



Volunteers at Camp

Policies and Procedures

Volunteers bring a wealth of experience and skill to camp programs. Before the season summer, corporate volunteers may help get critical projects completed around camp. Often, staff will lend their time for these projects as well. During the season, volunteers may fill specific programmatic roles, assist during events or simply return year after year to help as needed.

Regardless, key risk management policies and practices should be in place to keep your camp and your volunteers safe.

All Volunteer Forms, Websites and Publications

- **Mission Statement:** Share your mission statement and how volunteers help your camp achieve your mission.
- **Zero Tolerance Statement:** Consider adding a statement to volunteer and staff materials that indicates the following: *Our organization views protecting children and youth as an integral part of our mission. We have a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse and mistreatment of any kind in our organization.*

Event Based Volunteers

Camps often utilize “event-based volunteers” for a variety of reasons ranging from fundraising events to corporate days of service or work weekends. These volunteers typically work for your camp once or twice a year and are usually not working directly with campers in your programs. The following should be in place for all Event Based Volunteers:

- **Application/Basic Information:** Camps should have on file (either hard copy or electronic) basic information about each individual on site, as well as an emergency contact. At a minimum you should have: name, contact information, emergency contact information and details about any allergies.
- **Volunteer Waiver:** All volunteers should sign your camp’s volunteer waiver.
- **Personal Equipment Waiver:** If a volunteer is bringing personal equipment to assist in a project at camp, this should be completed as well as the Volunteer Waiver.
- **Training or Orientation:** Set up your volunteers for success. Whether it is an in-depth training or a brief orientation, camps should provide event-based volunteers with the information they need to complete the volunteer activity or project.

Program or Re-Occurring Volunteers

Program or re-occurring volunteers are volunteers who are on-site when campers are present, programs are in operation or come to camp on a regular basis. Examples include a weekly administrative volunteer, a volunteer nurse, a prior season summer staff joining for a few days or a skilled local expert leading a specialty program. Because these volunteers may have unsupervised access to campers regardless of their role, additional screening and training requirements should be in place to protect your campers and your camp.

- **Volunteer Application:** A more in-depth application should be in place for these volunteers. Think about the process in place for returning staff. While loved, there should still be an application process that is signed and dated for returning and program volunteers.
- **References:** Redwoods suggests three reference checks, including one personal reference upon initial application. Reference checks should be verified and documented.

- **Criminal Background Check:** A criminal background check should be conducted annually for all program and reoccurring volunteers.
- **Voluntary Disclosure Statement:** As recommended by the American Camp Association, all volunteers with access to campers should annually complete a Voluntary Disclosure Statement.
- **Code of Conduct:** Camps should provide and review a Volunteer Code of Conduct with these volunteers. This is an opportunity for the camp to outline expectations regarding behavior and conduct. The language in the Code of Conduct should also include specific information regarding the camp's child protection policies.
- **Volunteer Waiver & Personal Equipment Waiver:** Similar to event-based volunteers, all applicable waivers should be signed and dated.
- **Annual Child Safety Training:** Camp volunteers are often family, friends, community members or former staff with a high level of trust. However, camps should not rely on this trust alone to ensure that volunteers will behave appropriately. Therefore, all volunteers should receive annual training on your child protection policies, to include:
 - *Specific Child Abuse Prevention Training:* This should cover: types of abuse, red flag behaviors of potential abusers, reporting suspected abuse and local mandated reporting laws.
 - *1:1 Policy:* Provide information about your camp's policy on being 1:1 with a camper.
 - *Touch Guidelines:* Clearly define what touch is acceptable and appropriate between volunteers and campers.
 - *Communication Policies:* This should include policies on: social media, photography and cell phone use.
 - *Camper Supervision Policies:* Provide information on the expectations of volunteers and how to ask for help if needed.
 - *Emergency Procedures:* Outline what to do and how to respond to an emergency.