

Policies and practices that prevent abuse or neglect and keep children and staff safe at camp

Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Policy

As a staff person at Camp Mechuwana, you are a Mandated Reporter required to report any alleged abuse that is reported or suspected to the Department of Health & Human Services.

There are four categories of child abuse: Physical, Sexual, Emotional, and Neglect.

To make sure we are up to date in regard to being a mandated reporter, we are required to complete the Mandated Reporter training (done every four years). You may do this online. After you complete the training, you will be able to print out a certificate. For those who cannot do this online, we are able to offer this training at camp.

Camper Interaction

The Rule of Three. One-on-one and camper/staff interaction. Mechuwana tries very hard to create a safe environment for everyone: staff, adult counselors, and youth. In order to do this, we follow the “**Rule of Three.**” This simply means: **Never be alone with a camper/youth.** If there is need for a one-on-one interaction with a camper/youth, you should be in **Auditory and Visual** (sound and sight) range of others. This way you can still have a conversation but not be alone with a camper or youth.

Helpful Guidelines:

- We are here for you. Asking for help whenever you feel overwhelmed as a counselor is the right thing to do. It not only will help you in the long run, it will help the campers.
- Be understanding and compassionate. Strive to make all situations positive ones.
- Set rules and guidelines for your cabin and for your camp. This should be seen as a way of living together so everyone can have fun and be safe and should not be seen as negative.
- Discipline consistently and without judgment. Do so with the individual’s and group’s best interest in mind. Everything situation is a “teachable moment.”

Physical Contact at Camp

ALWAYS at the discretion of the recipient. Ask permission, read verbal and nonverbal cues, and keep the following in mind:

- A comforting touch on the arm, shoulder, or upper back is allowed with the child’s consent.
- Hugs must be camper-initiated with brief, limited contact; side hugs are preferable.
- Any contact should be in the company or line of sight of other staff members.
- Contact should never be in a place on a child’s body that is normally covered by a bathing suit.
- The exception of this is a medical necessity, done for a medical reason by trained staff.

Specific Policies for Protection of Children/Staff

Physical: Mechuwana will provide safe facilities and supervised activities. Basic comforts of food, lodging, and sanitation are provided while at camp. Behavior of physical aggression is never tolerated. Personal boundaries are enforced at all times.

Mental/Emotional: Emotional wellbeing is very important to us. Being positive, non-threatening, and compassionate of different personalities and backgrounds is vital. Bullying/hazing is not tolerated in any form. Always ask for help if you feel a camper needs emotional or mental help to deal with situations at camp or in their life outside of camp.

Social Media/Electronics: Staff may not post photos of campers on any social media platform (even if given permission by the camper). Ask Camp Director for clarification or if you have questions concerning sharing photos.

Photographs: Designated photographers may take photos of program participants if the parents/guardians have given the camp written permission to photograph their camper. Posting promotional photos will only be done on Mechuwana's official social media accounts with permission.

Relevant Topics Covered in Staff Training

- Positive Interaction with Campers
- Behavior Management
- Appropriate Discipline at Camp
- Recognizing Bullying
- Sensitive Issues and How to Talk about Them

Mechuwana Safe Sanctuary Policy

Introduction: The Safe Sanctuary Policy is actually a series of policies that we implemented in order to make Mechuwana a safe place for everyone. Our Volunteer Handbook, Dean Handbook, and Staff Handbook go into more detail with regard to day-to-day procedures, but the following nine points make up our Safe Sanctuary Policy:

1. All volunteers or staff members must fill out an application, provide at least two references, and be interviewed.
2. All volunteers and staff members must sign an American Camping Association "Disclosure Form."
3. All volunteers and staff members must have a criminal background check done, which includes a check of all "Registered Sex Offenders" of every state.
4. All volunteers must take the State of Maine Mandated Reporter training. This may be done online. The camp also provides a printed version and/or training for those who cannot do this online.
5. **One-on-one and camper/staff interaction.** Mechuwana tries very hard to create a safe environment for everyone: staff, adult counselors, and youth. To do this, we follow the "**Rule of Three**," which simply means: **Never be alone with a camper/youth.** If there is need for a one-to-one interaction with a camper/youth, you should be in **Auditory and Visual** (sight and sound)

range of others. In this way you can still have a conversation but not be alone with a camper or youth. The **“Rule of Three” is a Camp Mechuwana policy that must be followed by all groups using camp property.**

6. We strongly suggest you do everything in groups as that is the best way to protect everyone involved.
7. **Sexual harassment is defined as:** “The use of one’s authority or power, either explicitly or implicitly, to coerce another into unwanted sexual relations or to punish another for their refusal; or the creation of an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment through verbal or physical conduct or a sexual nature.” (US Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Definition)

Mechuwana is a place where children and adults come to have a fun and relaxing time. It is also a place at which all people should feel safe and respected. If someone is feeling harassed or uncomfortable, then Mechuwana is no longer a “safe” environment for this person. We want to ensure that we are providing a caring Christian experience for each and every person at camp.

