Child Abuse Prevention Resources

**If you suspect that a child is a victim of abuse, contact the authorities immediately!**[Access the phone number to call in your state.](https://www.nccafv.org/child-abuse-reporting-numbers)

Top Tips for Camps

1. **Understand the facts about child abuse.** According to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research), **1 in 4 girls** and **1 in 6 boys**will be the victim of abuse before they reach age 18. Consider your camp population related to these statistics. Children arriving at your camp may already be the vicitm of abuse. See below for help on recognizing the signs of abuse and steps to take if a camper reveals abuse to you.
2. **Report any suspicion of abuse to the authorities**. While state laws vary, in general, as camp professionals serving *in loco parentis*, you must call the proper authorities in your state when allegations of abuse are revealed. Make sure your staff understands that it is not just the law; it’s in the best interest of campers to get them the support they need. Do not attempt to "handle it" yourself. Connect with trained professionals immediately. It's both the right thing to do and the law.
3. **Establish a robust screening process for all staff and volunteers.** Your screening process should be multi-faceted and include a criminal background check, voluntary disclosure statement, reference checks, verification of previous work, and a personal interview. See below for advice and tips on how to set your thresholds for acceptable criminal backgrounds and conduct thorough screening for staff and volunteers.
4. **Train your staff and volunteers well.** Provide training on what child abuse is, how to recognize the signs of abuse, how to prevent abuse, and how to respond when there is suspicion of abuse. See below for great training resources!
5. **Establish and enforce guidelines for acceptable interactions between staff and campers, and between campers and other campers.**Your supervision and counseling policies should ensure that one staff person is never in seclusion with one camper. Staff needs to understand that there can be no physical contact between campers and staff. (If you allow such contact as hugs and high fives, you need to be very clear about what is acceptable.) If your camp serves a special needs clientele where personal care of the camper is required, establishing interaction guidelines is even more imperative.
6. **Establish and enforce supervision practices that promote camper safety.** We know that allegations of camper-to-camper abuse can come in those brief moments in time when staff were not directly engaged with campers — non-structured program time (time between programs, meals, etc.) shower time, trips to the restroom, changing for the pool, etc. It is imperative that your staff is trained to be even more vigilant during these vulnerable times. In addition, ensure that the [ratio of staff to campers](http://www.acacamps.org/child-health-safety/child-abuse/standards)is age appropriate and meets industry standards. Encourage employees/volunteers to actively interact with the youth to maintain adequate supervision and monitoring.
7. **Teach and model respectful behavior.** If your staff are overheard “teasing” or telling sexually suggestive jokes to one another — what example does that set? Be clear with your staff that you have a zero tolerance policy on any type of abuse and other inappropriate behaviors, such as physical interaction between staff, telling stories about their love life, no sexual innuendo, etc. Consider a dress code that eliminates the possibility for sexually suggestive clothing. Practice role playing, and have staff demonstrate appropriate behaviors, including ways to confront someone being inappropriate.

While each state is responsible for establishing its own definitions of child abuse and neglect that meet federal minimum standards, most include the following:

* **Physical abuse:** physical injury as a result of hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, or otherwise harming a child.
* **Sexual abuse:** any situation where a child is used for sexual gratification. This may include indecent exposure, fondling, rape, or commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic material.
* **Emotional abuse:** any pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth, including constant criticism, threats, and rejection.
* **Neglect:** failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

[Recognizing and Preventing Child Abuse Toolkit](https://www.acacamps.org/staff-professionals/core-competencies/health-wellness/child-abuse-recognition-prevention)

