

FOCUS 4

“A publication series prepared specifically for training summer camp workers in Lake Aurora programs.”

Dorm, Cabin And Tent Life



UP TO one half of a camper's day is spent in and around a dorm or tent. A positive experience with dorm or tent life is very critical in helping the camper make good decisions that affect his life.

Therefore, effort should be made to create a positive spirit within a dorm. A spirit of harmony, caring, cooperation, trust, and responsibility.

Who Sleeps Where

The counselor groups will be determined by which beds are used. One side of a dorm or section of a tent will be the “A” group and the other the “B” group.

A bed at the main door and a bed at the rear door are reserved for the counselors and auxiliary staff. (Please do not move beds)

Campers should not be allowed to share a bed and beds are to remain 30” apart. Counselors should never allow campers to sleep in beds with them.

Housing Unit Devotions

Some programs will want the campers to have devotions in the evening within their dorm. You may want to do this even if the program does not require it.

Dorm devotions work best by gathering the campers in a group away from their beds — middle of the floor, porch, etc. If the program has a strict lights out policy, then you need to get the devotions started early or inform the Program Director.

Good devotions can be built around biographies and short stories. You may want to select a good book of short devotions from a Christian bookstore before coming to camp. If you have good readers in your dorm, you could even let the campers read the stories.

End with a prayer time and consider including prayer requests. Involve the campers as much as possible. Campers' emotions (especially girls) can be quite sensitive at this time of the day and crying may start. It is important to get the campers to sleep as small things become very large when campers are tired.

Camper Hygiene

You will need to pay attention to the camper's personal hygiene. You will want to talk about this the first night. Cover such areas as how and when to take showers, going to the bathroom and flushing the toilets, brushing teeth, changing clothes, and wet towels and bathing suits. For boys include use of the urinal or putting the seat up on the toilet. For girls include the proper disposition of sanitary supplies (not in toilets).

From time to time toilets will get clogged. A plunger is in each unit and the toilet should be unstopped quickly to avoid others using it and it running over. Report serious problems to the summer camp office or the caretaker.

Occasionally a camper may neglect taking showers or changing clothes. Try to work with this camper in private as there may be a deeper problem. If hygiene supplies are needed, please ask the summer camp office for help.

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING COUNSELOR AUTHORITY

1. You are working with other people's children, so be careful.
2. Campers may not automatically recognize your authority or they may resent authority.
3. Your authority is limited to behavior modification while at camp.
4. Campers are not sheep to be driven to slaughter, but sheep to be led to water.
5. You do not have the authority to physically punish or send campers home.
6. Let your actions give the campers a reason to respect you.
7. When campers do not respond to your authority, discuss it with the Assistant Program Director.
8. Campers unable to participate in a respect/trust relationship will probably be sent home.

Getting Campers to Bed

...and other fanciful thoughts.

Campers may naturally be “hyped” from the day’s activities. Expect this and use positive motivation to encourage campers to prepare for bed. If the campers feel you want to get them to bed so you can do something else, they may not be cooperative. This is a very important part of the day and needs to go smoothly. Allow for expression of emotions.

There may not be enough time for every camper to shower at night. Some campers do not want to undress in front of other campers so suggest they do it under their covers.

Try to have lights out on time. Devotions can be done in the dark with the use of a flashlight. A good interactive dorm devotion will really help settle the campers.

Campers may feel insecure and make noises or keep flipping on flashlights. Do not get easily upset. If you confiscate items, make sure they are returned.

Caution should be used in disciplinary action. Do not threaten things you cannot enforce. It is not a good idea to use the loss of swimming as a punishment as it will build resentment. It is better to add work details. Restless campers have been known to leave their dorm and sweep the chapel or steel tent.

Rewards of food or parties need to be cleared in advance with the Program Director. Counselors should not offer pizza or similar items to campers unless it is a part of the overall program. Sometimes the program will offer incentives to the best dorm, etc.



“Chillin’ Out”

A/C Usage

Please help control the air-conditioning units. Here are general guidelines

1. If A/C units are on, please keep doors and windows closed.
2. Use during rest period.
3. Thermostats are preset at 76°.
4. For “white noise” the fan on the unit may be turned “on” but please return to “auto” for the day use.

