

## LIFE SKILLS DIPLOMA PROGRAM

The Diploma Program was developed and implemented in response to the growing demands within the paraprofessional market that certified Life Skills Coaches have more in-depth counseling skills, on-the job experience and advanced relationship group processing skills

### **The Life Skills Diploma Program consists of:**

- 1000 hours training leading to a certificate as a Life Skills Coach.
- 200 hours of advanced counseling training leading to a certificate and designation as an Operant Effectual Counselor.
- 200 hours of Relationship Training leading to 3 levels of certification in Relationship Group Process.
- 480 hours of on the job experience conducting Life Skills Student groups using the curriculum and methodology developed by Saskatchewan New-Start; resulting in specially trained coaches receiving designation as *permanently certified* Life Skills Coach Counselors.

Each applicant for the Life Skills Diploma Program can set up an individualized training plan incorporating full-time and part-time study. Upon successful completion of all certificate programs, individuals completing 9 months and 1880 hours internship will be awarded a Life Skills Diploma.

All Life Skills Diploma Programs are trademarked and copyrighted. They can be taught only by *designated certified trainers*. Life Skills Training Centre Trainers are distinguished for having completed a minimum of seven (7) years training leading to Trainer certification.

*Life Skills Training Centres Canada Ltd.(1976) are certified by the  
PostSecondary Education Commission of B.C.; Ministry of Education of  
Yukon  
and licensed by Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower*

## EVALUATION OF COACHES IN TRAINING

In the first phase of the course the coaches in training learn, modify and practice simple skills. Their adaptation and integration of these skills are continuously evaluated by the coach training group. In addition upon completion of their practicum, the coaches are evaluated by the student group that they coached. *(See Appendix F-1)*

As the coach becomes competent in complex skills, his self concept deliberately shifts from his conception of himself as the operative agent in a selective status giving system, to that of operative agent in a system which enables each individual to develop fully his pre-existing potential.

His competence is demonstrated and evaluated in his presentation of theory and lessons; goal setting, and solving instructional problems.

The course design ensures that every coach in the training group has worked closely with every other participant. As a result, every coach in training is in the position to assess the competence of his peers.

An evaluation agenda of all competencies included in the curriculum serves as a guideline during final evaluation for certification by group consensus.

Certification of Coaches in Training is granted by consensus of the Coach Training Group. Consensus reflects consistently demonstrated competence in all skills outlined in the curriculum.

## REQUIREMENTS OF A LIFE SKILLS COURSE

Because of the complexity of Life Skills training many factors must be considered in the design and delivery of an effective minimum (usually shorter) version of the Life Skills Course.

The ideal model includes 240 hours of classroom activity spread over a 16 week period to accommodate the learning phases. Shortening the duration means reducing the course components usually at the sacrifice of skill practice, leaving the students with only the cognitive and affective experiences.

The course can also be shortened by excluding the “processing” which is required for the students to link new skills and their practice with relevance for themselves and their life situations.

In order to achieve adequate skill development in a condensed version of Life Skills the following factors must be considered:

1. **Qualifications of the Coach**

*The prime considerations are the training and experience of the coach.*

The greater the deviation from the ideal Life Skills model the greater the need for the coach to compensate as much as possible for any reduction in the Life Skills Components. In addition to his training, the coach draws from all his coaching experiences to effectively adapt to the target population and to accommodate educational level, age, culture, etc.

2. **Target Population**

*The skill level of the students is a critical factor in determining course length.*

Students who are successful in managing their lives may benefit from a shorter, less intensive program. Their need may be personal enhancement or focus on a particular skill area that they might have identified as inadequate.

Those students whose function level is considerably impaired because of gross skills inadequacies require the full range of training, 240 hours over 8 weeks to 16 weeks (preferably) depending on whether the classes are held half days or full days.

A Life Skills course to be recognized as acceptable Life Skills training should include no fewer than 90 hours delivered over a period of 15 weeks with no fewer than 6 hours training weekly.

Since course content includes the students' life experiences, a heterogeneous group is most desirable for adults.

