

## Keeping Camp Fun For Everyone

Camps and Camping and Retreat Ministries (CRM) have policies, procedures, and guidelines. They are in each camp's Dean's Manual & in CRM's Deans Notebook. It is the dean's responsibility to be familiar with these and go over them with their counselors. This document is a CRM policy statement.

It is **very** important for staff to think safety. Campers may not be mature enough to consider health and safety as important issues. Adults need to see everything through the underlying principle of: "How can I (the adult) reduce the risk of this situation"?

**THE POLICY** in Christian camping in Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church is **zero tolerance of abuse**. **Abuse** is defined as physical, psychological, or sexual maltreatment of a person. Further, abuse is the illegal, improper, or harmful use of something (weapon). Abuse also includes insulting and offensive behavior directed at another person and the harmful or illegal use of alcohol or drugs.

### The Guidelines:

1. Adults should NEVER administer any physical or psychological punishment such as spanking, shaking, hitting, insulting or deliberately subjecting a camper to frightening or painful situations. Campers must not be deprived of meals as a punishment for unacceptable behavior. Adults must never subject a camper to psychological abuse such as name-calling, belittling, ridicule, intimidation. This is called bullying. Camp leaders will be happy to hear about non-abusive alternatives to correcting unacceptable behavior.
2. It is very important for adult leaders to go over boundaries in the early evening of the first night at camp. Campers should contribute as they are able. Adults should guide enough so that the product will represent a high standard for everyone's behavior. Adults have a responsibility to get the list "right" while letting the campers participate.

Campers are not permitted to abuse other campers or counselors. Children and youth will bully, fight, tease, do pranks and find other ways to abuse each others. This is not acceptable. Please take these abusive activities seriously. *TEACHING POINT:* Where is the Christian community in this behavior?

Campers need to know what "Zero Tolerance" means. It means that there are some rules that if broken only one time you must go home that day. The dean needs to know there are no second chances. Do not allow "3" instances of abuse to happen before going to the camp director (or nurse). Do not let "Thursday or Friday" influence your responsibility to report abuse immediately. Perhaps you are hoping you can get the camper through the week; maybe it is only 'Monday' it is too early to give up on a camper. If you are over-reacting, the camp director, dean or nurse will help with your concern. Always take questions to a supervisor. **Zero tolerance means act now.** You do not have the right to let someone else get hurt. Campers are not permitted to abuse counselors or other campers. **Do not ignore anyone abusing anyone else. Recognize signs of abuse & deal with the problem immediately.**

**THE POLICY:** Staff must supervise campers.

### The Guidelines:

1. Failure to **supervise** is called "supervisory negligence." Adults (people over 18) when *in charge* of children (people 17 and under) are responsible to **supervise** - "watch after (like sheep), to be in charge of a group and keep order"; **negligence** - "failure to provide a proper or reasonable level of care."
2. When minors (17 and under) are present, all persons at camp or on camp activities should be aware of and keep the '**rule of three**'. What the 'rule of three' basically says is that there should be at least 3 people together in a group at any time there is a minor present. If a small group is made up of minors with no adult, that group must be within sight and sound of an adult.

needs to know when they are watching out for someone else's campers! It must be a visible relationship.

Two people together (camper-counselor; camper-camper) must be in an open, public place. Do not stay or go behind closed doors or open doors that are not in **easy, immediate** sight and sound of group. Keep the "Rule of 3." *Be sensible. Protect yourself. Protect your campers.* **Keep this rule, and teach it to all campers and volunteer staff on the first night.**

**3.** Problems to take to the Camp Site Director immediately. These are behaviors which the camp director in consultation with whomever he wishes to consult, may send a camper home immediately.

**At camp there will be NO:**

- i. weapons – and nothing used as a weapon
- ii. illegal drugs or illegal use of drugs
- iii. tobacco products
- iv. alcohol
- v. gambling
- vi. stealing
- vii. fighting
- viii. pranks

The above are taken very seriously. They must be referred/reported to the Camp Director at the first offence so that the Camp Director and the Dean can plan a course of action.