Working With Campers

NOTES

All campers are important to God and should be treated with respect. Take time to listen to each camper. This is especially true when you are in disagreement with a camper. Seek first to understand, then seek to be understood. A camper may be wrong, but he is never wrong for being who he is. Ask another counselor for help if you are having a hard time being objective.

The purpose of camp is to help the camper. The counselor should plan to put the needs and interests of the campers ahead of his own. Your needs are important and you certainly need encouragement, but God will bless you through your service to the camper. If you are not willing to submit your entire self to ministering to the campers, you probably will not have a good experience.

Planning Cabin Activities

A. Activities not scheduled by the Program Director should always be cleared with him prior to announcing to the campers.

1. Parties
2. Out of dorm excursions
3. Pillow, shaving cream, or water balloon fights
4. Serenading

B. Activities involving money, such as pizza parties, should be avoided. If they are held:

1. All campers must be allowed to participate, regardless of ability to pay.
2. Counselors will be expected to up front the money for food and be reimbursed by the campers when the bank money is returned.

Avoiding Sexual Accusations

1. Do not sleep in the same bed with a camper.
2. Do not walk around the dorm or sleep naked.
3. Do not touch campers inappropriately.
4. Guard against being alone with a camper in the dorm.
5. Do not comment on camper’s bodies or body parts.

Working With Other Counselors

God is exalted when Christians speak with a single voice, therefore counselors should seek to share a common mind in Christ.

1. Allow for differing styles.
2. Do not encourage campers to come to you instead of their counselor.
3. Do not criticize any part of the ministry in front of campers.
4. Take your disagreements to the person with whom you disagree.
5. Pray for each other.
6. Support and encourage each other.
7. If a fellow counselor is not using good judgment, seek a way to help.
8. Guard each other from all appearance of sin.
9. Learn from each other — do not be afraid to ask for help.

“They brought ‘what’ to camp??”

The issue of confiscating items

When you confiscate an item, you take responsibility for its care. Receipts should be given for items of value.

Here are **some tips** that may help.

1. Prohibited items should not be ignored. This will cause the camper to ignore other rules.
2. If the camper will cooperate and keep the prohibited item safely put away, then you have trust developing. This would be on such things as radios, clothing, etc.
3. Illegal or dangerous items, such as fireworks or knives, should not be left in the camper’s possession. These should be turned over to the Program Director for safe keeping.
4. Drugs and alcohol should be removed. The Program Director may need to involve law enforcement and/or the parents.
5. Items being abused, such as flashlights or bug spray, should be removed from the camper and returned when needed or when a cooperative spirit is gained.
6. Items brought for the purpose of pranks or vandalism (shaving cream, water balloons, etc.) should be removed for safe keeping.
7. Confiscated items have value, both monetary and sentimental, so please make sure the items are returned before the camper leaves for home. Dangerous items should be given to the parent or driver.

The Three “P’s”

Respect each other’s **property**, including the camp’s. Do not use or touch other campers property without permission. When possible, restitution should be made on damaged property.

Respect each other’s **privacy**. Some campers may not be comfortable dressing, going to the bathroom or showering in front of others. Also, sometimes a camper may want to think, pray, or study alone.

Respect each other’s **person**. Do not allow campers to make fun of other campers. No matter how strange you may think a camper is, he was important enough to God to let His Son die for him.

And the Disagreements Begin....

Handling Camper Conflict

Work hard to create an environment that will minimize camper conflict. Stress the “3 P’s” on the first night. Be familiar with FOCUS 6 which deals with discipline. Teach the appropriate Christian response to disagreements.

Most young people of today have not been taught the Christian way to handle conflict. The **principles** you will need to teach and model include:

- How to discuss without violence.
- How to say and accept “no.”
- How and when to use an arbitrator.
- How and why to forgive.
- How to love when people act ugly.
- How to pray for someone else.

