

## *IX. Playground Planners*

### **The Setting**

Healthy children often accompany their parents and sick siblings to the Pediatric Urgent Care Unit (PUCU) at the Maricop Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. These healthy children often play in an outside play area attached to the PUCU while they are waiting for their brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, there were few activities and limited equipment to keep children occupied in the play area. Hospital administration budgeted \$10,000 to improve this playground. Arizona Call-A-Teen Resources, Inc., provided a team of six youth workers and adult supervision to develop the plans for the playground's renovation.

### **Comparable Settings**

There are many places where a new playground could be built or an existing playground needs renovation. These include neighborhood parks and schools as well as many businesses that entertain the children of their employees or clients. More generally, youth workers could survey an organization's clients and redesign the facilities to better serve them. Some examples include community centers, highway rest areas, senior centers and recreation centers.

### **The Work**

Maricopa Medical Center gave the team of youth workers a budget of \$10,000 dollars and asked them to develop recommendations for equipment, surfacing and access for the play area. The team surveyed physicians, nurses, parents, children and non-medical staff. They researched safety factors, designed play areas and obtained bids from three separate contractors and suppliers. The team presented their findings to the building engineering department of the hospital. They also presented an option of an indoor play area because many parents indicated that it was difficult to supervise children playing outside while they were inside with a sick child. Anticipated costs were \$800 under budget.

### **The Learning**

Youth workers learned about the operation of the PUCU system so they could develop a work plan. They developed information skills by writing, administering, and summarizing surveys of clients and staff, researching safety factors, and presenting their findings to the building engineering department. They learned about resource management by balancing the needs of the clients against the \$10,000 budget. By using computers to organize data and write surveys and proposals, the youth workers learned technology skills. Finally, they strengthened their interpersonal skills by working together as a team to meet the needs of the PUCU's clients and by interviewing and accommodating the needs of a diverse population, including staff and clients from all backgrounds and with a variety of special needs.

*Source: The Institute for Policy Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University  
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