



AIC Internet Policy for Campers, Parents and Staff

Introduction

A policy camps can use with campers, parents and staff regarding online activities and how they affect camp. Whether or how a camp enforces each policy, or just uses them as a set of guidelines, is up to each individual camp. The way the material has been organized is in terms of policies, approaches and/or guidelines for each constituency at camp; namely, the staff, campers and camper parents. In some cases, policies or guidelines about a particular issue, such as publishing pictures of campers online, should be done in a coordinated way with all three constituents.

This policy addresses several areas as follows:

- **Camper-counselor contact outside of camp.** Given all the new technologies and the ease with which a camper can track down a counselor online (using Google.com or other means), it has become clear that many campers are having regular dialogues with counselors outside of camp. Much of this contact and communication goes on *without the knowledge or oversight of parents*. Many parents think that once a counselor works at camp that the camp is somehow responsible for their off-season or out-of-camp behavior with campers. Parents need to be made aware of this contact, of the limited responsibility and liability of the camp and take steps to oversee any such contact, whether online, over the phone, text messaging (SMS) or personal meetings.
- **Partnering with parents.** With the majority of our campers using the internet, we need to partner with parents in order to provide the best possible outcome for our campers online use whether at home or at camp. By sharing our experiences and advice with parents we can help to keep children safe online. The more knowledge we share the better

equipped we are to face the challenges technology poses to our camp community.

- **Social Networking Sites.** Facebook.com and MySpace.com account for about 89% of all social networking sites in the United States. This area presents several challenges. First, many prospective staff do not have their profile set on the privacy setting (up to 80% of MySpace.com profiles are public), which means that campers and parents can openly view the text and photographs they have posted online. Second, many counselors photograph themselves in camp T-shirts or sweatshirts and otherwise identify themselves as employees of camp, which means that their online presence may affect the camp's image. There may need to be a two-tiered approach to social networking sites, the first being a firmer approach in the event that a staff member or employee identifies themselves as an employee of camp, giving the camp greater legal "muscle"; and a more general approach regarding what is tasteful and what might keep one from being considered for a position at camp.
- **Group Pages (User Groups).** All the major social networking sites have what is known as a "group page" feature, where anyone with an interest in just about anything can create a separate "profile" for that interest. Many counselors (and campers) have created camp group pages that can be mistaken for the official camp website. Many of these camp group pages (there can be several for any given camp) utilize the camp logo, camp pictures and make other specific references to camp.
- **Cell phones and digital cameras.** Though most camps have a "no cell phone" policy, many have not realized that, even if there is no cell phone service at camp, many of these phones now have digital cameras integrated in them which makes it easy to take candid photographs of staff or campers in compromising situations, like in the shower or while changing clothes. It has happened also that campers have uploaded images from their phones or their digital cameras that have embarrassed other campers, staff or the camp.

- **Online predators.** Though not specifically a camp problem, this area presents itself as an opportunity for camp professionals to present themselves to parents as advocates for children and their safety. Serving as a resource to inform parents about how to educate and supervise their children's online activities would be in keeping with the recent effort camps have made to partner with parents around the well-being of children.

Menu

- A set of guidelines for educating staff and informing them of the camp's policies on all things related to the Internet and other technology matters, along with the reasoning behind them.
- An outline of an orientation session at camp that would utilize an on-screen projected live Internet connection to show examples of appropriate and perhaps inappropriate personal profiles and group pages and that would cover all topics related to the Internet and technology at camp.
- An example of a possible contract with staff regarding social networking profiles, online communication with other members of the camp community and their contact with campers outside of camp. (A sample contract appears at the end as an appendix).
- Letter to parents outlining all camp policies.
- A resource sheet for parents that can be included in a stand-alone mailing to parents and/or that can be placed in a newsletter or on the camp's website in a section specifically designed for parents. This resource would help position camp administrators as advocates for child safety and as parent partners.
- A set of guidelines and policies for campers covering their out-of-camp contact with staff, cyber-bullying and other related matters.
- Advice for camp professionals regarding Social Networking sites.
- Examples camp can use to create policies.

Policies regarding pictures, camp logos and other camp "intellectual property," social networking sites, group pages related to camp, out-of-camp camper-staff contact, cyber-bullying and online safety are all embedded in these documents. Remember that these documents should themselves be treated as a menu from which camps can pick and choice/cut-and-paste to

tailor policies and contracts that fit their particular needs, approach and style.

