

**“Sleeping at the Library?
 A Guide for After-Hours Programs for Teens”
 By Monicah Fratena**

Do you work with teens? Do you want to take a bold step in your programming? At the recent Children and Young People’s Division conference, Suzanne Walker (Youth Services Librarian at Mooresville Public Library) and I had the privilege of presenting on after-hours programs at the library. Our presentation was geared toward teen programs, but the ideas can easily be tailored to children as well.

After-hours programming can take a variety of forms. Some can last just a couple of hours; others can last up to 12 hours. Gauge your community to see what kind of event would best fit your patrons. Ask your teens what kind of program they would prefer.

The first important step in hosting an after-hours program is to gain permission from your director and/or library board. This can be accomplished by preparing a proposal with all of the relevant information about the program. The proposal should include the who, what, when, where and why of the program. You may be asked to present your proposal to the library board as well.

The next step is to plan your program. Some factors to consider include the chaperones, the date and time, the activities and the areas used at the event. Here are some suggestions for each of these aspects of after-hours programming.

Chaperones: Once you determine how many attendees you will allow at your event, try to identify adults who are able to work well with teens and who are willing to participate in the event. Make sure the adults you select can remain energized throughout the entire event. You may also want to have an adult of both sexes at the event for more comprehensive coverage.

Date and Time: Check the community’s calendar before you plan your event. Try to avoid big school games or important community events. Also, keep your participants

in mind. If you live in a strong church community, you may want to avoid an all night program on Sundays.

Activities: While planning your event, create an agenda for the night. This will help you to prepare enough activities for the entire evening and also provide a guide for the event. Keep in mind, however, that this is only a guide. Be prepared to adjust your agenda throughout the event. If you are planning a 12-hour lock-in, I recommend that you plan both calm and energized activities to help maintain a positive atmosphere. You also need to decide if you want your participants to sleep for a few hours while at the event. Here is an example of an agenda used at a twelve hour lock-in:

**Cabin Fever Lock-In Agenda
 (all times/activities are subject to change)**

Saturday January 19th

6:30 p.m.
 Staff set up a registration area.
 Teens begin to arrive.

7 p.m.
 Teens arrive

7:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
 Introductions/Ground Rules/Vague announcement of activities

7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
 Group Game: Icebreakers

8:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.
 Video Games/DDR/Guitar Hero

(10:30 p.m. - Pick up pizza from Pizza Hut)

10:45 p.m. - 12:30 a.m.
 PIZZA!!/ Movie “Accepted”

Sunday January 20th

12:30 a.m. - 1:30 a.m.
 Group Game: Sardines/
 Zombie Tag

1:30 a.m. - 3:30 a.m.
Board Games/Card Games/"Happy Gilmore"

3:30 a.m. - 4:30 a.m.
Group Game: Capture the Caffeine
(Scavenger hunt)

4:30 a.m. - 6:30 a.m.
Breakfast snacks/"Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"

6:30 a.m - 7 a.m
Cleanup/Wrap-Up

7 a.m.
Teens leave!

Areas: Choose which areas in your library are going to be used for the event. This may be determined by your director or by the setup of your library. Designate areas for eating, activities and sleeping. Make sure the teens know where they are permitted and prohibited.

Some other important steps in the after-hours process are to create, distribute and collect permission slips from parents. You should also ensure that the teens have a reliable ride home after the event. This can be included in the permission slip. You should also inform your local fire and police department. If your building uses a security system, you should inform the company about your event. I also recommend that you discuss the event with your maintenance staff.

An after-hours event requires a large amount of preparation. If you follow these guidelines, you are well on your way to having a successful program. After-hours programs can be an excellent way to draw in new participants or to reward your regular attendees. I encourage you to take this bold step in teen programming!

Author

Monicah Fratena is the teen librarian at La Porte County Public Library. She earned her MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh. She has hosted a variety of teen programs, including four lock-ins and various after hours programs. Monicah is currently working on events that utilize zombies.

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