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Introduction

Communication is a vital part of creating and maintaining a safe and efficient workplace environment.

How we interact with clients and staff will affect how well the organization functions and how satisfying you find your job to be.

In this day and age 'information explosion' is a well known expression. In the nongovernmental setting it is no different. While the amount of information that is circulating can be daunting, the process is improved when:

- All staff develop good interpersonal skills, and
- Routine workplace procedures are put into place.

To achieve this, an organization needs to ensure that all staff are properly trained in the appropriate skills for their job. This training needs to be updated when necessary.

At Youth Initiative for Sustainable Human in Africa (YiSHDA), we provide inductions, and ongoing training and development for staff in all areas of communication.

Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication is the way we communicate with others. It may be with another person, to a group of people or to the public. It includes written, verbal and non-verbal communication.

General

At YiSHDA, when communicating with others, take into consideration:

- Who you are talking to,
- The type of information to be communicated (for example; confidential, good news/bad news, difficult technical information, instructions, general daily information), and
- What the most appropriate type of communication to use is (for example; verbal, text message, email, memo). This may be determined by the type of information to be communicated.

At all times staff needs to be respectful and polite to one another and to clients. At no time should they raise their voice, swear, or speak in a manner that makes another person feel belittled.

Cultural awareness

YiSHDA aims to create a safe and culturally aware work environment.

- We need to recognize that people come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and with them they bring a variety of different values, attitudes and beliefs.
- All staff need to be non judgmental, respectful and tolerant of each other's differences. When communicating with people from other backgrounds care needs to be taken to ensure that cultural differences in both verbal and nonverbal communication are considered.

Routine Workplace Protocols

All organizations have rules for the transfer of information. Knowing how to use the different types of communication and following the correct procedures at YiSHDA helps to ensure that information goes to the correct place and person.

Communication can be internal or external or both. Internal communication is between staff at YiSHDA. External communication is between staff at YiSHDA and clients or other community members including the media.

At YiSHDA, routine workplace protocols exist for:

- Written communication (sending and receiving information), and
- Verbal communication (giving and following instructions and messages).

Types of **written communication** used at YiSHDA include:

- email, and letters (internal and external)
- forms, reports and memos (internal and external)
- minutes and agendas for meetings (internal)
- technical and procedural manuals (internal)
- workplace signs (internal)
- whiteboards and pin-up boards (internal)

Written communication is a vital part of communication at YiSHDA. YiSHDA recommends that written communication:

- Is simple and easy to understand,
- Is to the point and avoids unnecessary repetition,
- Avoids too many technical terms, and
- Avoids slang, offensive language and discriminatory or sexist language.
- Make sure that President/CEO is always copied on all communications.

Types of **verbal communication** at YiSHDA include:

- Telephone (internal and external)
- Meetings (internal)

The way we speak to other people can make a difference to the way information is received. At YiSHDA, verbal communication can be improved when:

- It is clear and concise,
- It is friendly and professional,
- Appropriate feedback is given,
- Active listening is used,
- There is an understanding of cultural differences.

Please Note that, the type of written and verbal communication you use at YiSHDA will depend on your job description.

Communication Hierarchy

In all organizations there is a correct line of communication. At YiSHDA, the first line of communication is your Immediate Superior or Line Supervisor. The **YiSHDA organizational chart** will show you who your line supervisor is.

You can discuss any issues or concerns you may have with your line supervisor. Your supervisor may then either take your concern to the next level or you may be advised to do so.

Always make sure you discuss every matter with your Supervisor first before going straight to the President/CEO.

Computer use

Within an organization there will be information that is sensitive and confidential in nature stored on the computer.

When using computers at YiSHDA:

- Do not allow access to visitors to view sensitive information.
- No watching of movies on office computers
- Office computer is strictly for office use
- No personal documents should be saved on office computer
- Everyone YiSHDA staff has the right to access office computer

Email

When writing emails:

- Use polite and correct language,
- Start with a greeting, for example "Dear Joseph", until you know the person well enough to be able to address the email as "Hi Joseph or Hello Joseph",
- Explain yourself clearly,
- Don't use abbreviations in emails; write all out in full, and
- End the email correctly saying "Regards, Joseph".

Remember that the person reading your email can't see you so they can't read your body language to see if you are joking, angry or serious.

Whiteboard

Whiteboards may be used to allocate daily duties or jobs to staff members.

Pin up board

Pin up boards may be used as a means of posting any notices about courses, organizational events or social events.

When using a pin up board, write the date that the notice is posted on the top of the notice and remove after two weeks

Handover note

Handover note are the verbal passing of information from one or more persons to the following shift of worker.

When doing handovers:

- Make sure that all relevant information is passed on,
- Check that the next person has understood everything by asking and answering questions,
- Don't rush your handover note.

Telephone use

Phones should be answered within four (3) rings.

- Give the name of the organization and then your own name and job role.

This helps people know they have dialed the correct organization, who they are speaking to and what your role in the organization is.

- Speak clearly and at a speed that enables people to understand you.
- Write any information down as you are listening as it is very easy to get off the phone and find you have forgotten who was speaking, a contact number for them and which information they wanted.
- End the telephone call with some kind of resolution for the person who rang, either get the person with whom they wish to speak, take a message for them, ask the person to ring back at a later time, or solve the issue yourself.

Taking messages

When you take a message for someone make sure you understand the message correctly.

- Repeat the information back to the sender to ensure that the information you have is correct.
- Ensure you have the time of the interaction, the message, the sender's details, name, phone number, email address if necessary, so that the recipient can contact them.
- Give messages as soon as it is possible, as it may be something that requires urgent attention. If possible check back to be sure that the person received the message.

Reports

In a nongovernmental setting you may be required to complete reports.

When writing your report:

- Fill in all the required details,
- Only include necessary information,
- Write clearly and simply,
- Check that you have completed it properly, and
- Send or give it to the appropriate person.

If you have difficulties reporting, ask a colleague or your supervisor for some help.