8. **Anyone witnessing behavior that they feel breaks these regulations must report what they have witnessed to a Dean or to Camp Director *immediately*.**
9. **Report suspected abuse or neglect or other violation to appropriate designated authorities.**
 - If you suspect abuse or neglect, please contact the Camp Director, camp nurse, or your dean. We will assist you in the correct reporting to the appropriate authorities.
 - As an organization we are also obligated to report allegations of abuse or neglect made against our staff.

Reporting When and How: Remember your mandated reporter training

Please immediately share with your Dean or Camp Director:

- Interactions, discussions, or conversations that you observe or are made aware of that violate any of the above guidelines by staff or campers.
- Interactions, discussions, or conversations that are overheard or disclosed to you by a child about themselves or someone else that involves any of the information on abuse.
- Interactions, discussions, or conversations that you observe or are made aware of that seem strange, suspicious, uncomfortable, or unsafe for campers or staff.

If you ever have a question about whether or not you should report, talk to your Dean, the Camp Director, or the camp nurse, and we can help sort things out. Never feel you are doing the wrong thing by bringing it to our attention.

The reporting of suspected abuse or neglect or other violations to the appropriate designated authorities:

- Camp staff are required to report any incidents of child abuse to Mechuwana’s executive director, in accordance with its licensing requirements and training.
- Mechuwana’s executive director or designee is then required to report suspected child abuse to the DHHS Mandated Reporter Hotline (1-800-452-1999), in accordance with 22 MRS § 4011-A (1)(A)(14).

- This mandated reporter hotline is the intake line at DHHS Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS). OCFS Intake then forwards those reports from Mechuwana’s executive director to the OCFS Out of Home (OOH) Investigation Unit, when any abuse is reported to take place outside of the home. (If inside the home, then the Intake would refer to DHHS Child Protective Services.) The DHHS Out of Home Investigation Team (OOH Unit) will conduct child abuse investigations at youth camps, in accordance with 22 MRS Chapter 1071, Subchapter 18.
- In accordance with 22 MRS §§ 4099-K(4) and 4099-L (2)(C), OOH will coordinate with licensing agencies like the Maine CDC Health Inspection Program (HIP) in performing its investigation when the setting is licensed. Upon receipt of notification from OOH, HIP will perform follow-up steps and work to ensure that the camp is not in violation of licensing rules related to this reported incident, like hiring of staff, ratios of staff to campers, appropriate age of staff, training of staff, and confirmation that camps are establishing and training staff on policies to protect campers from child abuse and to report incidents, should the staff observe anything.
- In summary, and in tandem to any required reporting to law enforcement, a youth camp is meeting its licensing requirements for reporting suspected child abuse by contacting the DHHS Mandated Reporter Hotline. That agency will reach out to HIP as part of its investigative work to alert licensing agencies.

The youth camp’s course of action if allegations of abuse or neglect are made against the youth camp or its staff:

- At the first report of abuse or suspicion of abuse, the staff person receiving the information will notify Mechuwana’s executive director.
- Mechuwana’s executive director or proxy will make a report in accordance with relevant state and local reporting requirements and will cooperate with any legal authority involved.
- The staff member who reported will receive written verification that the report was filed/not filed with the State within 24 hours. If the staff member is not satisfied with the decision, they may make the report themselves (unless they are a minor).
- If the reported incident(s) allege that a program volunteer or employed staff was involved in the abuse, Mechuwana’s executive director will, without exception, suspend the volunteer or staff person from the camp. The parents or legal guardian of the child(ren) involved in the alleged incident will be promptly notified in accordance with the directions of the relevant state and/or local agency. If Mechuwana’s executive director is reported to be involved, the Bishop will take over these responsibilities while Mechuwana’s executive director is suspended and investigated.
- Reinstatement of the employed staff person *may* occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of Mechuwana’s executive director.
- All camp staff and volunteers must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of this information and, therefore, should only discuss the incident with the designated staff team and any and all outside authorities.

The youth camp’s grievance procedures for staff, parents, or guardians regarding alleged abuse or neglect:

Protocol for Complaints

When a serious verbal complaint (which may include but is not limited to abusive or violent acts or language, sexual harassment, or discrimination based on membership in a protected class, or gross negligence resulting in injury) is made by a participant, employee, or other party regarding inappropriate conduct, the following actions will be taken:

- (1) Mechuwana's executive director will obtain a written statement from the person making the complaint within 48 hours, specifying the details of any incident, behavior, other persons present, etc. If no written statement is made, no further action is needed. Upon receipt of a written complaint, statements will also be taken from all parties with first-hand knowledge of the allegation.
- (2) After Mechuwana's executive director has received the written complaint, they shall respond in writing to the complainant, informing the complainant that a complaint has been received and that an investigation will be undertaken.
- (3) Mechuwana's executive director will immediately inform the Chairperson of the Site Board of Directors, the Director of Connectional Ministries, and any other appropriate Conference personnel as to the details of the complaint.
- (4) Within seven days, Mechuwana's executive director will investigate the complaint, reasonably and fairly, to determine the facts surrounding the allegations. These facts will be shared with the Director of Connectional Ministries. Together Mechuwana's executive director and the Conference staff will determine what action, if any, is appropriate.
- (5) If the allegation is of a serious nature and if initial indications present a compelling case, Mechuwana's executive director (or, in the absence of the Executive Director; the Site Board Chairperson and their designee) may take immediate action to suspend a person, against whom a complaint has been filed, from their position or remove them from the site property. If the person being suspended is an employee, the person will continue to be paid through the time of the investigation. In some cases, the nature of the allegations will necessitate informing law enforcement or other agencies of further action. The results of any investigation by Mechuwana's executive director will be reported to the Director of Connectional Ministries, the chairperson of the Site Board of Directors, the person against whom the allegation has been made, and the person who has made the initial complaint. Depending on the investigation results, no further action may be initiated.
- (6) In response to the investigation, further action may include, but is not limited to, supervisory counseling, mediation, further training, written reprimand, or termination. Mechuwana's executive director is responsible for this action and may seek guidance from other professionals or through the Conference or CRM site Employee Assistance Program.
- (7) Throughout this policy, it is the intent of the CRM site to assume the innocence of the person charged, and to seriously consider any complaints that are made; appropriately investigating the validity or seriousness of any allegations; take necessary remedial actions; and seek reconciliation and restoration.

