ACA PUBLIC POLICY

Camp Security

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In light of today's global security climate, many camps are reviewing and increasing their security measures. Consider your assets and vulnerabilities; your camp visitor policies; the realistic probability of a dangerous occurrence; and your operational, cultural, and building code constraints.

Camp Security Overview

- Camps should assess their security needs annually.
- Camps should assess their level of risk and implement improved security precautions. Consulting with experts and/or hiring a security firm to assist in this effort can be very helpful.
- Camps should create and implement a policy for handling visitors to the camp property.
- Camps should develop a relationship with their local airports if campers arrive by air.
- Camps should develop a relationship with their local law enforcement — including police, sheriff's departments, and/or state troopers.
- Camps should make contact with their state's Homeland Security office.

Camp Security Considerations

Each camp should research its individual needs and liabilities. The following is a checklist of some of the most important considerations. Assess these on your own, or have a security firm or audit assist you:

- Assess the susceptibility of your campers to threats of kidnapping, international terrorism, domestic terrorism, and other dangers. With the help of a professional, consider the threat to your campers.
- Take stock of your land and location. First, assess your need for fencing, lighting, and telephones or cell phones for emergency calls. If your camp is on a large amount of land, ask your security firm how they can patrol or protect the area, especially in areas that cannot be fenced in or that include hundreds of acres. Review the architectural and environmental layout of your buildings in proximity to one another to determine secure and insecure areas. In addition, consider your camp's nearness to cities, roads, or heavily forested areas.
- Design a protocol for handling visitors. Your protocol for parents, whose visits are probably anticipated, will be different from that for sporadic visitors like delivery people.
- Develop protocols for the acceptance and transfer of luggage, mail, and other parcels. Programs whose campers arrive by airplane have to deal with the handling of luggage in the airport. Contact the airport to create safe and low-hassle methods for transporting campers' luggage. Camps may be able to set up an arrangement with the local airport to allow staff to accompany campers to the boarding gate. Staff may then call campers' parents when campers board the plane and again when the plane takes off.
- Assess the quality of security and control present in your facility, especially in the evenings. Some camps employ nighttime officers or guard patrol. Others request that local law enforcement drive by at regular intervals.
- Coordinate with local support systems. A camp might consider allowing local law enforcement to use their land for training when camp is not in session; this helps officers familiarize themselves with the grounds.
- Help parents feel confident. Tell them about the safety and security measures you have in place, but don't undermine your security plan by divulging all the information.

Homeland Security

The office of Homeland Security in your state needs to know where your camp is located. Contact them — talk with them about security issues. Develop an ongoing relationship with them. The Web site www.whitehouse.gov/homeland has a link to help you find out who your governor has appointed as the homeland security contact for your state.

Find the Right Security Firm

If you decide to hire a security firm, consider the following:

- Many security firms claim to specialize in camp security, but select your firm carefully; even these firms don't always understand the issues specific to camps. Paramount among these is the need to maintain the atmosphere of community and wilderness at camp even as you increase security measures.
- Interview several firms and select a professional you have good rapport with, one who either understands camp life or is willing to learn. Watch for firms that want to sell you equipment inappropriate for your camp.
- The best consultants will have experience doing vulnerability assessments and surveys and will look at your facility with the eyes of a perpetrator, considering all the possible ways they might break into your camp or harm your campers, so they might ultimately prevent such occurrences.

Lessons to Be Learned

- Camp staff should be taught to recognize that any unknown person found anywhere on your property is a potential security threat. Establish and implement tight visitor–security policies.
- Measures like substituting existing staff in the role of security staff, for example, are often very economical but are ineffective or are less effective than comprehensive security management.
- Camp directors might be tempted to use low-cost security and should learn from the mistakes of some public schools before making such mistakes themselves.
- Developing relationships with the authorities in your community is imperative.
- Utilize professionals who know about security issues. Their advice and counsel can be invaluable.

Where to Look for Help

- The International Association of Professional Security Consultants: www.iapsc.org
- The American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS): www.asisonline.org
- The Web site of the ASIS magazine, *Security Management*: www.securitymanagement.com
- Department of Homeland Security: www.whitehouse.gov/homeland
- Transportation Security Administration: http://www.tsa.gov
- American Camp Association, *The CampLine*, Spring 2002, www.ACAcamps.org/campline/02o_security.php
- American Camp Association, *The CampLine*, Spring 1999, www.ACAcamps.org/campline/99m_violenceinmycamp.php