

CAMPER ADVOCATE HANDBOOK



Three Trails
CAMP & RETREAT CENTER





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ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Child Advocate will play a vital role in ensuring the safety, well-being, and positive development of children attending Three Trails Camp. The child advocate will provide emotional support, advocate for children's needs, and create a nurturing and inclusive environment for the children at camp. They will serve as a liaison between campers, staff, and parents, promoting healthy communication and addressing any concerns that may arise. The child advocate should be passionate about youth development, skilled in conflict resolution, and dedicated to fostering an environment where every child feels valued and supported.

Responsibilities:

- Provide one-on-one support to campers as needed.
- Monitor camper behavior, ensuring a safe and respectful environment.
- Communicate with parents about camper well-being and progress during check in and check out.
- Work closely with camp staff to ensure the inclusion of all campers.
- Advocate for campers' rights and needs throughout the camp experience.
- Be available to help children when issues arise that counselors cannot specifically handle.
- Have one on one sit downs with children who are struggling during camp to make sure they feel supported.

1. Camper Well-Being:

- Serve as a point of contact for campers needing emotional support.
- Actively listen to campers' concerns and ensure they feel heard.
- Encourage campers to communicate their needs and feelings in a healthy way.

2. Conflict Resolution:

- Mediate minor disputes between campers using a positive, problem-solving approach.

- Teach and model respectful communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Work with counselors to address ongoing issues and ensure a harmonious cabin environment.

3. Behavioral Support:

- Recognize signs of distress or homesickness and provide reassurance.
- Assist campers in developing coping strategies for challenges they may face.
- Collaborate with staff to support campers with specific behavioral needs.
- Track behavior incidents in CampBrain to ensure consistent documentation and follow-up.

4. Inclusivity & Engagement:

- Ensure that all campers feel included, regardless of background, ability, or personality.
- Help facilitate friendships and encourage positive peer interactions.
- Support campers in adapting to new activities and stepping out of their comfort zones.

5. Communication & Reporting:

- Maintain confidentiality while ensuring appropriate staff are informed of concerns.
- Report serious concerns, such as bullying, emotional distress, or safety risks, to the Assistant Camp Director or appropriate leadership.
- Log incidents, interventions, and camper concerns in CampBrain to keep an accurate record.
- Document all parent communications in CampBrain, ensuring that any updates, concerns, or resolutions are properly recorded.
- Keep records of interventions or support given to campers when necessary.

GUIDELINES FOR CAMPER INTERACTION

- Approach campers with empathy, patience, and an open mind.
- Use age-appropriate language when addressing concerns.
- Never dismiss a camper's feelings; validate their emotions and help them process.
- Encourage problem-solving and independence while offering guidance.
- Remain neutral in conflicts and seek solutions that benefit all parties.
- Be mindful of personal boundaries and maintain professionalism at all times.

Why Advocate?

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax



Help Us Stay Calm

Strategies that help you and your child during challenging behavior

Stay Calm | Reflect | Re-Connect

When your child is engaged in challenging behavior or experiencing anger, stress, sadness or frustration, it is important to stay calm. If you express your anger and frustration, it might result in more challenging behavior from your child. Remaining calm will provide the safety and support your child needs as they learn how to calm themselves.

Step 1:

Calm Yourself



Drink some water;
Have a snack



Count until calm



Take deep breaths



Connect with a friend



Ask for help



Think something positive or fun about your child

Step 2:

Reflect

What feelings and thoughts came up?

How do you think your child is feeling?

What might your child need to prevent the behavior from occurring again?

Are you calm enough to re-connect with your child?

Step 3:

Re-Connect

When you re-connect, you can help your child learn new skills. Once you feel calm, and your child appears calm, here are a few tips.



Make sure your child is calm

I see that not getting a turn made you angry.

Acknowledge feelings



Offer choice



Redirect to a new activity



Talk and play with your child

HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Bullying or Exclusion

Address the situation immediately, speak with involved parties, and reinforce camp values of kindness and respect.

