

How to Supervise and Monitor Counselors and Campers

In our ongoing review of the components of Praesidium's *Safety Equation*, the next topic is *Monitoring and Supervision*. Keeping a close eye on children in any childcare situation is important, perhaps none more so than the casual and sometimes freewheeling environment of a summer camp — day camp or sleepover.

One of the most important ways to prevent sexual abuse is to train your staff and volunteers so that they know the signs. But a well-trained staff is only one part of abuse prevention. Staff, volunteers, and the campers themselves must be closely supervised and monitored.

Adequate supervision is a deterrent for sexual abuse; it puts potential offenders on notice that if they act inappropriately, they are more likely to be caught. Careful behavior monitoring and observing also have a bonus: it is less likely that children will abuse or bully each other if they are being closely observed.

Here are a few steps you can take to ensure that staff, volunteers, and children are being competently supervised.

1. **Create clear expectations and model appropriate behavior.**

Assess your staff's skills and guide them accordingly when they veer off track.

2. **Identify and monitor locations that may permit unauthorized privacy.**

Do not allow staff to accompany a child alone, and do not allow children to go off together to hidden locations.

Bathrooms are a typical place that provide privacy. Best practices for bathroom procedures at camps include:

- Taking children to the bathroom in small groups
- Examining the area for dangers before allowing children to enter
- Standing nearby so you can hear what is happening
- Announcing yourself so campers know that you are outside the door

3. **Monitor and supervise carefully.**

Those who perpetrate sexual abuse look for access, privacy, and control. Careful monitoring and supervision can limit those three things. And, it's not just adults abusing children who take advantage of access, privacy, and control. The number one way to prevent peer-to-peer abuse is effective supervision.

Counselors should be wary of revealing too much information to campers. Campers look up to counselors. Some may even develop crushes on them. To ensure friendly, but professional, relationships between counselors and campers, instruct counselors to:

- Follow policies about physical contact
- Not let campers sit on their laps or beds
- Stay in locations where other adults or campers can see their interactions with campers, especially one-on-one situations
- Keep conversations with campers to appropriate topics

4. **Watch how staff interact with children.**

Follow up on any strange or inappropriate behavior you observe.

5. **Provide corrective feedback.**

If you see something that needs to be addressed, do it right away. Meet with staff and:

- a. Use positive language and general praise statements
- b. State the behavior that needs to be changed
- c. Ask for clarification from staff
- d. Let staff know how behavior can change
- e. Follow up

In a happy and well-adjusted camp environment, you should be able to observe:

- That staff and volunteers seem at ease
- Staff and volunteers make eye contact with campers
- Staff and volunteers set limits, and campers react to those limits appropriately
- Staff and volunteers demonstrate appropriate affection toward campers (fist bumps, high fives)
- Staff and volunteers always know where the campers are

Conduct site visits at different times of day (or night), so you can observe the activities and actions of campers as well as counselors. If you provide a supportive environment with adequate supervision, they will know that you are looking out for them, and the chances of sexual abuse occurring at your camp will decrease.

For more information about the Safety Equation, visit the link below:

http://armatus2.praesidiuminc.com/publicCourse/kys_1/story_html5.html.