

MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

There are many variations for mandatory requirements as set forth among leadership programs. These are few responses that were sent by email to address the following questions about mandatory requirements.

- Is a mandatory attendance requirement *standard* across leadership programs for the "kick-off retreat/ROPES course?"
- If it is a requirement for **your** program, has there been any exceptions made for a participant for partial day absence?
- If so, what were the circumstances, guidelines or criteria set for the allowance?
- Did the participants' absence create a change in the dynamics that typically result from the group's bonding experience?
- If so, was it significant enough to re-consider allowing partial day absences for the future during the "retreat" weekend?
- Anything additional we should consider?

LEADERSHIP SOUTHWEST

Leadership southwest does not do a ROPES course, but we do now have a ½ day Orientation session. This year will be only the 2nd time we've done an additional ½ day Orientation session; in the past, Orientation has been both the program for the 1st class session and/or incorporated into a portion of the first class session. We did find the extra ½ day Orientation session (which was all team building exercises) played a vitally important role in helping the class bond and connect as a group. Last year, we had 2 participants who missed the Orientation session and they both lamented on how they wished they had participated in the ½ day session because they could tell the difference – it took them a little longer to feel a part of the group. Our attendance policy is that missing one day is excusable, missing 2 complete class sessions can mean dismissal from the class program. We did have 2 participants who were unable to graduate with the class and who have been asked to make up the days they missed this year.

Karen Wilson

Leadership Southwest (Dallas Area)

LEADERSHIP HEB

We have for a number of years made attendance for the challenge course day mandatory because it became very obvious that the people who didn't participate that day were always "on the outside looking in" for the rest of the year. They did not get the same experience that others did and they were not in tune with the group. They were also the most likely to drop out before the course was over. This year I made an exception to the rule and allowed one person to only attend 1/2 day. He did the morning low elements that required most of the teamwork and then caught a flight out for a business trip. I really felt it would be ok since he was there to work with the group for several hours, but as it turned out he never quite meshed with the rest of the group and he was my one drop out for the year. No more exceptions

Suzy Goldman HEB Chamber of Commerce

LEADERSHIP SOUTHLAKE

- **Yes, it is mandatory!**
- **If so, what were the circumstances, guidelines or criteria set for the allowance? We do not make an exception for the ropes course, but we will for just about anything else that is mandatory. We won't do it for the ropes course because it kills the camaraderie factor. They just can't make that up.**

Giovanni Phillips

Southlake Chamber of Commerce

LEADERSHIP FORT WORTH

We have a two-day opening retreat that is mandatory for participation in Leadership Fort Worth. It includes a half-day history tour of the city that people invariably say is one of the best things they have ever done (it even includes having lunch in the cemetery where most of the City forebears are buried!); a half-day of introductions, orientation to the City's Comprehensive Plan, and completion of the tour with a timeline highlighting community trustees; an evening of wonderful fun called "The News by Leadership Fort Worth" which includes current events skits with singing and dancing (!); and then a full-day program called *Leadership Challenges* which introduces six different community issues, six different group process techniques, and in the six groupings gives everyone a chance to meet with everyone else in the class. The evaluations for the retreat are consistently excellent (both immediately and at the end of the year when they reflect back), so we believe it really works as the kick-off for the year.

This retreat is absolutely mandatory. Our policy does say that a death in the family or a military obligation are excuses, but even in those cases, we have counseled the participant to hold over for the next year. Usually they do that. I can think of one fellow with a military conflict who was a pretty outgoing guy and got along OK in the class. I will say that he has not been involved as an alum – I can't say if there is a correlation. In all, we take the requirement to be a part of the opening retreat extremely seriously. Everything we do in it is intricately tied to the goals for the rest of the program.

Harriett Harral, Leadership Fort Worth

LEADERSHIP MIDLOTHIAN

For our Leadership program, you are allowed to miss one eight-hour span of time, if it is excusable and make-up is completed, *except* for the Ropes course and our Austin trip. Attendance is MANDATORY for both in order to graduate. Since the ropes course is at the beginning of the program year, we make them wait until the next year if they cannot attend. If they miss Austin, they have to complete the regular year's program and then attend the next year's Austin day. The only exception we have made has been one participant who had to miss 2 hours of the ropes course, and we required him to submit an essay on leadership to the committee. Since he attended most of the day, we did not feel that it affected the bonding of the class.

Typically, the makeup assignment for absences is decided by the committee, but always includes attending something (like a city council meeting or school board meeting) and then writing an essay about it.

Amanda Miller, I.O.M.

Executive Director

Midlothian Chamber of Commerce

LEADERSHIP YOUTH COPPELL

My group is the Coppell Youth Leadership, but we do have an all day ropes course/retreat and we make it **mandatory**. They get the schedule with the application and if they know they won't be available that day, we don't accept them. We've had 2 incidents in which students weren't with us for the entire day and it was evident that they missed out on the bonding. One was added to the session after the retreat, because one that had been accepted had to withdraw, due to acceptance in a college prep course. The other was allowed to leave for part of the afternoon, because he had a big soccer game, in which he was a major player and scouts were going to be there. In both cases, these kids were never completely in the loop. These were also the ones that tried to get away with missing or leaving early and simply caused us, facilitators, headaches. In both cases, though, we had them make up their time, but it just wasn't the same for them.

Needless to say, we no longer accept anyone after the retreat has taken place. If we have an opening, we just leave it that way. And, no one will be allowed to leave the retreat and stay in the course. If they can't attend or stay the duration, we'll refund their money.

Mary Ann Kellam

Director, Youth Coppell

LEADERSHIP GARLAND

When Dick Hammond opened Stony Ranch in 2003, we opted to move our Retreat to his facility and at that time went from a two-day overnight stay to a separate two-day event. We were concerned there might be an impact on class cohesiveness, but that has not really happened. In fact, the first class making that transition arrived at Stony Ranch with their cars and vans shoe-polished with Class bragging comments. Best case would be to have the overnight stay, but we have seen no significant negative impact.

We STRONGLY AGREE that attendance at the Retreat be mandatory for participation, and we have on several occasions removed members from the class and invited them to join the program in the following year. Reinforcing the purpose for the requirement in a positive manner is key in having the disappointed applicants graciously accept the decision.....looking forward to the next year.

We're all geared up for another tremendous year in Leadership Garland with 35 class members invited for membership. Hope that each one of our programs experiences growth and improvement as we move through 2007-08. Have a great year!

Here are some details about Leadership Garland's "retreat" event in answer to your questions:

- Held late September as initial program event
- Mandatory attendance - no exceptions for Day One of the Retreat/possible exception for minimal missed time on Day Two (that would need to meet extraordinary circumstances to be approved)
- Day One is a full day on a Friday (8 a.m. until 8 p.m.) held at Stony Ranch
- Day Two is a partial day on Saturday (9 a.m. until 2 p.m.) held at a location in Garland
- Day One is full of outdoor activities - including the ropes course; Day Two is spent with additional team-building activities and program introduction/housekeeping, etc.