Health or Safety Concerns

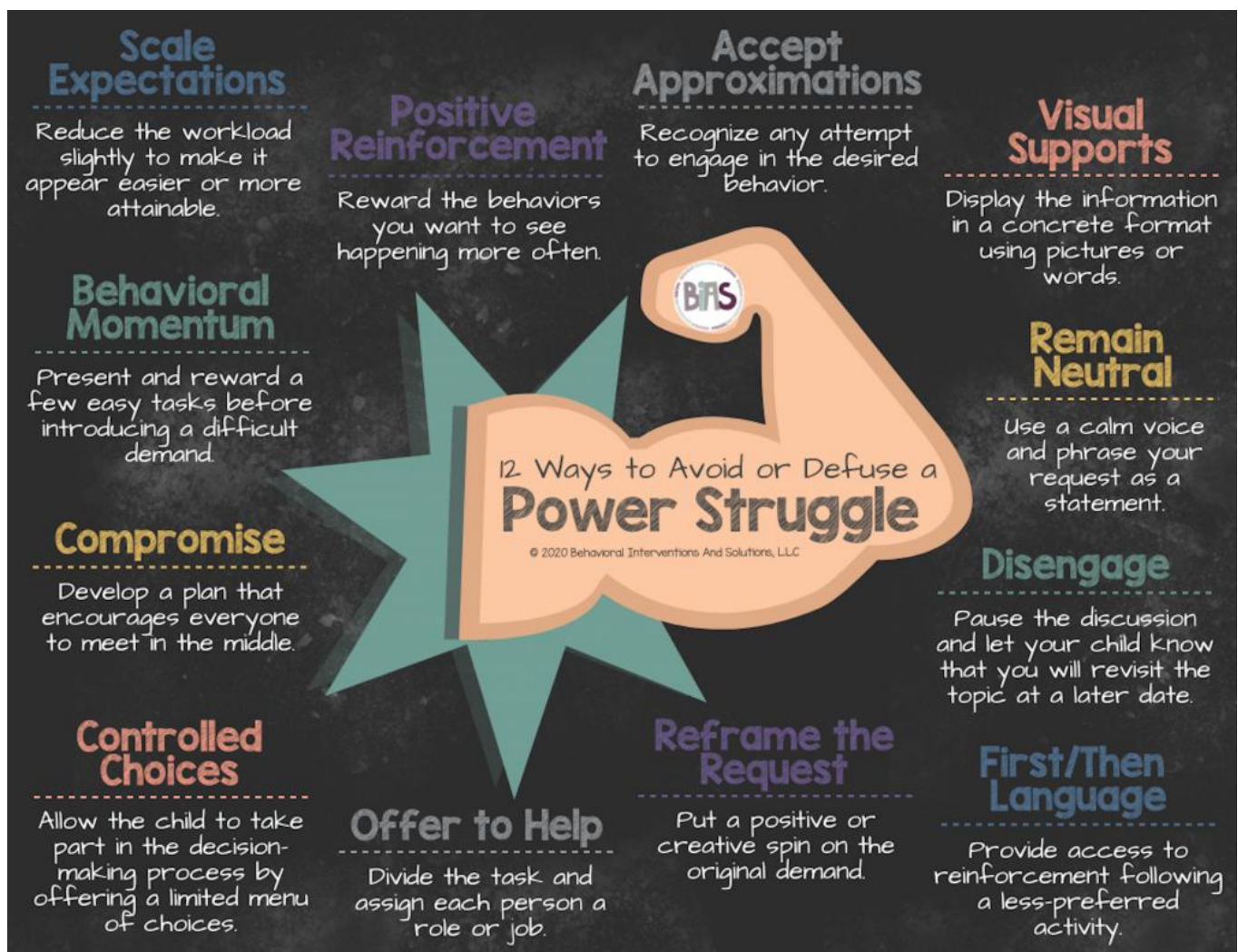
Report any medical or safety concerns to camp leadership immediately.

Emotional Outbursts

Stay calm, listen attentively, and offer a quiet space for the camper to regain composure.

