!

Online Training: Student staff will make a list of organizations that they are involved in to get a visual representation of these activities. Then, they will write down a list of the things that they enjoy attending and also answer a series of questions that relates to motivation.

With both lists, they will make a plan to incorporate these interests into their schedule. For example, during the month of February, they can write, "I will go hiking for 30 minutes every Friday".

Purpose: Our RA's need to be able to identify outlets that will help to reduce their stress and avoid getting to a place of complete fatigue. RA's are not in a position to help and support their residents, if their needs are not being met. Self-care is a vital part of this position if we want to provide a great residential experience for our residents.

A-Z Inclusive Language

What is inclusive language? Language that avoids the use of certain expressions or words that can exclude particular groups of people. Student staff interact with a diverse range of student populations and there can often be new terminology or language required to be inclusive.

Objective: In this session, students will learn about the importance of using inclusive language and replacing word use that can be offensive others with speech that is non-discriminatory

A-Z Inclusive Language

Online Training: RA's will first watch a video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTqrSMrVW3w) that discusses inclusive language which encompasses person-centered language, gender-neutral, and culturally inclusive language. RA's will read a few scenarios and identify the problematic language use and replace it with a word that is more inclusive. After the activity, RA's will receive a list of words that are more inclusive which can be printed off for later use.

Purpose: This topic is important for student staff to provide an inclusive space for their residents which includes the language they use. Words are powerful and can affect the way residents feel in their environment. Increasing the inclusivity of our language can help us to stop the cycle of reinforcing the societal hegemony about different identities and cultivate a more supportive and safe space for all students.

Diffusion: Exploring and Articulating Identity

Objective: Consider what it means to leave space to understand oneself, including self-conceptualization and connecting identity to the way people show up with work.

Activity:

Talk about one of the first moments you noticed human difference. Begin with this line: "I first noticed his/her/their ____."

Talk about a time when you noticed that something about you was different from those around you. Begin with this line: "I first noticed that I was ____ when ____."

Draw a line down the middle of a page. On the left side, make a list of your identities. On the right side, write about times when you are aware of being one of those identities more than another.

Have you ever felt privileged or disadvantaged because of some unchangeable aspect of who you are?

Exploring Identity Through Intersectionality

Objective: Holistic understanding of identity and intersectionality as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, this creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

How does intersectionality impact identity?

- Intersectionality impacts identity because there is always a connectedness and overlap of marginalized identities juxtaposed to power and privilege. For example, a resident who is a Black Woman can never separate being both Black and Woman. Those identities consistently overlap and influence her worldview.

- Viewing identity through an intersectional lens, that is, seeing multiplicities of identities as inextricably linked within a person and their lived, narrative experiences, one begins to understand that there is no way to simplify or reduce the experience of anyone to just one aspect of identity.

Student staff will watch the following video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6dnj2IyYjE

My Last Post Just Went Viral!

Student staff connect to an online world where digital engagement is crucial to connecting with the new generation of students entering higher education. Communication, in this way, has improved connections through social media and internet platforms to transform the ways that students build relationships with each other.

Objective: To gauge student interests and needs to provide a platform for dialogue, community standards, and policy reinforcement within a designated community.

Activity: RAs will evaluate one of the following social media applications; GroupMe, Slack, or Snapchat. RAs will come up with an action plan for how to best create an online community and policy reinforcement within these digital spaces.

Introduction

RA training is an integral part of giving our RAs the necessary tools they need to be successful in their position, while also growing in their own personal and professional development. For many institutions, RA training has been implemented through in-person facilitation rather than incorporating technology for remote training. Moving towards an online platform requires intentionality and well-thought-out activities that will enhance their learning, which is why we developed eight areas will help to supplement some of the topics that are already being covered. We will also introduce new topics that we believe are instrumental for RAs to understand themselves and the people around them to positively fulfill their roles as student support staff. In the following sections, we will discuss these specific topics and why we think they can be beneficial to RA training.

Affirmative Management

Duty responsibilities are an important aspect of the RA role to keep residential environments and students safe. RAs must be able to understand that their actions in these situations can impact the environment, students, and university. The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (2019) explains the seven steps to effective decision making as identifying the decision, gathering information, identifying alternatives, weighing the evidence, choosing among alternatives, taking action and reviewing your decision. Allowing RAs to apply these seven steps to their decision making can allow staff members to be more informed when making these critical decisions. One example of this decision making in practice is applied when RAs write incident reports. Writing incident reports can contribute to their practice of being affirmed in decision making, critical thinking, and allows space for constructive feedback from their direct supervisor.

Uncover Your Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is a topic that RAs should be aware of prior to starting their interactions with residents or supervisors. Everyone holds implicit bias and this, in turn, affects how we interact with those around us. Having this awareness of self and how bias can be very covert and implicit, one-way student staff can interrogate these biases are by taking one or more of the Project Implicit IAT tests. By taking this test, RAs will be able to reflect on how bias can influence interactions with residents. Following the test, RAs will write a reflection post about new findings they have learned and while interacting with others through a discussion board online. With a newfound awareness or reemergence of implicit bias, RAs can create a positive, growth-orientated community that not only serves self but also the surrounding community.

