




# Guide for Camp Directors

Molestation is an extremely painful and uncomfortable topic. It is hard to imagine that this can happen in our community, one which we hold to the highest standards. However, it has become clear that we can no longer ignore this terrible issue, but rather must take significant steps to ensure that this criminal activity no longer continues.

Camp Directors are responsible for the safety of all campers in their care and the behavior of every staff member they entrust with their campers. As such, it is incumbent upon directors to take strong measures to reduce the risk of harm to campers. **If a camp does not take measures to reduce the risk of harm, they may be legally accountable.**

The responsibility of a Camp Director is to hire trustworthy staff, provide professional training, impose and supervise safety guidelines, and identify and respond to abuse or suspected abuse or molestation **in a professional manner in accordance with the law.** While Safety First is every camp's nomenclature (safety from harm, water safety, driving safety, safety on trips, et. al.), this guide will provide you with information to help you navigate the recruitment, hiring, training and supervision of staff in order to keep your camp safe specifically from abuse and molestation. Please keep in mind that these guidelines are intended to provide a general framework for each camp's consideration. We strongly encourage each camp's administration to review and discuss the proposed guidelines with their attorney to ensure that the final, adopted version is consistent with applicable state law.

## The guide includes

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1. Staff screening guidelines
  2. Abuse-prevention protocol
  3. Intervention protocol
  4. Abuse Prevention Training for Counselors
  5. Discussion guide for counselors
  6. Safety guidelines for parents



## Background

**Molestation refers to any inappropriate intimate activity with a child under the age of 18 and includes:**

1. Inappropriate and abusive intimate physical contact
2. Inappropriate behaviors that do not include physical contact (e.g. exposing children to inappropriate acts or behavior, watching a child's private or intimate behaviors such as undressing, touching one's body in front of the child, and showing a child inappropriate print, audio or video materials)

Child molestation occurs more often than we imagine; 1 out of every 4 girls and 1 out of every 6 boys, even in the Jewish community, are touched inappropriately before the age of 18. Children who have been abused may be vulnerable to being abused again by others. The abuse may be a one-time occurrence, or it may last months or years, if no one intervenes. A percentage of child molesters are serial molesters and may have hundreds of victims over many years.

Molestation has a very serious short and long term impact on a child, especially when left untreated. It can affect them:

- A.** Physically (diseases, health issues, eating disorders, substance abuse)
- B.** Emotionally (shame, anger, mood swings, fractured sense of self, helplessness, shame, self-disgust, guilt, self-blame, anger, lack of control, loneliness)
- C.** Mentally (depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harming behavior, suicide)
- D.** Behaviorally (Aggression, defiance, acting out at school and home, hyperactivity, crime, promiscuity)
- E.** Socially and relationally (disconnect from family, friends and activities, inability to trust, difficulty building and sustaining healthy relationships, vulnerability to be abused in other relationships)
- F.** Career (difficulty obtaining and maintaining a job)
- G.** Academically (absence, drop out, difficulty focusing or concentrating)
- H.** Religiously (losing faith in G-d, Torah, and the community)

Any type of abuse – with or without touching, can be extremely traumatic and may require professional intervention. Because children are very resilient, with the proper intervention and healing, they can go on to live healthy, happy and successful lives.





# 1. Staff Screening Guidelines

The hiring process is especially challenging given the need to hire hundreds of staff for a brief summer period. Moreover, such hiring may occur via a brief in-person interview, Skype or telephone interview, and include 'last day' hiring when the application and reference process are condensed. For many staff, this may be their first job and they may have limited references. However, despite these challenges, it is the responsibility of camp administrators to carefully select and screen every staff person who will come into contact with campers over the course of the summer (counselors, kitchen staff, administration, drivers, rabbinic staff, lecturers, etc.), regardless of how many years they have worked at the camp, what position or standing they have in the community or who they are related to. The following guidelines will give you some basic tools to screen individuals who may be a risk to campers. By implementing these measures, you will be sending a powerful message to campers and their families that you have the highest of standards and are doing everything you can to protect them.

**While there is no foolproof method in the hiring process, these are professional guidelines that although rigorous and time consuming, will help minimize the likelihood of hiring any individual not suited for camp.**

Before recruiting, it is critical to know that molesters are usually not strangers who grab children off the street, but rather in the majority of cases (over 90%), are someone trustworthy who is close to the child and/or their family and community. Molesters can be rich or poor, children or adults, single or married, educated or uneducated, religious or secular, professional or not professional, able-bodied or disabled, male or female. Therefore, don't assume that gender, status, age, education or experience can free potential candidates from proper screening.