Staff

We believe the best approach with staff is the following:

- 1) Affirm their online communication as their right to free expression and a great way to stay in touch with friends.
- 2) Educate them about the potential impact of their own online presence to their careers or future. According to recent articles in the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, many law firms, medical schools and graduate programs routinely check the Internet to see how a candidate represents themselves online. Any material online that is deemed inappropriate or in conflict with the values or standards of the company or program often results in rejection. Many undergraduate admissions departments are considering similar policies. Most staff members have no awareness of this trend.
- 3) Point out to staff that what they put up for public display may follow them for years and be scrutinized by colleges, universities, potential employers and future partners. Once something is up online it may never be possible to totally delete it.
- 4) Make them aware of how parents and campers may "search" for them online and the way they portray themselves online may enhance or detract from their credibility with camper parents and may make them unsuitable for taking care of children.
- 5) Inform each prospective and returning staff member that, as a routine part of the hiring process, the camp may collect the address of a prospective counselor's social networking or weblog site that can be viewed by the public (e.g., ones that have no privacy settings on them) or do a random online search and review for content. (A candidate has the right not to reveal such a site. Doing so ends their candidacy). Any content deemed inappropriate for working with children (e.g., that would be offensive to camper parents or is in

- conflict with camp policy) may result in termination of candidacy or employment. *Prospective and returning staff must be given prior notice that this guideline is in effect so they may amend their profile, weblog or other Internet site accordingly.* Just to clarify, anyone has the right to free speech and therefore is not obligated to change what they have created online. You as the camp administrator also have the right not to hire anyone whose values, behaviors or representations are in conflict with the camp's values or that might not be conducive to the care-taking of children.
- 6) Use of camp logos, trademarks and the posting of material related to camp are covered in the document titled, "Camp Policies for Employees Regarding the Internet." This document should be posted on the camp website under the "staff" section, should be copied and handed out to all staff during the interview process and made available again during orientation where it will need to be signed. (See the section titled, "Staff Orientation.")
 - 7) Once a staff member identifies him- or herself as an employee of camp in any Internet venue (social networking profile, weblog, "group page"), the "Camp Policies for Employees Regarding the Internet" takes hold. Violating these policies could result in disciplinary action including but not limited to possible termination of employment.
 - 8) With regard to a camp group or user page that is started by a staff member, the camp respectfully asks to be informed and that certain courtesy (and good taste) guidelines be observed. Again, once someone identifies as an employee or utilizes anything the camp has copyrighted, the "Camp Policies for Employees" kicks in.
 - 9) Inform the staff about the official policy of camp with regard to out-of-camp contact between campers and staff. It is highly recommended that your policy should be to discourage post season contact between campers and staff, whether via phone, text message, AIM, e-mail, social networking site or other Internet venue. The camp should state clearly to staff that it does not take any responsibility for what may happen as a result of such contact, even if sanctioned by a parent, unless, of course, that contact is part of an official camp-sponsored/camp supervised activity. If a camper initiates such contact, the official camp policy is for the counselor not to respond unless the camper's parent is aware of and approves the contact. Having such a policy actually gives counselors "cover," in that

they can avoid hurting a campers feelings when they turn down a request for a cell phone number or to be added to their "friends list" on their social networking site by invoking the camp policy.

A Staff Orientation Session on the Internet

It is strongly recommended that an orientation session be developed specifically to cover issues of the Internet, social networking sites and so on. It could have the following features:

- 1) A live Internet connection projected onto a screen that everyone can see, demonstrating examples of profiles that are appropriate, inappropriate and showing the official camp website and explaining the rationale behind the camp's MySpace.com and Facebook.com profile. This approach immediately grabs the attention of the staff, portrays the camp administration as relevant and "in touch," and provides an excellent foundation for the rest of the session.
- 2) Approach the session from an educational and awareness-raising point of view. Cover the points above about how many firms and graduate programs are including online searches as a routine part of their admissions or application process. Caution your staff and you will be seen as an advocate, not an adversary. The more you enlist their trust, the more you gain their cooperation. *Strive to influence rather than coerce!*
- 3) Talk about what it takes to create a safe environment for children. What is it the staff loves about camp? What would they do to *protect this special place* and make sure that it can continue to provide kids with a healthy safe way to make friends, have fun and grow. This can be a powerful group discussion that will allow you to move on to other points.
- 4) Just as we ask counselors not to share aspects of their private romantic or recreational lives with campers, sharing their personal social networking site with campers is a boundary issue. It can be over-stimulating to campers and lead to a host of problems. That is

- why the camp has the policy it has forbidding the exchange of such information (or forbidding staff to add campers to their "friends list").
- 5) Facilitate a discussion of the ramifications and risks of accepting a camper or parent invitation to out-of-camp contact. Points might include the responsibility you inadvertently take on and the ramifications of becoming too close to some campers. Some campers may reveal deep problems (such things as secret cutting behavior, suicidal feelings, turmoil about sexual orientation, confusion about sexual behavior, having a drug problem, a desire for an inappropriate romantic or dependent relationship with staff have all been reported) that camp counselors may not know how to handle. Talk about what safe ways the camp might engineer to facilitate more appropriate contact. How can the camp protect counselors from the pressure they might experience from some campers or camp families? Again, position yourself as reasonable and experienced and concerned about the welfare of the staff and you will have greater influence than if you simply dictate "rules."
 - 6) Talk about how staff can use certain language in their correspondence with campers, like sticking to factual subjects (e.g., How is school going? What after school activities or sports are you participating in? Not, "Oh, I do miss you, too!")
 - 7) Near the end of the session hand out the "Camp Policies for Employees Regarding the Internet," review it and have the staff sign it and turn it in. An example of such an agreement has been added to this document as Appendix B.