### 3. Class Size

The number of students in the class significantly affects the speed with which they move through the curriculum and the process of skill development.

While a smaller group may progress more quickly they are deprived of valuable knowledge that is inherent in the range of input from a larger group.

Conversely, too large a group will be restricted by time constraints in processing and practice of the more complex problem solving skills in shortened courses.

### 4. Curriculum and Methodology

**Specific lessons must be included to develop the foundation or compulsory skills.**

Secondary lessons supplement the basics developing more complex skill sets for problem solving.

A third category of lessons is selected by the coach in response to specific group and individual needs.

Lesson sequence is paramount to skill development building toward problem solving. i.e. Until the students develop effective communication skills they are unable to solve interpersonal problems.

Recording playback is an essential component in Life Skills training. A Life Skills classroom must be equipped with video recording equipment that is used regularly as a feedback resource. The coach must have expertise in its appropriate use.

Skill transfer is the ultimate measure of success of the Life Skills training. When students apply their newly acquired skills to bring order to the troubled areas of their lives the purpose of the training is satisfied and can be used as a measure of its effectiveness.

Compulsory or basic lessons must be included in sequence utilizing the Life Skills methodology in *lesson structure: stimulus, evocation, objective inquiry, skill practice, evaluation* and process. No fewer than the following lessons from the Self Track should be covered.

### **Lesson Outlines**

Meeting One Another  
Seeing Oneself on Video  
Surveying Life Skills  
Listening To others  
Describing Feelings  
Relating To Others  
Giving and Receiving Feedback  
Expressing Trust in the Group  
Depending on Others  
Rating Behaviors in Groups  
Giving a Talk  
Describing Feelings 2  
Debating the Topic: To Work Or Not To Work  
Identifying Assumptions

The following lessons required to progress to complex problem solving skills may be used out of sequence if a classroom situation or if an individual student's crisis might be resolved by the introduction of a particular skill set.

Progression from the Self Track into Family, Community, Leisure, Job and Education also begins at this point.

**These lessons include the following:**

Relating Behaviors To Roles  
Fighting Fairly  
Learning Helpful and Harmful Behaviors in Groups  
Explaining Life Skills To Others  
Communicating With Children  
Trying a Creative Exercise  
Giving Help With An Individual Problem  
Identifying Strengths of the Family

The remaining lessons are selected at the discretion of the coach to meet specific group and/or individual student needs, and/or if time allows.

All lessons, activities, classroom incidents, external incidents affecting the classroom, as well as personal issues that students introduce are to be purposefully incorporated into the course as learning experiences.

Appropriate closure to all courses is an essential part of the training.

Confidentiality must be strictly observed at all times.

## LIFE SKILLS THEORY

Life Skills concepts can be identified as: *definition; assumptions about the target population, methods of teaching and learning; and most importantly, the life skills teaching - learning process.*

### DEFINITION OF LIFE SKILLS

No statement of the Life Skills rationale can be complete without the inclusion of the following paragraph in which Ralph Himsl so succinctly defines what life skills are and explains the defining terminology.

“Life Skills precisely defined, means problem solving behaviors appropriately and responsibly used in the management of personal affairs. As problem solving behaviors, life skills liberate in a way, since they include a relatively small class of behaviors usable in many life situations. Appropriate use requires an individual to adapt the behaviors to time and place. Responsible use requires maturity, or accountability. And as behaviors used in the management of personal affairs, the life skills apply to five areas of life responsibility identified as self, family, community, leisure and job” (Himsl, 1973, p. 13)

The definition of Life Skills as “problem solving behaviors responsibly and appropriately used ...” refers to the student’s ultimate responsibility for his actions, a logical expectation for an adult learner. The appropriate use of skills requires the student to modify his behavior to the circumstance; furthermore it emphasizes the personal qualities of the knowledge and skills. The student practices his skills in the “here and now.” This practice of “here and now”, which simply means working in the present, takes on a liberating, encouraging quality. Nothing can change the past; the student can however learn to perform effectively in the present and future.

