



RESPECT IS A SUMMER ESSENTIAL

A Guide for Counselors and Camp Administrators

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

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Summer camp is a wonderful time in children’s lives when they get to spend time outdoors, meet new people, have novel experiences and gain insight into themselves. There are about 12,000 day and resident camps in the U.S. and each year more than 11 million children and adults attend camp. According to an American Camp Association (ACA) [report](#), parents cite the following reasons as the most important ones for sending their children to camp: (1) camp helps build self-confidence and self-esteem; (2) camp is a safe environment; and (3) camp is a place to build social skills and make friends.

While camp can be an amazing, life-changing experience for a young person, it can also be stressful. In camp situations, sometimes children are away from home for the first time, encounter people with whom they are unfamiliar and find themselves in a position to test the limits of their own skills and abilities. Camps are more diverse than they used to be and this is both a challenge and an opportunity. Like school, camp can be an environment where bias, bullying and disrespect run rampant not only among the young people but also among the adult counselors.

As camps find themselves in a demographic shift, the ACA released “[Camp Diversity: A Call to Action](#)” in 2013, which puts forth an important question: How can we ensure that we deliver the highest quality, most culturally sensitive camp programs? They cite a variety of strategies including the promotion of inclusion and equity, defying myths and increasing respect and mutual understanding as steps camps need to take in order to answer that question.

Culled from our anti-bias and bullying prevention resources, below are strategies and information that can help camps realize their potential in providing a rich, harmonious and respectful camp experience for all.

CAMP COUNSELORS: TRAINING AND MODELING

Many camps employ young adults in their teens and twenties as counselors for whom this may be a first job. A relatively new trend is that camps seek out international staff in order to “expose campers to diverse cultures;” nearly 20% of counselors come from countries outside the U.S.

Most of the training that camp counselors receive focuses on the nuts and bolts of being a camp counselor such as safety regulations, emergency procedures, behavior management techniques, child abuse prevention,

Today, camps find themselves in a demographic shift.

In 2010, day camp participants were:

71% White

11% Black

7% Hispanic

5% Asian

5% Multiracial

1% American Indian/Islander

Day Camp

Directors were:

89% White

ACA reports that in 2013, there may have been 25% African American and 15% Hispanic participants.

Source: Camp Diversity: A Call to Action, American Camp Association, 2010.

How can we ensure that we deliver the highest quality, most culturally sensitive camp programs?

appropriate staff and camper behavior and specific procedures for supervision. Weekly meetings, which many camps use to supplement orientation training, would be a good time to discuss the importance of diversity, cultural responsiveness and ways to deal with bias and bullying.

Counselors can discuss specific scenarios, watch webinars, engage in interactive exercises or read tips/strategies and discuss ways to apply them. When they receive training in specific camp activities they will do with children, they can discuss how to integrate issues of identity and culture into those activities. Below are links to ADL's anti-bias and bullying prevention resources.

In addition to learning and teaching these skills and perspectives, counseling staff should be modeling the behavior they wish to see in young people. We know that children, especially in relating to those just a little older than they are, will emulate what they observe in others. In order to help staff be able to model inclusive and respectful behavior, it is important to have discussions with them about this and potentially provide some training.

In addition to training and meetings, here are some self-reflection questions that counselors can ask themselves:

- Do I listen with an open mind to all young people and colleagues even when I don't understand their perspectives or agree with what they're saying?
- Have I taken specific actions to dispel misconceptions, stereotypes or biases that members of one group have about members of another group at camp?
- Do I strive to avoid actions that might be offensive to members of other groups?
- Does the camp environment and activities reflect the experiences and perspectives of the cultural groups of the camp community?

Resources:

- [Anti-Bias Workshops and Assemblies](#)
- [Anti-Bias Resources](#)
- [Building Respectful School Climates](#) (webinar series)

PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CAMP ENVIRONMENTS

For many children, camp is an opportunity to meet and get to know people outside their school, town, city or neighborhood for the first time. Often times, young people will find themselves around people who are different in a variety of ways: religion, ability/disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, type of community (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), nationality and language. Spending all day together or in the case of overnight camp, sharing a bunk, is a great opportunity to get to know people who are different, learn and appreciate those differences and become more culturally competent.

The extent to which counseling and other staff acknowledge and integrate those differences into activities and conversations is essential. Staff should be careful not to promote the notion that we should be "color

blind” but instead, acknowledge differences and stress how understanding different people and perspectives is an asset in life. At the same time, be careful not to put individual children in uncomfortable positions in having to speak for their entire culture. Counselors should also consider how to integrate culturally responsive practices into activities and programs (see below), be aware of how differences impact friendships and cliques, help to challenge myths and stereotypes about people and if stereotyping and bias emerge, know how to address them.

Resource:

- [Love Has No Labels](#): A PSA campaign that encourages people to examine and challenge their own implicit bias with accompanying Educator, and Family/Caregiver and Campus Discussion Guides.

CAMP ACTIVITIES

There are so many opportunities during a day in the life of a camper (and evening for overnight camps) that staff can use to promote respect for diversity, infuse culturally responsive concepts, incorporate relevant language and discuss friendship, bullying and being an ally. Staff can incorporate these concepts into standard camp activities as well as create new ones that emphasize these topics. For example, when doing a getting to know each other activity like [The Big Wind Blows](#), have children incorporate different aspects of identity in their statements. When playing a name game, ask children to think about their family’s history or culture as it relates to their name. For evening programs, incorporate different cultural groups and topics into your theater, music and art activities. For very young children if you are using children’s literature to focus a group of kids, use children’s books that promote respect and inclusion. In arts and crafts, have children create a culture quilt by each of them making their own squares that represent their cultural identity. For overnight camps, before bed conversations around the campfire or flashlight can incorporate questions about friendship and bullying to get young people to discuss their thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears. Nearly half of all camps report having community service or “good deed” programs. Use these experiences as opportunities to not only engage young people in volunteering their time but also in understanding the root causes of the problem being addressed and taking a social justice approach to doing something about it.