Protocol for Complaints against the Executive Director

When a serious verbal complaint (which may include but is not limited to abusive or violent acts or language, sexual harassment, or discrimination based on membership in a protected class, or gross negligence resulting in injury) is made by a participant, employee, or other party regarding inappropriate conduct, the following actions will be taken:

- (1) The Chairperson of the Site Board of Directors (or their designee) or the Director of Connectional Ministry will obtain a written statement from the person making the complaint within 48 hours, specifying the details of any incident, behavior, other persons present, etc. If no written statement is made, no further action is needed. Upon receipt of a written complaint, statements will also be taken from all parties with first-hand knowledge of the allegation.
- (2) After the written complaint is received, the DCM shall respond in writing to the complainant, informing the complainant that a complaint has been received and that an investigation will be undertaken.
- (3) Mechuwana's executive director will be informed that a complaint has been filed against them and that an investigation is being undertaken. At that time, the DCM may suspend the Executive Director (with pay) pending the outcome of the investigation.
- (4) Within seven days, the DCM will investigate the complaint reasonably and fairly to determine the facts surrounding the allegations. These facts will be shared with the Chairperson of the Site Board of Directors, who will be consulted to determine what action, if any, is appropriate.
- (5) If the allegation is of a serious nature and if initial indications present a compelling case, the DCM may take immediate action to suspend the Executive Director from their position or remove them from Conference property. In some cases, the nature of the allegation will necessitate informing law enforcement or other agencies for further action.

The results of any investigation by the DCM will be reported to the Chairperson of the Site Board of Directors, Mechuwana's executive director, and the person who has made the initial complaint. Depending on the investigation results, no further action may be initiated.

- (1) In response to the investigation, action taken by the DCM may include (but is not limited to) supervisory counseling, mediation, further training, written reprimand, or termination.
- (2) The original complainant should be advised of their opportunity to invoke further procedures of complaint through the New England Conference's administrative and judicial processes.
- (3) Throughout this policy, it is the intent of the New England Conference to assume the innocence of the person charged, and to seriously consider any complaints that are made, appropriately investigate the validity and seriousness of any allegations, take necessary remedial actions, and seek reconciliation and restoration.

Action Plan for Active Security Threats

1. **CALL 911** and give as much information as possible.
2. **FIGHT BACK** if the threat is in your immediate physical location.
3. **RUN AWAY**, stay together, run into the woods, keep moving to safety.
4. **HIDE** if running away isn't possible. Hide in buildings, barricade, keep calm and quiet.
5. Do these things until a **TRUSTED SOURCE** says that all is clear.

Specific Locations

Lower Camp (Staff Area, Lakefront Cabins, Lodge, Asbury Theater)

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away (3 options):
 - a. Run past Asbury Theater on Peace Path to quickly get to main road
 - b. Run up Owl Trail into the woods
 - c. Run on the waterfront trail toward waterfront swim area
4. Hide (options):
 - a. In woods
 - b. In Asbury Theater/under theater
 - c. Under Lodge
 - d. Staff area
 - e. Cabins

Remember to barricade and be quiet until you get the all-clear from a trusted source.

Middle Camp (Commons, Village, Gus Building, Oak Village, Hilltop, Retreat Buildings, Arts Center, Yurt)

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away (4 options):
 - a. On trails to soccer field and then out on main road
 - b. On trails to waterfront
 - c. On trails to maintenance then out to main road
 - d. On trails through Village out to snowmobile trail to main road
4. Hide
 - a. In woods
 - b. Rec building
 - c. Commons
 - d. Memorial Chapel
 - e. In sleeping cabins

Remember to barricade and be quiet until you get the all-clear from a trusted source.

Upper Camp (Day Camp, Sports Village)

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away (4 options):
 - a. Get to main road as fast as you by using camp road
 - b. Take trail to waterfront swim area
 - c. Take trail through Village to snowmobile trail to main road
 - d. Go to maintenance area and take trail to main road
4. Hide
 - a. In woods
 - b. In maintenance area
 - c. At main office

Remember to barricade and be quiet until you get the all-clear from a trusted source.

