



October Bulletin: Leadership Conference and Program Registration

Departments came together last month at our annual ALA Girls State Leadership Conference, and we were all able to soak up a lot of information from many different departments. This year's turn out was great with about 26 departments sending representatives! Some new faces this year, which is always great to connect with new leaders in their programs.

Missouri gave a great presentation on a successful collaboration with their Boys State program, a great feat with the number of students in each of their programs separately, let alone the number combined.

Many departments had great ideas about including diversity workshops into their staff training, some states beginning their searches as early as December, giving plenty of time to interview and match people to their desired and most useful positions. Each state has different structures based upon the number of staff they have. Some states use the first year back on staff as a shadow year to get a taste for what it is like on staff as compared to as a citizen. Other states use them in a Junior Counselor type role, others wait a couple years to ask citizens back on staff. Hosting online meetings with staff ahead of the program is a great way to get everyone introduced, especially new staff members, and gives many opportunities for training ahead of the week to prepare staff and allow them time to process and ask questions about their roles.

During a break out session, we were able to learn about ways that programs with similar sizes to our own do some different things. One big topic that seems to come up each year is the online application/registration process. Most states seem to have a hybrid system, with some parts being online and others being physically sent to the leadership staff. It may seem early to think about, but now is a great time to begin looking over your registration system. Is it working for you, in some ways literally? Many of the online registration options that some departments use will actually fill in a spreadsheet for you with all the information that was input, saving you time and effort filling in a spreadsheet with each individual's information. Some examples that were used were Google Forms, CampDoc, Survey Monkey, and Form Stack. The earlier you begin thinking about this, you may come up with a few ways you can streamline this process and put them to practice for this year's upcoming session.

When was the last time your policy forms were edited? I mean *actually* edited. Not just a new date with updated yearly information, but really read through and made sure everything was relevant.

- How does the language sound; is it inclusive?
- Does the format look okay or has an update in the word processor you use thrown it out of whack?
- Are your forms self explanatory and easy to fill out?
- What about your standing rules, not just for citizens but for staff?
- Is your sponsorship process easy? Just a few questions that could be asked earlier rather than later to assist in the process later down the road.

The earlier you begin your preparation the better off you will be at crunch time. Make a timeline for yourself for when you want to have everything finalized by, and make them reasonable. Be nice to yourselves about it, don't overwhelm yourself and your leadership staff with trying to re-do a bunch at once. And of course, always keep in your minds, service not self.

Hugs and High Fives,

Kimberly MacKinney, Ed. D.
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