

Healthy Boundaries at Camp



What Campers Bring with Them to Camp:

Abuse or Neglect: At least 1 in 7 children have experienced abuse and/or neglect in the past year, and this is likely an underestimate. About 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience sexual abuse at some point in childhood.

Child-on-Child Perpetration: As many as 40 percent of children who are sexually abused are abused by older or more powerful children.

Pornography: The average age a child is first exposed to pornography is 11. Often it is accidental or with a friend.

Vulnerability: More children and youth are at risk for mental health disorders, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, or have parents with issues that adversely impact them.

Daily Life: Teens today are spending more time on devices, less time sleeping, and less time with friends.

Cited resources and other materials can be found on the camp page of our website: dovesnest.net/camps

Camp Offers Protective Factors for Healthy Boundaries:

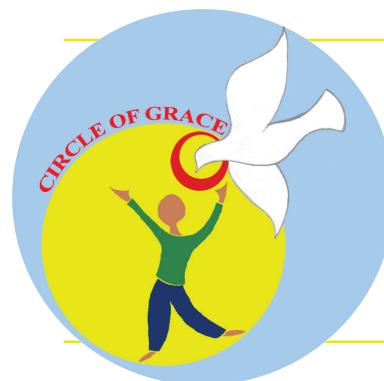
- Camp provides a break from technology and devices.
- Campers are exposed to new ways of understanding God through creation, Scripture, music, and more.
- There are opportunities to develop healthy, life-giving friendships and relationships.
- Counselors and other staff serve as role models.
- There are opportunities for attentive listening to children and youth.

Camp Has Inherent Risk Factors for Unhealthy Boundaries:

- There is high trust, so also higher risk.
- It is an intimate setting, with more personal interactions than at church or school.
- There are opportunities for grooming and inappropriate touch or relationships. Grooming is how offenders manipulate and build trust with their victims.
- There are opportunities for boundary violations among peers.
- Children are away from parents and home, some for the first time.

What Camp Directors Can Do to Establish Healthy Boundaries:

- Instruct counselors how to model healthy boundaries, avoid objectifying others, and practice consent when touching or getting physically close to a camper.
- Clarify expectations for relationships between counselors and campers/minors both in and outside of camp sessions, including electronic and online interactions.
- Be aware of potential risks in junior counselor and counselor dynamics.
- Provide open, approachable communication between summer staff and full-time staff, where both parties can voice concerns and questions.
- Consider the spiritual impact of the camp experience. What messages are campers receiving? Do the messages point them to a healthy perspective about God, self, and community? More specifically, do the messages avoid shame and blame, especially of victims of abuse?
- Provide clear policies on what to do if a counselor suspects abuse or inappropriate activity, whether it is at camp between a counselor and camper or between campers or if a camper discloses something in his or her life outside of camp that causes the counselor to suspect child abuse or neglect.
- Be aware of your state laws on reporting, and ensure your camp policies and procedures follow the law.
- Report suspected child abuse directly to child protective services. **1-800-4-A-CHILD | 1-800-422-4453**



Circle of Grace

a Christian safe environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.

dovesnest.net/circleofgrace

Dove's Nest: Faith Communities Keeping Children and Youth Safe

Equipping and empowering faith communities to keep children and youth safe in their homes, churches, and communities.

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