

SUMMER • CAMP • GUIDELINES



The Evangelical Council
For Abuse Prevention

SUMMER CAMP GUIDELINES

Every year millions of kids go off to camp for a time to experience the outdoors with friends and be exposed to a different rhythm of life. For thousands of ministries, this is a great time to get away from the routines of life and to spend concentrated time together in fellowship, worshipping God, and learning from His Word.

In order to promote ministry objectives for keeping kids safe, ECAP has produced this Camp Child Safety Guide to help pastors and ministry leaders before and during camp.

This camp guide is intended to be a supplemental resource for your ministry's existing Child Protection Program based on ECAP Child Safety Standards. This guide can be used to help ministry leaders carry out due diligence on potential camp providers and otherwise prepare for any type of summer or winter camp or an off-site retreat.

HOW YOUR CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM WILL HELP

1. Your ministry has already made commitments to keeping kids safe.
2. Your Workers are screened and trained.
3. Your transportation procedures are already in place.
4. You have a Response Plan in place.
5. You are therefore well prepared to add a camp experience into ministry programming.

SELECTING A CAMP

Your ministry leaders should address the following questions to determine if a prospective camp is sufficiently committed to child safety, as part of the camp vetting process. Negative, minimal, or troubling answers should indicate “red flags,” warranting caution, additional inquiry, or perhaps a different camp choice. These questions assume that you have already done your due diligence in aligning doctrinal and philosophical considerations.

POTENTIAL RED FLAGS:

- Does the camp have a staff Code of Conduct in place?¹ (See ECAP Indicator 4.1.)
- Are all adults from other churches or groups screened and trained? (See ECAP Indicator 2.13, 2.14, 3.1)
- Is the camp's staff screened? Are they trained on Child Safety and abuse reporting? (See ECAP Indicator 2.13, 2.14, 3.1, 4.1)
- Are the staff and other adults aware of Mandatory Reporter Laws in the state where camp is located?² (See ECAP Indicator 4.4, 5.1)
- How does the camp train children and what is communicated to campers regarding appropriate touch, behaviors, policies, and reporting? (See ECAP Indicator 4.15, 4.16)
- What emergency response procedures are in place? (See ECAP Indicator 5.1)
- What periodic safety inspections take place?
- Who is the camp's insurance provider? What does their insurance policy cover? (See ECAP Indicator 1.4, 5.10)
- What age-appropriate access control and property perimeter measures are in place? (See ECAP Indicator 2.1, 2.2, 4.9)
- Have they had issues with abuse in the past? How did they respond?
- Do they monitor technology use? Is internet access password-protected? (See ECAP Indicator 2.7)

OTHER QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Is the camp ECAP-accredited or pursuing accreditation?
- How deeply is the camp committed to child protection in value statements, policies, etc.? (See ECAP Indicator 1.2)
- Do Workers understand their role in keeping kids safe? Are responsibilities assigned and verified?
- How is gender-appropriate supervision provided overnight? (See ECAP Indicator 2.7, 2.13, 2.14)
- What are lodging arrangements? (See ECAP Indicator 2.13, 2.14)
- Is there a written safety and health program? What information is provided in advance?³

¹ See ECAP Resource [“Youth and Children’s Worker Code of Conduct”](#)

² See <https://mandatedreporter.com>

³ Please refer to Brotherhood Mutual’s Resources on Camp Safety, including [Camp Safety Checklists](#) and other [Camp Safety Resources](#)

- Is there a safety coordinator? (See Indicator 1.3, 4.4, 5.2, 5.7)
- What data do they monitor for accidents and incidents? Does the camp have an established protocol for handling accidents and other incidents? Have they had multiple occurrences of accidents and incidents? How have they responded?
- The organization should collect relevant participant records to keep on file. This should include participant's name, waivers with specific information about expected risks, emergency contact information, health information, and potential applications.
- Parents of participants should be notified regarding pick-up/drop-off times, dates, location, potential health risks, and other relevant information about the camp and any offsite activity.
- Parents should provide information regarding who is authorized to pick up the child from camp or drop off location.
- The organization should collect copies of Driver's License and Insurance Information for anyone authorized to drive participating campers, and keep such documentation on file (electronically or physically).
- Camp itineraries and activity schedules should be shared and available for parents.
- Workers may receive additional training regarding transportation, overnight events, and specific activities undertaken at the camp/retreat. They may also receive refresher training on organizational policies and procedures, especially regarding health/safety, monitoring and reporting.
- Review and communicate with Workers state-specific mandatory reporting laws in the jurisdiction where camp is located and any states passed through in transit.
- Review the expectations that the camp has in place for adult leaders from your ministry.

PREPARING FOR CAMP

- The organization should collect relevant participant records to keep on file. This should include participant's name, waivers with specific information about expected risks, emergency contact information, health information, and potential applications.
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DURING CAMP

- Workers should seek to ensure that access control is maintained. Unauthorized visitors should not be allowed onsite.
- Workers should maintain proper Worker/Child ratios.
- Gender-appropriate supervision must be provided.
- Sleeping areas for Children must be separated by biological gender and age grouping.
- Technology use should be monitored.
- Relevant forms should be accessible for Workers supervising at camp.
- Children should not be allowed to leave the overnight event or premises. Any exceptions are noted on the signed permission form.

AFTER CAMP

- Any follow-up letters or other communications with campers should be consistent with ECAP Training Standard 4.12.
- Workers should be reminded of the policies concerning communication between themselves and Children outside of regularly scheduled ministry programming.
- Consider feedback from campers and parents, in order to make future camp experiences safer and better for kids.

CHECKLIST

- Recruit Workers to accompany youth group.
- Screen Workers, as if they were to work in ministry.
- Train Workers, as if they were to work in ministry.
- Communicate with Parents about upcoming camp experience and related safety measures.
- Set and communicate expectation for campers (reference camp requirements, including Code of Conduct).
- Response plan for camp and traveling, with emergency contingency plans, including first aid and a trained medical provider on site at the camp.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Policies should address ways to transport Children for Child safety.
- Workers who transport Children not related to them on behalf of the Organization are approved by leadership for Child safety.
- Check with the Organization's insurance company on transportation requirements.
- Prohibit Children from being left alone in a vehicle and prohibit adults from being alone in a vehicle with a single Child not their own Child (with exceptions for medical emergencies).
- No fewer than two Workers should be in each vehicle transporting Children; exceptions to this policy should only occur when leadership and Parents are informed and there is more than one Child in the vehicle (avoiding isolation).
- Drivers should have at least five years of driving experience in good standing (as evidenced by a driver history check).
- Check with your insurance carrier on your organization's driver coverage during official capacity and the need for documentation of the driver's personal insurance coverage.

For a lists of helpful definitions visit: ecap.net/definitions