Parents

Many camps are considering sending a kind of stand-alone mailing to parents that has a number of pieces in it about the Internet, camp and other technology related questions, such as cell phone use, digital cameras and so on. (An alternative or supplemental method of getting this information to parents is to create a special section for parents on the official camp website and including all of these materials in that section).

The mailing or set of communications would include a cover letter outlining the essential issues (social networking sites, cell phones, cyber-bullying, out-of-camp contact between campers and staff, etc.) (added to the end of this document as Appendix E), a set of policies for campers that parents can review and, in the best possible scenario, *read to their children* (Appendix H) as well as perhaps some resources for parents regarding the online activities of their children (Appendix G). A sample of each of these documents has been provided at the end of this document in the appendix series.

In this communication you would have the opportunity to inform parents of all of your policies regarding posting of pictures or text by staff, by campers and by parents; review cell phone and digital camera policy; reiterate your policy on out-of-camp contact between their children and your staff (Appendix F); and so on.

Campers

Regarding camper contact with staff out of camp, a director or camp administrator might do the following:

- 1) State the official camp position to campers, which is to discourage such contact.
- 2) Remind campers that their contact with staff at camp occurs in a well supervised setting with lots of support, which is not the case out of camp, meaning that out-of-camp contact may become awkward or burdensome.
- 3) State the official camp policy to parents, adding that what they do in their own private lives is their business.
- 4) Remind parents that if they permit such contact, that the camp takes no responsibility for what might come of such contact (e.g., the parents are completely responsible; the camp takes no responsibility for and offers no endorsement of its staff members outside of camp) and urge parents to supervise or oversee any activity that occurs between their child and any non-family adult.
- 5) Request that parents articulate this policy to their own children.
- 6) Supply parents either with a permission form or a statement that clearly sets out the camp's position (a copy of which should also be shown to staff during orientation)

- 7) Clarify the camps policy to campers in writing, one the camp website and once the campers are in camp.

Camper use of camp owned computers in camp

If your camp(s) have computer technology programs, or campers are allowed access to computers for e-mail then a policy is needed to address each aspect of their use while at camp. Some camps will not be concerned about this issue because campers aren't allowed access to computers at all during the summer. There are Federal and probably State laws which govern the use of the Internet. This is where the lawyers come in. Any policy statement a camp draws up on Internet use should attempt to comply with those laws.

One such law, which may or may not apply to camp, but seems to provide a foundation for action by businesses, is The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). CIPA required schools and libraries to incorporate technology protection measures into their computers to protect against minors accessing visual depictions that are obscene, child pornography, or harmful to them.

CIPA emphasized that the determination regarding what matter is inappropriate for minors shall be made locally, never by the federal government, leaving room for community, and individual standards.

Cyber-bullying

It has happened at many camps where campers or staff have harassed, threatened, demeaned or otherwise defamed other campers or staff in an e-mail, Instant Message, blog, social networking profile or other Internet medium. This can happen through the use of text, photographs or other images. Needed is a clear statement of expected online decorum, guidelines and policies for these kinds of communications, along with the consequences for any violation of policies.

Advice for Camp Professionals Regarding Social Networking Sites

There are an estimated 165 million social networking sites active in the United States as of January, 2007. The two major sites are MySpace.com and Facebook.com, which between them account for over 88.3% of such profiles. Over 21 million youth in the United States use the Internet on a regular basis, with a surge in use currently seen after the seventh grade. In spot surveys with staff, up to 95% of them say they have a social networking profile they use to find and keep in touch with friends on a regular basis. Clearly, if you want to find young people, having a presence on the Internet is advisable. Given that camps can use the Internet to keep in touch with campers and staff and use it as a recruitment tool for each, *camps should create both a MySpace.com and Facebook.com camp profile which does not accept friends but simply welcomes campers, staff and alumni and redirects them to the official camp website!* The home page of each of these profiles should have the camp logo and other copyrighted or trademarked images or text and should link directly to the official camp website. A statement on the homepage of each profile should say that the camp website is the only *active* Internet presence that the camp supports, that this profile was designed to help people find the camp and that other sites or group pages are not the official voice of the camp.

In terms of group or user pages that might be created by campers or staff, it is recommended that you contact the moderator/creator of that individual site, introduce yourself and follow the following courses of action. If the site seems...

- Friendly/Inoffensive: Ask he/she to put a link to your official alumni site and keep things as clean as they are now.
- Friendly but Somewhat Offensive: Explain your concerns. Politely ask he/she to take down anything that may be offensive and to put a link to your official alumni site. Remind he/she that you will be checking the site from time to time.
- Unfriendly/Offensive: Explain that you do not tolerate the use of your camp name/logo in association with offensive or unsavory topics/photos. Give he/she a deadline to clean up or remove his site. If he/she does not comply, follow the social

networking site's procedures for removal (instructions are usually found in the FAQ section). If all else fails, have your lawyer send a cease and desist letter to the creator of the unofficial camp site.

