

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

Bullying at Camp



Gwenn Kudler
Gelfand, LCSW

In the light of recent events, most recently the suicide of a South Hadley high school student, bullying has become highlighted in our society and concerns have escalated as to the effects of bullying. The Centers for Disease Control's latest report indicates that bullying is cyclical. Bullies have themselves often been targets and three-fourths of those targeted go on to bully another child. A camp setting where campers live in close proximity is potentially a breeding ground for such incidents to take place.

The literature on camping points to an increase in the incidence and frequency of bullying over recent years. Previously thought to be a problem specific to teenage girls, as in "mean girls", we are finding that boys are not excluded from this population, and especially that the incidence of bullying is occurring at younger ages than ever before.

How can you prevent bullying in your camp community?

- Bullying at camp seems to be most prevalent during unstructured times. Rest hour is prime time for this to happen as is free play or late nights in the bunk. Training counselors at orientation on how to defuse situations, help resolve disputes, and increase awareness of bullying is most important.
- Have group leaders discuss with their campers who to talk to and what to do if they feel unsafe, threatened and, in effect, bullied. Establishing open communication between counselors and campers in which a camper feels comfortable sharing their concerns is paramount.
- Encourage activities that foster togetherness both during the day and during evening activities. Team building games are extremely helpful.
- Separate cliques and best friends for such events as Olympics, color war, etc. to expand additional friendships and to reduce incidents of ganging up on others.
- Camps should initiate a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to bullying not unlike the one that public schools have adopted. The message should be clearly conveyed that if bullying is identified and continues to persist, the camper will be sent home.

SOBEL AFFILIATES – The SOLUTION for your Camp Insurance needs!



SOBEL AFFILIATES
A BROWN & BROWN COMPANY
Insurance since 1904

April

SOBELUTIONS

2010

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

Bullying at Camp Continued

The solution to bullying is not in punishment alone but in helping campers to develop positive, healthy social relationships with their peers. Often attempts at bullying are actually ineffective negative social attempts at making friends or being included.

Overall, the best defense is a good offense. Camps need to continue to create a warm and nurturing environment that encourages and supports positive relationships among campers and its staff.

What about cyber-bullying?

In our technologically advanced society bullying extends itself to the internet and the cell phone. Texting, video chatting and Facebook are technologies through which bullying can be initiated and perpetuated.

We need to ask ourselves: What are the implications for camps and what policies, if any, need to be established to address this issue?

- Camps need to consider a strict policy of dealing with cyber-bullying occurring during off-season and throughout the school year. Cyber-bullying among camp friends during off-season may transfer into bullying in a camp environment and continue throughout the summer. Some camps have gone as far as to refuse to allow a camper to be permitted to return to camp if they have engaged in cyber-bullying during the school year. Whatever policy is established, it needs to be clearly spelled out and consistently followed.
- Eliminating bullying at camp is critical so it does not continue into cyber-bullying post-season. The concern is that if these issues are not addressed during the camp season and catastrophic incidents occur through cyber-bullying, an aggressive attorney may attempt to link the bullying that occurred at camp to the incident that occurred after camp. Once again, prevention is key.

Whether dealing with traditional bullying or the newer cyber version it's important for camps to continue to cultivate a culture that is sensitive to and aware of the potentially devastating effects of this kind of behavior.

SOBEL AFFILIATES – The SOLUTION for your Camp Insurance needs!

