

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Training for Camp Counselors



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Camp should provide:

- **Safe and healthy space** with adequate food and clothing
- **Protection** from abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination
- **Good environment** built to help youth grow and reach their potential
- **Respect** for self, others, and the environment



**Camp wouldn't
exist without
Camp
Counselors**

Camp Counselor Screening:

- **WHY? Counselors:**

- ◆ Are responsible for safety and experience of campers
- ◆ Quickly develop strong trusting relationship with campers
 - Therefore, campers feel comfortable sharing some of their greatest challenges and potentially secrets– and we need people who can handle it!

- **HOW?**

- ◆ Application
- ◆ Interview
- ◆ References
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Sexual predator website screening (<http://www.nsopw.gov>)
- ◆ BCI background check, if over 18 years old



This training seeks to help Camp Counselors:

- Increase awareness of the frequency of child abuse
- Understand the types of abuse and common indicators
- Grasp what your duty to report is, whether you:
 - ◆ observe the incident directly or
 - ◆ it is reported to you by someone else or
 - ◆ you have reasonable cause to believe that abuse has occurred or may occur
- Educate you on how to report suspected child abuse
- Become aware of Standards of Behavior
- Understand Ohio 4-H/OSU's accountability



IT'S TIME
WE STOPPED
HIDING
CHILD ABUSE



WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child Abuse is:

Any action that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child

Four main forms:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect



Physical Abuse is:

Definition: Any physical injury or death inflicted other than by accidental means

- Unexplained burns
- Unexplained bruises on the face, lips, mouth, back, buttocks, and thighs
- Human bites
- Multiple hospital visits
- Seems frightened of parents and does not want to go home

What to look for at CAMP:

- Talking about a fear of going home
- Anxious about going with a particular staff member
- Physical force used by parents
- Look for unexplained bruises or burns visible in swimwear

Sexual Abuse is:

Definition: When a person uses power over a child, and directly involves the child in any sexual act, involves the child in pornography, or forces the child to witness sexual acts.

- Suddenly refuses to participate in physical activities
- Exhibits unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Frequent and unexplained sore throats
- Yeast or urinary infections
- Torn or bloody underclothes
- Aggressively initiates sexual contact with another child

What to look for at CAMP:

- Campers talking about sexual topics advanced for their age
- Inappropriate sexual touching child-to-child
- Excessively physically affectionate
- Bruises on inner thighs or other “no touch” areas

Emotional Abuse is:

Definition: A pattern of harmful interactions between two people such as criticizing, belittling, rejecting, or withholding love resulting in impaired psychological growth and development.

- Eating issues (anorexia, bulimia, etc.)
- Nervous habits (tics, washing hands, biting nails, extreme anxiety)
- Cruel behavior – using physical force or words to hurt another camper, staff member or animal.
- Lack of emotional attachment to parent

What to look for at CAMP:

- Not eating or overeating at camp meals
- Extreme nervous repetitive habits – nail biting, washing hands
- Very negative about oneself, loner, demeaning
- Excessive name calling, hazing, destructive

Neglect is:

Definition: failure to provide for a child's basic (i.e., food, shelter, supervision, and clothing), educational or medical needs. Neglect may exist because of the refusal to provide or because the family does not have the financial means to provide for their child.

- Begs or steals food or money
- Unsuitable clothing
- Low height and weight average
- Assuming adult responsibilities (caring for younger siblings, cooking all meals, etc.)
- Poor hygiene
- Chronic hunger
- Large amounts of time unsupervised

WHAT TO LOOK FOR AT CAMP:

- Stealing food from the dining hall
- Poor shower habits/poor hygiene
- Dirty clothes or clothes with numerous stains and/or tears

**What if they
disclose to
YOU...**

Recommended steps to take if a child discloses:

Listen to the child

- Restate and validate their feelings if someone shares them
 - ◆ Do Say: “I can understand you feeling _____.”
 - ◆ Do not say: “That must have made you feel _____.”

