

Three Mountain Retreat Child Abuse Prevention Training

Curriculum from
“Riverbend Retreat Center Child Abuse Prevention Training”
Course approval number YC06-0003



Why this training is important...

- ❑ Child abuse has become a nationwide issue since about the 1980's.
- ❑ Schools, camps, churches and other youth organizations have come under intense scrutiny.
- ❑ We must be sensitive and well-informed to avoid potential difficulties in this area and for the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care.



A Team Effort...

- It is not just the responsibility of the Cabin Counselor to ensure the safety of the campers.
- Preventing child abuse is a team effort.
- Every adult, either employee or volunteer, who has opportunity to interact with the campers is required to take this course and pass the test with 70% accuracy.



Definition of Child Abuse

- Child abuse is any experience during childhood or adolescence that involves inappropriate sexual attention from another person.
- This person is usually an adult but can also be an older child or a teenager.
- Child sexual abuse is not solely restricted to physical contact.



Effects of Child Abuse

- ❑ Difficulty in forming long term relationships.
- ❑ Sexual risk-taking
- ❑ Physical complaints and physical symptoms
- ❑ Depression, suicidal thoughts and suicide
- ❑ Links to failure of the immune system and to increases in illnesses.



Signs of sexual abuse

- ❑ Fear of a parent or fear of the perpetrator
- ❑ Withdrawn or isolated
- ❑ Overly compliant or cooperative when that is not their usual behavior
- ❑ Sexually precocious, which is being involved in play that is intrusive or inappropriate



Signs of sexual abuse...

“As we discuss the signs of abuse, it’s important to note that very few of these findings are totally specific for abuse. That means that we can see these signs in a child who is not being abused. The converse is also true. **A child can be a victim of abuse and show no outward signs.**”

Dr. Janet Squires

Children’s Medical Center of Dallas



Characteristics of a child molester

- A child is more likely to be abused by somebody that they know or someone in their family than they are by a stranger.
- About 1/3 of all sexual abuse of children occurs at the hands of older children, primarily adolescence.

Strategies of Abusers

- Molesters tend to use three basic strategies: seduction, trickery and force all wrapped in secrecy.





Strategies of Abusers...

- There is usually little a child can do to resist **force**, which is a very infrequent act of abuse.
- The molester may attempt to use **bribery** by giving gifts or other favors to the interested child.
- The abuser may try to shift the **blame** to the child by telling them it is their fault the molestation took place.



Strategies of Abusers...

- Other ways that abusers maintain secrecy during abusive relationships are:
 - Embarrassment
 - Displaced Responsibility (similar to blame)
 - Loss of Affection (98% of the time the molester is a wonderful person in the child's life and the child values that relationship in spite of the abuse.)
 - Threaten the child or someone in their family



Abusive feelings and normal curiosity

“Adolescence can be very sexually confusing. But if we’re talking about something sexual between somebody who is older and someone who is younger by even a couple of years, we are getting into the realm of things that can be abuse.”

David Finkelhor

University of New Hampshire



On-Site Protection and Prevention

These policies are primarily for the protection of the campers; however, they also serve to protect the adult leaders from false accusations of abuse.



Protection and Prevention Policies

1. Avoid one-on-one contact.
 - Adult to Camper
 - Camper to Camper
2. Respect camper's privacy.
3. Use constructive discipline. Corporal punishment is never a proper form of discipline.
4. Any type of hazing is prohibited.
5. Campers are responsible for proper behavior.



Responding to Abuse

If a child discloses abuse to you...

the most important thing you can do is **Listen.**



Responding to Victim of Child Abuse

1. **BELIEVE the child.** (Don't criticize, support for disclosing)
2. **AFFIRM the child.** (Accept child's feelings, praise for courage, promise to get help).
3. **PROTECT the child.** (Private place, discuss only with listed individuals, promise only to help).
4. **REFER the child.** (Don't handle alone. Mandated by law to report)



Reporting Abuse (Occurring at Camp)

- For reporting child abuse, all the state requires is that you have **reasonable suspicion** that abuse has occurred.
- **If the suspected abuse occurs at the youth camp**, the suspected abuse must be reported to the Texas Department of Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) utilizing the online form at https://wafers.hhsc.state.tx.us/Abuse_Fraud_Re-ported_IR.asp.
(available from Three Mountain Retreat Director or Assistant)
- Local authorities (County Sheriff's office) should also be contacted about the suspected abuse.



Reporting Abuse (Before coming to Camp)

- ❑ **If the suspected abuse occurs before coming to camp,** respond to child as previously discussed. Inform **only** the following people:
 1. Three Mountain Retreat Director or his assistant
 2. The Group Leader (Director of the Camp)
 3. The child's church leader/minister/pastor

- ❑ These persons will inform the Department of HHSC, and the County Sheriff's office.