



Summer camps create cherished memories for many, offering children and adolescents a chance to explore new activities, make friends, and develop valuable life skills. The success of your camp hinges on [well-trained staff](#) and [volunteers](#) who create a safe, engaging, and memorable environment.

Screening and Background Checks

The success of the camp begins with your staff screening and background checks. Develop written hiring policies that outline appropriate application and screening processes for each job category and review these policies with legal counsel or human resources professionals to ensure compliance. Implement a thorough screening process for all staff and volunteers, including criminal background checks, sexual offender registry searches, and reference verification.

Verify licenses and certifications for anyone in specialized roles, such as lifeguards. Ensure all background screening complies with the Fair Credit Reporting Act and other relevant privacy laws. An overview of background checks, along with guidance on selecting vendors, has been developed by the American Camp Association – [Criminal Background Checks](#).

Establish Policies

Develop policies to emphasize a code of conduct expected by everyone. Staff members should understand your zero tolerance policies for boundary invasion, bullying, harassment, and discrimination. These policies should be clearly communicated to campers and staff members. Provide training on camp policies to ensure staff members can recognize and address bullying incidents, recognize and report sexual harassment, and understand their responsibilities for reporting child abuse.

Training and Development

Prioritize comprehensive training for all staff members. This should include sessions on child safety and welfare, emergency procedures, conflict resolution, and specific camp activities. Require all staff members to be trained in first aid and CPR, and ensure first aid supplies are readily available throughout the camp.

Offer ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the summer to enhance staff skills and confidence.

Camp Safety

The safety and well-being of the camp should be the top priority for all staff. Encourage staff to remain vigilant and proactive in identifying and addressing potential hazards. Conduct regular safety inspections of camp facilities and equipment. Ensure outdoor areas are in good condition and free of holes, depressions, or protruding objects. Check indoor facilities to ensure fire extinguishers are present and inspections are current, exits are clearly marked and unobstructed, and rooms are clean and well maintained.

Clear Communication

Establish open lines of communication from the outset. Clearly communicate expectations, responsibilities, and any changes in policies or procedures. Encourage staff members to voice their concerns, ideas, and feedback. Regular staff meetings are an excellent forum for discussing issues, sharing updates, and fostering teamwork.

Address any issues or concerns promptly and effectively. Whether it's conflicts between staff members, disciplinary matters, or camp related issues, handle them with professionalism, fairness, and empathy. Be approachable and available to listen to staff members' perspectives and work together to find solutions.

Summer camps can be dynamic environments with unexpected challenges and changes. Encourage staff members to be flexible and adaptable in their approach to foster a culture of problem solving and innovation, empowering staff to think creatively and find solutions in challenging situations.