**When recruiting,** let candidates know that:

- You hold your staff to the highest of standards
- Your camp takes child safety very seriously and has a zero tolerance policy for abuse
- A criminal background check will be conducted
- References will be contacted
- Staff is expected to take the ASAP's Abuse-Prevention program – <http://asap.care/counselor-training/> and achieve a minimum of 85% on the test (the certificate should be brought to camp)

**It is of utmost importance to uphold the policies and guidelines you set out for your camp so that this issue is taken seriously.**

**Before the interview:**

- **Application form**
  - ▶ Request 3 references (employment, personal, educational)
  - ▶ Ask for education, employment, and volunteer history (Find out if the candidate has moved around a lot)
  - ▶ Ask if they have any pending arrests or convictions in any jurisdiction.



- **Conduct reference checks**

- ▶ Speak to references on the phone – pay attention not just to what they say, but how they speak about the person
  - ▶ Try and speak to people who know the candidate personally through work or school
  - ▶ Before asking specific questions, let them speak freely
  - ▶ Confirm factual information (where the candidate studied or worked, etc.). Notice if anything was missing/left out

- ▶ **Potential questions**

- ▶ What is the candidate like? Personality traits?
- ▶ How do they interact with children?
- ▶ Would you have them babysit your children?
- ▶ Do they respect boundaries? Can you give some examples?
- ▶ Have you seen them discipline children/youth? How do they do so?
- ▶ Has this candidate ever had issues in school? Issues with other teachers or students?
- ▶ Would you hire this person again?

### **The Interview:**

- Try to have a staff member that understands child safety issues be present in the interview  
Follow up on what was written in the application form and references
- Assess honesty, transparency, and maturity
- Assess whether the candidate has clear boundaries for working with children. The following questions may help in this assessment:
  - ▶ Why do you want to work with children?
  - ▶ What is the best thing about working with children?
  - ▶ What is the worst thing about working with children?
  - ▶ What makes you unique to work with children? What will you bring to this camp?
  - ▶ What age group would you prefer to work with and why?
  - ▶ Would you be comfortable working with a different age group?
  - ▶ Do you think boundaries are important in camp?
  - ▶ Have you ever crossed a personal boundary you have set? Tell me about it and how you dealt with it.
- Give them specific case scenarios and ask them how they would handle the situation
- Where practical, show them the Abuse Prevention and Identification Protocol and discuss it with them. Ask them if they have a problem with any of it.

### **While it is important not to jump to conclusions, here are some things to look out for:**

- Large or unexplained gaps in employment history
- Someone who ignores social, emotional or physical boundaries or limits
- Someone who is drawn to child-like activities instead of adolescent or adult activities and has child-like hobbies
- Fixation on a specific age group





### **Before hiring:**

- Pursuant to applicable state law, conduct a state and national criminal background check through fingerprinting (this takes time so plan in advance)
  - ▶ Although criminal background checks don't identify most molesters because most have not been reported, arrested or convicted, it is still an important step in the screening process.
  - ▶ Make sure you have the candidates permission to conduct this check  
Check with your insurance company first to ensure you are adhering to their expectations and regulations
  - ▶ Check the State Central Registry for Child Abuse
  - ▶ Conduct a search of the state and national sex offender registry
- Use careful judgment  
If you are in doubt about something, consult with professional experts in this area. Consult an employment attorney in your respective state to ensure that you can conduct these clearances and ascertain if you are able to conduct additional clearances.
- It is better to be safe than sorry



## 2. Abuse Prevention and Identification Protocol

As part of their new hire orientation, all staff, independent of their level of direct involvement with children, should be required to attend a training given by the Camp Director or other senior member of the staff. At the training, the following Abuse Prevention and Identification Protocol should be discussed. Practical examples of what may and may not be done vis-à-vis staff/child interactions should be provided and discussed. Furthermore, the Camp Director should affirmatively state that **the Camp has a zero tolerance policy regarding child abuse** and that the Camp will call the Police and/or other governmental authorities if required to do so or deemed appropriate. Additionally, staff should be reminded that they are obligated to report any allegations of abuse and/or suspicious or concerning behaviors to the appropriate camp personnel or, if a mandated reporter, to the State Central Registry for Child Abuse.

