

Abuse Prevention Scenarios

We created these scenarios in order to give staff the opportunity to discuss, in a group, different situations they may find themselves in when working with children. During each scenario, we encourage you to discuss with your staff whether they agree with the answer, if they think there are additional responses that may be correct, and how they can ensure that they are following both best practices and your organization's policies. While these scenarios are set in a traditional day camp model, they can occur in any youth-serving program. Feel free to adjust them how you see fit.

Scenario 1

You observe Alex, a fellow co-worker, giving Sam, a camper, a piggyback ride. Sam seems happy and is enjoying the free ride to the next activity. Initially, this does not make you uncomfortable because Alex seems to be a trusted counselor by everyone. It's the first time that you have seen him give a piggyback ride to any child. However, you know that this is against your organization's code of conduct. What should you do?

- A. Have a conversation with Alex later in the day to remind him that, while the piggyback ride seemed innocent, it was against the rules and he shouldn't give piggyback rides anymore. You don't need to do anything else because Sam wasn't harmed and Alex is a good counselor.
- B. You don't need to worry about it too much until you start to see a pattern in Alex's behavior. You would hate to ruin someone's reputation over something so innocent.
- C. Find your supervisor and explain the situation that you observed. You are not reporting Alex as a suspected child abuser, but it is your responsibility to raise up instances of rule-breaking like this one.

Correct Answer: C

Options A & B do not fulfill your role as a counselor. Reporting any observation of rule-breaking by a fellow counselor is just as much a part of the job as showing up on time each day, leading by example and wearing a staff shirt. Remind staff that they are not reporting a staff member as a suspected child abuser, rather they are just reporting a rule being broken.

Tip: Make sure that all staff and volunteers know what it means to be a mandatory reporter. Train them on your state's mandatory reporting laws.

Scenario 2

It's Tuesday, so it's your cabin's responsibility to set up for Arts & Crafts today. Alex chooses a couple of campers to go with him to get the supplies out and tables set up. One of the campers chosen is Sam, the camper Alex gave a piggyback ride to the other day. You watch as Alex and the small group of campers skip off to the Arts & Crafts area.

Upon taking the entire group of campers to Arts & Crafts, you observe Alex and Sam sitting off to the side making friendship bracelets. When it's time for clean-up, they both disappear to the supply closet to put things away. You are uncomfortable, but you are still a new counselor and don't want to make a big deal out of nothing. What should you do?

- A. Ignore it. There are other counselors that see what's going on, and surely one of them will report it.
- B. Write down what you observed and tell your supervisor what you observed as soon as the session is over.
- C. Interrupt them in the closet so they're not alone. Then tell your supervisor what you observed as soon as the session is over.

Correct Answer: C

You have just observed a counselor favoring a camper and spending alone time with her. This behavior is against the rules of your organization. It's important to report rule-breaking to your supervisor right away, but more importantly, to intervene when you see this behavior happening. Go to the closet and check in to see what is going on. Let Alex know that you are present and aware. Remind the counselor that they should follow the "rule of 3's" (three people together for safety).

Scenario 3

It's the last day of camp and all of your campers are packing up to go home. Off to the side, you see Alex and Sam talking. Alex is on his phone, and is looking for Sam on Facebook. They then continue to exchange numbers and Alex tells Sam that he would love to hang out outside of camp. Immediately, this doesn't feel right to you. You know it is against your organization's rules to have any outside contact with the youth in your care. What should you do?

- A. You immediately report what you observed to the onsite supervisor and go to the senior leadership of your organization. There has now been a definite pattern established and no change in behavior. You continue to report up the chain of command until you observe change.
- B. Ignore it. The camper is leaving and is no longer your responsibility.
- C. You pull another counselor over to ask for advice. If you both agree something is wrong, then you will report it.

Correct Answer: A

Tip: Keep in mind that simply reporting the rule-breaking is just the first step. If you don't see a change in behavior, leadership has the responsibility to step in and help modify behavior, improve accountability and create change.