Examples camps could incorporate into their camper/staff policies

Pictures

- Posting pictures of campers/staff on any of your own personal web pages is not allowed.
- Campers/staff agree not to post anything online that would represent camp name in a distasteful way.
- Campers/staff will remove any picture that has been requested to be taken down.
- Campers/staff may not post any pictures that have campers, staff members or the physical camp in them.
- The only pictures of our campers and camp name on the internet should be on the camps official website, as camps have (hopefully) obtained permission from their parents and these sites contain no personal information.
- Campers are not allowed to have cell phones/camera phones in camp. Staff may use personal cell phones on their time off and when not in use must be stored in the camp office.

Camps logos and sites

- Campers/staff will not use the camp name logo and/or name without expressed written permission.

Social networking sites and personal webpages

- Campers/staff will not post anything that could be considered defaming.
- Staff are not allowed to comment/post on any camper webpages, blogs, social chat sites or any other personal webpages. Campers are

not allowed to comment/post on any staff webpages, blogs, social chat sites or any other personal webpages, or any other internet based public domain.

- Instant messenger away messages must be camper appropriate. No mentions of drinking, drugs, hooking up, etc.

Camp's official website.

- Camps can monitor message boards through passwords and have the ability to remove postings/rescind passwords.
- Camp's official websites can be the avenue through which staff and campers continue their positive, appropriate relationships after camp has ended. Through our message board and chat room, you can communicate with camp name people each and every day.

Guidelines for communicating with campers aside from the camp's official website

- Any communication with campers after the summer must be approved by that camper's parent/guardian, through phone calls, letters or emails.
- Camp name requires that staff members first contact the camper's parents to ask for permission to contact/correspond with their child, even if it is the camper that first initiates the contact.
- Staff members should be aware that by corresponding with campers outside the supervised and supportive context of camp, such correspondence places staff in an awkward position of liability, should a camper disclose reportable information.
- If you choose to have contact with a camper via phone, email, IM, or in any other manner during the "off-season," that choice places you firmly in a counselor role again, even though camp is not in session. That is true even if the camper initiates the contact. Please adjust your conduct as necessary to uphold the high standards expected of camp name counselors.

Appendix

Staff

Appendix A

Staff Contracts

Camps should have certain things built into their contracts/employment agreements. Each camp will decide whether to use the whole policy or part of the policy and add it to their contract or their contract addendum, or their terms of employment.

Menu of items for consideration for a staff agreement:

- Staff members must not post pictures of other staff members on a web site without obtaining written permission.
- Camp Name does not host or sponsor a social networking site. The use of the copyrighted camp name or logo is not allowed.
- No staff or camper may use the camp's name or logo to create any unofficial Internet sites.
- The only type of relationship that is permitted between a camper and a staff member at camp name is a professional leadership relationship.

- Romantic relationships, at any time, in person or on the Internet, are never permitted.
- Socializing with campers in the off-season is permitted only at official, supervised camp functions, such as reunions or our password-protected, monitored chat room. Other off-season socializing is not permitted.
- If you become aware of any in-person or cyber-bullying, contact the camp director immediately.
- If a camper reveals to you—in person or on the Internet—any information that makes you concerned about that camper's safety, contact the camp director immediately.
- Staff are never allowed to possess, share, modify, or send photos of campers in the off-season. Staff are never, at any time, permitted to post photos of campers.
- Staff are never permitted to photograph any campers engaged in any private activity, including sleeping, using the bathroom, or changing.
- Do not share your personal e-mail address, cell phone number, web page or screen name with any campers.
- Do not permit current or past campers to have access to your pages or photos on any social networking site, such as MySpace or FaceBook.com.
- If you receive any Internet communication from a camper, redirect them to the camp's password-protected, monitored chat room, which is part of the camp's official web site.
- Camp name welcomes excellent photos of camp (campers, staff, activities, trips). If you have photos you would like to have posted on camp name's website, consult the Camp director.
- The camp name Code of conduct extends into cyberspace and applies in all forms, contexts and media.
- Inappropriate communication with campers during the off season is grounds for rescinding a contract that has already been offered.

Appendix B

Sample Employment Agreement

Employee Policies Regarding Internet Communication

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We know that the Internet, when used wisely, provides many safe and positive ways to stay in touch with your friends from camp. We view Internet venues as your right to self-expression and generally have a favorable regard for them. What you do privately, on your own time, is your business. **Once you identify yourself as a camp employee** in a social networking profile, website, group page or weblog, however; **or use the camp name, logo or any official camp photograph or text**, everything and anything that you post or say in that medium can then be seen as a reflection of camp. That is why we require you, as a condition of employment at camp, to observe the guidelines below. We established these guidelines to assure that camp remains an emotionally and physically safe environment for all staff, employees, campers and families.

