



Tip Sheet: Camp Safety

A Summer Of Happy Memories

You're sending your children off to summer camp – for the day, the week or maybe longer. You've applied sunscreen and packed enough warm clothes. What else can a parent do to make sure their summer is filled with happy memories?

Most camps and summer recreation programs already know about the need to be proactive about safety, both in screening staff and in setting sound policies for supervision during the course of the day or night.

Don't be shy about asking questions. Successful program administrators understand that knowing the lay of the land is just "good parenting." Find out how you can work with them to boost their program's reputation for keeping kids safe. If safety isn't high on their priority list, make new plans.

Check out camp policies

Ask about the program's staff training curriculum. See how much time is specifically devoted to education and prevention of sexual abuse.

What's the policy about campers being left alone without adult supervision? If unsupervised time is allowed, when?

Are staff ever alone with kids? Under what circumstances? Why?

How are staff trained to support one another in safe practices and to respectfully challenge fellow staffers who stray from the rules.

What procedures are in place to report concerns and to address an accusation?
Under what circumstance will parents be notified about an allegation?

Know the rules and expectations for behavior

Ask how the program educates kids about rules and expectations around intimate and inappropriate behavior among campers and from staff.

Is there information in materials sent out before the program that clearly describes expectations?
How are romantic relationships and inappropriate sexual advances addressed in orientation?
Beyond orientation, how are kids encouraged to voice concerns every day?
How does the program assure kids that their concerns will be heard and treated seriously?
Model "good boundaries".

Before they leave home, make sure kids clearly understand the importance of recognizing and respecting personal "boundaries"—that imaginary line that marks the border between "you" and "me." A boundary functions like an invisible wall that outlines each person as a separate individual, with distinct likes and dislikes and a clear right to set limits. Like a protective bubble, good boundaries give permission to deflect unwanted feelings, words, images, or physical contact. When boundaries are respected at home, kids are empowered out in the world.

Once you know the rules about things like changing clothes and intimacy among campers, discuss the expectations openly with your children. Clear expectations make it easier for everyone to identify and to talk about violations of that invisible line.
Remind kids that "no" means "no." Then they'll have solid grounds for resisting peer pressure—protecting them both from being victimized and from being drawn into victimizing another child. Respect should play a big part in every family's summer activities, whether kids are at camp, at the beach or in the back yard.

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