Outpost and Waterfront Swim Area

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away into woods or the safest direction away from the threat
4. Hide
 - a. In woods
 - b. If person is at waterfront, hide at Outpost

Behavior Management

Preventative Methods/Positive Behavior Support Methods

1. Discuss with campers the basic ground rules of camp and why they are important. (Also discuss consequences of breaking those rules, and get feedback from campers.)
2. Set cabin/group rules together. If possible, let the campers come up with their own rules. Make sure to cover all the areas you want covered. In larger groups we have them sign a covenant page.
3. Remind them of camp-wide rules such as rules around the waterfront area.
4. Let the group and individuals know when they are doing a great job.
5. Always point out great behavior.
6. In a quick, semi-private way, let individuals know how much you appreciate them (i.e., on a walk from Point A to Point B).
7. Reward that behavior with sincere gratitude from you.
8. Single out campers for good behavior in a group setting.
9. Make good behavior something to strive for because the group can gain more privileges.
10. When it comes to safety make sure you set the rules and behavior you expect to keep everyone safe.

When Misbehavior Occurs

- Be consistent and uniform with all campers.
- Check with Dean or Mechuwana's executive director if you have any questions.

Acceptable Consequences

- Quiet time for (group or individual)
- Restriction from activity (group or individual)
- Restriction of interaction with certain individuals
- Clean appropriate facilities
- Conference with Mechuwana's executive director or Dean
- Conference with Mechuwana's executive director and parents/guardians

Do Not

- Deprive a camper of food or sleep
- Place a camper alone—they can be separated but still within observation range
- Subject a camper to hazing, ridicule, or threats
- Use any form of corporal punishment
- Use excessive physical exercise
- Restrain

Keep Mechuwana's executive director informed of all disciplinary actions.

Strategies to Stop Negative Behavior

- Stop the activity or behavior when you see behavior first take place. Using a stern voice let them know behavior is wrong and needs to change.
- If behavior continues, stop activity, pull individuals involved aside and:
 - Clearly identify the behavior.
 - Put the responsibility on them to change.
 - Let them know the consequences if behavior continues.
 - Let them know this is the last warning.
- If behavior persists, do not hesitate to carry through with consequences.
- If behavior continues after that — get assistance/help.
- Bring in Mechuwana’s executive director for conference.

Administrative Observations Can Help

- May watch from a distance to see if they can catch something you are missing.
- Make recommendations for changes.
- Be another set of eyes and witness if a conference with parents/guardians is needed.

Do not take it personally – Be open to change and feedback.

- We are in this together and want to make your life easier.
- We want success for the camper and you.
- We want to hold campers accountable for their behavior.
- We want to make sure the entire group is not negatively affected.
- We want to make sure the camper is getting the help they need.
- We are not here to blame but to make it better.
- We are a team.

Age-appropriate Behavior Management

Although almost all the above can be used for campers of all ages who come to Mechuwana, here are a few things to remember when dealing with younger campers:

- Set rules that everyone understands.
- Younger campers need to be reminded of rules more frequently.
- Consequences can seem more serious to young campers than they do for older campers.
- Make sure to make eye contact when stopping behavior.
- Speaking to campers outside the group is very effective with younger campers.
- When making group rules, have a list of suggestions.
- Give campers a chance to rejoin activities and end the day on a positive note.
- Taking time at the end of each day to recognize positive behavior is very important to younger campers.
- Make sure the bulk of that recognition is for the group and not an individual.

Bullying (SV19 ST.30.1)

Bullying is when one or more people exclude, tease, taunt, gossip, hit, kick, or put down another person with the intent to hurt them. Bullying happens when a person or group of people want to have power over another and use their power to get their way, at the expense of someone else. Bullying can also happen through cyberspace: through emails, text messaging, instant messaging, and other less direct methods. This type of bullying can also lead to persons being hurt during or between the camp sessions and be especially hurtful when persons are targeted with meanness and exclusion.

At Mechuwana, bullying is inexcusable, and we have a firm policy against all types of bullying. Our camp philosophy is based on our mission statement, which ensures every camper has the opportunity to build relationships, further develop their self-esteem, and create a meaningful community. We work together as a team to ensure that campers gain self-confidence, make new friends, and go home with great memories.

Further Training

Most kids, most of the time, are totally doing the right thing. They are listening to you, being respectful to each other, playing and having fun in activities (they may not have chosen for themselves), and following directions and instructions without incident. Of course, we would all like to have more of that kind of behavior at camp, but almost all our discussions about camper behavior revolve around what to do when campers are breaking down, falling apart, or having a hard time. While that stuff is important, we also need to do a good job at supporting, guiding, and facilitating all the great behavior we see.

There are so many benefits to encouraging positive behavior. Let's break down those benefits in terms of adults versus kids.

The adult benefits are obvious to anyone who has ever worked with groups of kids. It's easier to do things and more fun to engage with them. Plus, the things you have planned will go more smoothly.

However, none of that really matters. Well, it does, but that's not what camp is all about. Camp is about kids. It's about what they get out of it and how we as adults can set up a community where relationships matter and where everyone is important.

So, the real question is, how does good behavior benefit kids?

For kids there are external benefits, like increased positive attention (praise) from adults; internal benefits like developing a positive self-concept because it feels good to be successful; and social benefits because more people want to be around you. Our job as camp counselors should be to help campers maximize these benefits by supporting their positive behavior and creating opportunities for more of the same.