***If you suspect a child has been neglected or abused, you must report it:***

* [Where to call](https://www.nccafv.org/child-abuse-reporting-numbers) when you suspect a child is a victim of abuse
* [Crisis Hotline](https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/camp-crisis-hotline) — ACA's support service to camp's in crisis
* [If Sexual Abuse Is Alleged Against a Camp Director, Top Ten Suggested Considerations](https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/articles/top-10-considerations-suggested-if-sexual-abuse-alleged-against-camp-director). Norman Friedman, MEd
* [Remember, Camps are Mandated Reporters](https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/campline/remember-camps-are-mandated-reporters). *The CampLine*
* [Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect](https://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/reporting.cfm). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
* **Staff and Volunteer Screening**
	+ [ACA standards](http://www.acacamps.org/child-health-safety/child-abuse/standards)that relate to staff screening, supervision, and training
	+ [But His Background Check was Clear!](https://www.acabookstore.org/p-6127-but-his-background-check-was-clear.aspx) Healthy Learning DVD
	+ [Child Protection Improvements Act](https://www.acacamps.org/news-publications/news/child-protection-improvements-act-senate-floor)— A bill to allow all youth-serving organizations access to timely, inexpensive, fingerprint-based records checks of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's criminal records database.
	+ [Guidance for Camps and Other Youth-Serving Organizations: Developing Criminal Background Check Thresholds.](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/page_documents/publicpolicy/CriminalBackgroundCheckThresholdGuidance.pdf) American Camp Association
	+ [How to Perform Criminal Background Checks: Background Information and Guidance for Camps.](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/page_documents/publicpolicy/Criminal_Background_Checks_Education.pdf) American Camp Association
	+ [Staff Screening and Hiring How-To's](http://www.acacamps.org/knowledge/human/staffscreening). American Camp Association
* **Establishing Policies and Procedures**
	+ [How to Abuse-Proof Your Camp: Procedures for Preventing Child Sexual Abuse](https://www.acacamps.org/staff-professionals/events-professional-development/recorded-webinar/how-abuse-proof-your-camp-procedures-preventing-child). ACA Online Course
	+ [Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures.](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingchildsexualabuse-a.pdf) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
	+ [Preventing Child Maltreatment and Promoting Well-Being: A Network for Action.](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2013/guide.pdf) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
	+ [SAMPLE Child Protection Policy for an Organization](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/CRSF-Template-National-Child-Protection-Policy.pdf).  Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation
	+ [Tough Lessons for Organizations Serving A Vulnerable Clientele](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/enews/2012/enews062712.html). Nonprofit Risk Management Center.
* **Staff and Volunteer Training**
	+ [ACA standards](http://www.acacamps.org/child-health-safety/child-abuse/standards)that relate to staff screening, supervision, and training
	+ [Child Molesters: A Behavioral Anaylsis.](http://missingkids.com/en_US/publications/NC70.pdf)National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
	+ [Critical Things Staff Needs to Know About Bullying Prevention](https://www.acacamps.org/staff-professionals/events-professional-development/online-course/critical-things-staff-need-know-about-bullying-prevention). ACA Online Course
	+ [For Their Sake Handbook: A Staff Training Handbook About Child Abuse Awareness](https://www.acabookstore.org/p-5804-for-their-sake-handbook-a-staff-training-handbook-about-child-abuse-awareness.aspx). Becca Cowan Johnson
	+ [Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children](http://www.missingkids.com/Publications/Exploitation). National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
	+ [Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect](https://www.acacamps.org/staff-professionals/events-professional-development/online-course/recognizing-reporting-child-abuse-neglect). ACA Online Course
	+ [Staff Sexual Assault: Prevention and Intervention](https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/camping-magazine/staff-sexual-assault-prevention-intervention). *Camping Magazine*
	+ [ACA's Annual Buyers Guide](https://www.acacamps.org/marketplace/camps/browse-buyers-guide). Search for companies that offer trainings, products, and services regarding sexual abuse.
* **Initiatives to Educate Children about Protecting Themselves from Abuse**
	+ [Erin's Law](http://erinslaw.org/): A state-by state iniative to enact legislation which would require require all public schools to implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program that teaches students in grades preK – 5th grade age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and to tell a trusted adult.
	+ [Speak Up: Be Safe.](http://www.speakupbesafe.org/)ChildHelp. The evolution of "Good Touch Bad Touch," a universal primary prevention program targeting child abuse, neglect, and societal risks for Grades 1–6.
	+ [Take 25: Conversation Starter: Make Time to Talk to Kids about Safety.](https://www.azag.gov/sites/default/files/sites/all/docs/child-family/Take_25_Brochure.pdf) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
	+ [Teaching Kids to Be Safe without Making Them Scared](http://www.kidpower.org/library/article/safe-without-scared/). KidPower.org
* ***What if the abuser is a child?***
	+ [Fact Sheet on Youth Who Commit Sex Offenses](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/Fact-Sheet-Youth-Offenders.pdf). National Juvenile Justice Network
	+ [Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/JuvenilesWhoCommitSexOffensesAgainstMinors.pdf). Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

 Resources

* [Child Abuse Prevention Month - New Resources for 2017](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/) - US Dept of Health and Human Services
* [Center for Disease Control and Prevention — Child Maltreatment Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/childmaltreatment/index.html)
* [Child Advocacy Centers](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/index.php?s=24)- Find a center near you.
* [Erin's Law](http://erinslaw.org/)
* [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](http://www.missingkids.com/home)
* [Prevent Child Abuse America](http://preventchildabuse.org/)
* [Stop It Now!](http://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance/prevention-tools)
* [List of organizations](https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/) across the country that provide resources on child abuse and neglect prevention.