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- August 9th - **The Medicare Program and Its Effect on You** with guest **Vicki Gottlich**

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Cool Icebreakers!

A good icebreaker can set a warm and positive tone for your meetings and/or training sessions. Great icebreakers help break tension and can help attendees get to know each other quickly and effectively.

Consider the following icebreakers for your initial meetings/training sessions:

Fabulous Food

As your attendees walk through the door, hand them a food item (i.e., a can of soda, a candy bar, a piece of fruit, etc). Then, place those different food items at the center of each table. The person who received a candy bar will sit at the "candy bar table", the person who received the soda will sit at the "soda table", and so on. This fun approach helps prevent people who already know each other from sitting next to one another. You can simply ask people to introduce themselves at their assigned table, or you can develop a series of questions for people to ask one another. Here are a few suggestions:

- Describe what you like about the healthcare profession the most.
- Share your biggest current challenge you are experiencing at work.
- Share two things about yourself that you think no one at the table may know.
- Describe a positive customer/patient interaction you have experienced.

Anything Goes

Divide the meeting participants into groups of four or five people by having them number off. Again, you want to do this because people generally begin a meeting by sitting with the people they already know best. Tell the newly formed groups that their assignment is to share their five favorite movies of all time, or their five favorite novels, or their five least favorite songs, etc. The topic can be five of anything—most liked or disliked. This ice breaker helps the group explore shared interests more broadly and sparks lots of discussion about why each person likes or dislikes their selected five.

The Two-Minute Round Robin

This is a quick and easy icebreaker that requires no preparation, and gets people involved with each other and moving around the room. For this ice breaker, have your attendees break off into groups of two. Then, for two minutes they can ask each other pre-determined questions. Sound a buzzer after the two minutes are up, and at that time, the groups switch up. The speed of this icebreaker usually generates a lot of energy and laughter.

You can get your attendees started with questions like these:

- Share one thing about yourself that you think your coworker doesn't know.
- Share your favorite television show and why.
- Share your favorite guilty pleasure.

Remember, good icebreakers can help get your meetings off to a great start. Use these examples and get as creative as you wish to create a warm and cohesive environment for your attendees!

"You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them"

—Michael Jordan

Addressing Embarrassing Issues: What You Need to Do

It's unfortunate, but not too uncommon—it seems as though there is always an employee or two who has poor personal hygiene, foul smelling clothes or breath, or an annoying personal habit, like an obnoxious laugh or speaking voice.

As uncomfortable as it may be, it's critical for healthcare leaders and managers to address these issues. After all, if you don't hold the conversation, someone else likely will—and probably not as effectively and professionally as you could have. A bottle of deodorant or a bar of soap might show up in the employee's locker or mail box. An anonymous, nasty note might be left. Actions such as these do not contribute to a harmonious workplace, and it's your duty to stop them before they happen. Here's how you can nip these embarrassing issues in the bud.

Get to the point. Don't beat around the bush. Once you've told the person that you want to discuss a difficult topic, move right into the topic of your difficult conversation—trying to make small talk beforehand will only cause more anxiety for the both of you.

Give them your perspective. Tell the employee directly what the problem is from your point of view. If you talk around the issue or use hypothetical situations, the employee may never get that you're addressing them. If you reference the problem as "some of our employees do the following," the employee may never understand that you mean him/her. Tell the person how you see the situation and the feedback you've received from others.

Show them it's not personal. Attach the feedback to a business issue. Perhaps other employees don't want to participate on this person's team. Maybe an irritating mannerism has caused a patient or resident to request another employee. Make the business purpose of the conversation clear. You also need to let the employee know that not only is the behavior affecting the business and the employee's coworkers, but it is also affecting the employee's career. Let the employee know the impact you believe the behavior is having on potential promotions, raises, career opportunities, and relationships in the workplace.

Be sensitive. Always keep cultural differences and standards in mind. If the employee's situation is due to their cultural norms, it's always a good idea to seek HR or legal advice. But as a general rule, your workplace is justified in asking employees to embrace the cultural standards of the workplace in which they are working.

Follow up. After a few weeks, make sure you check back with any employees who had feedback as well as the employee in question. If the employee is making an effort to correct the problem, (such as bad breath or body odor) but is not making progress, suggest that the employee see a physician to determine if an underlying medical condition might be causing the problem.

Above all, remember that having these conversations in a respectful and straightforward manner actually shows employees that you care about their career and status at the workplace. Although it's never easy, addressing sensitive and embarrassing issues is an absolute necessity for cohesive and harmonious workplaces.

*"The most exhausting thing in life is being insincere."
-Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

PHI Rolls Out Fact Sheets on Health Reform & The Direct-Care Workforce

PHI's Health Care for Health Care Workers campaign released its first "Health Reform Fact Sheet" in a series that describes how key provisions in the new Affordable Care Act affect direct-care workers and their employers.

"Health Reform Facts 1" details several federal grant opportunities for states, community colleges, and individual employers that could have an impact on training and education for the direct-care

workforce.

The fact sheet also describes two new workforce commissions that will convene in the coming months. Once formed, the commissions will address many issues facing the direct-care workforce, such as wages, benefits, recruitment, and retention.

View the [Health Reform Facts 1](#) PDF document to learn more.

*"A compromise is an agreement whereby both parties get what neither of them wanted."
—Author Unknown*

Through Sickness & In Health...?

A woman's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she had stayed by his bedside every single day. One day, when he came to, he motioned for her to come near. As she sat by him, he whispered, eyes full of tears, "You know what?"

You have been with me through all the bad times.

When I got fired, you were there to support me.

When my business failed, you were there.

When I got shot, you were by my side.

When we lost the house, you stayed right here.

When my health started failing, you were still by my side... You know what?"

"What dear?" she gently asked, smiling as her heart began to fill with warmth.

"I think you're bad luck."

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