

5. Discussion Guide

Guidelines for Facilitator

Prior to leading this discussion, the facilitator must review the information supplied above in the “Guide for Camp Directors,” which outlines the camp’s official policy on appropriate camp relationships and delineates how to identify and respond to cases of sexual abuse.

Discussion Goals:

1. Raise awareness of the issue of molestation and its relevance to summer camp.
2. Reinforce core concepts and guidelines for appropriate boundaries in relationships
3. Provide tools for effectively responding to cases of abuse
4. Create a safe space for counselors to be comfortable discussing this sensitive issue
5. Establish safety as a priority for your camp

The Role of the Facilitator

Create a Safe Space

- **Establish ground rules:** Begin with a clear introduction, outlining the goals of the meeting and the sensitivity and importance of the subject matter. Make it clear that there will be no tolerance for disrespect, inappropriate humor or public shaming. Participants will be expected to speak sensitively, listen respectfully, and maintain confidentiality.
- **Be sensitive:** Consider that each counselor may have a different level of knowledge about abuse. Whereas some may have been unaware that this was a problem in the community, others may be affected by it on a personal level. Take note of the issues or subject matter that are particular triggers and seem to especially affect the group or individuals in case follow-up discussions are required.
- **Respect boundaries:** Encourage active participation from all group members without forcing people to speak about topics that may make them uncomfortable in a public setting. Acknowledge the emotional responses that people may have to the subject matter, and monitor excessive talkers or prompt quieter members to encourage a balanced discussion.



Stimulate Meaningful Discussion

- Encourage participation: Be careful not to speak too much. Ask thought provoking questions to stimulate discussion, stepping in when necessary to clarify a point or move a conversation forward. In order to deepen and direct the discussion, paraphrase insightful comments and ask follow up questions. Encourage counselors to speak to each other, rather than to you, by seating everyone in a circle or breaking into smaller groups.
- Do not be the expert: Rather than simply giving counselors the answers, encourage them to discuss different possibilities and delve into the complexity of the dilemmas. By acknowledging that these issues can be complicated and difficult, the counselors will understand that it is okay to feel confused and turn to others for support.
- Ensure clear takeaways: At the end of each part of the discussion, make sure that the counselors understand the central issues by summarizing important points, asking directed questions, and providing essential concrete information. Conclude the discussion by summarizing the information, emphasizing the commitment to confidentiality, and letting the counselors know that you are always available to discuss related issues privately.

Discussion Questions

Your Role as a Counselor

- What do you see as your central role as a camp counselor?
- How does it make you feel to know the enormous positive or negative impact you could have on your campers?

Creating Healthy Boundaries

- Why are boundaries such an important aspect of forming healthy relationships with campers?
- What are some healthy ways that you can show your campers affection?
- Is it necessary to keep all of the rules regardless of the situation, or to be flexible and know how to apply them on a case-by-case basis? Explain your response.

Understanding and Identifying Harmful Affection

- How did it make you feel to learn that child molestation is a problem in the community?
- What kind of effects can unhealthy relationships have on campers both at camp and in the future?
- What signs would you look for to identify a camper who was being abused?
- When looking out for abuse, what types of people do you think can be abusers? What types of people can be victims? (Age, gender, role in community, degree of familiarity, religious affiliation, etc.)

Responding to Suspected Cases of Abuse

- What would you do if you felt a camper was being or had been sexually abused?
- Why might a counselor feel uncomfortable or afraid to deal with this situation?
- How can counselors ensure that campers feel safe and supported when discussing such difficult topics?



Case Studies

Situation 1: Balancing conflicting values

You hear a raucous coming from the bathrooms during shower time, and you are worried that there may be an emergency.

Questions:

- **How do you ensure camper safety while respecting privacy?**
 - ▶ **Note:** The counselor must first assess the situation from outside. If he needs to enter, he must give the campers a proper warning so they have time to cover up first.
- **Can you think of other examples where campers' privacy and safety may come into conflict?**
 - ▶ **Note:** Camper gets bug bite in private area, camper is injured and asks for help getting undressed, etc.

Situation 2: Inappropriate relationships between campers

You are a counselor for a rowdy group of boys who love play-fighting, including wrestling, giving wedgies and "pantsing" each other. You know that this behavior is inappropriate and against camp rules.

Questions:

- **Why is this type of behavior problematic?**
- Do you think a camper who is not enjoying this type of behavior would feel comfortable speaking up? Why or why not?
- How would you explain the rules to these campers?