



Title: Group Counselor

Purpose: To provide campers with an enjoyable and beneficial camp experience while being accountable for the personal safety, physical and emotional well being of the campers with whom they are working, and in many respects, must function as a surrogate parent. Moreover, they are expected to serve as positive role models and set an example that campers can follow with confidence.

Accountability: Accountable to Unit Leader/Head Counselor and work closely with the Program Director and Camp Directors.

General Responsibilities:

Every group of campers has two group counselors or one counselor and one Junior Counselor, who serve a multi-faceted purpose in the camp community. During the 24 hour day, when at least one of the group counselors is on duty at all times, he/she sees after the cabin group as well as the individual camper. The basic functions of a group counselor are to accompany and supervise their campers through the daily routine, to provide additional instruction and safety coverage at the specialty areas, to provide leadership and guidance during rest hour, meals and other bunk and free times, and to see that a standard of personal and cabin cleanliness and safety is maintained. On a more abstract, but certainly at least equally important level, a group counselor after each of his camper's individual needs while also maintaining certain standards of behavior appropriate to the group setting. He/she attempts to direct their campers toward realization of their own potential and creativity and thus foster a feeling of self-respect and self-assurance. In doing so a group counselor must be constantly aware and focus on the individual's actual and potential contribution to the group and his/her benefits gained by the group living experience. In essence the group counselor, acting "in parentis", must provide care and concern while guiding each of their campers toward an enjoyable and rewarding summer of fun and growth.

Requirements:

- At least 18 years of age
- No criminal record
- Responsible and mature personality

Additional Requirements (not mandatory):

- Lifeguarding or WSI Certifications
- Special Skills such as proficiency in tennis, waterskiing, theater work, etc.
- Teaching experience

Overview: Attempting to cover every detailed responsibility would be an almost impossible task for a job as diverse and complex as Group Counselor. The following

is meant to serve as a guide for specific responsibilities charged to the position of Group Counselor.

Orientation and Conference: This will be conducted for five days prior to the camper's arrival. During this time, topics such as safety regulations, emergency procedures, programming, and camper/staff interaction techniques will be covered.

Preparing for Camper Arrivals: This takes some thought, and time will be given during orientation to prepare the following: cleaning and organizing your cabin, preparation of a job wheel/job chart, making a large colorful welcome sign (to be used when charter busses arrive and then left in living rooms to decorate cabin), learning the names of your campers and familiarizing yourself with their specific room assignments (which are done by administration with thought and reason, and not to be changed without permission). All camper and counselor beds that are near each other (6 feet or closer) must be set up "head to toe."

Opening Day is a busy and exciting time for everyone. It is important that at least one counselor (if possible) remain in the cabin to meet and greet arriving campers and their parents from after lunch until the charter buses arrive. Campers arrive at camp by three modes of transportation. The first arrivals are those dropped off by parents. Once the counselors meet the parents and the baggage is unloaded, one counselor can give the family a quick tour of the campus (if it is a camper that has never attended camp before). After that, the counselor should stay with the new camper as they see the parents off. Returning campers do not need as close attention as a new camper, but they should stay in the vicinity of your cabin. Often times, it has been a good idea to enlist the assistance of all those arriving early to help "set up" the cabin and of course, set up their own areas and make their beds (see attached unpacking instructions). This will prove to be helpful when the large number of campers arrive by chartered bus and your time will be in great demand. The second group and usually by far the largest, are those campers arriving by the chartered buses. A bell will be rung 10 minutes prior to the arrival of the buses. At that time, counselors and all campers already in camp should assemble with the welcome signs at the large athletic field. Upon campers exiting the buses, they will assemble by cabin groups and will go with you to your cabin. Campers assisted by staff should start unpacking and making beds as soon as the baggage is delivered to the cabin. It should be noted that often the baggage truck does not arrive at the same time as the buses. The third group of campers usually arrive late in the evening and usually by plane. In most cases, they will be brought to your cabin quietly and will need your welcome and assistance with getting settled quickly. After dinner campers should continue, with assistance from the counselors, setting up the cabin. Prior to lights out a cabin meeting should be held welcoming the campers, discussing camp and cabin rules, and finishing with an opportunity for the campers to introduce themselves and visit as a group. Also that night an administrative representative will come to your cabin to collect important items belonging to campers such as: money, passports, airline tickets, baggage keys, letters to the Camp Directors, checks, medications, vitamins, etc.

During the first days at camp, you should be aware that special consideration should be given to individuals with such sensitive problems as; shyness, homesickness, bed wetting (arrange for special rubber sheets), special medical and dietary needs etc. The most common (but with counselor help, preventable), bad experiences campers can have at camp are: homesickness, getting picked on by others, not being listened to, not making any friends, getting “yelled at,” being physically “bullied” and getting feelings hurt. These negative experiences can leave lasting effects on a child if gone unchecked. The happiness and well-being of each camper in his/her group is ultimately the responsibility of the group counselor. A special schedule will be in effect for the first couple of days. This allows time for camper orientation including a camp tour, meeting specialty counselors, swim tests, and infirmary check. An Emergency Evacuation drill will also be conducted during this time.