Praise

Praise is an overused term in youth development. We talk about it a lot. Unfortunately, we typically just talk about how to give campers praise. For every technique and tip you have heard about how to praise, it really comes down to two things: being genuine and specific. Skip the script and catchy acronyms; just be real and reference something that actually happened. The untold story about praise is more about when, where, and why.

Why do we praise good behavior? Most people would say, “So we can get more of the same behavior.” Of course, we want good behavior from the campers with whom we work, but camp, and working with kids, is not about us. Camp is about them. It is more important to praise kids, so they learn how to make great choices and decisions for themselves. Some of you are probably thinking that those two things don’t sound that different. Don’t both happen if we praise kids’ behavior? Maybe, but when we are thinking in terms of campers learning how to make great choices based on our feedback, it forces us to think more about when, where, and how we praise them.

The conventional wisdom about when to praise a good behavior is to praise it immediately or as close to the behavior as possible. Why? Well, it is easier for campers to connect their behavior to the positive attention of the adult if you praise them immediately, which may be important, but again, seems to be more about the adult than the kid. If we work a little harder at getting to know our individual campers, their skill set, and their internal motivation for making whatever choice they made, maybe immediately isn’t the best option. Kids need to practice making choices to understand that when they do something there are consequences (negative and positive). It’s difficult for some kids to understand because often they come from environments where they have little to no control or power. So, it isn’t always intuitive to the youth that making good choices equals getting what they want.

Try to notice what happens (consequences) when a camper does something great, such as being inclusive, being super friendly, or following directions the first time you ask. Instead of jumping right in on the praise, wait to see if you can connect some reaction to their action. Then speak up with something like, “Wow, that was pretty sweet. I noticed that you included everyone in that game at rest hour. Being inclusive like that really seemed to make everyone listen to you and follow your lead.”

Along with specificity (I noticed that . . .) and being genuine (I’m assuming you do think it is pretty sweet when everyone is included), thinking about when you praise will help the camper learn how their positive actions help them get what they want, or at least that they have some positive outcome.

Where you praise kids is important, too. Not everyone likes to be called out in front of the group, even for good things. Some campers would eat it up; others would be mortified. We tend to want to praise out loud and in front of others so everyone else hears the praise and starts to learn how to get the same positive attention from the adults. That may happen, but again, who’s that about? Not necessarily the camper. Get to know your campers’ personalities and preferences. Try out some different ways to praise based on what you learn, such as:

- Out loud and in front of others
- One-on-one
- At nighttime or pick-up
- In a small group
- During an unrelated activity where you are seeing a similar behavior
- With a quick glance and smile, followed up later with a specific comment
- In a note you write to them at rest hour

This brings us back to how you praise. **Be genuine, specific, and connect what they did with what happened because of it.** You can really teach kids a valuable lesson about how to be successful in almost every environment. Praise should be about helping them understand that they have power and control, not just about following the rules.

Success and Positive Self-concept

It feels good to be successful. Whether it is a small success like winning a game or a huge success like graduating at the top of your class, success drives feelings of confidence, competence, mastery, and much more. Those feelings help us build a positive self-concept. We feel good about who we are and what we can do, which makes us happier, and more people want to be around us (more on that later).

Being successful is a combination of having skills (for which you praise them) and using them appropriately. For as athletic and amazing as Michael Jordan was at basketball, he wasn't so great when he tried to play baseball. You have to know the "rules of the game" to be successful at it, no matter how good you are. Campers that show you all the best behavior have managed to figure that out. They have the skills — listening, following instructions, being respectful, creative problem solving, etc. — and they know how to apply them at camp. They listen to you when you are asking the group to do something. They follow your instructions the first time you ask. They include each other and go out of their way to pull in other campers. They are being good kids! Let's unpack what they have really figured out so we can support more of their great behavior.

Camp is a system with rules and procedures that are unlike their home, school, or community systems. Camp is a living, breathing, evolving thing. Just like any system, you must be flexible, patient, agile, and smart to be successful.

How do you get meals at your camp? How do pick-up and drop-off go? Who is in charge of which areas? When is it OK to scream at the top of your lungs? These are just a few examples of how your camp is a unique system, with its own set of rules and expectations, and its own culture. As a camp counselor, you can support all the best behavior from your campers by explicitly teaching them the rules of the game they are playing.

Rules of the Game

Be Consistent

One of the reasons that campers make bad or more challenging choices is because they don't know what to expect from the adults around them. They are testing the boundaries to see if they are real. By that logic, the more consistent you can be, the easier it is for them to trust you and their environment. Be consistent with:

1. Rules and consequences — if it's not OK today, it shouldn't be OK tomorrow. If one camper can't do it, then neither can another camper. There actually aren't that many rules, and there are even fewer consequences, so the object here is to apply them consistently across people, situations, times, etc.
2. Giving attention — we all know you will have a few campers that you get along with better than others. That's okay. In fact, it's how personalities work. However, your behavior is what is important. Notice who is easier to hang out with and who is more challenging, and then change things up. Think about who you talk to and when. Sit with someone different today.

