

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect:

Training for Camp Counselors

Scenarios Answer Key



Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Sexual Abuse

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

As a camp counselor, you witness one of your peers being overly touchy feely with the campers.

- **What are the reasons that this situation is a problem?**
 - a. *Camp Counselors need to maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries at all times.*
 - b. *Families have different lines of acceptable touch and at camp we need to be as careful as possible not to cross those lines.*
 - c. *Just because the interaction seems okay between those two individuals, it might make others uncomfortable.*
 - d. *Counselor need to model appropriate touching between one another and also with campers so that campers know what is expected of their behavior.*
- **What should you do immediately?**
 - a. *Immediately stop the activity in a discrete manner, for example, call the camp counselor over to help you with something.*
 - b. *Then you could remind them about the boundaries rule. If you are uncomfortable doing this, you could explain what you interrupted to an adult and they could speak to the counselor.*
- **Is this something you can just take care of yourself?**
 - a. *Although this is something you could initially take care of yourself, it's a good idea to mention it to an adult staff member so that they can monitor it in the future and also*

have further conversations with the camp counselor if they think it is necessary.



Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Sexual Abuse

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

In a discussion with a few campers in your cabin, one of the girls states that she was touched inappropriately by a family member. She says it in passing, not really giving much detail. The other kids don't really know how to react so they just go on talking about something else.

- **What are three things you must do?**
 - a. *Allow the conversation to move on to another topic so that the conversation does not continue in front of other campers.*
 - b. *Talk to your camp director about what you heard soon after the conversation.*
 - c. *Do not tell anyone else about what you heard.*
- **What are important things to share when retelling this story to the camp director?**
 - a. *Details about what exactly the child said: who, when, where, with what, how often, does anyone else know or has anything been done about it already*
 - b. *Any other relevant facts you know about the child from getting to know him/her throughout the week*
 - c. *Do not share your opinion or what you might think about the situation*
- **What is the best way to handle this for the other campers in your cabin who heard the camper make the statement?**

- a. *If the conversation progresses without anyone saying or asking anything then you should let it go.*
- b. *If you hear something brought up about it again or even later in the week you could say, “That’s something private going on in ____ life that we need to respect. The right adults know about it and will work hard to make sure that ____ is safe.”*



Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Sexual Abuse

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

At night in your cabin, your campers begin talking about some of the other campers and counselors that they would like to dance with at the upcoming dance. One of the campers begins talking about one of the other campers in a sexual way. Some of the things that the camper is talking about seem very advanced for a junior high camper.

- **What are three things you should do in that moment?**
 - a. *Immediately stop the conversation.*
 - b. *You should address that we do not talk about topics like that at 4-H camp.*
 - c. *Provide an easy transition to something else you are excited about regarding the night’s activities or something else at camp. Make it easy for the campers to talk about something else.*
- **What are three things you shouldn’t do?**
 - a. *Do not chime in about what you like or dislike about someone in a sexual way or offer anything about your relationship status or preferences.*
 - b. *You should not shame the kids for being interested in talking about dating, sexual topics, etc. It might be okay at home, but it’s just not a topic for camp.*
 - c. *You should not correct the info they are sharing.*
 - d. *You should not blow it up into a big deal. Try and encourage different conversation after you stop the topic.*

- Who is it appropriate to tell about this conversation?
 - a. *The only person(s) you can tell about this conversation would be your camp director at your earliest opportunity.*



Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Sexual Abuse

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

A female camper comes to you during camp and says that a male camper is pushing himself on her even though she has asked him repeatedly to stop.

- What is your immediate action towards the male camper?
 - a. *It depends on where the male camper is in that moment compared to the female camper. Ideally, he would be engaged in another activity at the moment and you would have time to take the camper with you to find the camp director and have her repeat what she said directly to the camp director to deal with.*
 - b. *If not and the male camper is around the female camper in that moment, you should get an adult (if possible) or another camp counselor and ask them to go get the male camper and wait with him while you go find the camp director with the female camper.*
 - c. *This is a much bigger issue than a counselor should try to handle on his/her own. The counselor should not try and talk to the campers about the situation on his/her own.*
- Who is acceptable to tell about the conversation you had with the female camper? Who are people it is not acceptable to tell?
 - a. *The only person it is acceptable to tell is your camp director.*
- What are the first things you say to the female camper?