The statement that the student uses skills “responsibly” suggests a value judgment of some sort. *Training which gave the students skills and no judgment as to their use, or gave no practice in their responsible use, would reflect a faulty design. The course design identifies the criteria for responsible use of skills, and provides practice in the application.*

# **LIFE SKILLS COLLEGE**

## ***LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINING***

### ***A TWELVE-WEEK COURSE***

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The candidate for Life Skills Coach Training at Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. is prepared to conduct Life Skills programs. The intensive, mainly experiential, twelve-week training program of approximately 1000 contact hours, includes a variety of theoretical and practical knowledge. Essentially, the candidate is trained to bring students to competence in ways of successfully managing their personal affairs in the areas of Self, Family, Leisure, Community, Job and/or Education.

The broad spectrum of skills developed in Life Skills Coach Training is in demand not only by prospective Life Skills Coaches but also by counselors and social workers, teachers and trainers, politicians and clergy, outreach workers, band councils and friendship centre workers, interpreters and educational assistants, group home and crisis centre workers, corrections and court workers, day care and mental health workers, radio broadcasters and television producers, and others in people-related fields.

#### **COURSE CONTENT**

##### **Basic Communication Skills**

The coach acquires competency in speaking, checking for understanding, listening, identifying breakdown in person-to-person communications, using gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication.

##### **Human Relations / Interpersonal Skills**

The development of these skills is central to a coach training program. The coach develops a sensitivity and awareness in his training which he transfers to the classroom. Behaviors are learned, practiced and modified until the coach develops competency in such areas as:



1. attending behaviors, expressing, sharing and responding to feelings, giving and receiving constructive feedback, initiating and contributing data, seeking contributions from others, summarizing, clarifying, coordinating, integrating, elaborating, setting standards and orienting, testing for consensus, gate keeping, encouraging and supporting, harmonizing and compromising, confronting and resolving conflict;
2. coping with such harmful behaviors as blocking, dominating, recognition seeking and competing, self-confessing and sympathy seeking, special interest pleading, side tracking, withdrawing, “horsing around” and assuming that the problem is clear;
3. managing stress and preventing burnout;
4. thinking critically and applying the principles of *Balanced Self Determined* behavior in own personal life and in Life Skills coaching;
5. defining the role of *Sexuality and Communication* in the enhancement of interpersonal relationships; and,
6. making effective process interventions and contributions in diagnosing and commenting on various aspects of group process for the development of effective coaching techniques.

### **Family Process**

Through an experiential group process the trainee learns to improve family interactions by exploring various approaches to parenting, affirming and emphasizing the resources each family member already possesses, reducing conflict in the family, communicating with children, talking with teens, increasing choices and responsibilities of each family member, helping families to change, developing support systems -- those skills required to make “*family*” an enriching, positive experience.

### **Relationship Skill Development**

An introduction to *Relationship Training* provides an experiential process of exploring the dynamics of relationships and cultivating skills to initiate, develop, nurture, maintain, assess and close a variety of relationships from the professional to the intimate.

### **Problem Solving Skills**

The problem-solving component includes demonstration of the problem solving skills, practice in them and practice in teaching them to others. It contains some theory, demonstration of problem solving systems, the use of heuristics and skill practice in synectics.

### **Theory and Knowledge**

The coach demonstrates his competence in all the skill areas by accumulating and understanding specific content from many sources, formal coursework being only one. The content knowledge requirements for coach training include:

1. the theoretical foundation of the Coach Training and Life Skills programs, their structure, concepts and experiential nature of training;
2. the principles of learning in the affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains; and,
3. Understanding the ‘**Use of Process in Life Skills**’; understanding the integration and transfer process;
3. group dynamics, group development and phase progression, performance-centered counseling, behavior description, behavior modification, skill training and ethical problems of coaching.

### **Lesson Preparation Skills**

The coach trainee develops expertise in writing an effective lesson plan, adapting material to the needs and abilities of the students, relating relevance of material to real life situations (transference), sequencing of skills training, setting objectives and goals. The trainee will also develop abilities in skill

assessment and evaluation and will practice report-writing skills, which will be integrated into the skill development.