Conflict Styles

In the RA role, they will likely have to face conflicts between residents, staff, and even potential their supervisory chain. Conflict management styles are important in helping RAs understand their role in the situation and to better understand others. Brent O'Bannon (2010) describes the strengths and struggles of the five styles of conflict management including the avoidance turtle style, the accommodating teddy bear, the competition shark, the compromising fox, and the collaboration owl. The RA staffs can utilize Bannon's model and assessment to better understand which conflict styles they utilize in practice. This will be actualized through the undergoing of a scenario where they have to solve conflict using their conflict management style to understand how their strengths and weaknesses work during conflict mediation. It is crucial RAs understand their positionality as it pertains to their ability to maintain conflict, particularly due to the amount of conflict resolution that RA staff will have to perform. Being able to understand the different conflict management styles will allow them insight into the

different ways their residents or peers might respond to conflict throughout the year.

CommUNITY Building

At the heart of what an RA does is fostering community with their residents and for them to be able to do so, they need to familiarize themselves with the student population of their community. By understanding the needs of the different student populations, they can cater to their programming and resources in both an individualized and communal way. Students who feel a sense of belonging at the university are more likely to stay at the institution (Strayhorn, 2012), so it is important for our RAs to have the necessary skill-set to foster an environment which can help produce these feelings for residents. It takes time to build a community, therefore, it is a necessity to understand that developing a community is a process and looks very different for different individuals. One person's definition of community may look very different from another person, so it is important to get a general consensus of the community wants and needs while piloting a communal environment. In periods of strain where it can be difficult to bring residents together, RAs must circle-back to consider the community needs and the ongoing developmental processes which occur when cultivating communities on their floors.

Self-Care

Burnout is a common theme that happens in the lives of RAs when they are not prioritizing themselves in the midst of juggling their many responsibilities. Burnout can cause RAs to lose motivation and interest in the position which can affect the impact they have on their residents (McLaughlin, 2018). RAs need to be able to develop appropriate strategies for taking care of themselves in order for them to attend to the well-being of their residents. Most exercises that focus on burnout usually tend to surround stressors, but we felt that it would be important for RAs to think about what motivates and inspires them while also jotting down their interests. The

goal is that they would not need to wait until they are stressed to take time out for themselves,

but with active planning, they will be able to incorporate these interests into their daily lives.

Inclusive Language

Words matter. As the professional staff, we need to be able to convey this to our RAs

because the words they use can have a real effect on their residents and their sense of belonging

at the university (Howard, 2015). In this online training, we want RAs to understand the

reasoning behind using language that is inclusive so 1) students feel safe and comfortable in their

environments and 2) that they can also educate those around them. It is important to be mindful

of how current language can reinforce the dominant ideologies and hegemony which can lead to

the exclusion of others. In order for residents to feel included and welcomed in their community,

they need to feel like their experiences are validated and reflected in some capacity. We believe

that with this training, RAs can work towards creating a welcoming environment for their

residents and holistically create a positive student-centered community.

Exploring and Articulating Identity

As RAs develop, there must be a space to engage with one's self in ways where identity

can be explored and understood as best as possible within a given context. The objective for this

training is to allow RAs to understand themselves, including self-conceptualization and

connecting identity to the way people show up with work. In order to understand how to work

with people from different backgrounds, RAs must also understand how their identities

influence, shape, and coexist in interactions with people. RAs must consider how identities show

up as privileged, marginalized, how those identities intersect and how they can also exist in

isolation. Taking an intersectional lens and approach by doing the self-work to understand how

one's personal identity can impact others is very important in building communities as RAs. For

students who live within our residence halls with varying identities, we must be able to support the diverse experiences that different students have to validate, support, and retain students.

Social Media Communication

With a new student population entering higher education, Generation Z, these students are considered to be digital natives. This means that they have had technology since birth and utilize it on a daily basis (Prensky, 2001). Communication through social media has created online spaces for communities to flourish, connections to develop and has allowed for greater interactions between global communities. With this in mind, RAs must consider ways to engage with their various populations that have adopted technology as a commonality. Social media outlets, such as GroupMe or Facebook, have become platforms for RAs to disseminate information to their residents and also for students to engage with one another. As this online communication continues to increase, RAs need to be able to navigate the conversations that are taking place, while also holding residents accountable to their interactions with their peers. Our online training will help RAs to evaluate social media etiquette as it pertains to alternative methods to engage students and build communities. They will implement and craft an action plan for implementation of how to gauge student interests and also utilize the platform to set community standards and policy enforcement.

In conclusion, we believe that these eight RA online training topics will be instrumental in supplementing the RA training experience to provide a comprehensive learning environment. By utilizing online training methods, we can make training more accessible and relatable to our students. RAs will also be able to learn at their own pace which will give them autonomy over their learning and training. The transition from to an online platform can reduce the information overloading for RA's and gives professional staff more time to cover certain topics in-person.

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