- 1) As a camp employee, before I...
 - a. use the camp name or official camp logo or camp photograph;
 - b. add a link from my group page, profile or other site to the official camp website;
 - c. include text or photographs that are the property of camp;
 - d. include photographs of campers or other staff members;
 - e. or create a camp "group page" with the above items......I must request and receive *prior written approval* from the camp.
- 2) As a camp employee I agree to be respectful of the camp, its program, the campers and its employees in all communications in my e-mails, IMs, profile, blog or other Internet sites. As such, I agree to the following:
 - a. I will not use obscenities, profanity or vulgar language.
 - b. I will not engage in harassment or intimidation.
 - c. I will not post comments that are derogatory with regard to any individual's race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability.
 - d. I will not use sexually explicit, suggestive, humiliating or demeaning comments.
 - e. I will not post photographs that compromises anyone's privacy or that is used to demean, humiliate or otherwise embarrass anyone.
- 3) As a camp employee I agree not to use a social networking profile, group page, weblog or other Internet medium to discuss behavior that is prohibited by camp policy, including, but not limited to alcohol or drug use, sexual behavior, delinquent behavior, destruction of property, harassment or intimidation.
- 4) I recognize and accept the camp's policy on out-of-camp contact with campers, which is that the camp discourages such contact. Furthermore, I may not share any contact information (including, but not limited to cell phone number, e-mail address, AIM, weblog address or social networking site) with a camper unless the parents are fully aware of this exchange, give expressed written permission for such contact, and take full responsibility

for it. I understand that the camp takes no responsibility for securing this permission.

- 5) Once I identify myself as a staff member at camp, which is to say as an employee of the camp, the general public may see me as an ambassador or spokesperson of camp. I therefore understand that is a condition of employment that I agree to and adhere to the guidelines outlined above. I understand that if any of the guidelines outlined in this measure are violated, it may result in disciplinary and/or legal action including possible termination of my employment.

I have read and understand the above guidelines and agree to their terms.

Staff Signature

date

Appendix C

Sample user agreement for camp computers (staff lounge)

Camp Computer/Internet Usage Agreement

Access to the Internet is a wonderful opportunity to interact with the world at large. The opportunity brings with it a number of responsibilities. In order to use the internet services available at _____, you must read the following information and sign the computer/internet agreement that follows.

1. The use of any _____ computer which provides access to the Internet is a privilege which may be revoked by directors or administrators at any time for abusive or inappropriate conduct. Such conduct would include, but is not limited to, the placing of unlawful information on or through the computer, system, accessing another person's files or e-mail, and the use of obscene, abusive, or otherwise objectionable language or images in either public or private files or messages.
2. Because of the potentially large number of individuals who might need to use the computers for Internet as well as personal productivity, student access may be limited to a specified time, as provided by the director(s) and/or administration.
3. The camp reserves the right to inspect any material stored in files to which users have access and will edit or remove any material which the district staff, in its sole discretion, believes may be objectionable. Users of the computers/Internet will not use their account to obtain, view, download, or otherwise gain access to potentially objectionable materials. This includes text materials, video images, or sound files that may be considered objectionable.
4. Information services and features contained on the camp network are intended for the private use of its patrons. Any commercial or other unauthorized use of those materials, in any form, is expressly forbidden.
5. The camp does not warrant that the functions of the system will meet any specific requirements you may have, or that it will be error-free or interrupted; nor shall it be liable for any direct or indirect, incidental, or consequential damages (including lost data, information, or profits)

sustained or incurred in connection with the use, operation, or inability to use the system.

6. Rules and regulations of system usage will be added and posted from time to time by the faculty/administrators of the district and/or the network. Users of computers/Internet are subject to these rules and regulations.
7. The camps computers/network is intended for the exclusive use of its registered users. As a user, you are responsible for the use of your password and account. Any problems which arise from the use of a user's account are the responsibility of the account holder. Any misuse will result in suspension of the account privileges.
8. Deletion, examination, copying, or modification of files and/or data belonging to other users without their prior consent is prohibited.
9. Commercial software is placed on the computer for the use and convenience of staff. Any unlawful use such as the copying of copyrighted material without the express written permission of the owner or the proper license is prohibited.
10. Any unauthorized, deliberate action which damages or disrupts a computing system (including the willful introduction of computer "viruses" or other disruptive/destructive programs), alters its normal performance, or causes it to malfunction is prohibited. Intentional attempts to "crash" network systems or programs are punishable disciplinary offenses.

COMPUTER/INTERNET USAGE AGREEMENT

I have read the camp Computer/Internet Usage Agreement, understand it, and agree to adhere to the principles and procedures listed within. I also understand that additional rules and regulations may be added from time to time and that they become a part of this agreement. Should I break this agreement, I understand that I may lose all computer/Internet privileges. I also understand that inappropriate or illegal use of computer facilities could result in civil or criminal lawsuits. Parents and/or guardians may be held accountable for inappropriate use by their child.

Signature

Parent Signature(if under 18)

Date

Appendix D

Continuing communication after the camp season

There needs to be continuing communication between the camps and their staff and camper after the summer has ended to reinforce these policies and to remind everyone that they still are still pertinent.

Dear staff member's name,

Hello from camp, etc, etc, etc,

There are an increasing number of parents who use social networking sites to study and examine the staff who take care of their children each summer. Using social networking sites as a new form of background checks is an increasing practice throughout the professional world, resulting in the loss of potential or existing jobs and a number of legal issues.

As is always the case, the rest of the world is starting to catch up with technology. As such, we must learn to use this new form of communication in a way that does not harm the special relationships that we have at Camp, as well as make a concerted effort to ensure that we adhere to important legal guidelines.