Remain calm and collected

- Don't downplay, exaggerate, or make promises in response to their story—your response is important to maintaining trust
 - ◆ Do Say: “Thank you for telling me, I understand this is important”
 - ◆ Do not say: “I will fix this” or “That's the worst thing I've ever heard”

Don't ask leading questions

- Let the kids tell their own version of their experiences
 - ◆ Do Say: “What happened?”
 - ◆ Don't say: “Did s/he _____ to you”

Recommended steps to take if a child discloses:

Maintain Confidentiality

- Don't promise the child you won't tell anyone
- Tell only the Camp Director– unless they direct you otherwise
 - ◆ Do Say: “I will have to tell (Camp Director) if you or someone else is in danger.”
 - ◆ Do not say: “You can tell me. I won't tell anyone.”

Immediately Tell the Camp Director

- Depending on the urgency of the situation, immediately go find the camp director or at your next available opportunity
 - ◆ Do: Calmly walk to and have a face-to-face conversation with the camp director
 - ◆ Do not: Run in a panic, create a dramatic scene, or wait to tell later

Focus on Remembering Facts

- You will need to report objective details of everything the child said– leave out subjective details or your opinion
 - ◆ Do: state when, where, who else was there when the abuse occurred and when you were told.
 - ◆ Do not: state any assumptions or make guesses

Recommended steps to take if a child discloses:

- **LISTEN, ONLY!**

- **Not your job to:**
 - Investigate
 - Ask questions
 - Confirm child abuse or not
 - Place judgment

- **Stick to the facts! Do not dig deeper**

**CONSIDER
THE
FOLLOWING
SCENARIOS...**

TAKING APPROPRIATE ACTION...

“The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.”

-Albert Einstein



Reporting Abuse: At Camp!

- Reporting should be a first person account (or as close to it as possible)
 - You as the counselor should be the one that reports
 - You will have your camp director/educator with you when you call
- Regardless of where the abuse occurs (at home/camp/school) it is both your ethical and legal duty to report what you see/hear
 - What 4-H stands for?- Ethics
 - Standards of Behavior- Legal
 - ◆ If you do not report, disciplinary action could be taken (including removal from the 4-H program)
 - Ohio Revised Code- Legal



Reporting Abuse: At Camp!

- **Who do you report to?**

- Camp Director/4-H Educator
- Children Services in county in which the abuse occurred (residence or camp's county)
- OSU police
- Associate 4-H Leader (Kirk Blair)

- **You need to report facts**

- Immediately report to the camp director.
- Emotions make it easy to make assumptions—it's important to stay objective when reporting even if you are very emotionally upset by the info
- Report as many details as possible- do not leave things out that you might think are irrelevant
- In addition to calling, also write down what happened



Cautions: Abuse or Not?

- **Not all signs are actually abuse– in fact most are not!**
 - ◆ Kids that like to wear their favorite shirt day after day
 - ◆ Kids are clumsy and do have accidents– consider specific locations and shape of bruises before jumping to conclusions
- **If uncertain, approach an adult about your concerns and they can help advise you on the situation/circumstances**
- **When in doubt, report!**
 - ◆ Often families get connected to resources to help borderline situations through reports.
 - ◆ Removing kids from their families is the last resort of Children Services so do not assume that will happen!



Best Ways to Prevent Abuse at Camp!

- **Always obey the “Rule of 3”**
 - 1 adult:2 youth or 2 adults:1 youth or 3 youth
- **Never be alone and out of sight with a child (Rule of 3)**
 - High Risk Areas: cabins, restrooms, showers, storage rooms
- **Never leave kids unsupervised where child on child abuse can occur**
 - Sending two kids to the shower or bathroom together (use Rule of 3)
- **Monitor appropriate verbal and non-verbal interactions**
 - Verbal- positive, encouraging, proactive, clear
 - Physical- hands on shoulders, side hugs, high fives, hand shakes, eye contact, smiles
- **Discourage Inappropriate Interactions**
 - Swearing, insults, negative tones [often sarcasm], child on your lap, front hugs, touching anywhere a bathing suit would cover



