



Bullying Prevention Policy

Statement of Intent

We, the campers and staff of Camp Oconto, are committed to providing a compassionate, receptive and non-threatening atmosphere for everyone in our community to learn, grow, and succeed in. We believe that cooperation, respect, and kindness are the foundations of healthy relationships and happy environments. Accordingly, we have a zero-tolerance policy against bullying, meaning that bullying of any sort is deemed unacceptable within the camp community. If bullying does occur, campers and staff should be assured of the fact that all incidents will be addressed quickly and fairly.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be generally defined as the use of aggression, intimidation and/or cruelty with the result of hurting another person verbally, physically or emotionally. Bullying carries the ramification of causing pain and stress to the victim. Bullying is never justified and cannot be attributed to “kids being kids” or any other rationalization. Specific types of bullying may include, but are not limited to:

Emotional:	Being deliberately unkind, shunning, excluding, or tormenting. Examples: consciously leaving out a participant in a game or activity, making threatening faces or gestures, gossiping about someone behind their back, etc.
Physical:	Pushing, kicking, hitting, tripping, punching or using any other sort of physical violence against a victim. Examples: Rough housing on activity equipment, splashing someone against their wishes, throwing an object at someone, etc.
Racist or Intolerant:	Taunts, slurs and/or physical threats directed around a victim’s race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity. E.g. writing graffiti with racial slurs, excluding a person based on their race, religion sexual orientation or ethnicity etc.
Sexual:	Initiating and/or executing unwanted physical contact, making sexually threatening and/or abusive comments. Examples: grabbing or touching a person against their will, using derogatory labels such as “slut” or “whore,” denying a person their privacy when they are changing their clothes or using the bathroom, etc.
Verbal:	Name-calling, ridiculing, using words to attack, threaten or insult. Examples: Spreading rumours, making fun of someone’s appearance, mannerisms or intelligence, etc.

Please note that an instance of bullying may fall into more than one of the above categories.

Policy Objectives

- All staff, campers and parents should have a full understanding of what bullying is and encompasses;
- All staff should be thoroughly familiar with the bullying policy, and should follow it appropriately when bullying is reported or observed;
- All campers should be thoroughly familiar with the bullying policy, and should know what steps to take when bullying occurs;
- Campers and parents should be reassured that Camp Oconto takes bullying utterly seriously, and will support victims and their families when bullying is reported;
- Bullying will not be excused, permitted, or tolerated.

Warning Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Not all victims of bullying will let on that they are suffering. Many people feel that admitting how bad things have gotten will increase their torment at the hands of the perpetrators if they risk “snitching,” or are afraid no one will believe or support them or are too embarrassed to admit what was happening. Staff should openly encourage campers to report incidents of bullying that are observed or experienced first-hand.

Even in the event that a camper or staff is not forthcoming about being bullied, there may be signs or symptoms that suggest a problem. We should be aware of these symptoms and what they signify and should investigate immediately. A child may be a victim of bullying if she:

- Is noticeably frightened or evasive when asked “what’s wrong?”
- Suddenly loses her appetite
- Begins bullying or showing unusual aggression towards other children
- Has unexplained cuts, scrapes or bruises
- Repeatedly claims to feel ill before social situations
- Cries herself to sleep at night or suffers from chronic nightmares
- Attempts to runaway
- Seems withdrawn, anxious or suddenly suffering from low self-esteem
- Avoids situations that involve interacting closely with other kids

It should be noted that the above signs may indicate other problems, but bullying should promptly be considered a possibility and looked into.

Proper Bullying Report/Response Procedures

1. All bullying incidents should be reported immediately to a counsellor who must tell her Section Head.
2. Staff members will record all reported bullying incidents on the Incident Reports kept in each Section Head’s cabin. Completed incident reports must be handed in to the Camp Director as soon as possible.
3. Depending on the severity of the situation, parents of both victim and perpetrator may be contacted- by Lisa.
4. In severe cases, local police may be contacted.
5. The bullying behaviour will be investigated quickly and fully, with both victim and perpetrator informed that the behaviour must stop immediately.
6. The bullying perpetrator may meet with the Camp Director or a designated staff member in order to understand the seriousness of her actions, to include placing themselves in the victim’s shoes and to learn the appropriate means of changing behaviour.
7. The bully may be asked to apologize to the victim and/or, if the victim prefers, will sign a letter promising to avoid all future contact with the victim.
8. There may be a range of punitive responses up to dismissal from camp property for the perpetrator.
9. After the incident has been thoroughly investigated and dealt with, staff will monitor both the victim and perpetrator, to ensure the bullying doesn’t reoccur.

Tools for Prevention and Education

Camp Oconto will adopt any/all of the following tools to prevent and educate campers about bullying:

- Setting clear rules with the campers at the beginning of each session.
- Making this policy available to campers and staff.
- Engaging campers in open discussions or cooperative activities based on preventing bullying.
- Emphasizing the importance of reporting incidents of bullying both observed and experienced and including confidentiality as an option in making such reports.