

## Retention Tip Sheet

- Retention begins when you have accurately described the member position and assessed whether the potential member is right for the position. Hence, **retention begins in the interview process**. Tune in to the member's main reason for serving and honor this throughout his/her time with you.
- Retention refers to the member's adherence to the initial **contract agreement**. If a member is asked to commit 20 hours a week for a six month period, and the member leaves after 6 months, it can be said that the retention was successful.
- There are several key components in a member program that enhance retention. These are: placement, orientation, training, supervision, evaluation, and recognition.
- **Placement** refers to the position that is assigned and agreed to by the member. This might be a standardized position or a newly created position that matches the skills, interests, and availability of the particular member. It is important that a **position description** is constructed and a **contract** is signed.
- The **orientation** is important in allowing the member to feel as though he/she is part of the agency and ensure he/she understands the agency on a larger level. An orientation should cover the agency's history, mission, programs, population served, staff introductions, and member program basics. Include a tour of the agency and point out locations of office equipment and supplies if these are relevant to the position.
- Members have the right to be given **training** for the tasks required of the position. Even if the member already has the skills necessary, she/he must still be offered clear directions and timelines for how the activity is to be completed. Members must know what is expected of them, both in their product and delivery of that product.
- If extensive training is required, it is helpful to create group training experiences over a full day or weekend. This allows the members to learn together and support one another through the process. It also allows members to get to know one another and make friends at the agency.
- Use as many different training techniques as possible such as: lecture, on-the-job demonstration, written material, role-playing, etc. [Note that adults learn best when they have practical and experiential modes of learning. Ask for their input and allow them to practice and offer immediate feedback.]
- The training should also explain the method of **supervision** — so that members understand to whom they should turn with a question or for feedback — as well as how the supervisor will be evaluating their service.
- Supervision can be handled as check-in meetings, ongoing informal discussion, or written reports. It is important to set up "checkpoints" along the way.
- Make sure that the members have all the **resources** necessary to complete their service.
- Incorporate **evaluations** both *of* the member and *by* the member. Members have a right to grow professionally and therefore require constructive feedback. They also have a right to let you know how you and the agency can better support them in completing their service.
- Provide authentic on-going **recognition** of the member both verbally and concretely.