Clear Routines

Camp is one of the most unique places that many kids will experience. From the way the adults act to singing at dinner and the sheer amount of face paint, camp is a different environment and culture than just about anywhere. To support the best behavior, you have to be clear about what you expect from campers and their behavior. Beyond explaining the ground rules, try to explain the various camp routines. What do you do as a camp or unit that happens every day consistently? Those camp routines often become second nature to people, but we have to get good at teaching them. Whether you are talking about meals, singing, going to sleep, preparing for an activity, etc., think about what the routine is and how you can explicitly explain it.

The best way to be clear about your routines and effectively teach them is to pre-plan and answer these five questions for each routine.

- Who is doing what and when (staff and campers)?
- Which staff member takes the lead?
- What is the goal?
- What do you want campers to know?
- What happens if the plan is messed up?

When you are clear with the routines at camp, you're giving kids the playbook to be successful.

Be Inclusive

The more inclusive you can be as an adult, the easier it is for each camper to fit into your program and culture. When campers (or anyone) feel a sense of belonging, they tend to identify with and adhere to the rules. You see this happen at camp all the time. Things like the random

fanny pack that never sold from the camp store five years ago became all the rage when a counselor sported it loud and proud. They made it cool by doing something different. It's more than fashion and inside jokes. The same thing happens to campers' behavior when we create a space where we strive to include everyone and where campers have a lot of options.

Here are some things you can do to create a more inclusive environment for your campers:

- Show openness and acceptance — it's OK to be different; in fact, being different and unique should be celebrated.
- Get uncomfortable yourself — doing something outside of your comfort zone will help you accept every camper's unique take.
- Leave labels behind — it is ultimately not that helpful to take a label like "ADHD" or "autism" and apply it to a camper. Those labels come with a lot of baggage. In fact, as you read those words, a bunch of images and ideas probably popped into your head. Those assumptions tend to lower your expectations of the campers' behavior. Instead, leave the labels behind, and discover the campers' behaviors on your own. You'll be much better at working with them.
- Check yourself — we are all a bit exclusive, and we just have to admit it. Be honest with yourself and realize those feelings when they happen. You can then change your behavior based on those feelings to be more inclusive.

There are so many more ideas that can help campers to be successful at your camp. Take the time to think about what it means to be successful as a camper at your camp, then develop ways to explicitly teach those ideas. You'll be amazed at what happens.

More People Want to Be Around You

Finally, there are social benefits of good behavior, which just boil down to the fact that other people (both kids and adults) want to spend more time with you. You can support this benefit with some good, old-fashioned time management skills.

- **Quality versus quantity** — it doesn't necessarily matter how much time you spend with someone if the gift of your time is spent in a meaningful way. Work to get to know each camper individually, and you will start to see patterns in how your campers like to spend time and what they like to do.
- **Be interested in them** — this can be hard because of your age difference, but work to have them lead the conversation, game, or activity. Your interest in their ideas and them is the best indicator to them that they are important and doing something worth noticing.
- **Stay present** — work to minimize mental distractions. We want you to review what has happened and, of course, we want you to be prepared for what will happen. However, when you are spending quality time with a camper, stay in the moment; your presence will be noticed.

When it comes to campers' good behavior, we have a tremendous opportunity to help teach them life skills that will serve them (and the people around them) in every environment and situation they will encounter.

Discussion Questions

1. Name a camper behavior you might praise and explain why you feel it is important to provide positive reinforcement for that specific behavior.
2. What are two things you can do that will foster success in your campers?
3. What are some consequences of being inconsistent in explaining and/or implementing rules at camp?
4. If you are short on time, what are some activities that promote the concept of quality over quantity?
5. How will you work to diminish distractions so you can stay present with your campers?

Emergency Plan — Staff Training

(Revised 2024)

Orientation of Emergency Plan

- The information in the Volunteer Staff Handbook is included with user group paperwork.
- All staff, volunteer or paid, must be familiar with Mechuwana's Emergency Plan.
- Communication of these procedures will take place as part of staff orientation.
- Staff must sign off that they have been made aware of these procedures.
- Emergency Plans are posted in strategic places around camp, part of our staff handbook, and part of the online training tool.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is a sudden or unexpected occurrence or combination of occurrences demanding prompt attention.

The types of emergencies one might encounter at Mechuwana include:

- Accidents
- Injury
- Missing Person
- Release of Campers
- Fire
- Weather-related
- Severe Behavioral Issue
- Unfamiliar Person at Camp
- Intruder/Active Threat

Your Role

Each staff member has the responsibility to react immediately to protect individuals and property consistent with their own personal safety.

Steps to Take in Accident of Injury to a Person:

- Call 911 if required.
- Do not move the person injured unless there is physical danger.
- Do any first aid you are qualified to perform.
- Seek person with highest level of certification on the scene.
- Call for on-site medical personnel.
- Ask for help from other staff.
- Get help to deal with any crowd.
- Fill out proper paperwork (after crisis situation has calmed/passed).

MISSING PERSON PROCEDURE:

It is our responsibility to know where our campers are at all times. As part of cabin orientation, talk to campers about the buddy system and not leaving the group. Staying together will prevent almost all lost camper situations before they start.