- a. *Thank you for trusting me with this. We are going to have to go talk to the camp director. We will make sure you are safe.*
- b. *Do not promise to keep it a secret. Do not say the male camper will get punished. Do not say you don't believe her.*



Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Sexual Abuse

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

You see a male camp staff member giving a long back massage to a female camp counselor during down time.

- **Does it matter whether the camp counselor looks comfortable or not?**
 - a. *No, it doesn't. Camp Counselors need to model appropriate touching at all times.*
- **Does it matter if this is out in the open with a bunch of people around or not?**
 - a. *No, it doesn't. Camp Counselors need to model appropriate touching at all times.*
- **What are reasons this situation is a problem?**
 - a. *Camp Counselors need to model appropriate touching at all times.*
 - b. *Different people are comfortable with different levels of touching. Whether the camp counselors are showing it or not doesn't truly mean both parties are okay with it.*
 - c. *Even if the touching isn't happening to them, it might make other people uncomfortable, scared that it might happen to them, or that they might get asked to do that to someone else.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Physical Abuse

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

On the way to the pool, you notice several bruises on the back of one of your campers. One of the bruises has a distinct shape that seems odd to you.

- What are important details to pay attention to and tell the camp director?
 - a. *Where are the bruises? Are they like a shape? What color? How many? Did the camper say anything?*
- What conversation (if any) should you have with this camper?
 - a. *Maybe call them next to you and say: Hey, camper, those bruises look pretty nasty. How did you get those?*
 - i. *If they answer with something like “while bike riding” you can follow up with another question about bike riding and see if their story seems legit. Either way you still need report what the child says.*
 - ii. *If they answer with something more graphic about abuse you should say, “Hey, camper, I’m sorry to hear about that. I want to hear more about it, can we talk later today?” Then go tell the camp director.*
- What should you not do?
 - a. *Ask them if they got the bruises from a beating or provide any other suggested means of getting it.*
 - b. *Ask details if they confide. Your job is not to investigate.*
 - c. *Embarrass them in front of their friends.*
 - d. *Promise that you won’t tell anyone.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Physical Abuse

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

While playing a game with pool noodles, one camper becomes very aggressive and begins forcefully hitting another camper with the pool noodle.

- What specific language and action would you use to stop the game?
 - a. *Woah! Let's take a break!*
 - b. *Let's review the point of camp—have fun and make new friends. Sometimes we do that by playing fun games. We need to remember that these games are meant to be fun. If people are getting hurt it's no longer fun!*
 - c. *Review the rules of the game.*
 - d. *Address self-control and aggression during games can get out of hand but that we need to play within the rules in order to keep playing and keep everyone safe.*
- Is stopping the situation enough?
 - a. *At a minimum, a follow up conversation needs to happen with that camper, or even all campers, about self-control and aggressiveness during games.*
 - b. *Mentioning the interaction to the camp director is a good idea so they can be alert to other potential situations where the camper might get out of hand.*
- What are things you need to consider when reflecting on the situation? What do you need to consider for the rest of the camp?
 - a. *Did you do your best to set the game up to be non-aggressive? Were the campers mature enough to handle a potentially aggressive game? Were there enough rules and guidelines and were they clearly explained? Did this happen at a time in the schedule when the campers were already amped up? Did other factors play into the camper interacting that way? Lastly, could something be going on outside of camp that made the camper react that way?*
 - b. *Do we need to reconsider other activities we have planned because this camper/other campers aren't handling games like this well?*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Physical Abuse

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

While packing up to go home, one of your campers tells you a story about getting beaten up after school every day and his brother often steps in save him. He is dreading leaving camp and is worried about going back to school in the fall.

- What are things you should and should not say?
 - a. *Should: Thank you for trusting me with this. How do you feel? We are going to have to tell the Camp Director. We will do our best to keep you safe. Everyone at camp loves and supports you. Tell me more about it.*
 - b. *Should Not: It's no big deal. You don't have to go back. Your parents must not care. I won't tell anyone. Did they do _____ (fill in examples for them to just say yes to).*
- What do you do next?
 - a. *Go tell the Camp Director.*
- What are other factors you need to consider when reacting?
 - a. *Who else is around?*
 - b. *What else is going on with that child?*
 - c. *What were his/her interactions like with other campers at camp?*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Physical Abuse

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

In your cabin, one of your campers tells a story about his sister hitting him at home.