These **simple rules** may help to minimize camper conflicts:

1. Do not let campers wear each other’s clothes.
2. Do not let campers use each others personal care products.
3. Do not let campers enter any dorm but their own.
4. Keep the dorm neat with each camper’s items in their own area.
5. Do not allow campers to be picked on.
6. Do not leave campers in the dorm unsupervised — day or night.
7. When allowing for privacy, always be with in ‘ear shot’ to listen.

Sweep, Sweep, Swoosh

Cleaning Responsibilities

Each unit is responsible for keeping itself clean. Daily routines include making the beds, sweeping the floor, emptying the trash, and organizing personal belongings. Some cleaning supplies are provided for the bathroom, and more can be obtained from housekeeping. Supplies are provided for mopping the bathroom floor. Do not sweep dirt out the door, but use a dust pan and put it in the trash.

Try to develop a sense of pride within the unit. Check with the Program Director before offering rewards.

At the end of camp each unit will be expected to have its area especially clean. Try to keep all your cleaning equipment within your dorm.

Other cleaning chores may be assigned to counselor groups or dorms. These should always be accomplished with adult supervision.



The “it” word...

A review of the chapter “How to handle Homesickness” from How to be a Successful Camp Counselor.

“There is a word that is never mentioned during camp, at least within earshot of any camper. The very mention of it causes a problem.”

However, many think of this as more of a problem than it is. The key is to plan ahead and be ready for it.

The cause of homesickness is simple. A child’s (or teen’s) emotional support is the family and is taken for granted until the child finds himself removed from it. For many, camp is their first experience at separation. Panic is usually the first response to this separation and is a very real feeling.

Problem: breaking away from the traditional emotional support system, resulting in a mental/emotional problem affecting the physical being

Solution: Growth toward independence and establishing a new emotional support.

This new support system starts immediately when the child arrives at camp. Which is why it is vital for you to be present at check in. Make him feel welcome and never allow him to be lost in the shuffle. Know his name, accept him, and show him that you really care.

Night falls and the activities are winding down for cabin time. “It” attacks and the camper is suddenly thinking of their usual night routine and all they see is darkness, cabin, trees, no mom! PANIC, PAIN, TEARS! Then you come along side with a firm arm around the shoulder. You remind them of the great time they just had but, their mind is in neutral or stalled out on self. You go on and dispel their fears by telling them exactly what will happen next. Reassure with your presence, tell a funny experience, talk about an upcoming event but above all, keep them moving and thinking about camp.

For most that’s all it will take. Sobs may continue to lights out. You might step over after the last “amen” and pray with them a prayer of thanksgiving. Thanks for the camper, camp, good food, new friends,..and all the other good things at CAMP, not those at home. Never mention or talk about home at all. They are too fragile at this point.

The next day at lunch, “it” will probably start all over (due to being tired and resistance is down). Normally, just repeat what you did yesterday and stall for one more day.

However, there are some that don’t respond to this love and kindness.

Suggestions for the severely homesick:

1. Change gears to a mild disciplinarian. With firmness, look in the eyes and tell them their parents expect them to stay the whole week. To some, this is a new concept. The mild “get tough” approach works MUCH more

effectively than piles of sympathy.

2. Guide the camper into helping others.

If a child continues and goes to the extreme of homesickness and will not eat, will not listen, insists on their own way and demands to call home, then he is a discipline problem and should be sent to the Program Director to be treated as such.

Two things bring on homesickness.

1. As we discussed earlier, an honest problem in establishing a new emotional support basis.

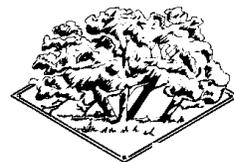
2. The parent. The chronically ill child was probably preprogrammed by the parent to fail by telling him they were only a phone call away or writing and telling them how much everyone missed him.

For more insightful information on being a successful counselor, request from the camp office for loan or purchase, How to be a Successful Camp Counselor by David Burrow.

HOW TO USE THIS ARTICLE

Program Directors: Make as many copies as you need to distribute to your counselors and administration.

Counselor: Study this “Focus” training material and request the next number in the series from your Program Director.



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1/12/07