

## 2019 ACA's Camp Crisis Hotline – Case Studies and Lessons Learned 800-573-9019

### Categories of Calls

- Health and medical issues 25%
- Personnel/staff issues 19%
- Allegations of child abuse 19%
- Camper Issues 16%
- Business operations issues 11%
- Infestations 4%
- Parent issues 3%
- Miscellaneous/Other 4%

### Most Common Resources Cited

- [ACA's Hotline Resource Page](#)
- [Allegations of Abuse](#)
- [Bullying Prevention](#)
- [Child Abuse Reporting Telephone Numbers by State](#)
- [Crisis Communications Toolkit](#)
- [E-Cigarettes and "Juuling" — What All Camps Need to Know](#)
- [Laws and Regulations Applicable to Camps \(State\)](#)
- [LGBTQ Toolkit including transgender and other gender related resources](#)
- [Lice](#)
- [Mental, Emotional, Social Health Toolkit](#)
- [Understanding a Camp's Right to Search](#)
- [Who's in Charge?](#)

### Crisis Hotline Recommendations for Crisis Preparedness

1. **Develop a working relationship with your insurance company and representative.** Know and understand the limits and coverages afforded your camp by your various insurance policies.
2. **Ensure access to legal counsel.** Consider it an investment. If finances are an issue for retaining legal counsel year-round, consider alternative means of accessing such counsel.
3. **Ensure access to mental health professionals.** Develop relationships with and a network of mental health professionals who are available and willing to be both on site and on call to help with mental, emotional, spiritual, or relationship issues of campers and staff.
4. **Develop a thorough crisis communication plan.** In the event of a serious accident, incident, injury, or infestation, an excellent communications plan is critical.
5. **Review your supervision policies and procedures.** Attentive, active, and involved staff supervision is the key to keeping campers from harming each other.

### Case Study Discussion Questions

For small group discussion, consider:

- What would you do if this happened at your camp?
- Who would you involve in the situation?
- What resources would you want and use?
- What "aha" moment has this provided for you?
- In your opinion, could have this situation been prevented? If so, how?

## Case Studies

1. **Do you want to know a secret?** – It's dismissal day, and a camper makes their way to the camp director because they have a secret they feel an adult should know about. The secret is about a female camper who has already left camp but shared some information with this friend and asked the friend not to tell anyone. The female camper confided that during her time at camp, not one but TWO different male counselors kissed her. The camper sharing this secret with the camp director is reluctant to give any more information about who the female camper is or the names of the male counselors but finally agrees. The camp director worries about taking action when the truth is difficult to determine.
2. **Health Challenges with International Staff** – An international staff person shares once they arrive on site that they have a diagnosed health condition that requires close monitoring and nutritional support. This was not disclosed prior to the start of camp. During the first few weeks of camp, the staff member struggles to manage their condition, leaving other staff members concerned. One evening, they find the international staff member unresponsive and seek emergency medical care. The staff member is treated and returns to camp, but the camp director is concerned about the person's ability to manage their health in a camp setting that is far away from medical care and might not have the on-site medical or nutritional support this person needs. Is this the best camp situation for the health and safety of this individual, and, if not, what can the camp director do about it?
3. **Can't Touch Me** – A parent appears at the camp office to report that her child came home with bruises and marks on his arm caused by a counselor. Upon further discovery, the camp director learns that one of the most popular counselors grabbed the camper's arm in a disciplinary action and was responsible for the marks. The parent was involved in talking with the counselor about the negative impact this had on her child. The counselor believes they were in the right on how they handled the matter. The camp director is worried that taking action to terminate this revered counselor will cause other campers to react adversely and lead additional staff to quit.
4. **Female Staff Supervision of Male Campers** – A camp director calls because the camp is short on male staff and wants to know if they can have female staff persons supervise and stay in a cabin with their six- and seven-year-old boys. There would be a 2:8 ratio of staff to campers. He has already checked with his insurance carrier and knows that nothing is legally prohibiting the female staff from sleeping in the cabin with the boys. Similarly, he already knows that ACA standards do not dictate supervision by gender, only by ratio.
5. **Vaping Comes to Camp!** – A parent of a camper who went home from camp mid-session reports to the camp that her child told her some of his fellow campers were vaping while at camp. The director speaks with his staff and finds none were aware of any vaping activity. According to the parent, one of the vape pens contained Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). The director calls needing assistance in determining whether the camp could search camper belongings and what should they do if they find e-cigarettes regardless of THC? Should the presence of THC change how they handle it?
6. **Parental Rights Dispute Related to Camp Information** – At a day camp, one parent enrolls a camper and fills out all the paperwork listing himself as the only parent/guardian. Additionally, he shows the director a legal document stating that the child's second parent is not to transport the camper, nor is she to have any contact with the child. Two weeks into camp the second parent, who has a letter from a lawyer stating she also has parenting privileges, asks for the registration documents the first parent provided the camp. In addition, she says the camper has a known medical condition and wants to know if the first parent provided that information. The camp is feeling caught in the middle of the parents' dispute and calls looking for advice on next steps.