



Sandra Stimson

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

By Sandra Stimson ADC, CALA, CDP Executive Director,
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Sandra Stimson has experience as a corporate consultant, Corporate Trainer and National Speaker. Her experience is in long term care, as Activity Director, Director of Alzheimer's Units and Assistant Administrator of a 550 bed long term care county home. She is Co-founder of Pet Express Pet Therapy Club, is a Life Replay Specialist. Sandra implements dementia units nationwide. Sandra has written several books, Volunteer Management Essentials for Long Term Care and Pet Express Pet Therapy Program. Sandra has been a facilitator for Alzheimer's support groups and is the Awards Chair for the NJ Association of Activity Professionals. Sandra is the Executive Director of **National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners**
<http://www.nccdp.org>.

Corporate Activity Consultants Are a Plus for Health Care Organizations

Article from Summer 2007 Long Term Care Newsletter

Corporations that utilize an Activity Consultant will see immediate results in the following areas:

- Competitive edge over their competition
- Deficiency free survey's
- Continuity of Activity departments
- Increase in customer satisfaction scores
- Trained Activity Directors & staff
- Strong programming to meet the individual needs of your clients
- Documentation compliance
- Strong volunteer programs & community involvement
- Awareness of community resources
- New systems implemented
- Continuity among their facilities
- Deadlines met because of training in time management

Many health care organizations are utilizing Activity Consultants because long term care facilities have poor surveys, inexperienced directors (lack qualifications) or a department with major concerns in areas of programming and documentation. With the new guidelines it is imperative that corporations recognize the need for an Activity consultant who can pin point any areas that are of concern and fix those problems before your annual survey. Many corporations make the mistake of bringing in a consultant during the survey window. That is not recommended as Activity Directors and the Activity Consultant need adequate time to isolate the problems, make recommendations, and implement new systems.

Some Activity Directors view the consultant as a threat to their job but on the contrary they should view the time and money the corporation is investing on the consultant as a "gift." The Activity Consultants have years of experience and a wealth of knowledge. The Activity Director should utilize the time with the consultant to gather as much information and resources from the consultant as possible. As most consulting jobs are short term contracts the Activity Director has a limited time with the consultant. As long as the Activity Director is moving forward and implementing the recommendations, the Activity Director has no reason to be insecure about their job. In the long run, the Activity Director will have a better department and confidence in her performance. Activity Consultants want to see the Activity Director succeed.

Often times the consultant is called in by the Administrator or the Corporation. Generally when the Corporation calls in a Consultant it is to provide systems and programs that are offer continuity with their facilities. When the Administrator contacts with an Activity Consultant it's generally because there are areas of concern. The Administrator needs to be open and forthright about the reasons for hiring the consultant. This will insure that the relationship begins on the right foot; otherwise the director will view the consultant as a threat and with a hidden agenda.

Additionally, Activity Directors who feel there are areas that they need training should be honest with the Administrator about those concerns. The Activity Director should discuss with the Administrator the reasons for bringing in a consultant.

The Activity Director may know a consultant they feel comfortable with and may wish to recommend that consultant. But when this happens, remember, it does no one any good if you are hiring a "friend" consultant just to provide positive feed back. We all want that! But it is more important to the director to hire a consultant who will be objective and provide information and guidance. If the Activity Director feels that this can be accomplished than go forward with hiring the Consultant.

I am often asked, "once the consultant is hired, now what?" That is a great question. Often times this is the first time a facility or corporation has utilized an Activity Consultant. The Administrator should ask for references and feed back from previous corporations.

During the first visit, the Activity Consultant provides an initial comprehensive audit in the areas of documentation, observations, review of programs and compliancy with state and federal guidelines. Based on the initial audit, the Consultant will meet with the Administrator

[Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care](#) offers resources for health care professionals in many areas of dementia care, care plans, Snoezelen products, dementia activity calendars, adult day care calendars, sensory calendars, reminisce videos for dementia, activity books, and dates to remember, party supplies, resources and links.

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The Activity Director Community is a gathering place for LTC Activity Professionals. Feel free to express yourself and respond to submissions from other AD's. This is an important community and you need to be part of it. Membership is FREE so [Join Today](#).

This site is moderated by Robert & Linda Lucas, Owners of The Activity Director website.



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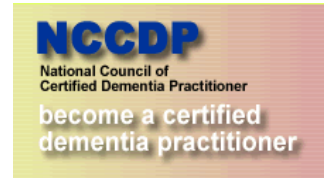
to discuss recommendations, systems to be implemented and the amount of time on site required to insure implementation. A comprehensive report is provided to the administrator that will state the area of concerns and specific recommendations. The Activity Director is provided with written objectives and time frames.

Alternative Solutions has provided consulting services for seven years with 100% deficiency free surveys for our clients. 100 % success to an Administrator might mean a positive outcome during survey. However, for the consultant it is the satisfaction of training a director to be a top notch Activity Director in all aspects such of their job; management, program development, population and calendar analysis, documentation, community resources, room bound programs and volunteer programs.



For those facilities that are seeking other accreditation the consultant can provide valuable information. Many facilities are implementing dementia units and rehab units. The consultant can bring all kinds of programming ideas, resources, policies, training, in-services and systems to the facility which enables the facility to stay competitive as well as insuring a positive outcome during survey.

Additionally, consultants are used when the director does not meet state or federal regulations and lacks the qualifications. They can also be used to fill in for an activity director who is out on leave, vacant positions and oversight of a director does not meet federal or state requirements.



- Activity Consultants provide many services:
- Training and in-services
- Activity Courses (NCCAP 180 MEPAP REV 2)
- Training for Activity Directors (Management, Documentation, Q/A, Calendar planning and implementation, Q/A, Resident Council, etc)
- Calendar and Population Analysis Tools
- Implement state and federal guidelines
- Implement standard of practice protocols
- Survey readiness –on site visit
- Implement special programs for Alzheimer's and dementia, low functioning, Sensory enrichment programs, bed bound, room bound, NPO, sensory rooms
- High Functioning programs, committees, empowerment, self esteem, wellness, community involvement, spiritual, independent, etc
- Documentation compliance – Initial assessments, progress notes, MDS, care plans, IDCP notes individual participation, group participation
- Compliance for Quality Indicator Reports
- Calendar review
- Q/A Program
- Activity Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Management Program which includes policy and procedures, recruitment, training, recognition, applications, welcome packet.
- Referral of numerous resources
- Recruitment



Companies may hire a consultant for a one day audit, weekly, monthly or even daily oversight of the activity departments. They provide on-site and off-site consulting and generally are available by email and phone should the situation arise. They are sometimes asked to be there during a survey.

So the most important question I would ask the owners of facilities is why you don't have a corporate consultant? Because you can invest wisely now or pay penalties later. As there are a limited number of consultants it would be in the best interest of the facility to contract with a consultant now and take the necessary steps to insure your activity department is in compliance.

I recently worked for one corporation who was honest enough to say, "activities were not an area they had invested in before." They were unsure of what the consultant would provide and I think were amazed not only by what we could bring to the departments but the changes they saw in their activity program and quality of life for their residents. They saw how the investment paid off with deficiency free surveys and an increase in customer satisfaction scores. It's never too late to begin working with a Activity Consultant as it can only be of benefit to the Activity Director, residents and the corporation.

If you are concerned about your department or just want an objective opinion of the Activity Department contact Sandra Stimson for information at activitytherapy@aol.com. All correspondence is held in the strictest of confidence.

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THE ACTIVITY DIRECTOR
for Activity Professionals
in Long Term Care Settings
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