Please think carefully if you write/post anything online when it comes to your experiences about camp, as anything you post can be read by our parents and the general public and may impact us and our camp's reputation. Remember that anything you put on the Internet is there for ever.

When you post inappropriate pictures or you are involved in anti-social activities on the Internet, these actions may prevent you from getting into graduate programs and/or could have a negative impact on future employment opportunities.

You should check your profile regularly for any inappropriate information (this includes things others may have written on your wall or photos that others may have posted of you).

We hope you have a great year at school and are looking forward to seeing you back at camp this summer, etc,etc,etc

Your camp Director

Parents

Appendix E

Parent Letter re: Camp Policies Regarding the Internet and Other Technologies

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Dear Parents,

We have always taken the safety and well-being of our campers—your children—very seriously. After all, giving your children over to the care of other people is perhaps the greatest act of trust you as a parent can engage in. We aim to do everything we humanly can to earn and keep that trust. We also know we cannot do this without your help. With more and more children using the Internet, cell phones and other technologies at younger ages, we appeal to you as parents to partner with us to ensure that your children continue to have the safest, most wholesome experience with us at camp as possible.

Please read our letter carefully. It will help you understand the challenges some technologies pose to the continued health and safety of our camp community. Please also review and then read to your child the enclosed policies regarding the Internet, social networking sites and exchanging contact information with their counselors. As always we invite you to call us if you have any questions or concerns about any of these issues.

Cell Phones

As you know we have a “no-cell phone” policy at camp. Aside from the fact that cell phones are expensive and can get lost or stolen and that the physical camp environment is not kind to such items, there is a fundamental problem with campers having cell phones at camp, and that is trust. When children come to camp they—and you—are making a leap of faith, temporarily transferring their primary care from you as their parents to us and their counselors. This is one of the growth-producing, yet challenging aspects of camp. As children learn to trust other caring adults, they grow and learn, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges. We believe this emerging independence is one of the greatest benefits of camp. It is one important way your child develops greater resilience. Contacting you by phone essentially means they have not made this transition. It prevents us from getting to problems that may arise and addressing them quickly. Sending a cell phone to camp is like saying to your child that you as the parent

haven't truly come to peace with the notion of them being away from you and in our care.

We agree to tell you if your child is experiencing a challenge in their adjustment to camp. *You can help* by talking with you child *before they leave for camp* and telling them that there is always someone they can reach out to, whether it be their counselor, a trusted activity leader, the Head Counselor, the Director or camp nurse or health care provider. We are all here to help, but if *you* don't trust us, your children certainly won't!

Digital Photographs

Another drawback of having cell phones at camp is many of them have built-in cameras. It has happened at some camps around the country that children have secretly taken photographs of other campers or staff during changing or showering times and later uploaded those images onto the Internet. (If you belong to a health club, chances are it has "no cell phone" policy). To lessen the possibility of this happening we have decided to *ban all digital cameras and suggest that if your child wants pictures from camp, that they bring a disposable film camera.* We take photographs during the summer, which are available for viewing on our secure (password required) website. Please help us maintain a safe environment by explaining this to your child (see our accompanying note on "Policies for Campers.") You should know that *any camper that takes a compromising photograph of another camper or staff member and uploads it on the Internet or makes it public in any way may be subject to dismissal from camp or may not be allowed to return. If the law is broken, the appropriate authorities will be notified.*

Cyber-Bullying and Harassment

It has happened at camps around the country that a few campers have sent rude, demeaning, intimidating or vulgar e-mails or IMs to other campers or have created false screen names to harass members of the camp community or spread false and damaging information about them. To be sure most Internet communication is fun, positive and one important way campers stay in touch with their friends. Our "Policy for Campers," which we are asking you to read over and then read with your child, covers our response to this problem. In addition, *we have outlined the steps you or your child should take should they receive an abusive, demeaning or otherwise threatening or inappropriate Internet communication.* Being familiar with these steps is part of the overall safety and healthy practice you should have in place with your child if they are online, regardless of whether they attend camp or not. Sharing them with you is one way we felt we could support your effort to protect your children whether they are at camp or not.

Your Kids, Our Staff after Camp

Our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and capable young adults we can hire—counselors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of that pledge. Our staff work with your children in the context of a visible, well scrutinized environment that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised by senior staff guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to co-workers and campers. By hiring them we do not recommend them as baby-sitters, Nannies or child companions outside of camp. *In general we discourage our staff from having contact with your children after camp since we cannot supervise it. We hire our staff for the camp season. We do not take responsibility for their behavior off-season.* As a parent you are, of course, free to make your own choice in this matter. While we cannot keep you from allowing your child to visit with one of our staff members, in so

doing you take full responsibility. We also know that many children exchange contact information (e.g., e-mail address, profile names, cell phone numbers) with counselors without our or your specific awareness or permission. *We recommend that you as the parent supervise your child's online activities just as you do other aspects of their life in your home, and oversee any off-season contact our staff members and your child. You take full responsibility to oversee any contact that results.*

Working Together to Keep Your Children Safe

We see many positive, exciting ways for youngsters to enjoy the healthy benefits of the Internet and other technologies. As advocates for children we want to work with you to keep those experiences safe, healthy and positive. That is why we have taken the time to write these policies, include some resources for you and urge you to talk with your children—both about camp and their online activity in general.