### **Lesson Presentation Skills**

The coach develops the behavioral skills required to facilitate the learning process in the implementation of Life Skills lessons. These include:

1. skills in questioning, skills in recording, categorizing and summarizing data, and reporting outcome and information to the group;
2. motivating students in the classroom, gaining commitments for change from students, planning activities with the students, leading discussion groups, and using behavioral counseling techniques;
3. techniques of role playing, conducting the case method and organizing *group-on-group* situations; and,
4. using audio/visual equipment for recording and playback, creating simple teaching tapes, visual aids and displays and selecting the most appropriate medium to present a concept.

### **Practicum**

The coach tests his/her skills in lesson presentation during a one-week block placement in a Life Skills student group.

Opportunities for team coaching are also provided as are occasions for the trainee to demonstrate his understanding of coaching theory and practice through design and presentation of Life Skills lessons with his peers.

### **Counselling Skills**

With the aid of *Performance-Centered Counselling* techniques the coach practices and demonstrates effective counseling skills. Adequate experiential practice will assist in developing and perfecting this valuable counseling technique.

## **Modification Skills**

The coach will learn how to adapt the Life Skills Program as to time and place to meet the special needs of different cultural groups, agencies and geographic locations.

## **Cultural Enrichment**

The coach will also learn how to enrich Life Skills programming through integration of local culture with Life Skills lessons by arranging for speakers, guests, films, tours, and the sharing of students' own knowledge and traditions.

## **Public Information/Education and Community Development**

Community awareness is stressed. Through an experiential process the trainee develops skills in organization and presentation of Life Skills Theory and Concepts to a variety of community agencies.

## **Evaluation Skills**

The coach's ability to evaluate is integral to the learning process. In some cases the process of evaluation cannot be divorced from the major skill, because in and of itself, it is of an evaluative nature. For instance, the human relation skill of 'giving and receiving feedback' falls into this category.

Other evaluation skills in which the coach develops competency are performance evaluation skills. These include observing, analyzing and evaluating his own performance and that of his peers and students to identify strengths and weaknesses, feeding back evaluation data and using techniques for the development of student self evaluation skills.

Finally, trainees develop competency in the evaluation of overall program effectiveness and in the writing of reports.

## **LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINING**

### ***~ THE PROCESS OF APPLICATION AND SELECTION ~***

#### **STEP 1. APPLICATION**

It is required that the applicant submit:

- (a) A detailed Application Form
- (b) Proof of Academic Standing

Include official transcripts of highest level of academic achievement (minimum GradeX11 or G.E.D. Diploma preferred). If official transcripts cannot be obtained, applicants should supply *certified* statements confirming academic standing achieved.

Certification of transcripts and diplomas must be effected by imprinting them with the official seal of the institution endorsing them by hand with the written signature of the responsible school officer. Photocopies which are not certified in this way are not acceptable.

#### **STEP 2. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

Confidential letters of recommendation are required in support of your application for Life Skills Coach Training from three persons under whom you have worked or studied. When approaching these people for a confidential letter of recommendation, please ask the for their comments on the following.

- (a) The capacity in which you they know you;
- (b) Your potential as a Life Skills Coach trainee and your personal suitability for working with people;
- (c) And information they might wish to include regarding your personality features, the kind of relationships you are able to develop with others, your emotional stability, work habits and skills, attitudes revealed etc.

### **STEP 3. *PERSONAL INTERVIEW***

Applicants meeting the above criteria will be contacted and a personal interview will be arranged in Edmonton approximately two to three months prior to the course start date. (Please notify Life Skills Training Centres of any change in address or telephone number.)

If coming to Edmonton is impossible, please contact Life Skills Training Centres to arrange a time when you can call back for a telephone interview with a selection committee or meet with our representative in your area. The telephone number to call is (403) 424 3843.

### **STEP 4. *PERSONALITY APTITUDE ASSESSMENT TESTS***

At the time of the interview, the applicant will be asked to complete one or more personality and aptitude assessment tests. The assessment tests will be scored, interpreted and rank ordered on the basis of indicated suitability and probable success in training and group work.