### General Safety:

- Lock up/close off spaces and cabins that are not utilized or are generally left unsupervised (e.g. storage rooms, change rooms after hours, etc.)
- Put up cameras in staff offices as well as in any areas that are isolated, unlit, or out of the site of the main campground wherever feasible.
- Create a system to monitor visitors to make sure they are not wandering freely – create a clear policy about who is allowed in, to what areas, and in what situations.
- Create a transparent system of spot-checking activities that take place outside the main campgrounds, especially outside the view of other main camp staff (e.g. field trips)
- Ensure that hotel/motel/camping grounds are thoroughly checked before a trip is planned
- Maintenance staff – ensure that they are not allowed in a bunk or room when campers are there alone

At the commencement of each camp season, it is important that the Camp Director and each child's respective Head Counselor create a safe space, and directly communicate to the campers, in an age appropriate manner, that children are always able, and encouraged, to share any concerns with them or any other camp supervisor, especially if children feel unsafe or uncomfortable. The children should be told that nothing negative will happen to them for sharing their concerns, that sharing concerns is not loshon hara, and that campers should never keep "secrets" from the Camp Director or be afraid of "getting into trouble" for sharing their concerns.

### Safety protocol:

The following guidelines address physical and emotional interactions between staff and campers and between campers themselves. These guidelines should be distributed to all staff members. Staff schedules should be created in a way that ensures utmost safety. It should be made clear that **all** staff is responsible for adhering to these guidelines and for keeping others in check. **Safety is a group commitment!**



## **Between staff and campers:**

### **Physical contact:**

- The following physical contact is NOT permitted, even if a camper does not have a specific problem with it:
  - ▶ Touching areas that are private or intimate
  - ▶ Touching in an intimate way
  - ▶ Touching a camper in any way that makes him/her feel uncomfortable
  - ▶ Causing pain in any way – slapping, punching, etc.
  - ▶ Long drawn out hugs
  - ▶ Making a camper touch you in any way

### **Interactions:**

- It is important for staff to adhere to the guidelines for interactions to ensure that boundaries do not get crossed and that no harm is inflicted on a child.

#### **The following interactions are NOT permitted:**

- Spending time with a camper alone in a locked room or in any area not seen or observed by other staff members
- Sleeping in the same sleeping bag as a camper
- Allowing campers to see you undress or shower
- Touching a child in any way while they are sleeping
- Going into campers' showers or change rooms (unless it is part of your responsibility, such as caring for a child with special needs)
- Showing inappropriate pictures or videos
- Become social media friends or sending private texts or emails
- Forbidding a camper from sharing any conversation or information with their parents or the administration
- Instructing a camper to keep a secret
- Speaking inappropriately or telling inappropriate jokes
- Inviting a camper to engage in inappropriate or suggestive activities which may or may not include a promise of a reward for complying or a threat of reprisal for not complying

## **Between campers:**

More than 1/3 of molestation is committed by someone under the age of 18. To ensure that camp is fun and safe for all campers, it is important that staff imposes and supervises the following guidelines for interactions between campers. Campers are not allowed to:

- Touch each other in an aggressive or abusive manner
- Touch each other in inappropriate places or ways
- Give each other full-body hugs with private areas touching
- Isolate themselves with a specific camper
- Share a bed or sleeping bag
- Go into bathroom or shower alone with someone else



### **Identifying cases of abuse:**

Staff members are in the important position of being able to identify situations of abuse, stop the abuse, and get the camper the help they need. The following characteristics and changes in behavior **may** indicate an issue, and requires further examination:

- General anxiety or fear
- Fear of being alone with a certain person or going to certain places
- Fear of going to bed, showering or getting undressed
- Frequent nightmares
- Depression
- Anger
- Aggression
- Sudden mood swings – rage, fear, insecurity or withdrawal
- Temper tantrums
- Isolates themselves from others
- Cries a lot
- Stops participating in fun camp activities
- Acts younger than his/her age – e.g. thumb sucking
- Starts wetting the bed

### **Be aware of the following behaviors of an individual to identify potential situations of abuse:**

- Targeting vulnerable children
- Becoming friends with a potential victim, earning their trust, pretending to be their friend and secret 'confident'
- Spending a lot of time alone with a specific child or a specific group of children
- Testing and blurring boundaries with small violations – jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling, 'accidental' touch', to assess whether or not they will tell someone
- Showering them with gifts
- Sharing secrets
- Isolating them from their support system
- Intimidation – using fear, shame or guilt
- Direct threats to the child or family – e.g. your parents will have a heart attack, everyone will laugh at you, they will think you are crazy, etc.