Appendix F

Policy for Parents Regarding Out-of-Camp Contact between Campers and Staff

Camp _____ {your camp name}

Off-Season Camper-Staff Contact

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At Camp _____, our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and appropriate young adults we can hire—counselors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of that pledge.

By hiring the staff that we do, however, we do not recommend them as baby-sitters, Nannies or child companions outside of camp. Our staff works with your child in the context of a visible, well scrutinized community that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised by senior staff and are guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to a community full of co-workers and campers. In general we discourage our staff from having contact with your children after camp *since we cannot supervise it. We hire our staff for the camp season. We do not take responsibility for their behavior off-season.*

We also recognize that campers and counselors develop close, trusting relationships with one another at camp and that these relationships are healthy, wholesome and beneficial to campers and staff alike. We are aware that many campers will naturally want to keep in touch with their favorite counselors after camp.

Therefore, *our official policy is to forbid the exchange of contact information of any kind between campers and our staff, whether paid or volunteer.* With the Internet as it is, however, we know campers can “find” their counselors if they

persist. Our recommendation is simply for you as parents to be aware of your child's online activities and supervise them as you would any other aspect of their life in your home. Likewise, if you as a parent or legal guardian wish your child to exchange such information with a camp staff member, that is, of course, your right. However, by doing so, you understand *you accept full responsibility for overseeing whatever contact occurs as a result.*

Appendix G

Resource Sheet for Parents

Regarding Your Child and their Online Activity

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Children today spend a lot of time each week online. While this can be healthy and positive, as an advocate for children and their safety, *we recommend that you as parents be knowledgeable about their online activities.* While your children may balk at your effort to supervise them or see their online profile, we also know children listen to their parent's advice and concern. We've gathered information from many sources and are providing you with a summary of that information as a way of supporting your effort to ensure your child's continued well-being, even outside of camp. We have included some helpful resources for further help or information.

General Tips

- 1) If you aren't already, make it your business to become familiar with your child's computer and the Internet. You can't protect your children unless you know what is out there. If you want further help, contact www.masterteacher.com/index.html
- 2) Try to avoid using the computer as a baby-sitter. Leaving your child online for long periods of time without checking in with them or supervising them may result in activities that are risky, over-stimulating or inappropriate that you may not be aware of.
- 3) Set rules around the use of the computer and the Internet. You have rules about other aspects of conduct in your home. The computer and the Internet should be no exception. Kids who think their parents "don't care" often take higher risks than children who know their parents are interested, knowledgeable and involved.
- 4) Think about the location of the computer your child generally uses to go online. One significant question online predators ask children and Teens is the location of their computer. Predators are emboldened if they sense that the children they are communicating with online are not being supervised by an adult.
- 5) Inform you children of the dangers of the Internet and tell them that you intend to supervise or oversee their online activity. Then follow through on a regular basis! The following three items are specific examples of things you can do.
- 6) Check the browser history on your child's computer. This way you can see what sites they are visiting. Microsoft Explorer, AOL and Netscape all have history tabs or "my favorite places" that show you where your child has been. A survey

- in Boston in 2005 revealed that up to 70% of all boys ages 14-18 spend from between 3 to 6 hours a week on pornographic sites on the Internet *each week* without their parents knowledge!
- 7) Check down-loaded files by checking the directory that programs are downloaded into. This is another way you can see what you child has been up to.
 - 8) Ask your child if they have an online social networking profile. (Kids don't call it that, so you may need to say, "You know, like MySpace or Facebook!" If they are being coy, they are hiding something from you). If they have one, look at it! The pictures and text may tell you a lot about what your child has been up to.

Safety Tips for Teens Online

- 1) Avoid giving out your last name, phone number, address, name of your school, where you hang out or sports teams you are on.
- 2) Use the privacy features on your service.
- 3) Avoid meeting people in person who you have met on the Net that you don't know. If you do agree to meet someone, let your parents know and take some friends along.
- 4) Be careful of what you post online—pics and text are open for the world to see. Teens seem to forget this!
- 5) Remember that *anyone can pose as anyone else online!* Unless you are positive of the person's identity, be skeptical.

What to Tell Your Child If They Are Threatened Online

- 1) Don't respond or retaliate. Doing so may only make matters worse or get you into trouble.
- 2) If you can, save the message on your hard drive and print out a copy. Then close the message or program.
- 3) Tell your parent or a trusted adult immediately.
- 4) If it is someone from camp, call the camp director.
- 5) If necessary, call your Internet service provider (e.g., AOL, Yahoo, g-mail, etc.)
- 6) If necessary, call the local police (like in cases of a threat on your life, a sexual advance, etc.)
- 7) Another resource: The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.ncmec.org).

Other Resources

"Keeping It Safe—Nine Important Steps to Internet Safety and Protecting Our Children," www.Westchestergov.com . A handy, helpful pamphlet put out by the District Attorney's Office in Westchester County, New York. E-mail them for a copy.