- **What are things you should and should not say?**
 - a. *Should: Thank you for trusting me with this. How do you feel? We are going to have to tell the Camp Director. We will do our best to keep you safe. Everyone at camp loves and supports you. Tell me more about it.*
 - b. *Should Not: It's no big deal. You don't have to go back. Your parents must not care. I won't tell anyone. Did they do _____ (fill in examples for them to just say yes to).*
- **What is important to tell the camp director?**
 - a. *Specifically what the camper said. Later you can add more information you might have gathered throughout the week but that does not go in the immediate report. You need to share when the child told you, where you were, who was around, what specifically she/he said, and specifics as best you can remember. Do not exaggerate, share opinion, add non-factual details, such as assumptions or rumors.*
- **What should you do if his sister is at camp?**
 - a. *Make certain that the two do not have an opportunity to interact alone while at camp.*
 - b. *Do not bring it up with the sister.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Emotional Abuse

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

During your group meetings, several of the campers are misbehaving (being loud, not listening and goofing off). One of the other counselors takes them off to the side and begins yelling at them very loudly and aggressively. The campers are being belittled and made fun of in this reprimand.

- **What action should you take?**
 - a. *The key point is to stop the action immediately. Try to stop the interaction without further escalating or bringing attention to the situation.*
 - i. *Focus on stopping the action at this point, you can deal with the other counselor's inappropriate actions at a later time.*
 - ii. *Should intervene and say: Ok campers, I know you're having fun, but we have some things we need to get done and you are being very disrespectful. Let's rejoin the group and finish our meeting.*
 - iii. *Should not say: Hey, (Counselor Name), you need to stop yelling at them like that they're just having fun...it's not a big deal.*
 - b. *Once you have handled the situation immediately, then you can talk to the counselor about his/her actions explaining that it not necessary to yell aggressively and it is never acceptable to belittle the campers.*
- **Is this something you can handle on your own?**
 - a. *Depending on the severity of the situation, you may be able to stop the action and redirect the counselor to deal with it in a better way. However, this is something that you would want to bring to the attention of the camp director so that they can monitor future interactions and talk to the counselor if necessary.*
- **What are acceptable ways to handle the misbehavior?**
 - a. *One option might be to get the other counselor's attention and ask to talk to them. If this does not stop the situation, you may need to be more forceful, but never physical unless someone is endangering themselves or others.*
 - b. *If you are not able to stop the situation yourself, seek help from a staff member or the camp director.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Emotional Abuse

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

During various camp activities, you notice that one particular group of campers is being very mean to another camper. They make fun of her a lot in front of others, won't include her in their group and put her down constantly.

- **What action should you take? What words do you use?**
 - a. *You want to try to stop the action without bringing further attention to the girl who is being made fun of.*
 - i. *Sometimes simply stating that the action is not appropriate will put a stop to the immediate situation.*
 - ii. *Then you can pull the group of campers that are being mean aside and talk to them about their actions*
 - 1. *Use feeling statements such as "How would it make you feel if someone said these things to you," to help them understand why these actions are not appropriate.*
- **Is this something you can handle on your own?**
 - a. *Initially, you may be able to handle this on your own if the actions do not continue after you intervene. However, if actions continue, you may need to talk to the camp director and set up a meeting with the group.*
 - i. *Even if you are able to handle the situation on your own, you still need to keep the camp director informed of what is going on. This could be something that the camp director would receive a call about from parents after camp and they will want to be aware of the situation.*
- **What are positive ways you can use your influence as a camp counselor to impact the way this camper is treated?**
 - a. *One of the best ways that you can help to influence the situation is to be a positive example and model positive actions. You can include the camper that is being bullied and make it clear that these actions are not acceptable.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Emotional Abuse

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.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Emotional Abuse

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

At your camp closing ceremony, you do an activity where everyone shares positive compliments about one another. One of your campers starts crying. When you attempt to console him he says, “No one has ever said nice things like this about me before.”

- **What factors do you consider in your response?**
 - a. *Consider how your response is going to make the camper feel. You don't want to make them feel worse. You may want to ask questions in the course of discussions such as:*
 - i. *Use encouraging words to continue to build their self-esteem. In the course of that discussion you might ask questions such as “What makes you say that?”*
 - 1. *These kinds of questions may give you a little more information about why they would say something like this.*
- **Is this something you can handle on your own?**
 - a. *This may be an initial discussion that you can handle on your own, but you want to make sure that you let the camp director know what took place in the conversation so that they can decide if a further response is needed.*
- **Why are activities like this positive? What can make them challenging?**
 - a. *Activities like this are important to building a positive camp atmosphere, allowing for reflections and encouraging youth to apply what they have learned.*
 - b. *However, activities like this often break down walls and lead to over-sharing or may make youth that are not receiving as many positive comments feel left out.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Neglect

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

You discover that one of the kids in your cabin is not taking showers at camp and does not change their clothes regularly. They seemed to have a strange smell when they arrived at camp and it is getting worse as the week goes on.

- **What are factors you need to consider when assessing the situation?**
 - a. *Not everyone has the same shower habits. Some kids may not shower as often as others. However, kids are also more active at camp and are going to sweat more.*
 - b. *There may be other factors that are affecting the camper not taking a shower.*
 - i. *They may feel uncomfortable showering in a public shower or have issues with the cleanliness of the shower.*
 - ii. *They may have forgotten necessary shower supplies such as soap, towels, etc. and are afraid to ask.*
- **What action do you take? What words do you use to handle the situation?**
 - a. *Ask questions before making assumptions. NEVER intentionally embarrass a child. Be discreet in your inquiries.*
 - b. *Talk to the group as a whole as opposed to singling out a specific child. (i.e. Remind everyone they need to make sure they take a shower. Determine who is taking morning or evening showers so that everyone will commit to a time).*
 - c. *Utilize the camp director if necessary.*
- **How do you help the other campers deal with the situation?**
 - a. *Make sure that they are not making fun of other campers. The best way that you can do this is by being a good example. Explain to them that not everyone has the same daily habits.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Neglect

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

You find a bunch of leftover camp food spilling out of a camper's bag in your cabin.

- **What are other things to consider before reacting?**
 - a. *Do not accuse them or overreact.*
 - b. *Ask questions to inquire about why they have food in their bag.*
 - c. *Be discreet; do not say anything to them in front of others.*
 - d. *This very well could not be neglect. Campers could be planning a night time party in the cabin or that camper might have not brought snacks with them and was feeling left out.*
- **What immediate action do you take?**
 - a. *Identify the camper that has the food.*
 - b. *Find a time to talk to the camper about the food without bringing attention to the situation.*
- **Who is it acceptable to tell?**
 - a. *Talk to the camp director about the situation.*
 - i. *Together you may talk to other counselors to find out if this is a pattern anyone else has noticed.*
 - b. *Do not share this information with other counselors or campers that are not involved with the situation.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Neglect

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

You see a camper at your table secretly wrapping food up and put it in their pockets several days.

- **What are other things to consider before reacting?**
 - a. *Do not accuse them or overreact.*
 - b. *Ask casual questions to inquire about why they have food in their bag. (i.e. You saving that for later?)*
 - c. *Be discreet; do not say anything to them in front of others.*
 - d. *This very well could not be neglect. Perhaps the camper is taught at home to not be wasteful and didn't want to waste their food.*
- **What immediate action do you take?**
 - a. *Identify the child that put the food in their bag.*
 - b. *Talk to the camp director about the situation.*
- **Who is it acceptable to tell?**
 - a. *Talk to the camp director about the situation.*
 - i. *Together you may talk to other counselors to find out if this is a pattern anyone else has noticed.*
 - b. *Do not share this information with other counselors or campers that are not involved with the situation.*

Camp Child Abuse Scenarios

Neglect

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

All the campers have been picked up from camp except one girl from your cabin. She tells you “It’s okay, this happens all the time.”

- **How do you respond to that statement?**
 - a. *Inquire with further questions (i.e. Why would you say that?)*
 - b. *Ask them who is picking them up and where that person would be coming from (i.e. home, work, etc.)*
 - c. *Reassure them that all parents get busy and are sometimes running late.*
 - d. *Let them know that you (or the camp director) will stay there with them until their parents arrive.*

- **What should you do while you wait?**
 - a. *Continue to make small talk that may give you more information about the situation at home.*
 - b. *Try to get away to mention this to the camp director without others hearing you.*
 - c. *Listen for other comments that may give you more insight into the comment/situation.*
 - d. *Understand that this could just be a passing comment and not an issue of neglect.*

- **Who should you tell about this comment?**
 - a. *Talk to the camp director about the situation.*
 - i. *Together you may talk to other counselors to find out if this is a pattern anyone else has noticed.*
 - ii. *Do not share this information with other counselors or campers that are not involved with the situation.*