If a camper is missing, follow these procedures:

- Determine when and where the camper was last seen. Stay calm.
- Make sure other campers are supervised.
- Do a search of the immediate area. Check all buildings in area; be sure to include bathrooms.
- Ask other staff to assist.
- Contact the main office.
- A camper that does not want to be found will require a wider search.
- Discover (if possible) the state of mind of the camper. Were they depressed, angry?
 - Widen search to check all buildings not in area and other camping groups in all other areas, remembering to ask if they have seen any campers by themselves. Contact staff on duty, they will contact Mechuwana's executive director.

If camper is not found within 20 minutes, a full-scale public search will begin. This includes:

- Driving roads surrounding property
- Canoe search
- Through-the-woods search
- Downtown Winthrop search
- Calling neighbors on lake and road
- Winthrop Police Department and parents/guardians contacted by Mechuwana's executive director

Complete incident report

Release of Campers

- Campers may only be released from camp to persons who have written authorization.
- Copies of that authorization is held with Deans of each camp and at the camp office.
- If there is a change in that authorization, you will be notified of that change.

Fire

Fire drills are held within the first 24 hours of each session. The safety of campers and staff depends on everyone performing their tasks.

- Review fire exits with campers
- If fire alarm goes off, staff check alarm site to check out situation.
- Campers should leave building and move to common area. Camper count maintained at all times.

- Staff calls 911.
- After camper count is done, campers are moved to safe area far from affected site i.e., Commons.
- Staff are assigned to duties as needed.
- If evacuation is called for, we will get the entire camp to the soccer field or Dining Commons, depending on instruction from EMS officials.
- Remember the most important thing is to constantly do camper count and stay together.

Alarms do not necessarily mean a fire; our alarm systems are sensitive and can be set off for many different reasons. **Do Not Panic** and check out the situation first.

Inclement Weather

Mechuwana can experience bad weather. The three most common weather-related issues at camp are:

1. Lightning
2. Heavy Rain
3. Wind

These conditions can come up suddenly and without much warning. Therefore, it is important to be able to react to what is happening.

- **Communication.** Whenever possible, we will let everyone know that severe weather is close by or headed our way. Camp staff will constantly monitor weather alert situations.
- If severe weather takes place **move your activity to the safest building** in the area you are currently in. Those buildings by area are:
 - **Upper Camp:** Day camp building
 - **Middle Camp:** Memorial Chapel or Dining Commons
 - **Lower Camp:** Lodge

Wait for the all-clear call before returning to activities.

Some storms happen late at night. In all but extreme cases, we ask you to remain in your cabin. If an extreme weather event is imminent and there is a need to evacuate, we will provide instructions.

Utility Failure

This could be water, electrical, or propane and includes losing any of the functions related to these areas or the smell of the propane. **In all cases contact the camp office, do not** try to fix problems on your own.

Severe Behavioral Issue

Campers come to us with all kinds of mental and emotional concerns and behavior. We do our best to address these during screening, but many times, because of lack of disclosure by the parents/guardians,

we are left unprepared. Communication of this behavior to camp administration is key to addressing these issues.

Examples of behaviors that need to be addressed immediately: Bullying, talk of violence toward self or others, physical aggression, consistently not following rules (especially one that keep us all safe), disclosure of violence or abuse outside of camp.

- Address immediate behavior to keep everyone safe.
- This may mean removing everyone from the scene except those specifically involved.
- Call Mechuwana's executive director.
- Let Mechuwana's executive director determine what action steps should be taken.
- Fill out incident report.

Unfamiliar Person(s) at Camp

Unfamiliar persons on the camp property may range from someone lost and looking for directions to a person with intent to do harm to persons or property.

- Approach person professionally and ask them why they are here.
- Refer person to camp office where they must sign in.
- If they are in a car, observe them leaving and write down/note license plate number and state,
- Call camp office and Mechuwana's executive director immediately.

ACTION PLAN FOR ACTIVE SECURITY THREATS

1. CALL 911 and give as much information as possible.
2. FIGHT BACK if the threat is in immediate physical location.
3. RUN AWAY and stay together, run into the woods, keep moving to safety.
4. HIDE if running away isn't possible. Hide in buildings, barricade, keep calm and quiet.
5. Do these things until a TRUSTED SOURCE says that all is clear.

Specific Locations

Lower Camp (Staff Area, Lakefront Cabins, Lodge, Asbury Theater)

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible.
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away (3 options):
 - a. Run past Asbury Theater. Peace Path will quickly take you to a road.
 - b. Run up Owl Trail into woods.
 - c. Run on waterfront trail toward waterfront swim area.
4. Hide (options):
 - a. In woods

- b. In theater/under theater
- c. Under Lodge
- d. Staff area
- e. Cabins

Remember to barricade and be quiet until you get all-clear from a trusted source.

Middle Camp (Commons, Memorial Chapel, Village, Gus Building, Oak Village, Hilltop, Retreat Buildings, Yurt)

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible.
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away (4 options):
 - a. On trails to soccer field and then out on main road
 - b. On trails to waterfront
 - c. On trails to maintenance then out to main road
 - d. On trails through Village out to snowmobile trail to main road
4. Hide
 - a. In woods
 - b. Rec building
 - c. Commons
 - d. Chapel
 - e. In sleeping cabins

Remember to barricade and be quiet until you get all-clear from a trusted source.

