



Association of Camps Farthest Out, Inc.

"Providing a Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led program through which people discover the Kingdom of God in the midst of today's world."

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in CFO Camps & Retreats

(adopted by CCR May 2013)

PREAMBLE

God has called us to make disciples of Jesus Christ with concern that our ministries safely protect our children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation.

Jesus taught that *"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me," (Mark 9:37 NRSV)* and *"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones ... it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. " (Matthew 18:6 NRSV)*

We recognize that our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection to all persons, and especially include children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as those committed to ministering to them. The Association of Camps Farthest Out, Inc. recognizes the need to respond by outlining policies and procedures that can

- 1) prevent abuse from happening at any sponsored CFO event;
- 2) affirm we are a place where children can feel safe;
- 3) protect those in ministry to our children, youth and vulnerable adults.

This policy suggests minimum requirements in the areas of:

- 1) Screening,
- 2) Supervision,
- 3) Reporting, and
- 4) Response Plan.

SCREENING PROCEDURES Careful screening is one way to prevent abuse and exploitation of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

All who have regular and direct contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults shall be required to fill out background screening information that shall include, but is not limited to

- a. Standard contact information.
- b. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history, including any criminal charges and / or convictions
- c. Waiver of confidentiality allowing the Camp Council Ring or the ACFO Office to secure background checks and references as necessary.

Background screening:

Minimum – National criminal and sex offender background check.

It is recommended that background checks be repeated at least every 5 years.

All records shall be kept in a secured, locked location. There will be a system in place that gives access to those who need these records. It is recommended that these records be kept by the ACFO Office in perpetuity.

SUPERVISION: Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse or exploitation of children, youth or vulnerable adults, and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unfounded accusations.

1. **No child, youth or vulnerable adult will be left unsupervised.**
2. An additional "roamer" adult should be utilized to spot-check all programs in progress.
3. **All ministry activities should occur in open view.**
4. Registration Materials should be collected for all attendees at every activity.
5. Ministry activities involving transportation shall require written and signed permission from parents/guardians.

REPORTING: Reporting is required by any staff or volunteer that personally witnesses an incident of abuse or exploitation. Reporting is also required when an allegation of an event of abuse or exploitation is made to staff or a volunteer by a third party. Finally, reporting is also required when a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse or exploitation to a staff member or volunteer. It is crucial that reporting be immediate and the allegations dealt with as soon in time as possible to the incident or disclosure.

1. The staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or to whom such abuse is disclosed, or who suspects abuse is required to report the incident/ suspected abuse **immediately** to the person in charge. The CFO chairperson in charge and immediate supervisor are to be informed immediately about the making of a report.
2. The person in charge of the activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim and his/her address and family information.
3. After the Chairperson has reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, he or she is to report the incident immediately to the ACFO Office. (see below)
4. The Secretary, in collaboration with the Chairperson, must keep a written report of the steps taken by the Council Ring in response to the reported abuse. The report should be kept brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. This report should be written or typed, kept in duplicate with the camp records, and a copy should be sent to the ACFO office. Confidentiality must be assured.

RESPONSE PLAN: A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with official investigating agencies.

1. All media requests for statements should be directed to the ACFO Office.
2. Immediately, and with dignity and respect for the rights of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth or vulnerable adults and advise the accused there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of the removal. In any removal from any activity/ministry, care should be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by authorities.
3. When it has been alleged that a volunteer has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, the volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry / activities with children, youth and vulnerable adults until the incident has been resolved.
4. Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and wellbeing of the child, youth or vulnerable adult until the parent(s)/guardian(s) arrive.

NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.

5. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further harm. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the **first** priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
6. The Council Ring should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.

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