

Recruitment as a Continuous Process

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For many in early childhood leadership positions, recruitment is and has always been one of the greatest challenges! However, know that it is possible to take charge of the recruitment process and cushion the impact of turnover on everyone involved in your program. To do this, you need to intentionally choose a different model for your employment practices. This new paradigm reflects a shift from recruitment as an isolated event to recruitment as an ongoing continuous process of community outreach and engagement.

Choosing a new paradigm is not like choosing to wear a new brand of shoes versus the ones that have always been most comfortable to you. Choosing a new paradigm is a new mental model that requires the practice of self-awareness. As an early childhood leader, you need to pay close attention to the assumptions, values, and beliefs that influence your behavior. Consider these two questions as they relate to you:

1. What are the assumptions, values, and beliefs associated with a view of recruitment as an isolated event?
2. What are the assumptions, values, and beliefs associated with a view of recruitment as a continuous process?

If you think about recruitment as an isolated event, you are also likely to think of your organization as static—frozen in time like a snapshot that captures your image at one particular moment. Just as you want to be at your best when posing for the camera, you want your early childhood program to always be at its best. Close your eyes for a moment and think about your program “being at its best” when staffed. Waves of images of being *fully staffed* may have immediately entered your thoughts! Perhaps you took it a step further and thought not only about being fully staffed but also with highly qualified, degreed teachers, all of whom have taught in your program for more than five years. Looking through this still-camera lens, the picture is clear. This picture is then framed, placed on the wall and represents ‘being at its best’ with stable, near-permanent staff, with little need for honing your recruitment practices.

If you think about recruitment as an ongoing, continuous process, you are also more likely to think of your organization as a living, growing, and always changing entity. This shift in viewing of your program captures it as a dynamic social system in which all the component parts (the people, structures, culture, processes, external environment, and outcomes) as all inter-dependent. This mental model of your program is now best captured by a streaming video rather than just a framed photograph on the wall.

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From the streaming video perspective, close your eyes and think about your program as a dynamic social system. What does “being at its best” mean now? You may have thought about the staff facilitating children’s learning and development or responding sensitively to the needs of families. Or you may have thought about the staff working together as a team, supported by a positive organizational culture and work environment. Watching this streaming video on your computer or phone allows you to visualize your program in motion—staff interacting with others and the environment to include staff both responding to and influencing the organizational culture. With this new mental model, perhaps you can begin to see that it is neither possible nor desirable for staff to remain permanently in place, no matter how well-qualified they are. To truly embrace the idea of recruitment as a continuous process you must change the way you conceive a high-quality program being “at its best.”

At its best, an early care and education program is always anticipating change, both from within and without. A high-performing early childhood program has systems in place to fill vacancies quickly as they occur because it implements a model of continuous recruitment, selects the best candidate based on right-fit criteria, and orients new staff right from the start so they are more likely to commit to the organization for a considerable length of time.

One resource to explore these concepts and ideas of enhancing leadership’s influence is the McCormick Center’s online module, *Recruiting, Selecting and Orienting Staff*, which is based on Kay Albrecht’s, *The Right Fit* (2002). This module is part of our online national director credential, Aim4Excellence™. You can learn more about the credential on our website, or directly by accessing the *Recruiting, Selecting and Orienting Staff* module [here](#).

REFERENCES:

Albrecht, K. (2002). *The Right Fit*. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons.