

## 2. Abuse Prevention and Identification Protocol

As part of their new hire orientation, all staff, independent of their level of direct involvement with children, should be required to attend a training given by the Camp Director or other senior member of the staff. At the training, the following Abuse Prevention and Identification Protocol should be discussed. Practical examples of what may and may not be done vis-à-vis staff/child interactions should be provided and discussed. Furthermore, the Camp Director should affirmatively state that **the Camp has a zero tolerance policy regarding child abuse** and that the Camp will call the Police and/or other governmental authorities if required to do so or deemed appropriate. Additionally, staff should be reminded that they are obligated to report any allegations of abuse and/or suspicious or concerning behaviors to the appropriate camp personnel or, if a mandated reporter, to the State Central Registry for Child Abuse.

### General Safety:

- Lock up/close off spaces and cabins that are not utilized or are generally left unsupervised (e.g. storage rooms, change rooms after hours, etc.)
- Put up cameras in staff offices as well as in any areas that are isolated, unlit, or out of the site of the main campground wherever feasible.
- Create a system to monitor visitors to make sure they are not wandering freely – create a clear policy about who is allowed in, to what areas, and in what situations.
- Create a transparent system of spot-checking activities that take place outside the main campgrounds, especially outside the view of other main camp staff (e.g. field trips)
- Ensure that hotel/motel/camping grounds are thoroughly checked before a trip is planned
- Maintenance staff – ensure that they are not allowed in a bunk or room when campers are there alone

At the commencement of each camp season, it is important that the Camp Director and each child's respective Head Counselor create a safe space, and directly communicate to the campers, in an age appropriate manner, that children are always able, and encouraged, to share any concerns with them or any other camp supervisor, especially if children feel unsafe or uncomfortable. The children should be told that nothing negative will happen to them for sharing their concerns, that sharing concerns is not loshon hara, and that campers should never keep "secrets" from the Camp Director or be afraid of "getting into trouble" for sharing their concerns.

### Safety protocol:

The following guidelines address physical and emotional interactions between staff and campers and between campers themselves. These guidelines should be distributed to all staff members. Staff schedules should be created in a way that ensures utmost safety. It should be made clear that **all** staff is responsible for adhering to these guidelines and for keeping others in check. **Safety is a group commitment!**

## **Between staff and campers:**

### **Physical contact:**

- The following physical contact is NOT permitted, even if a camper does not have a specific problem with it:
  - ▶ Touching areas that are private or intimate
  - ▶ Touching in an intimate way
  - ▶ Touching a camper in any way that makes him/her feel uncomfortable
  - ▶ Causing pain in any way – slapping, punching, etc.
  - ▶ Long drawn out hugs
  - ▶ Making a camper touch you in any way

### **Interactions:**

- It is important for staff to adhere to the guidelines for interactions to ensure that boundaries do not get crossed and that no harm is inflicted on a child.  
**The following interactions are NOT permitted:**
- Spending time with a camper alone in a locked room or in any area not seen or observed by other staff members
- Sleeping in the same sleeping bag as a camper
- Allowing campers to see you undress or shower
- Touching a child in any way while they are sleeping
- Going into campers' showers or change rooms (unless it is part of your responsibility, such as caring for a child with special needs)
- Showing inappropriate pictures or videos
- Become social media friends or sending private texts or emails
- Forbidding a camper from sharing any conversation or information with their parents or the administration
- Instructing a camper to keep a secret
- Speaking inappropriately or telling inappropriate jokes
- Inviting a camper to engage in inappropriate or suggestive activities which may or may not include a promise of a reward for complying or a threat of reprisal for not complying

## **Between campers:**

More than 1/3 of molestation is committed by someone under the age of 18. To ensure that camp is fun and safe for all campers, it is important that staff imposes and supervises the following guidelines for interactions between campers. Campers are not allowed to:

- Touch each other in an aggressive or abusive manner
- Touch each other in inappropriate places or ways
- Give each other full-body hugs with private areas touching
- Isolate themselves with a specific camper
- Share a bed or sleeping bag
- Go into bathroom or shower alone with someone else

### **Identifying cases of abuse:**

Staff members are in the important position of being able to identify situations of abuse, stop the abuse, and get the camper the help they need. The following characteristics and changes in behavior **may** indicate an issue, and requires further examination:

- General anxiety or fear
- Fear of being alone with a certain person or going to certain places
- Fear of going to bed, showering or getting undressed
- Frequent nightmares
- Depression
- Anger
- Aggression
- Sudden mood swings – rage, fear, insecurity or withdrawal
- Temper tantrums
- Isolates themselves from others
- Cries a lot
- Stops participating in fun camp activities
- Acts younger than his/her age – e.g. thumb sucking
- Starts wetting the bed

### **Be aware of the following behaviors of an individual to identify potential situations of abuse:**

- Targeting vulnerable children
- Becoming friends with a potential victim, earning their trust, pretending to be their friend and secret 'confident'
- Spending a lot of time alone with a specific child or a specific group of children
- Testing and blurring boundaries with small violations – jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling, 'accidental' touch', to assess whether or not they will tell someone
- Showering them with gifts
- Sharing secrets
- Isolating them from their support system
- Intimidation – using fear, shame or guilt
- Direct threats to the child or family – e.g. your parents will have a heart attack, everyone will laugh at you, they will think you are crazy, etc.

### **It Responding to boundary violations and abuse or suspected abuse:**

It is the job of adults to speak up and intervene on behalf of the children. Children who are being abused are scared and confused. They don't always understand what is happening and often don't have the words to explain it. They are often ashamed and feel guilty, as if the abuse was their fault. They are scared the abuser will harm their family. They often feel that what happened is their fault because they may have broken a rule, initiated some of the contact, or experienced positive feelings from the abuse. They often love the abuser and are scared of getting him into trouble. They are also often scared to disappoint their family. **It is the responsibility of every staff member who identifies a situation of abuse to report immediately to the Camp Director or Head Counselor.**