

Dealing with Problem Docents and How to Retire Docents Gently

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I. Challenges

- Rogue docents
- Refusal to give tours or follow guidelines
- Older docents that will not change leading skills
- Museums that refuse to let docents retire
- Difficult attitudes of new docents
- Docents that give wrong information
- What to do when there is no education leader (all are volunteers)
- Some docents just want a social club and are never available to lead tours
- New director that will not do docent training
- Memory issues with older docents who are otherwise great docents
- Feuding groups of docents

II. Some solutions for Problem Docents

- Peer review – share reviews – two docents observe with a staff person
- Education department must be more directly involved
- Have an Education Policy Manual to anticipate problems
- Mentoring with an appropriate partner
- Senior docents mentor new docents
- Team or “buddy system”
- Education staff drop in on a tour to observe
- Evaluation director gives evaluation
- Put docent on probation status if they do not meet expectations
- Docents must commit to a number of tours
- Have sample tours for new or problem docents
- Have a deadline for improving and changing attitudes
- Have a clear understanding that docents are representing the museum
- Look into Chat Room at www.docents.net
- Contact a museum that has a successful program

III. Retiring Docents Gently

- Offer other jobs to older docents (hostess, librarian, greeter,)
- create new docent category – put docent put on sustaining status