Resources:

- [Lesson Plans](#)
- [Dos and Don’ts with Special Diversity Events](#)
- [10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism](#)

AWARENESS OF ABILITIES AND DISABILITIES

Being aware of abilities and disabilities is a significant part of the camp experience. At camp, there is often an emphasis on outdoors, sports and art-focused activities. Some children will naturally be better than others in these areas which can unintentionally place a heavy emphasis on skills, talent and abilities. In this way, it is important to be cognizant that children should be exposed to all activities and have an

opportunity to partake no matter their skills or abilities. There should be plenty of programming that doesn't emphasize skill and talent; children should be able to try new activities without fear of making mistakes or not being good enough.

It is relevant to note that 47% of camps offer programs for young people with disabilities. Therefore, staff and campers should recognize that children with disabilities may have their own challenges around doing certain activities and that this is a learning experience and an opportunity to build awareness and empathy among the camp community.

Resources:

- [Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights](#)
- [Suggested Language for People with Disabilities](#)

ADDRESS BIAS AND BULLYING

Make sure that camp staff understands what bullying behavior is and that when bullying or bias occur, they should interrupt and stop them on the spot, find out what happened and support the young people involved. The most important thing staff can do to prevent bias and bullying at camp is to establish safe, respectful and inclusive camp environments. This includes: (1) providing a culture where young people can be honest and open about their lives, perspectives and what's happening at camp, (2) talking with them about what bias and bullying are and giving them the skills to address them (including microaggressions at the teenager level), (3) helping young people learn how to use ally behavior for their own sense of empowerment and because often times, bias and bullying take place when children are alone and not under the watch of adults, (4) encourage camp staff members to make themselves approachable so children feel comfortable coming to them if there is a problem. These steps, in addition to those outlined above, will help to promote a positive anti-bias camp environment where respect for diversity is taught, modeled and experienced firsthand.

Resources:

- [Challenging Biased Language](#)
- [Microaggression in Our Lives](#)
- [Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources](#)

RESOURCES ON BIAS AND DIVERSITY RELATED ISSUES

Programs

Anti-Bias Workshops and Assemblies, www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/educational-programs-training

Training programs for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators,

youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Curricula and Print Resources

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism

Ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These are lifelong skills and attitudes that teach students about citizenship and that there is something you can do when faced with injustice.

Anti-bias Tools & Strategies, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies

A wide range of tips, tools and strategies for K-12 educators, administrators, students and family members to promote diversity and anti-bias behavior in learning environments and society.

Be An Ally: Six Simple Ways, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways

Six simple things you can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

The Big Wind Blows, www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activity/the-big-wind-blows.html

An activity where children incorporate different aspects of identity in their statements as a way of getting to know each other.

Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/bullying-and-cyberbullying-prevention-strategies

Strategies and resources for youth, staff and parents on bullying prevention and intervention.

“Camp Diversity: A Call to Action” by Tish Bolger. Martinsville, IN: American Camp Association, 2013. www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/camping_magazine/Camp-Diversity.pdf.

A brief report on the statistics of diversity in camps.

Challenging Biased Language, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-biased-language

Strategies and resources on challenging biased language regardless of whether the comments are deliberately malicious, said out of ignorance or thought to be a joke.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment

Practices and tools to prepare for successfully raising issues of diversity and bias and for creating positive, anti-bias environments where respect for diversity is taught, modeled, and experienced firsthand.

Definitions Related to Name-Calling, Bullying and Bias, www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/definitions-related-to-name-calling-bullying-and-bias

Definitions of words relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children for use by elementary educators and family members.

Dos and Don'ts with Special Diversity Events, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/dos-and-donts-with-special-diversity-events

A list of "dos and don'ts" to help assist those who are interested in hosting a diversity event. While this list is not comprehensive, it highlights actions that we recommended or discouraged.

"Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights." *Curriculum Connections*, Fall 2005 (updated June 2015),

www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/equal-treatment-equal-access-raising-awareness-about

This multi-grade curriculum seeks to challenge myths and stereotypes about people with disabilities and to promote awareness of various forms of disability.

"Identity-Based Bullying." *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying

This elementary lesson will help students define and understand identity-based bullying, reflect on experiences they have had and analyze scenarios and come up with potential solutions.

Lesson plans, www.adl.org/lesson-plans

ADL's collection of free, online K-12 lessons and curriculum units which assist educators in teaching about bias, bullying, diverse perspectives and discrimination.

Love Has No Labels, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/love-has-no-labels

A PSA campaign that encourages people to examine and challenge their own implicit bias with accompanying Educator, and Family/Caregiver and Campus Discussion Guides.

"Microaggression in Our Lives." *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/microaggressions-in-our-lives

This lesson provides an opportunity for high school students to explore what microaggressions are, how they have experienced them and what can be done to counteract them.

Suggested Language for People with Disabilities,

www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/suggested-language-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf

A list of inappropriate/common wording with corresponding suggested wording for people with disabilities.

What Can Be Done about Name-Calling and Bullying, www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/what-can-be-done-about-name-calling-and-bullying

Tips and strategies on what kids and school staff can do to about name-calling and bullying.

Children's Books

Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice, www.adl.org/books-matter

ADL's recommended collection of books representative of the excellent anti-bias and multicultural literature available for educators and parents of young children through young adults.