TIPS FOR CAMPS

✓ Report any suspicion of abuse to the authorities. Make sure your staff understands that it is not just the law; it's in the best interest of campers to get them the support they need. Do not attempt to "handle it" yourself. Connect with trained professionals immediately. It's both the right thing to do and the law.

✓ Establish a robust screening process for all staff and volunteers. Your screening process should be multi-faceted and include a criminal background check, voluntary disclosure statement, reference checks, verification of previous work, and a personal interview.

✓ Train your staff and volunteers well. Provide training on what child abuse is, how to recognize the signs of abuse, how to prevent abuse, and how to respond when there is suspicion of abuse.

✓ Establish and enforce guidelines for acceptable interactions between staff and campers, and between campers and other campers. Your supervision and counseling policies should ensure that one staff person is never in seclusion with one camper. Staff needs to understand that there can be no physical contact between campers and staff. (If you allow such contact as hugs and high fives, you need to be very clear about what is acceptable.) If your camp serves a special needs clientele where personal care of the camper is required, establishing interaction guidelines is even more imperative.

✓ Establish and enforce supervision practices that promote camper safety. We know that allegations of camper-to-camper abuse can come in those brief moments in time when staff were not directly engaged with campers — non-structured program time (time between programs, meals, etc.) shower time, trips to the restroom, changing for the pool, etc. It is imperative that your staff is trained to be even more vigilant during these vulnerable times. In addition, ensure that the STAFF TO CAMPER RATIO is age appropriate and meets industry standards. Encourage employees/volunteers to actively interact with the youth to maintain adequate supervision and monitoring.

✓ Teach and model respectful behavior. Be clear with your staff that you have a zero tolerance policy on any type of abuse and other inappropriate behaviors.

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