Homesickness

Provide comfort, encourage participation, and remind campers of the fun aspects of camp.



TRACKING BEHAVIOR INCIDENTS & PARENT COMMUNICATION

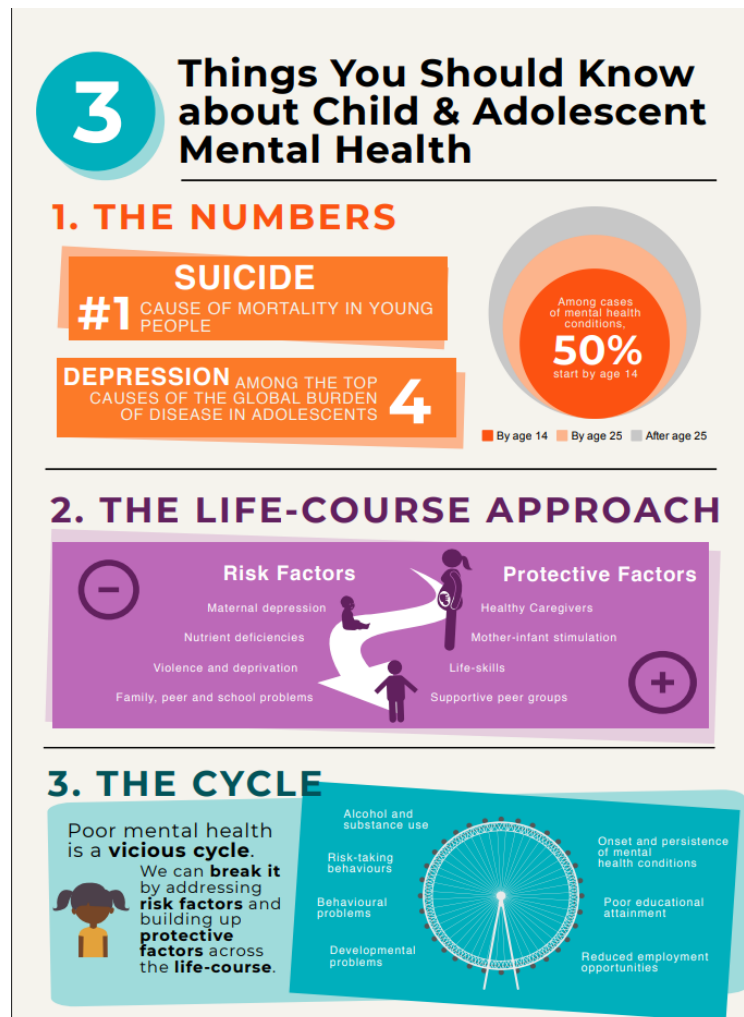
Keeping thorough and accurate records ensures consistency, transparency and better support for campers.

Use CampBrain to document all behavior incidents, including:

- Camper name, date, and detailed description of the incident.
- Staff interventions and camper responses.
- Follow-up actions taken and any resolutions.

Log all parent communications in CampBrain, including:

- Updates on camper well-being and behavior.
- Concerns expressed by parents and staff responses.
- Follow-up actions, such as phone calls or meetings.



SELF CARE FOR CAMPER ADVOCATES

- Take breaks when needed and seek support from fellow staff.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries to prevent emotional burnout.
- Reflect on challenging situations and learn from them to improve advocacy skills.
- Celebrate small victories—making a difference for even one camper is a success!



Give your attention and build a strong relationship
Spending quality time with your child is an easy way to strengthen the parent-child bond

Listen
Let your child finish the story before helping solve the problem

Give consequences
Calmly and firmly explain the consequences if they don't behave

Ways to Deal - WITH - Behavior Issues

Redirect behavior
Sometimes children misbehave because they are bored. Find something else for your child to do

Show and tell
Model behaviors you would like to see in your child

Set limits
Have clear and consistent rules your child can follow

Be positive about good things
Notice good behavior and point it out, praising success and good tries

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