

Training Tool Sheet for Staff

Training in Decision Making: Using Real-life Scenarios in Relationship to ACA Standards

Objective: Introduce staff to the concept of ACA accreditation and standards (how it supports and impacts their role at camp)

Materials needed: Standards book (for display); scenarios (cut apart) to give groups; scenarios with standards references—“the answers” for session leader; and flip chart or chalk board, if possible.

Introduction:

Give a BRIEF overview of ACA’s standards and accreditation process

- The mission of the American Camp Association is enriching the lives of children, youth, and adults through the camp experience. (Mission)
- ACA standards are nationally established “best practices” for camps.
- Standards cover nearly all aspects of a camp’s operation—site, transportation, health care, staffing, overall administration, and program.
- All types of camps can seek accreditation—agency, religious, private—day, resident, year-round.
- An individual camp’s policies may be stricter than ACA standards—may be a result of ACA standards—or be a result of (YMCA or other organization) policies.
- Accreditation should complement the camp’s policies and procedures—not be an extra process outside the camp’s training and system. The important thing is that staff KNOW and FOLLOW camp policies and procedures.

Activity: To explore how much staff know about camp policies (and, subsequently, about standards), divide into groups of three to six people, depending on total group size. Tell the staff you are going to give each group a scenario to discuss, based on real-life issues that happened when the director called for help on the ACA Crisis Hotline (even camp directors ask for help!).

List the following five items on a flip chart or post prewritten list; ask groups to discuss the problem and identify:

1. Underlying Issues: What is going on in the scenario? What issues do we need to think about?
2. Training/Policies: What training have they been given in this area? What are camp policies/procedures? What training do they think they may still need?
3. Safety: What are the health and
4. Options: What are the options? How do I decide which option is best? Who can I go to if I’m not sure?
5. Recommend: Based on the above, what are the group’s recommended actions—first steps?

Tell them they’ll have about ten to fifteen minutes to discuss and then each group will report on their recommendations. After ten to fifteen minutes, have groups report—reading the scenario first to the whole group.

As groups identify issues and policies, point out those areas that are also standards requirements (e.g., “By the way, emergency communication is an ACA standard—camps need defined procedures, and training for staff.”). See scenario “answer sheet” for standards references.

Other areas that could be tied into standards—as appropriate:

- “In loco parentis” – standards requirements in day and resident camp are based on the legal concept of the camp being “in place of the parent.”
- Accreditation is an educational process that requires verification every three years, but is expected at all times – by parents, by agencies, by directors, by other staff.

- Directors may ask staff in specialized areas to help organize written materials for an accreditation visit – a great opportunity to update operating procedures for areas.

Wrap-Up:

Emphasize again that policies and procedures are established for reasons (maybe ACA standards, state regulations, agency policy, or camp tradition). Regardless, they serve as a safety net for staff in fulfilling their job responsibilities, so it is important for staff to understand and follow procedures – to provide children with healthy opportunities to discover, explore, grow, and have fun. See the **Scenarios for Group Discussion** on pages 3 and 4.



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Scenarios for Group Discussion

#1 The camp's policy is to send home any camper for use of a controlled substance. A camper tells you that all the other campers in his unit are smoking joints, and to prove it, he shows you a joint. The camper is not in your unit, but is in your best friend's unit.

#2 Your group is scheduled to go canoeing, but when you get down to the lake, you discover that the canoeing specialist has come down with the flu and has gone home. Your campers are really looking forward to canoeing, having already gone through the basic instruction earlier in the week. You learned the routines and safety procedures during pre-camp, so you convince your co-counselor that it's OK to go anyway.

#3 One of your campers panics on a high element at the ropes course. As one of the staff members is trying to talk him down, some of the campers waiting start calling him "wimp" and telling him not to act like a girl. The ropes course staff member joins in the ridicule, hoping to snap him out of it.

#4 As you take your group down to the bus area at the end of the day, one of your campers runs ahead saying "Cool! Dad's here to get me!" He has been riding on the bus all week, but seems really excited to see his father.

#5 During rest hour, your group is quiet and you've got a bad headache. So you leave the program aide in charge to go get something from the nurse. When you return, you discover a water fight in full swing – with the aide in the middle of it.

