

Call to Action

Bullying is prevalent throughout society, and many people don't even realize they are doing it themselves. Campers have so many examples—from tailgating and aggressive driving to people trying to “beat the system”—they sometimes come to think of it as expected and accepted. Bullying can have deep and long-lasting effects—not only on the camper who is targeted, but also on bystanders who feel less safe. At Camp Illinois, we will continue to aggressively advocate for every child to feel that camp, at least, is an oasis from heartache.

For Camp Illinois, nothing is more important to us than the well-being of our campers. We are vigilant about emotional safety as well as physical safety, about creating a place where children feel safe. Camp Illinois maintains a bully-free environment and does not tolerate teasing behaviors. To that end, we encourage:

- Staff to address every single incident of bullying—whether overt or covert
- Parents to reinforce the camp's anti-bullying policies at home
- Campers to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do, not just because someone might be watching and get them in trouble
- Colleagues in camp and youth development to train their staff, volunteers, and participants in preventing, recognizing (even in themselves), and quickly, actively, and consistently intervening in bullying behaviors
- Neighbors and fellow community members to look for signs of bullying in themselves and others and to put a stop to bullying whenever they see it
- Media outlets to focus on positive persuasion as a means of getting what you want, not encouraging poor behavior such as bullying

Within our own camp community, Camp Illinois will educate our campers and staff on appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Whenever a breach of our anti-bullying policy occurs, we will impose consistent and logical consequences. We will teach our campers new ways to say what they want and new skills in how to cope when they don't get what they want. Where actions are severe, parents will be notified by both the camp and the camper, because we consider ourselves to be partners with parents.

(Include a “silver lining” paragraph, such as the following.)

Camp Illinois is a community where children grow and develop life skills. They learn how to make good decisions and to be responsible for their actions. The camp experience is conducive to practicing social habits that help children become stronger, more compassionate, and better adult members of society. Children learn from their mistakes, they explore methods of being more inclusive, and they realize unequivocally that relational aggression and bullying are not acceptable—each member of our community matters and is important and deserves respect.

At Camp Illinois, we are always looking for ways to improve our campers' sense of safety, and we challenge you to consider your own role in bullying or allowing bullying to happen. Join us in our movement as we make a cultural change and make the world a better place to live.