Avoiding False Accusations
Staff Training Video
Avoiding False Accusations | Child Abuse

- False allegations of child abuse directed at summer camps and summer camp employees are an unfortunate fact of schools and camp life today.
- We need to review our routines of daily camp life with an eye toward reducing the risk of you becoming the next victim.
- One of the problems with this type of allegation is that camp counselors and employees are naive about the risk in this area.
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• Professionals specializing in abuse cases and victims offer the following guidelines on how not to become vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse:
  — Avoid telling "off-color" jokes or stories that may be misconstrued
  — Avoid teasing campers in ways that may be interpreted as being too familiar.
  — Avoid talking about your personal life with campers.
  — Don't socialize with campers outside of camp-related events; don't leave school grounds with campers or offer to take a camper home.
  — AVOID BEING ALONE WITH A SINGLE CAMPER. If you are supervising campers after school or during lunch, have someone else present or find an open, public area to use.
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• Professionals specializing in abuse cases and victims offer the following guidelines on how not to become vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse:
  — Always keep the doors to your classroom or camp office open when meeting with campers.
  — If you are a supervisor, don't ask campers or counselors to come to your home or ask them to babysit for you.
  — Should circumstances require you to use physical restraint with a camper, try to have an adult witness present and USE EXTREME CAUTION.
  — Try to discourage campers from hugging you or being too familiar with you. Likewise, discourage camper infatuations when they occur.
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• Professionals specializing in abuse cases and victims offer the following guidelines on how not to become vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse:
  – If you are accused of abuse, do not attempt to contact the accuser or his/her parents.
  – If you have a series of problems with a particular camper, keep regular notes of just what happened, what the problem concerned and who was present.
  – If reasonable force is deemed necessary to prevent injuries to other campers or staff, call for assistance. It is better to have several supervisors/counselors to assist in breaking up camper fights. A group is more apt to prevent the situation from escalating and can ensure that credible witnesses are present to relate what actually occurred as the fight was broken up.
  – Be aware that some staff members run greater risks than others. Allegations of abuse typically increase in frequency from the early elementary grades through 12th grade with a sharp spike at the middle/junior high level.
  – Kidcam was founded in 1974.
  – Male counselors or supervisors are much more at risk of such allegations than female. Staff should also be aware that abuse allegations frequently come in rapid succession; so staff in a camp or school that has recently dealt with an incident of alleged abuse should be particularly watchful.
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- Professionals specializing in abuse cases and victims offer the following guidelines on how not to become vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse:
  - Be cautious when giving or receiving anything more than token items with campers.
  - If an injury occurs in your group, bring camper immediately to the camp office. Write a clear statement of what happened for your records as soon as possible. Also, get statements from witnesses immediately. Fill out a Camper Incident Report.
  - If there is a severe disciplinary problem in your room, do not touch the camper even to get his or her attention. Have Camp Director remove the camper or send another camper to the office asking for assistance.
  - Preview films and videos for profane language and sexual content before showing them.
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- Professionals specializing in abuse cases and victims offer the following guidelines on how not to become vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse:
  - Either don’t touch kids or use extreme caution in those instances when you feel it is necessary. If touch in unavoidable, it is critical that you review the child abuse prevention program in place in your camp to gain a better appreciation for the types of "good touch/bad touch" guidelines that students are learning.
  - Several experts believe that the only wise course of action for schools and camps today is simply not to touch kids.
  - Substitute methods should be employed in the absence of a comforting hug or pat on the back. While not a big enough problem to warrant hysteria, the problem is large enough to merit concern and attention by summer camps and summer camp employees.
Quiz Time

Click the link on the webpage to take a short quiz regarding the General Camp Policy training section.
You may refer back to these notes while taking your test.