#6 As your group is returning to the bus from the afternoon at the water park, you discover one camper missing. You had seen her earlier with several other girls, at the snack area. The other girls say she went to the restroom, and they haven't seen her since.

#7 One of your thirteen-year-old campers has confided in you over the summer, grateful to have an older person to talk with about her parents' recent divorce. The girl has said that her mother now works so much she doesn't have much time for the kids. A sixteen-year-old boy in her neighborhood has been paying her much attention and is now pressuring her for more intimacy. She asks you when you first had sex – and if you use birth control.

#8 You have a new assistant for your group of nine and ten-year-olds, as your previous one had a family emergency that will take her out for the rest of the summer. She appears to be pretty comfortable with the kids, but doesn't know much about the camp routines and rules. You're hoping she'll catch on as the week progresses, as you just don't have the time or patience to explain everything.

#9 As you bring your group down for horseback riding; one of the riding staff pulls you aside and says she saw two kids with their clothes off beside the trail. You leave your group with the other counselor and riding staff and go to investigate. You find an eight-year-old girl and an eleven-year-old boy together in the bushes. They are very embarrassed and beg you not to tell anyone.



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Answer Sheet: Scenarios for group discussion; With **standards references noted.**

#1—The camp’s policy is to send home any camper for use of a controlled substance. A camper tells you that all the other campers in his unit are smoking joints, and to prove it, he shows you a joint. The camper is not in your unit, but is in your best friend’s unit.

Personal property regulations—OM-12; Supervision of campers—HR-14; Behavior management—HR-16

#2—Your group is scheduled to go canoeing, but when you get down to the lake, you discover that the canoeing specialist has come down with the flu and has gone home. Your campers are really looking forward to canoeing, having already gone through the basic instruction earlier in the week. You learned the routines and safety procedures during pre-camp, so you convince your co-counselor that it’s OK to go anyway.

Watercraft supervisor qualifications – Youth—*PA -20; Aquatic safety regulations—PA-5

#3—One of your campers panics on a high element at the ropes course. As one of the staff members is trying to talk him down, some of the campers waiting start calling him “wimp” and telling him not to act like a girl. The ropes course staff member joins in the ridicule, hoping to snap him out of it.

Staff/camper interactions—HR-15; Adventure/Challenge staff skill verification—PC-3; Supervision of Adventure/Challenge activity leaders—PC-4; Adventure/Challenge operating procedures—PC-5

#4—As you take your group down to the bus area at the end of the day, one of your campers runs ahead saying “Cool! Dad’s here to get me!” He has been riding on the bus all week, but seems really excited to see his father.

Camper release—OM-19; Arrival and departure procedures—TR-3

#5—During rest hour, your group is quiet and you’ve got a bad headache. So you leave the program aide in charge to go get something from the nurse. When you return, you discover a water fight in full swing – with the aide in the middle of it.

Supervision of campers—HR-14; Camper supervision ratios—HR-9

#6—As your group is returning to the bus from the afternoon at the water park, you discover one camper missing. You had seen her earlier with several other girls, at the snack area. The other girls say she went to the restroom, and they haven’t seen her since.

Campers in public areas—OM-18; Camper supervision off-site—PA-14

#7—One of your thirteen-year-old campers has confided in you over the summer, grateful to have an older person to talk with about her parents' recent divorce. The girl has said that her mother now works so much she doesn't have much time for the kids. A sixteen-year-old boy in her neighborhood has been paying her much attention and is now pressuring her for more intimacy. She asks you when you first had sex – and if you use birth control.

Sensitive issue policy—HR-17; Job training—HR-7

#8—You have a new assistant for your group of nine and ten-year-olds, as your previous one had a family emergency that will take her out for the rest of the summer. She appears to be pretty comfortable with the kids, but doesn't know much about the camp routines and rules. You're hoping she'll catch on as the week progresses, as you just don't have the time or patience to explain everything.

Late-hire training—HR-12; Safety orientation—OM-10

#9—As you bring your group down for horseback riding, one of the riding staff pulls you aside and says she saw two kids with their clothes off beside the trail. You leave your group with the other counselor and riding staff and go to investigate. You find an eight-year-old girl and an eleven-year-old boy together in the bushes. They are very embarrassed and beg you not to tell anyone.

Behavior management—HR-16; Supervision of campers—HR-14

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