

Camp Counselor Training

Building a solid core of competent counselors is essential to the success of any camp. You will find people offering their time and energies to assist in a camping program when they have had an enjoyable experience as a counselor. How can you help them have that enjoyable experience? How can you keep quality counselors coming back year after year? **TRAINING**. That's right, just a little training will go a long way toward making a counselor feel like their investment of time and energy is significant. It will help them see the potential of this assignment in terms that are much bigger than "baby-sitting," or "adolescent sitting." Prior to your training session, it would be helpful to prepare a Counselor's Handbook, which should contain any information the counselor may need to properly carry out his or her duties. The following is a simple list of information that could be included:

- 1. Job Description.** This section should contain a full list of responsibilities and activities in which the counselor is expected to participate. Privileges should also be listed (i.e. canteen or snack shop privileges, phone, etc.). Guidelines for counselor's personal behavior and relationships to the camp director, other counselors, and campers should also be specified.
- 2. Camp History and Traditions.** Your campsite may be near or on a famous historical location (i.e. Revolutionary or Civil War battle-ground, Indian campsite, etc.). If a particular group or individual organized the camp, it would be nice to give them proper recognition. There are also certain traditions that have grown over the years and you will want to inform your counselors of the "annual counselor talent show," or other such events.
- 3. Camper Information Forms.** Camper registration, health forms, medical release forms, dormitory assignment sheets, etc. should be included here. This information and how it will be used will be especially helpful to those people assisting with camper registration. Follow-up forms that will be sent to pastors should also be included. Also included should be a sample of the incident report the counselors may need to fill out.
- 4. Camp Policies, Rules & Regulations.** These will govern your camp for the week. Included should be the ministerial goals and objectives.

5. **Camp Map.** All buildings, recreation areas, trails, etc. should be noted. Camp boundaries and any areas that are off limits should be clearly marked. Camp managers will often have this information available. If unavailable, secure someone to sketch the major landmarks for you.
6. **Emergency Procedures.** The campsite will have some standard operating procedures for tornado warnings, fire, animal intrusion, camper injury, lost camper, etc. This information should include information on emergency equipment location, and whom to contact and how. If warning sirens are used in any emergencies, counselors and campers alike should be informed what the signs mean, what to expect, where to go, and what to do.
7. **Supplies and Requisition.** Counselors will need to know where athletic equipment is stored and any check out procedures that are to be followed. Cabin cleaning materials, craft supplies, and other equipment are other items that they will need access to. A clear explanation of the procedures involved in advance will avoid frustration and lost activity time later.
8. **Camp Schedule.** This is the detailed list of all activities for each day of camp. Special events, excursion, and departure times should all be included.
9. **Miscellaneous.** Here's the "catch-all" section every handbook needs. Camp theme and information about the speaker are a few examples of information you may wish to provide for your staff.

Scheduling of the Counselor Training Event

Consider one of the following options for your counselor training:

1. **Pre-Camp Off-Site Training.** Schedule this training time 1-2 weeks before the first day of your camp. The closer the training is to the actual event, the better the retention rate of the material given to your counselors. Select a centrally located church on your district for the event. Make sure to budget for refreshments and at least one good meal for your

counselors. It is a nice way to say thanks in advance for their commitment of time to the campers. Consider building the expense of this event into the total budget for your camp. Training of workers is always a wise investment. The schedule presented here serves as a starting point from which you can adapt your own.

Schedule

9:00 a.m.	-Arrival at training location -Coffee and doughnuts -Get acquainted time
9:30 a.m.	-Devotional moments
9:45 a.m.	-Goals & objectives for the week at camp -Review of schedule
10:30 a.m.	-Break
10:45 a.m.	-Counselor assignments (i.e. activities, housing, etc.) -Handling of discipline situations -Safety and emergency procedure
12:00 p.m.	-Lunch
1:00 p.m.	-Preview curriculum for small group leaders -Program people (recreation, registration) meet to discuss details. -Review items counselors are to bring to camp -Expected arrival time for first day
2:30 p.m.	-Dismissal

- 2. Pre-Camp On-Site Training:** Scheduling conflicts or travel distance may prohibit a pre-camp off-site training event. If so, consider inviting your counselors to camp on the Sunday evening just before the Monday start of camp. Many of your counselors are active in their own local churches. You most likely have several Sunday commitments of your own. This Sunday evening time can be utilized for getting acquainted and settling into their respective cabins or rooms. Here's a sample schedule:

Sunday

9:00 p.m.	-Arrive at campsite Cabin/room assignments
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