



Guidelines for Professional Boundaries for Camps offering virtual programming

During this unprecedented time, many summer camp programs have chosen to move to virtual camp programs so campers can still experience some aspects of summer camp. Camps play a pivotal role within communities to offer connection and support through difficult times. Virtual camp programs come with new considerations and learning for everyone. An important one being, best practices for how camp staff can maintain professionalism under the same rigor as within the outdoor camp setting. To provide a standard of measure on best practices, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, in partnership with the Ontario Camps Association, has developed guidelines to help establish professional boundaries for virtual camp programs.

Suggested Best Practices:

- Apply professional standards to all online interactions with campers and parents.
- Maintain professional boundaries by communicating with campers and parents during appropriate times of day and through established and authorized camp platforms (as opposed to staff using their own personal accounts).
- Keep communication goal-oriented and tied to outcomes for a specific camp program.
- Keep all forms of communication transparent by including parents on all correspondence.
- Camp staff to avoid sharing personal videos or requesting a camper share personal videos. If a video is created tied to a camp program/activity, it should be posted to a camp approved platform for campers to access as opposed to sending directly to a camper's personal account.
- Follow your camp's privacy policies if posting any digital pictures or other identifying information on social media or websites.
- Set appropriate restrictions to maximize your privacy on your personal social media accounts, ensuring that campers cannot view or post content.
- Refrain from sending or accepting friend requests from campers or liking content in campers' personal social media accounts.
- Ensure transparency during video chat discussions with campers. While chatting, all parties should be located in common/high traffic household areas (bedrooms/bathrooms are off limits). Proper clothing attire should also be worn.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Would a parent/guardian consider my interaction as reasonable and professional?
- Protocols and procedures if something happens (something you might consider abuse/Injury/another child coming into the program (sibling for example) who isn't "registered").
- What are the reporting procedures (Children's Aid Society, local Police Department)

The above are general guidelines and are not intended as a replacement for legal advice.

Examples of inappropriate electronic communication include:

- Intimate or personal texting with campers.
- Sexualized exchanges (communication, pictures, etc.) with campers.
- Using informal and unprofessional language, such as profanity with campers.
- Criticizing campers, parents or colleagues.
- Posting or forwarding content, links or comments that might be considered inappropriate, offensive, discriminatory or inconsistent with professional or ethical standards.
- Communicating with campers through personal social media accounts or apps.

We strongly recommend participation by each camp offering any virtual/online programs in the Commit to Kids Program

Overview of Commit to Kids — a program that focuses solely on child protection

The program is completed in 10 steps and is approx. 2.5 hours long. It can be done in multiple sittings.

- Step 1:** Assess your organization: highlights strengths and gaps in your organization.
- Step 2:** Understand child sexual abuse.
- Step 3:** Manage Risk: the program provides risk charts, checklists and a risk management plan to address items such as hiring, supervision, reporting of abuse or misconduct, confidentiality
- Step 4:** Create a code of conduct to Protect Children: Sample document provided to assist camps on establishing boundaries between adults and children.
- Step 5:** Hire the right people: Establish a well-defined process that includes policies on recruitment, interviewing, screening and employment to help keep high risk individuals from working or volunteering in your organization.
- Step 6:** Supervise and Monitor: Includes checklists and best practices to help organizations strengthen their supervision of new and existing staff.
- Step 7:** Reporting and Documentation: Program includes information and tools, such as sample report forms, that will provide support with what to report, documenting reports, where to report, investigating reports, and communication of concerns and outcomes.
- Step 8:** Creating policies and procedures: Written policies that outline how major decisions, actions, and activities should take place, as well as those that clearly state what will and will not be permitted, as essential.
- Step 9:** Creating a child protection manual.
- Step 10:** Training for management and staff conducting online programming.

The above are general guidelines and are not intended as a replacement for legal advice.

© 2020, Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. Users are permitted to save and print a reasonable number of copies for non-commercial purposes. "CANADIAN CENTRE for CHILD PROTECTION" is registered in Canada as a trademark of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.