Upper Camp (Day Camp, Sports Village)

1. Call 911 and give as much information as possible.
2. Fight back: throw, hit, and scream
3. Run away (4 options):
 - a. Get to main road as fast as you by using camp road
 - b. Take trail to waterfront
 - c. Take trail through Village to snowmobile trail to main road
 - d. Go to maintenance area and take trail to main road.
4. Hide
 - a. In woods
 - b. In maintenance area
 - c. At main office

Remember to barricade and be quiet until you get all-clear from a trusted source.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

*Staff phone numbers are hung up in all main buildings and the Dean's cabin.

- Cell phones are carried by all Deans and at least one counselor.
- Staff at all program sites have cell phones.
- Health care workers have cell phones 24-7.
- Staff Administrator on Duty always has cell phone.
- Camp phone is answered 247.
- Call 911 first if warranted, then call camp administration/health personnel.
- If for some reason phones are down, a runner can be sent to Health Center.
- **Contacting parents** should be done by Mechuwana's executive director or their designated representative. But camp administration will always talk with parent/guardian to clarify the camp's role and responsibility.

MEDIA

The only person that may speak with media is Mechuwana's executive director. If any staff, volunteer or paid, is approached or contacted by the media they are to refer them to the director and make no other comment.

OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER WITH MAJOR INJURIES OR ACCIDENTS

1. Do not rush or panic.
2. Take charge, be firm and clear with your instructions to campers and other staff.
3. The staff member with the highest level of certification is delegated the responsibility of giving aid to the injured party. The person giving first aid must meet with the nurse within 12 hours to fill out health log.
4. Delegate another staff member to ensure safety of other campers by taking them away from the scene.
5. Contact health care supervisor as soon as possible. This may mean sending someone or having another person call. Be clear with direction of where you are.
6. Contact or have someone contact Camp Office. Ask for assistance at the scene. Give clear directions.
7. As soon as scene is stable, collect facts: What happened? How? When? Where?
8. Prepare accident report and meet with Mechuwana's executive director.

Rule of Three

One-on-one and camper/staff interaction. Mechuwana tries very hard to create a safe environment for everyone: staff, adult counselors, and youth. To do this, we follow the “**Rule of Three,**” which simply means: **Never be alone with a camper/youth.**

If there is need for a one-to-one interaction with a camper/youth, you should be in **Auditory and Visual** (sight and sound) range of others. In this way you can still have a conversation but not be alone with a camper or youth.

The “**Rule of Three**” is a Camp Mechuwana policy that **must be followed by all groups** using camp property.

Self-Harm/Suicidal Ideation

If you have reason to believe that a child or staff member is planning to harm themselves or others, **you are required by law to report it to Mechuwana's executive director** who will report it to the proper authorities. As camp staff, we must take threats to physical safety extremely seriously.

If someone tells you that they want to self-harm, harm another, or struggles with suicidal thoughts/ideation...

Remain calm: Stay calm and take your time.

Listen: The person obviously has entrusted you with something very personal. Now it's your turn to listen to them. Do your best to actively listen.

Never agree to keep silent: A camper/staff may want to tell you a "secret," but only if you promise not to tell anyone. *Never* agree to this. If you discover that a camper/staff wants to self-harm, harm others, or is struggling with suicidal thoughts, you must report it. If you make a promise to them and then break it, they will feel betrayed. If it comes up, you can say:

"I promise not to tell any of the other campers/peers, but I can't promise not to tell anyone. If I have to share this with someone else, I will tell you who I am speaking with, and you can be there when I tell them if you want ..."

Do not give advice: The camper may ask your opinion. This is a difficult situation. While you may feel overly emotional, you need to remain objective. Try to tell them that they made a good choice by telling you.

Report it to director: Tell Mechuwana's executive director or camp nurse immediately. The camp is obligated to make sure everyone in their care is safe.

Write down everything you remember: After the discussion with the camper/staff, and as soon as you are free to do so, write down everything you can remember about the conversation. Write down everything you both said. Little details may be significant.

Recognize your own needs: Listening to your camper/staff can be taxing. Be sure to take time to debrief the situation with Mechuwana's executive director and recognize your own needs when providing care to others.

All of us need to be on the lookout for the signs of physical harm at all times. Report even the slightest suspicion to Mechuwana's executive director or camp nurse.

Please complete and sign this form and return by May 15th.

I, _____, confirm that I have completed the following required training sections in order to be able to volunteer at Camp Mechuwana this summer.

(Check each section that you have completed.)

_____ Active Security Threats

_____ Behavior Management

_____ Bullying

_____ Mechuwana Abuse Prevention Policy

_____ Mechuwana Emergency Plan

_____ Rule of Three

_____ Self-harm/Suicidal Ideation

_____ State of Maine Mandated Reporter Training* (Once completed, you will receive a certificate from the State. Please either email or mail the certificate to the camp office.)

If you are unable to do this training online, please contact Mechuwana to discuss.

Online training is at **<https://mainemandatedreporter.org>**

Signature _____

Date _____

Mail to: Norm Thombs, Camp Director

Mechuwana
PO Box 277
Winthrop ME 04364

Or email to mechuwana@gmail.com

Questions? Call 207.377.2924