

8. ENSURING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Ensuring safe environments centers on the idea that the physical environment is a place that promotes mental, emotional, and social health and wellness. While this information cannot fully be gathered through policy, there are a few key steps organizations can take to ensure that their physical space promotes a healthy and safe environment for all youth. One key environmental consideration includes ensuring that all activities and programs are conducted in spaces that are open and visible. It is important to educate staff on how to conduct interactions with youth that are appropriate, observable, and interruptible. This should be a guiding principle that is explained and taught to staff.

A benefit of the camp environment is that being outside in open spaces can provide ample opportunities for good sight lines. When evaluating program spaces, personnel are required to consider the following:

- Space is open and visible
- Doors or buildings have windows/shutters
- Blinds remain open at all times (except during lockdown)
- Bathrooms or changing rooms provide privacy, while allowing for adult supervision

Any space that is not visible should not be used for one-on-one, youth-to-youth, or youth-to-staff interactions.

Key questions to keep in mind:

- *How are safe environments and power dynamics discussed with staff and campers?*
- *Are staff taught to design activities and build relationships with campers in a healthy and safe way?*
- *What supervision and feedback are offered to staff to ensure the environments they build are safe and the activities they are planning are meeting expectations, mission, and culture? Is the feedback ongoing with clear follow up? Is it positively framed?*
- *What is done when a staff member or camper violates another person's boundaries or does not abide by the rules of creating and maintaining safe environments?*