

## PROPOSED TRAINING OF STAFF

In accordance with our Accessibility and Public Awareness project, we've tried to create a stimulating, non-threatening Museum experience for visitors with disabilities. We are equally concerned that these Museum experiences are comfortable for all Museum Wharf staff. The goals we originally established in our proposal included the following:

- 1) The training of all direct service staff to be useful and feel comfortable with all disabled visitors.
- 2) Identifying types of interaction of direct service staff with disabled visitors.
- 3) Identifying the information needed by direct service staff.
- 4) Using the Museum's interpretership and volunteer training model, design a training program for direct service personnel.
- 5) Designing a feedback system for direct service staff to maintain contact with trainer around these issues.

It is with these goals in mind that we are in the process of developing a workshop for all staff members to become acquainted with the disabled visitors' special needs as well as dealing with preconceptions and anxieties regarding an expanded disabled audience.

Thus far, we have compiled a questionnaire directed primarily at attitudinal issues yet including the practical concerns of a disabled population in a Museum environment. We have distributed this questionnaire to interpreters, developers, and volunteers. The results are included in the enclosed synthesis. Keeping the results of these questionnaires in mind, we envision a workshop, approximately two hours long, for all staff members who will be involved directly with the Museum visitor.

Through this workshop, we would be establishing links of communication with staff members who are not already involved in the Special Education training program. This program is primarily for interpreters and floor managers who take part in our Wednesday morning Special Education programs in which interpretive staff are matched in a one-to-one situation as companion and guide, accompanying the visitor through the participatory exhibits, encouraging interaction at whatever level is possible for the visitor, interpreting information and supporting success. The training for this program takes place in an initial orientation program and through weekly support meetings. Conducted by the Special Education coordinator, these meetings allow interpreters to share problems and successes and to ask specific questions about various disabilities and educational methods. Due to the comprehensive and on-going nature of the training program for the interpreters, the workshop we are discussing would be designed specifically for other Museum staff members, including front desk, security and Museum Shop personnel.

The workshop will consist of the following components:

- I. General discussion of disabled populations we see in the Museum.
- II. Teaching specific skills, e.g. sign language, how to be a sighted guide, how to deal with seizures, etc.
- III. Using feedback from the general discussion in order to answer specific questions and approach attitudinal issues.

IV. Use of outside resources as part of workshop including:

A. Inviting disabled individuals to take part in the discussion and be available as consultants.

B. Suggesting books, periodicals and relevant articles which would be available through the Special Education Department.

C. Use of audio-visual materials, such as "A Different Approach" or the "We Did It... So Can You!" series.

We will make ourselves available as resource people and make available materials concerning particular issues. We will also establish a support system for all staff members in order to maintain contact with them, and have a direct line for feedback on these issues.

We would like you to help us in the planning and implementation of successful workshop format. Please think about these issues in preparation for our February 26th meeting.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Janet Kamien  
Susan Porter  
Amy Goldbas