



Oak Hill Christian Service Camp

8451 Oak Hill Camp Road
Mechanicsville, Virginia 23111
804-779-3050 (O) / 804-819-9612 (C)
www.oakhillcamp.org
[Travis Jones, Camp Manager](#)

GUIDELINES FOR CAMP COUNSELORS

Developed April 2007

Summer camp is an experience that millions of young people enjoy every year. It is also a time in which care taking responsibilities may be transferred from the child's family to others: the camp staff, including the camp counselor. In meeting your care taking responsibilities, you may encounter obstacles. The children placed in your care come from an unknown background; they have had experiences you may not know about; and some will bring problems that you do not have the experience or training to address properly. In spite of these disadvantages, you are in a position to be a source of strength and help to children placed in your care.

What to Do:

At some point, a camper may tell you that someone has molested or abused them. This may have occurred at home or at camp. If this happens, we want you to be prepared to help the child. Follow the guidelines below if a child indicates that they may have been the victim of abuse or exploitation.

DON'T:

- Panic or overreact to the information disclosed by the child.
- Criticize the child or claim that the child misunderstood what happened.
- Put words in the mouth of the camper, let them tell it in their own words.
- Don't bring up the subject or topic as a discussion or in any way try to prompt a discussion of the subject.

DO:

- Become thoroughly familiar with the camp's policy on child abuse, its procedures and implementation.
- Respect the child's privacy. Using the "buddy system" take the child, (with an adult counselor who is the same sex as the child and who can observe,) to a place where they cannot be overheard by campers or counselors. It is important that you discuss the situation with the Camp Manager or the Dean of the week. It should not become a topic of conversation at staff meetings. It is difficult to keep information confidential at camp, but your camper should not have to pay the price for your indiscretion and become the subject of camp gossip.
- Encourage the child to talk to the Camp Manager or the Dean of the Week.
- Make sure the child feels that he or she is not to blame for what happened. Tell the child that no one should tell the child to keep a "special" secret, and that it is okay to talk with appropriate adults about what happened. Try to avoid repeated interviews about the incident, this can be very stressful for the child.

Protecting Yourself Against Accusations of Abuse or Exploitation:

Child abuse is a serious criminal offense. As a camp counselor with the responsibility of caring for children, you may be placed in sensitive situations, making you vulnerable to charges of child abuse. If you take these simple precautions you need not be afraid of groundless accusations.

- Have other staff members present when supervising showers, or in circumstances where campers may be dressing or undressing.
- Respect the privacy of the child, do not become intrusive or curious more than is necessary for to monitor the health and safety of the child.

Oak Hill Christian Service Camp
Counselor Abuse Guidelines

- The child has the right to reject displays of affection if they feel uncomfortable about them. Not every child comes from a background where affection is openly displayed. Respect the child's wishes.
- Protect your own privacy. This is especially important since the counselors share living quarters with the campers. Do not get involved in discussions with campers or other counselors about sexual matters. Do not get involved in pranks that may be interpreted as abusive. The price you may have to pay won't be worth it. You should use common sense in discussing sensitive subjects with your campers, and should not go into detail about your private life.
- Protect yourself against false accusations by using the "Buddy System", where at least one of the counselors ate the same sex as the camper. Always use the designated counseling areas. If you must use another area get permission from the Dean prior to taking the camper to the area.
- Avoid giving and receiving backrubs, letting campers sit on your lap, forward hugs and having "little" boyfriends or girlfriends.

Sexual exploitation should not be confused with physical contacts that are true expressions of affection. A warm and healthy relationship can exist between camper and staff, if staff members respect the child and place reasonable limits on their physical interaction.