



Handling Problem Situations

(For Volunteer Training)

Problem #1: Parenting Issues

Scenario: A volunteer (Jenny) is reading to several of the guests' children. Michelle comes into the room and tells her two children (ages four and six) that it's time for them to get ready for bed. Jenny interrupts her and says, "Oh, it's good for children to have a story before bed ... we've just begun reading Make Way for Ducklings, and I really think they should stay ...you don't want them to miss out." Michelle begins to insist when her six-year-old grabs Jenny's arm and screams at her mother, "I'm not going to bed ...Jenny said I could hear the story!"

Michelle is hurt and angry and is beginning to cry. She yells at the children to come with her "or else," then looks to you, the Coordinator, (you've been observing this whole incident), to help her by backing up her authority. Jenny remains insensitive to the situation and repeats, "Oh, just let them read one more." What do you do?

Problem #2: Volunteer Disappointment

Scenario: A volunteer who loves to cook and is well known for her gourmet meals has prepared a full-course dinner for 16 people (14 guests and 2 hosts). Her husband has been on a low-fat diet and she has looked forward all week to cooking so that she can do what she loves and provide the guests with a really, fine meal. She arrives at the congregation at 5:30 pm with the meal (she is also serving as a host that evening) and learns that only three of the fourteen guests will be there for dinner. One family is looking at apartments in another county; an older couple is eating at a friend's; and a mom bought a pizza for her three kids on the way back to the congregation because they were all hungry and tired.

You arrive at the congregation at about 6:30 pm to check on things. The volunteer is visibly disappointed, corners you, and begins to speak angrily (in earshot of the guests who are there having dinner), saying things like: "These people don't appreciate anything ... why should our congregation go to this trouble?" What do you do?

Problem #3: Guest Tardiness, Absence Disregard of Guidelines

Scenario: A guest (John) shows up at 9:00 pm at the host congregation. John smells of alcohol and is slurring his speech; however, he is apologetic for missing dinner and not calling. John quickly disappears into his room with his family and promptly goes to bed.

At dinner that evening, another guest (Bill) told the host (Susan) that he had seen John drinking in his car on several occasions. Susan calls you, the Coordinator, to report on the incident and get your advice about what to do. What do you do, and what do you ask Susan to do?



Problem #4: Handling Conflict

Scenario: Two mothers (Mary and Janice) are arguing over the conduct of one mother's children. Mary is complaining that Janice's kids have gone through her children's belongings and have taken a toy. Janice denies the charges and starts to scream at Mary, "Mind your own business and keep your kids away from mine!" Mary leaves the room for the time being but complains to you, the coordinator, about Janice and her kids. The tension mounts until there is another argument that erupts into name-calling and threats of physical abuse. What do you do?

Problem #5: An Unexpected Element

Scenario: It is Sunday evening and you are in the middle of your orientation. There are kids running around, excited to see the new place and the toys you set out for them. The dinner hosts ran ahead of schedule and they're ready to serve food. You quickly show the guests their rooms and share the rules of your congregation. As you're reading the rules, one of the guests (Lisa) says, "It is going to be 27 degrees out, and I don't want my dog sleeping in the car. Is it okay if I bring my service animal inside?" Another guest (Michelle) chimes in, "The last congregation let her sleep inside, it's really not a big deal, and we all like dogs."

You read nothing about the dog in Julie's preceding e-mails, and your congregation has no policy about animals. How should you respond to Lisa?

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