MySpace Unraveled: A Parent's Guide to Teen Social Networking, Larry Magid and Anne Collier, Peachpit Press, 2006. Extremely helpful, informative and comprehensive, easy-to-read guide for parents. Paperback, about \$15.

www.Wiredsafety.org A set of Internet sites having to do with various online safety issues.

“What Parent’s Need to Know about MySpace—Your Guide to a Kid’s World on the Internet,” *U.S. News and World Report*, September 18, 2006. Great, easy to read, all-in-one-place article. You can download it from their website for a small fee.

Campers

Appendix H

Camp Policy for Campers and the Internet

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We have asked your parents to go over some policies we have developed about the Internet and other important issues so that everyone has the best experience at camp as possible.

- 1) We view e-mail, IM and social networking sites, like Facebook.com and MySpace.com, as positive ways for you to express yourself and keep in touch with your friends. As a camper you have the right to exchange e-mails or IMs with other campers and invite other campers to be on your "friends" list in any way that you *and your parents* see fit.
- 2) When it comes to exchanging contact with anyone on our staff, however, *your parents must take full responsibility for you to do that. This includes giving or getting an e-mail or IM address, cell phone number, social networking profile, weblog or any other Internet contact.* (We tell this to the staff during orientation). It's not that we don't think your relationships with your counselors are important. They are! It's just that, once they leave camp, we can't take responsibility for what happens between you and them—*only your parents can.* We have enclosed a parent communication permission form *which your parents must sign before a counselor can give you any contact information or take any contact information from you.* We recommend you look it over with them so you aren't surprised by what it says.
- 3) Regarding e-mails, IMs and comments you might make to other campers on their social networking site, we ask you:
 - a) to keep what you say positive and respectful of staff and campers alike;
 - b) not to use obscenities, vulgar or sexual language;
 - c) not to say mean or threatening things to or about other campers or staff;
 - d) not to post pictures online that would embarrass or violate anyone's privacy;
 - e) not to pose as another camper online or spread false information about anyone or say damaging or threatening things to or about anyone;
 - f) not to use a website or blog or e-mail to talk about things that are against camp policy, like using drugs or alcohol or bullying or sexual things.
- 4) Most Internet communication is positive, and that's great! In the rare case where there might be any negative messages to other campers or staff, our policy is to call the parents of campers who send those messages and share the content with them.
- 5) We will use any legal means available, including contacting the police and the FBI, to track the source of any offending or threatening Internet communication if we need to.
- 6) Any camper who violates any of our policies regarding the Internet or other communication might have to leave camp, might not be able to come back to camp and might even have to answer to the police or other law enforcement authorities.
- 7) We want you to be safe on the Internet. ***If you receive a threatening e-mail, IM or message on your personal website—one that is mocking, uses vulgar or harassing language—here is what you should do:***
 - a) Do not respond to the message or retaliate, because it might encourage the sender or get you into trouble.
 - b) If possible, record the message onto your hard drive.
 - c) Print out a copy of the message, then close it but ***do not delete it.***
 - d) Tell your parents about it and have them notify the local police or, if necessary, contact your Internet service provider (like yahoo, aol, earthlink, g-mail, etc.)
 - e) If you suspect that the sender is from camp, call us immediately.
 - f) You or your parents can also contact Pedowatch (www.pedowatch.com) or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.nemec.org).
 - g) Camp is meant to be a fun, safe and happy place for all of us. We need your help to keep the way people from camp communicate with one another positive and in the spirit of camp—a way that makes everyone feel safe.

Some other things to consider

Insurance

- The operation of a chat room is currently not insured by most camp general liability insurance policies.
- On most insurance policies today there is no coverage available for internet communication issues involving the camp, campers or staff.

Trade marking

It is a good idea to trademark your camp logo(s). This can help insure that others cannot use your logo or bring a lawsuit against you for using a non trade marked logo. The process of trade marking your camp logo is fairly easy and will provide you with greater legal muscle to shut down unofficial websites who are using your logo.

Legal

It is wise to think about what can be done legally (e.g., copyright protection; checking the profile of any staff member that is able to be viewed by the public and considering it as a regular part of their application to be at camp); what is and is not enforceable (e.g., telling counselor they may not engage in vulgar language and being able to enforce that policy if the staff member quits or leaves and refuses to take down the offensive material from their profile or group page); versus what is practical or advisable (for example, it would be important not to come on in such a rigid or forceful way as to alienate most of the staff).

For example, can you really tell staff they cannot post pictures of their staff friends on their personal profiles? What if their profiles are set to "private," and are open only to specific "friends?" What can you realistically do about a staff member who might get fired or leave camp disgruntled, who then breaks policy and posts camper or staff pictures?

All of these questions are a great place to start your discussion with your camp's lawyers and insurance agents to create the best policy for your camp.

Sources used for this information:

Birch Trail Camp
Bob Ditter
Camp Lincoln/Lake Hubert
Camp Timberlane
Chris Thurber
Ed Shirick
Gabe Chernov
Hannibal School District
International Gymnastics Camp
Island Lake Camp
Keewaydin
Norm Friedman
Will Evans

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have or for any further help at:

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