

What you should observe:

- **The program setting:**

The physical environment in which the program takes place.

- **The human and social environment:**

Ways in which people organize themselves into groups and sub-groups;

Patterns of interaction and frequency of interaction between people;

Decision-making patterns;

Social characteristics of group members.

- **Planned program implementation activities and formal interactions:**

What goes on in the program?

What do people do in the program?

What is it like to be a participant?

Look at the sequence of the activity: beginning, middle, end, and consider:

Who is involved?

What is being done and said by staff and participants?

How do they go about what they do?

Where do activities occur?

When do things happen?

What are variations?

What are signals an activity is ending?

How do participants react to the ending of the activity?

- **Informal interactions and unplanned activities:**

Look at what's happening during unstructured or free time -- this is a good time to ask participants:

What did you think of what went on this morning?

Was it clear to you what they were trying to do?

What did you think of the session today?

How do you think what went on today fits into your overall program interests?

*Remember: Everything that goes on in or around the program is data!

- **Nonverbal communication:**

Take note of the ways in which participants dress, express affection, physically space and arrange themselves in the physical setting. These can all offer nonverbal cues about what is happening in the program.

- **Observing what does *not* happen:**

If program goals indicate that certain things are supposed to happen, and they do not happen, it is worth noting that as well.