### **It Responding to boundary violations and abuse or suspected abuse:**

It is the job of adults to speak up and intervene on behalf of the children. Children who are being abused are scared and confused. They don't always understand what is happening and often don't have the words to explain it. They are often ashamed and feel guilty, as if the abuse was their fault. They are scared the abuser will harm their family. They often feel that what happened is their fault because they may have broken a rule, initiated some of the contact, or experienced positive feelings from the abuse. They often love the abuser and are scared of getting him into trouble. They are also often scared to disappoint their family. **It is the responsibility of every staff member who identifies a situation of abuse to report immediately to the Camp Director or Head Counselor.**



### 3. Intervention Protocol for Camp Directors

If you know or suspect that anyone under the age of 18 (camper or counselor) is being or has been abused by an adult or another child, **it is your responsibility to intervene immediately, in a professional manner, in accordance with your local and state law requirements which may include calling the police or State Central Registry for Child Protection.**

Mandatory reporting laws differ from State to State. You can learn more about your obligations through Child Welfare Information Gateway - <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/mandatory/>

Remember that you are not a therapist, child protection worker, investigator or judge. Your job is to listen, support and get the child the assistance they need. **Don't interrogate or ask specific targeted yes/no questions. This could put wrong information in a child's head and damage an investigation.** Remember, the child is scared and vulnerable, and needs you to be supportive and strong. Honor the child for speaking up. Honor the staff member who has come to you for speaking up. Believe and validate them. Reinforce that they did the right thing. Remember your obligation to inform the child's parents (unless you learn that the parent was abusing the child.)





## 4. Abuse-Prevention Training for Counselors

Counselors are in the critical position of being role models for their campers, and ensuring that they are physically and emotionally safe throughout the summer. ASAP's Abuse-Prevention Program will train counselors on healthy and unhealthy affection, boundaries, signs for identifying inappropriate relationships, and the proper response to situations of abuse or suspected abuse. By learning and implementing this information, counselors will be able to help give campers the positive healthy experience they came for.

The course comprises two components:

1. Four short videos addressing the important and basic level of information camp counselors need in order to ensure the safety of their campers.
2. A multiple choice test based on information presented in the videos which is designed to help counselors integrate the information learned through real camp scenarios.

**Link to the full course: <http://asap.care/counselor-training/>**

Below is a discussion guide which will enable Camp Directors to further discuss and process this important issue with their staff.



## 5. Discussion Guide

### Guidelines for Facilitator

Prior to leading this discussion, the facilitator must review the information supplied above in the “Guide for Camp Directors,” which outlines the camp’s official policy on appropriate camp relationships and delineates how to identify and respond to cases of sexual abuse.

### Discussion Goals:

1. Raise awareness of the issue of molestation and its relevance to summer camp.
2. Reinforce core concepts and guidelines for appropriate boundaries in relationships
3. Provide tools for effectively responding to cases of abuse
4. Create a safe space for counselors to be comfortable discussing this sensitive issue
5. Establish safety as a priority for your camp

### The Role of the Facilitator

#### Create a Safe Space

- **Establish ground rules:** Begin with a clear introduction, outlining the goals of the meeting and the sensitivity and importance of the subject matter. Make it clear that there will be no tolerance for disrespect, inappropriate humor or public shaming. Participants will be expected to speak sensitively, listen respectfully, and maintain confidentiality.
- **Be sensitive:** Consider that each counselor may have a different level of knowledge about abuse. Whereas some may have been unaware that this was a problem in the community, others may be affected by it on a personal level. Take note of the issues or subject matter that are particular triggers and seem to especially affect the group or individuals in case follow-up discussions are required.
- **Respect boundaries:** Encourage active participation from all group members without forcing people to speak about topics that may make them uncomfortable in a public setting. Acknowledge the emotional responses that people may have to the subject matter, and monitor excessive talkers or prompt quieter members to encourage a balanced discussion.





## Stimulate Meaningful Discussion

- Encourage participation: Be careful not to speak too much. Ask thought provoking questions to stimulate discussion, stepping in when necessary to clarify a point or move a conversation forward. In order to deepen and direct the discussion, paraphrase insightful comments and ask follow up questions. Encourage counselors to speak to each other, rather than to you, by seating everyone in a circle or breaking into smaller groups.
- Do not be the expert: Rather than simply giving counselors the answers, encourage them to discuss different possibilities and delve into the complexity of the dilemmas. By acknowledging that these issues can be complicated and difficult, the counselors will understand that it is okay to feel confused and turn to others for support.
- Ensure clear takeaways: At the end of each part of the discussion, make sure that the counselors understand the central issues by summarizing important points, asking directed questions, and providing essential concrete information. Conclude the discussion by summarizing the information, emphasizing the commitment to confidentiality, and letting the counselors know that you are always available to discuss related issues privately.

