

Staff Sign-Off—Affidavit Regarding Counselor Conduct and Camper-Counselor Contact*

I certify the following:

- I have read the current year's staff manual as provided to me by [camp name], and I understand the policies and procedures for proper supervision of children, role modeling, child safety (physical and emotional), and curriculum development and instruction.
- I am informed about safety procedures dealing with a variety of camp activities (e.g., the buddy system at aquatics) and when specially trained staffing is required. I have practiced fire, lightning, and evacuation drills and know what to do in case of emergency or missing child. I have also been informed of the camp's procedures on strangers and wildlife.
- I have read all information presented to me in writing, and I have attended orientation sessions where my supervisor or camp administrative personnel further explained the duties and responsibilities of my job.
- I intend to abide by all written and verbal information provided to me, including all personnel policies.

Guidelines for the Discipline of Children

I understand and accept the following:

- Counselors may under no circumstances hit a child.
- Counselors may not use abusive or derogatory language with campers or other counselors.
- Counselors need to ask for help, even if they only think they *might* need it. A staff member who encounters a particularly difficult child will seek the assistance of supervisory staff.
- In all dealings with campers, counselors should strive to *be proactive* as opposed to *reactive*.

Guidelines for Camper-Counselor Contact

I understand and accept that when touching campers, the following guidelines apply:

- Only on the shoulder, upper back, or upper arm and always with an open palm
- Never against a child's will (unless in the case of clear and present danger of the child)
- Never against a child's discomfort, whether expressed verbally or nonverbally
- Only in the company of other adults
- Never when it would have the effect of overstimulating a child
- Never in a place on a child's body that is normally covered by a bathing suit, unless for a clear medical necessity or other emergency, and then *only with supervision by another adult*.

Counselor Responsibility

I understand and accept that I am a caretaker of children:

I understand that there is a clear power difference between the campers and myself (money, mobility, authority, experience, knowledge, different set of rules). I will not abuse that power difference, and I will be aware of the

*The concept and wording of this staff sign-off on orientation was adapted from materials by Bob Ditter and is used by permission. For more information, go to www.bobditter.com.

tendency toward regressive pull. I will always try to retain my supervisory and safety role with campers. If I havetrouble, I will ask for help.

I understand that inappropriate sexual contact with, or physical or emotional abuse of, a camper can have severe emotional and psychological effects on that camper that can last a lifetime. These reactions can be so severe that they require professional intervention, which can be disruptive to the victim's life as well as time-consuming and expensive. Actions of this kind will result in my dismissal and possibly in criminal charges. If I feel at any time that I might hurt a camper (e.g., in anger), I will remove myself from the situation and contact the nearest supervisor.

State Law Pertaining to Child Abuse

I am aware of the following:

- Definition of "mandated reporter"—I must tell my supervisor or the director immediately if I suspect that a camper is being abused or if a camper tells me about abuse, whether that abuse is alleged at camp or elsewhere.
- Purpose of the mandated reporter law
- Clarification that a report is based on *suspicion of abuse*, not proven abuse
- Summary of procedure (time frame, reporting agency, information requested)
- Penalty for not reporting

Further Guidelines for Staff

I also understand and accept the following:

- This camp has a no-bullying environment that condemns teasing, hazing, and any other "initiation" rites that are abusive in any manner—toward campers or counselors.
- Counselors should avoid being alone with campers. Another camper or counselor should be present at all times. Double coverage of campers by adults will be enacted during changing times.
- It is not appropriate for campers and staff members to share a bed or sleeping bag.
- Counselors will set limits with children who "cling" or hang on them.
- Actions such as massages, backrubs, and tickling are cases where campers could become uncomfortable with the touch. Counselors will use extreme caution in any such situations, and counselors will never touch campers without their clothes on (except in case of safety).
- Pillow fights, water tossing, and wrestling matches are examples of actions that can become overstimulating in short time and need to be limited (if not avoided) and carefully supervised.
- Overnights need a minimum of two adult leaders. At least one counselor of the same gender as the campers needs to be present.
- Counselors "sleeping together" on camp or during camp-sponsored overnights is grounds for dismissal.
- Romantic lives of counselors can under no circumstances be shared with campers.
- Adolescents tend to develop hidden or secret romantic fantasies about staff members. Counselors will not encourage these thoughts about themselves or about others and will contact a supervisor if a camper becomes overly attached
- Whatever is done with campers should be done in broad daylight, with company, observable and interruptible; I will pretend I'm on stage in front of 500 camper parents.

Other Instructions

I agree to the following:

- To watch for signs of stress in myself and others as a way of maintaining a safe environment at camp. I will alert my supervisor if I become aware of these signs in myself or in others.
- To alert a supervisor of "at-risk" situations between campers and staff.
- To seek help myself if I feel at risk for hurting, overstimulating, or abusing a camper.
- To ask for more supervision, intervention, or support at any time I might need it.
- To approach the director if I do not feel I am getting what I need from my supervisor.

Furthermore, I am attesting, by signing below with penalty of perjury, to the fact that I have listened to a talk about appropriate conduct between campers and myself, and that I have read over, understood, and accepted the rules, guidelines, and standards of conduct outlined in this document.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Witnessed By