“Counselors, we really need you!” It sometimes goes without saying that younger campers need guidance and assistance from their counselors. Even though teenage campers often will not visibly seek out such guidance and may even seemingly reject it, they need counseling, guidance and support often times more than even the youngest campers. It must be realized that although the teenagers may seem very sophisticated, they are still campers in our care with very definite needs.

Regular Schedule operates for 5 days a week with 2 days designated for special program. During the “regular schedule,” there are two or three elective choices each day. Counselors should be aware and give assistance to younger campers who often feel unable or lack confidence in making decisions, or to older campers who wish to monopolize certain areas such as water-skiing, often intimidating their peers into not choosing an activity. Counselors are responsible for reading the bulletin board with regard to shower and infirmary schedules, laundry day, personal hour off schedule, evening patrol duty and deadlines for group newspaper articles etc. The listed bedtime should generally be followed. Often counselors let the campers whisper or read with a flashlight as they settle in for the night. Also, a late night party with food, s’mores and sometimes pizza shared in the living room with a fire in the fireplace, is a special treat for a cohesive group.

General Practices for Effectively Relating to Campers: At camp, we put the highest priority on our counselors not only being accessible, but involved with all campers and in cabin life. To encourage the development of staff/camper relationships, it is recommended that counselors spend as much time as possible interacting directly with the campers. A “Good” counselor spends little time in his/her bedroom but tends to be in the living room, camper bedrooms, or outside during the camper’s free time, involved in activities and having fun with them. Counselors rooms should be cleaned up prior to the breakfast meal every day. This allows you to be fully involved with you campers and their clean up duties once you return from breakfast. Counselors can show a genuine interest by assisting campers in: holding dust pans, helping sweep a larger room, assisting campers with bed

making or straightening up his/her belongings, etc. There graded inspection at least once a week. Through active participation with your campers, you can encourage them to take pride in their cabin and belongings.

Counselors should only use technology during their “free time” or “time off.” Doors to counselor’s rooms must always remain fully open, even at night, except during the counselor’s day off allowing a counselor to “sleep in.”

Many parents surprise their children by sending “care packages.” The camp allows these as long as there is enough to share with the entire cabin group. Campers are notified prior to the camping season of our sharing policy along with the fact that the food is to be held by the counselors in his/her room for distribution at specified times. Chewing gum, due to many campers with braces, is not allowed in or out of camp. Technology such as cell phones, gaming consoles, and laptops do not promote camp life and social interaction and as such are prohibited from camp. Confiscated items should be turned in to the Unit Leader or Head Counselor for safekeeping and will be returned upon the completion of the campers time at camp. It is important that counselors encourage international campers to speak English at all times, as this is a principal reason that their parents choose our camp.

Staff Performance Reviews: Each Group Counselor will meet with their Unit Leader/Head Counselor and or the Directors prior to mid-season, and near the close of camp. At these meetings, an assessment of the counselors performance detailing strengths as well as areas needing attention, will be addressed verbally following a detailed written evaluation of which you will receive a copy (written informal evaluations given out weekly).

Camper Reports: All group counselors are responsible for detailed reports on each camper within their group. The reports include not only general bunk activities but also specific information on the individual camper. Rough drafts of all reports must be approved by the Unit Leader/Head Counselor or Directors, and final copies must be completed and turned in for review by the following deadlines: 1st session camper reports due 1 day after departure of campers, 2nd session and full season camper reports due 3 days after departure of campers. Because these letters are time consuming and require thought, notes on campers and their accomplishments should be kept starting with the first few days of camp.

Parent’s Weekends take place the third and fourth weekends of camp. Further information will be given prior to the visiting days.

Change Over Weekend occurs approximately four weeks into the season, when a number of campers return home and a new group joins us. The order and condition of the campers baggage, leaves a lasting impression on their parents as to the supervision and care that they have received from you while at camp. Therefore, it is essential that the attached packing instructions be strictly adhered to.

The Final Days of Camp are filled with a number of special traditions and programs that campers and staff look forward to.

As campers get ready to return home, the transitions they face can be difficult. Some may be concerned over leaving their friends and/or returning home and the anxiety of change can bring out a number of different emotions in different children, even causing some to act out.

After Campers Depart there will be a number of special requirements involving the cooperation of all camp counselors. As an example, all boats need to be taken out of the water, cleaned and stored swim rafts taken out of water and cleaned, etc. Once the camp is ready to be closed, your cabin is clean, along with the cabin inventory completed, and your final reports are turned in and approved, you will be given a number to check out with the directors.