## Discussion Questions

### Your Role as a Counselor

- What do you see as your central role as a camp counselor?
- How does it make you feel to know the enormous positive or negative impact you could have on your campers?

### Creating Healthy Boundaries

- Why are boundaries such an important aspect of forming healthy relationships with campers?
- What are some healthy ways that you can show your campers affection?
- Is it necessary to keep all of the rules regardless of the situation, or to be flexible and know how to apply them on a case-by-case basis? Explain your response.

### Understanding and Identifying Harmful Affection

- How did it make you feel to learn that child molestation is a problem in the community?
- What kind of effects can unhealthy relationships have on campers both at camp and in the future?
- What signs would you look for to identify a camper who was being abused?
- When looking out for abuse, what types of people do you think can be abusers? What types of people can be victims? (Age, gender, role in community, degree of familiarity, religious affiliation, etc.)

### Responding to Suspected Cases of Abuse

- What would you do if you felt a camper was being or had been sexually abused?
- Why might a counselor feel uncomfortable or afraid to deal with this situation?
- How can counselors ensure that campers feel safe and supported when discussing such difficult topics?





## Case Studies

### Situation 1: Balancing conflicting values

You hear a raucous coming from the bathrooms during shower time, and you are worried that there may be an emergency.

#### Questions:

- **How do you ensure camper safety while respecting privacy?**
  - ▶ **Note:** The counselor must first assess the situation from outside. If he needs to enter, he must give the campers a proper warning so they have time to cover up first.
- **Can you think of other examples where campers' privacy and safety may come into conflict?**
  - ▶ **Note:** Camper gets bug bite in private area, camper is injured and asks for help getting undressed, etc.

### Situation 2: Inappropriate relationships between campers

You are a counselor for a rowdy group of boys who love play-fighting, including wrestling, giving wedgies and "pantsing" each other. You know that this behavior is inappropriate and against camp rules.

#### Questions:

- **Why is this type of behavior problematic?**
- Do you think a camper who is not enjoying this type of behavior would feel comfortable speaking up? Why or why not?
- How would you explain the rules to these campers?





## 6. Safety Guidelines for Parents

Parents are the most important influence in a child's life and it is important for them to speak to their children about the issue of safety and abuse and give them tools to prevent abuse at summer camp. Below are some guidelines for parents. Urge all parents to speak to their children about this topic.

### Things to Tell your Child before Camp Season:

- Let your child know that he or she can always speak to you, the camp director, head counselor or another trusted member of the camp administration about anything, and that you will always be supportive. You and your child should be notified of the person with whom they should speak if they have any concerns at camp, including but not limited to their safety.
- Teach your child that no one, not even a person in a position of authority or a close relative, has the right to touch him or her in a private area or in a way that feels uncomfortable
- Teach your child that it is okay to say "No, get away," even to someone close to them
- Let your child know that he/she should tell you or a trusted member of camp about any inappropriate touching or behavior he/she is uncomfortable with
- Teach your child that speaking is not lashon hara or an aveirah
- Teach your child to ask you about things that may seem strange or confusing
- Teach your child that they should not listen to anyone who tells them to keep secrets from his parents or camp administration
- Teach your child that he should not be afraid of threats from anyone who touches him inappropriately or threatens his physical wellbeing or privacy. Let your child know that you and the camp administration will protect him.
- Tell your child that if anyone makes him/her uncomfortable, to speak to you about it
- Teach your child accurate names for their body parts (including private areas). In a situation of abuse this knowledge will enable them to speak up and explain what happened in a way that will be understood. This is one of the most critical tools for abuse prevention.

### General pointers:

- Be alert for any changes in your child's behavior that could signal abuse such as sudden secretiveness, sleeplessness, bedwetting, withdrawal from activities or increased anxiety, inappropriate awareness of sexuality, avoidance of a specific individual for no apparent reason, reluctance to be in camp.
- If your child is a victim of abuse, don't blame him/her. Listen to them and support them, and consult with a competent professional.
- Open communication with your child is critical. It can significantly reduce the risk of abuse.
- A few days after camp starts, remind your children about personal safety and open communication.