

CAMPER ADVOCATE HANDBOOK



Three Trails
CAMP & RETREAT CENTER





TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES	3
GUIDELINES FOR CAMPER INTERACTION	4
HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.....	5
TRACKING BEHAVIOR INCIDENTS & PARENT COMMUNICATION	6
SELF CARE FOR CAMPER ADVOCATES	7

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 appropriate leadership.
 - Log incidents, interventions, and camper concerns in CampBrain to keep an accurate record. File appropriate Incident and Safe From Harm reports as necessary.
 - 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

Connect with a friend

Think something positive or fun about your child

Take deep breaths

Ask for help

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.

#1
Make sure your child is calm

I see that not getting a turn made you angry.
Acknowledge feelings

Offer choice

Let's find a new toy.
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.

Scale Expectations
Reduce the workload slightly to make it appear easier or more attainable.

Positive Reinforcement
Reward the behaviors you want to see happening more often.

Accept Approximations
Recognize any attempt to engage in the desired behavior.

Visual Supports
Display the information in a concrete format using pictures or words.

Behavioral Momentum
Present and reward a few easy tasks before introducing a difficult demand.

Remain Neutral
Use a calm voice and phrase your request as a statement.

Compromise
Develop a plan that encourages everyone to meet in the middle.

Disengage
Pause the discussion and let your child know that you will revisit the topic at a later date.

Controlled Choices
Allow the child to take part in the decision-making process by offering a limited menu of choices.

Offer to Help
Divide the task and assign each person a role or job.

Reframe the Request
Put a positive or creative spin on the original demand.

First/Then Language
Provide access to reinforcement following a less-preferred activity.

12 Ways to Avoid or Defuse a Power Struggle
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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.

3 Things You Should Know about Child & Adolescent Mental Health

1. THE NUMBERS

SUICIDE
#1 CAUSE OF MORTALITY IN YOUNG PEOPLE

DEPRESSION AMONG THE TOP CAUSES OF THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE IN ADOLESCENTS **4**

Among cases of mental health conditions, **50%** start by age 14

2. THE LIFE-COURSE APPROACH

Risk Factors (-)

- Maternal depression
- Nutrient deficiencies
- Violence and deprivation
- Family, peer and school problems

Protective Factors (+)

- Healthy Caregivers
- Mother-infant stimulation
- Life-skills
- Supportive peer groups

3. THE CYCLE

Poor mental health is a **vicious cycle**. We can **break it** by addressing **risk factors** and building up **protective factors** across the **life-course**.

- Alcohol and substance use
- Risk-taking behaviours
- Behavioural problems
- Developmental problems
- Onset and persistence of mental health conditions
- Poor educational attainment
- Reduced employment opportunities

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

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

Set limits
Have clear and consistent rules your child can follow

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

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

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

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

WAYS TO DEAL - WITH -
Behavior Issues

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