



“DISHING IT OUT” THE BOHSE WAY:

Proven Keys To Successful Food Service Programs

Years of experience and hundreds of interviews with seniors and senior center staff have shown us that there are a few simple things that you can do to make your senior center a great senior center, that people can't wait to get into:

- 1 **A great name.** A clever or easy-to-remember name will attract people to your center. A great name invites people to take action and invites them in. Would you rather attend the Elderly Nutrition Program or the Main Street Friendship Center?
- 2 **Your name should be published** in easy to find places like the Yellow Pages, community directories, Internet search engines such as Yahoo! and Google, aging directories, and in publications of your local Office on Aging.
- 3 **A “welcome” policy.** When a client enters the doors (we'll talk about them later) of your center, they should be greeted by respectful and caring staff (paid or volunteer). Your staff should have good interpersonal skills, understand who their customers are, have positive attitudes and acknowledge a person's right to be self-governing and independent.
- 4 **Atmosphere and ambiance.** The atmosphere and ambiance should be warm and inviting. There should be round tables, which invite conversation and socialization, rather than long, narrow tables that tend to isolate. Tables should be covered with tablecloths (while linen would be nice, but paper is more practical). The tables should have flowers (they can be donated from the local funeral parlor, country club, or corporate offices). The dining chairs should be comfortable and welcoming for after-meal conversations. The menus should offer choice, and should be printed in large type (you can even have these donated if you provide advertising). Meals could be served on dishes (the unbreakable kind), if possible. Music should be played that is relative to the customer's era (it can be either live or piped in). Your guests—and yes, that is what they are—should be seated and waited on restaurant-style.
- 5 **Good food.** Let's talk about the food—it has to be good and consistent and appropriate for your guests. While your food is required to be low sodium, appropriate seasonings can be available on the table. You can incorporate your meal choices with fun programs, such as Cinco de Mayo Day with a Spanish meal with appropriate Spanish music, dancing, entertainment, and festive atmosphere. A great resource for menu/activity planning is <http://mealswithappeals.com>

Ideally, the demand for meals at your center should be so great that customers would need a reservation and have to go on a waiting list! You might even have to hire a maitre de....