**Guidelines**

In a Christian Community we must encourage the highest standards of respect guided by biblical principles. This all starts with YOU- THE DEAN and the counselors, the leaders at your camp.

+ Do not use or allow the use of videos, music or any other resources that are not part of deans' program materials.

+ Plan bedtime hours that are age appropriate. Teach campers to respect other campers.

+ Be very careful about playing some games. It is important to think about the risk of someone getting hurt. The old Red Rover will still break arms, dodge ball has many problems, the biggest of which is to try to hit another person as hard as you can with a ball. With all games, adults set the boundaries and you are to stay and see that they are enforced. Remember about supervision. Our camps banned pranks a number of years ago. Its not that they are not fun, but that there is always a victim. Don't do them.

+Acceptable language and clothing are different in every home. Some campers need guidance in our "camp home" about language, clothes, meal time behavior, and other things. Staff may have many teachable moments. These are not usually "send home" things, but with patience some campers learn a lot.

+Meal time is a wonderful time to work on Christian community issues. It is a good time to listen to and get to know the campers better, to answer questions, to discover needs. If adults are running around having fun, catching up with other adults, who is at the table getting to know the camper!

+ Your campers may want to make a list Sunday night of other guidelines or covenants for their group.

+ The policy statement and guidelines below will be included in the “health card packet” that goes to every camper. (You will also receive a packet for your information.) We are counting on the deans and counselors to be modest with their own attire and safe with their foot wear. That will help campers to accept this policy with a minimum of rancor. If a camper does not have enough clothes with her/him to cover up the bare spots, we will have extra free hand-me-down t-shirts at the pool. This is the paper that the parents and campers will get: Help your camper understand the need for sunscreen & hats. Families that stop by the emergency room on the way home from camp because of second degree sunburn blame the camp.

### **Summer Camp Clothing**

Policy: Camp clothing, including shoes and swimwear, must be modest and safe.

#### Guidelines:

How to judge clothing that is not “camp appropriate” .....

- + No belly shirts, (meaning no bare midriff)
- + Girls need to be careful not to wear short, short, shorts. Finger tip length is the standard in many schools as well as two finger wide shoulder straps for shirts.
- + Very low-rise jeans or pants for females; very low rise have to be held up or on
- + No extremely baggy pants on males (meaning no pants that are meant to fall off from the waist) - jeans, pants, or shorts. No “beaters” (athletic undershirts) In most cases adding a t-shirt on top will make the “outfit” acceptably modest.
- + For guys or girls, T-shirts should not have offensive messages. Turning the shirt wrong-side-out usually solves this problem. For most of these problems, a t-shirt on top covers up.
- + Bathing suits should be modest one piece for females and swim shorts for males. Camp staff, deans and volunteer counselors will have the decision determining the appropriateness of any suit worn by each gender, reserving the right to ask any camper, volunteer or staff member to wear a t-shirt over swimsuit.

#### Foot wear that is safe:

All campers should bring 2 pairs of comfortable shoes to camp. Preferred footwear around camp are closed toe & heel shoes. Sturdy outdoor sandals or “Teva” style footwear are permitted in casual or less strenuous activities. Tennis shoes are a good walking shoe & needed for sports. Shoes with heels are preferred for horse and pony campers. Flip-flops are permitted only inside lodging areas, showers, and pool areas. Help campers understand that this is for their safety. Camp grass and wooded paths are not always as smooth as they look. (rabbit holes, tree roots, areas where rain has changed paths, loose rocks to name a few) Camp is not so much fun for campers or staff when there is pain and limited activity from twisted, sprained or broken ankles. If campers think this is silly, we accept their jokes with grace, but be sure they wear safe shoes.

- + Must wear footwear for the horse and pony events are sturdy shoes: tennis shoes are acceptable, riding boots are great.
- + Adventure activities shoes must be closed heel and toes shoes or hiking boots.