**APPENDIX E**

**Child Abuse **

Camp Tecumseh is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the prompt reporting of suspected abuse to connect campers and their families to professional resources. As professionals working with children, we must be keenly aware of the potential risks that may impact a child and be prepared to respond to campers sensitively and appropriately. Camp policy is designed to comply with all New Hampshire laws and regulations regarding the prevention, identification, and reporting of child abuse and neglect. Camp also provides training to employees to supplement this policy and the Camp Director is available for consultation about appropriate boundaries or suspected abuse at any time. Failure to comply with this policy may result in reprimand and may result in termination of employment.

**Reporting**

Under New Hampshire, ***any person*** who has reason to suspect that a child under age 18 has been abused or neglected must report that suspicion immediately to the New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). The report must be made ***immediately*** to the Central Intake Unit at (800) 894-5533. This report may be followed within 48 hours by a report in writing, if requested by DCYF.

Under Camp policy, any Camp employee who suspects that a child under age 18 has been abused or neglected must also ***immediately*** inform the Camp Director. The Camp Director can assist the employee in making an external report to DCYF. The Camp Director will:

1. Assess the immediate safety and well-being of the camper
2. Take any immediate steps for physical or emotional safety, including seeking medical care, contacting 911, or seeking crisis counseling
3. Determine the appropriate manner of communication with parents or guardians
4. Contact DCYF and as appropriate, the Moultonborough Police Department
5. Maintain written documentation of the circumstances of the report
6. Assure that staff with a “need to know” in order to support the child are informed
7. Maintain the privacy of the information

If the suspected abuse includes a Camp employee, the Camp Director will consult with the Chair of the Board and Camp legal counsel to ensure that all appropriate steps are taken, including suspension of the staff member from Camp until a final determination is made.

**Understanding Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be physical, sexual or psychological. It can also involve neglect. Child abuse can be committed by any individual, including a parent, a caregiver, teacher, employee, another adult in the child’s life, or an older child. Child sexual abuse often begins with grooming behaviors, which involve a pattern of conduct designed to facilitate access, build trust, break down emotional and psychological barriers to allow abuse to occur, and minimize the risk of disclosure by encouraging secrecy. These behaviors may mimic otherwise healthy and appropriate behaviors, but may also involve inappropriate or criminal acts. Grooming often involves escalating behaviors and attempts by the abuser to shape the child’s perception of the acts. Every child experiences abuse differently. While some children display behavioral changes, others show no external signs. In addition, there is often a significant delay between the abuse and when a child chooses to disclose the abuse.

**Reason to Suspect**

“Reason to suspect” is a very low threshold. Reason to suspect may be based on your own observations or knowledge, or on information shared with you by the child or any other individual. There is no requirement that a Camp employee have actual evidence or proof of abuse, nor should a Camp employee seek to investigate the matter themselves before making a report. When in doubt, Camp staff should always err in consulting with the Camp Director or making an external report to DCYF.

**Responding to a Report**

Camp employees should reassure the camper and thank him for sharing. Camp employees should react as neutrally and empathetically as possible and reassure that the camper has done the right thing by sharing. Camp employees should not panic or overreact to the information disclosed by the child, criticize the child, or claim that the child misunderstood what happened. Camp employees should encourage the camper to tell the Camp Director or camp nurse and reinforce that the child feels that he is not to blame for what happened. Tell the child that no one should ask him to keep a special secret and that it is okay to tell a trusted adult.

**Privacy**

Given the nature of our interactions with campers and their families, parents or campers may choose to share sensitive information with staff. Camp expects all of its employees to maintain professionalism and respect the privacy of campers and their families. Aside from reports to DCYF and the Camp Director, as required by Camp policy and New Hampshire law, employees with information about suspected abuse should not discuss suspected abuse with other staff or campers.

**Professional Boundaries**

As Camp staff, it is our duty to model and maintain appropriate professional relationships with campers. The Camp environment provides close 24 hour a day contact between counselors and campers. Supportive relationships between campers and counselors are encouraged and develop naturally. It is important, however, that counselors use good judgment and interact with campers in developmentally-appropriate ways.

All Camp staff should be aware of the following guidelines:

1. Follow the “rule of three.” Camp staff should avoid being alone with a camper or junior counselor, particularly in private locations or in places that are not commonly viewed as normal meeting areas.
2. Have other staff members present when supervising showers, changing into swimming suits, or other circumstances in which the child may be dressing or undressing. Respect the privacy of the child.
3. Treat all campers consistently and fairly and avoid displaying favoritism.
4. Do not sleep in the same bed or share sleeping accommodations with a camper, or allow two campers to sleep in the same bed.
5. Use good judgment about physical contact, and allow a child to initiate a hug. A child has the right to reject displays of affection if he feels uncomfortable about them. Not every child comes from a background in which affection is openly displayed. Respect the child’s wishes and follow their lead.
6. Be sensitive about the use of age-appropriate language and refrain from sharing personal or private matters with campers, and protect your own privacy. Campers may have a natural curiosity about boyfriends or girlfriends, personal relationships, and, with some of the older campers, sexual activity.
7. Use common sense in discussing sensitive subjects with your campers.
8. Refrain from using or encouraging the use of alcohol or other drugs with minors.
9. Refrain from giving or receiving gifts from campers.
10. Refrain from contact with a camper outside of Camp (e.g., babysitting or home visits), unless with the express permission of the camper’s parents and the Camp Director.
11. Speak with the Camp Director about age-appropriate practices for social media or other electronic communications outside of Camp (e.g., contact may be appropriate between seniors and junior counselors, but not between juniors and counselors). All contact should be with parental permission.

Camp staff who have questions about appropriate boundaries should speak with the Camp Director, Assistant Director or another member of Senior Staff.