

# Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Training for Camp Counselors

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Ohio 4-H Camping Programs use 14-18 year old youth as camp counselors in Ohio 4-H day and overnight camping programs. The best practice training requirement for Ohio 4-H camp counselors is 24 hours of camp counselor training, including a minimum of 6 hours on-site. Placing the health and well-being of campers in the hands of teenagers requires extra emphasis on risk management topics. Child abuse training related to prevention and reporting is one of the key subjects covered in-depth with teens. Identifying appropriate, interactive, relevant ways to teach this concept is essential to comprehension and operationalization by camp counselors. The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide educators with an overview of the Camp Counselor Child Abuse Training Curriculum and how to best utilize it in their county programs.

## Why is this training important to you as an 4-H Professional?

Camp is the #1 risk activity Ohio 4-H offers. There is endless opportunity for injury to a person, property, and/or reputation to yourself, your program, and to The Ohio State University. It's a gamble 4-H professionals will continue to take because they watch counselors and campers grow and learn exponentially right before their eyes at camp year after year. Ohio 4-H professionals are not going to stop going to camp. Therefore, the challenge becomes, assessing our areas of greatest liability and responding by providing quality training to those who are directly and indirectly responsible for handling these matters.

Specifically this training seeks to educate camp counselors so that they are able to:

- Be aware of and more comfortable with the topic of abuse.
- Take steps to prevent abuse from happening at camp.
- Recognize signs and types of abuse.
- Present appropriate responses in the event a child discloses abuse or abuse is discovered.
- Know the steps to take in order to report child abuse.



*13361 campers went to camp in Ohio 4-H in 2015. Camp should be a safe place. This training helps keep everyone safe and also helps share information about what is needed to get some kids the help they need.*

## What are the goals of this training?

4-H professionals are extremely intentional with how they spend their time training camp counselor because the amount of time they have to teach something about so many topics is limited. Therefore, 4-H professionals need to make certain the training they do is both an efficient and effective use of their time. The components used in this training are designed to be able to be used individually or in a progressive manner. No matter what, the goals stay the same. The learning objectives of this training are to:

- Provide constitutional and operational definitions of types of abuse.
- Offer examples of what each type of abuse might look like in a camp setting.
- Outline the expectations for reporting in a camp setting.
- Deliver applied-learning opportunities for real-world camp scenarios.

This training seeks to provide Ohio 4-H camp counselors with both the content and context for child abuse prevention and reporting at camp.



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## What's included in the training?

This curriculum seeks to provide all the pieces necessary to thoroughly cover the camp counselor child abuse training. The following tools are included in the curriculum:

### 1. Camp Counselor Child Abuse Training

- Powerpoint with abuse definitions of the four types of abuse and what to look for at camp for each
- Complete with talking points for 4-H professionals

### 2. Parent Letter

- Modifiable letter explaining content and significance of training to parents.

### 3. Interactive Learning Scenarios

- 20 scenarios, five scenarios for each of the four types of abuse and how it could personified in a camp setting in both powerpoint and discussion card format.
- Discussion questions for each scenario and approved answers and responses.

### 4. Child Abuse Jeopardy

- Jeopardy powerpoint with questions related to the child abuse training powerpoint.

### 5. Evaluation

- Tool to help 4-H professionals understand what impact the training has had on camp counselor's knowledge of child abuse and readiness to handle the situation.

## Child Abuse Training Scenario Example

**Explain in detail how you would react to the following situation:**

Some of the veteran kids in your cabin decide to initiate the first year campers. They want to have them drink a strange concoction as well as perform some other stunts that will make them look silly. It seems like it would all be in good fun and no one should get hurt.

- **How do stunts like this impact the camp environment?**
  - a. Important points to hit on are:
    - i. Perceptions of parents and supporters
    - ii. Does this create a welcoming environment for campers?
    - iii. Even something that may seem innocent can set an example that other instances of hazing or initiation are acceptable.
- **What action should you take? Does it matter if it seems like everyone is okay with it?**
  - a. The situation needs to be stopped immediately.
  - b. Hazing or initiation is never ok, even if everyone seems to be ok with it.
- **What are some ways to proactively handle the veteran/first-timer cabin dynamics?**
  - a. Veterans might be assigned as mentors to first time campers. This might give them more of an honor/responsibility as opposed to a position of power.
  - b. Stress to campers and counselors that everyone is on an equal playing field. Do not focus on different levels or allow different privileges for certain groups of campers. If you do offer something for last year campers or a certain group try to limit those events and make sure it is seen as an honor that others want to strive to achieve.

## Tips from the Pros

- Make the sacrifice of time in your camp counselor training schedule to thoroughly cover this topic. It's not something that you can skim over briefly and expect your camp counselors to take seriously. Remember, it not only will save you paperwork and legal hassles, but it could save a child's life.
- Help camp counselors become comfortable talking about child abuse so that they can become lifelong advocates for children.
- Let parents of camp counselors know that this topic in advance. Encourage parents to talk to their teens about what they learned.

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## Further Resources

*Suggested websites and programs for further information on child abuse prevention and reporting:*

**Ohio State University's Activities and Programs with Minor Participants:**

<http://hr.osu.edu/public/documents/policy/policy150.pdf>

**Ohio Children Services:**

<https://ifs.ohio.gov/ocf/childprotectiveservices.stm>

**OSU Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Cards**

*For further training, attend the 4-H Camp Program Director's Training held in the Fall each year—organized by the Ohio 4-H Camping Specialist in collaboration with the Ohio 4-H Camping Design Team*

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