### **STEP 5. *NOTIFICATION OF STATUS***

Applicants will be notified by telephone and/or by letter whether or not they have been accepted for a particular program at least one month prior to the course start date. In special circumstances, an attempt will be made to provide earlier confirmation of acceptance.

Due to the large number of applicants, not all acceptable candidates will be accepted for a specific training session, however, these applicants will be given priority in the next available course.

## **Permanent Certification of Life Skills Coaches**

***Permanent certification is available only to applicants who have successfully completed Life Skills Coach Training conducted by a certified Life Skills Coach Trainer and conducted by Life Skills Training Centres Ltd.***

**Applicants for a Permanent Life Skills Coaching Certificate must meet the following criteria:**

1. ***Hold an Interim Life Skills Coach Training certificate.***

In the event the Interim Certificate has expired, a letter requesting extension must be submitted prior to the date of expiration of the certificate. Extensions will be granted for one year and further requests for renewal will be given individual consideration.

2. If permanent certification is not secured within four years of completing Life Skills Coach Training, the applicant may be required to complete additional upgrading. This will be discussed at the time the applicant requests an extension to his/her certificate, which may extend beyond the four year limit.

3. The applicant must have facilitated a minimum of two Life Skills programs of 240 hours each, for a total of 480 hours of actual group contact.

4. Group Contact requires that the applicant be in attendance in a group conducting a life skills program. Hours spent in one-to-one counseling, supervising, follow-up by telephone, liaison or referral, does not constitute group contact hours. Time accrued in facilitating other types of groups will not be accepted for certification.

5. The applicant may have been the sole facilitator or a co-facilitator with equal responsibility in the group. In the case of co-facilitation, each facilitator will receive full credit for all hours in actual group contact.

## **Equivalency**

Applicants for Permanent Certification who do not complete the required two groups of 240 hours each may qualify for certification provided they meet the following criteria:

1. Conduct of a minimum of five shorter Life Skills programs totaling 480 hours.
2. Each short program must have a minimum of 90 hours, to be conducted over a maximum of 15 weeks, with no less than six (6) hours of group contact time per week.
3. The basic lesson plans in the Self Track of the Life Skills Coaching Manual must be taught as core to the 90 hours of group contact time.

### **Group Size**

The number of participants constituting a Life Skills group shall be a minimum of eight (8) and a maximum of 25.

### **Curriculum and Methodology**

1. The lessons in the Life Skills Coaching Manual (Saskatchewan NewStart) must be followed in sequence using the methodology (lesson steps) as directed in the manual. (Stimulus, Evocation, Objective Enquiry, Skill Practice, Evaluation).
2. The applicant in his/her application must make the appropriate distinction between a Life Skills student/client group and a Coach Training group.
3. The applicant must have initiated the group sessions: presented basic lessons in sequence; provided for skill practice; monitored skill development; evaluated skill development; and closed the programs.

### **Request for Permanent Certification**



The applicant should submit his/her request in writing to Madeleine Dunkley, President of Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. at the location where the applicant's training was conducted. Where appropriate, a duplicate copy of the request must be sent to the Head Office of Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. in Edmonton for verification.

***Each application for permanent certification must include:***

1. Name(s) of employer or contractor  
The dates of the group(s), noting start and finish dates  
The number of hours of group work per week  
Where the group(s) were conducted  
Number of students/clients who attended weekly
2. The name of the co-facilitator if the group was co-facilitated
3. A detailed outline of the actual lessons taught and the sequence in which they were taught.
4. A letter from the applicant's immediate supervisor who observed/monitored the program and who attests to the criteria outlined herein, as well as the content which was taught. The applicant must provide a letter for each Life Skills group conducted.

In the event that there is any reason that Life Skills Training Centres questions the validity of the application or of the applicant, or if there is any reason to question legal or ethical issues involving the behavior of the applicant, then certification may be withheld until such time that the applicant provides verification that he/she has met the criteria required for permanent certification and/or all areas of concern have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Life Skills Training Centres. The Life Skills Training Centres' Board shall be the final arbitrator in all aforementioned matters.

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