



Bullying Prevention Policy and Procedures

Bullying is never acceptable. Beacon Bible Camp is dedicated to providing a safe and healthy environment where campers are free from the fear of bullying and can build strong relationships through acceptance and inclusion, enjoy a fun and adventurous camping experience and authentically experience the love of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Beacon's staff members work together as a team to ensure that campers gain self-confidence, make new friends, form positive relationships, feel connected to a caring community, go home with great memories, and clearly understand, through both teaching and example, God's message of salvation and new life through a right relationship with His Son, the Lord Jesus.

This policy outlines Beacon's commitment to a bullying-free environment, and the steps that staff will take should a camper make an accusation of bullying towards another person.

Definitions⁽¹⁾

Bullying An aggressive behaviour that is typically repeated over time. It is meant to cause harm, fear or distress or create a negative environment at camp for another person. Bullying occurs in a situation where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Forms of bullying

- Physical: hitting, shoving, damaging or stealing property
- Verbal: name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist or homophobic comments
- Social: excluding others from a group or spreading gossip or rumours about them
- Written: writing notes or signs that are hurtful or insulting
- Electronic (commonly known as cyber-bullying): spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cell phones (e.g., text messaging) and on social media sites.

Prevention Guidelines

Everyone plays a role in preventing bullying before it can take place. At Beacon, we believe that it is important to respond appropriately to all forms of bullying as well as maintain a positive environment of care, respect and belonging for all those who come to camp. Furthermore, we believe that this coincides with Beacon's mission to provide an adventurous Christian camping experience where people can be encouraged to respond to the gospel of the Lord Jesus and to grow in their Christian life.



To prevent bullying, Beacon provides guidelines and training for its staff around how to appropriately identify and respond to bullying, as well as how staff can build and promote a positive camp climate, which takes into account a range of elements including programming, teaching, camper relationships, staff modeling, parent/guardian engagement, and physical and emotional safety within the community.

Parents, cabin leaders, session directors and camp administration each play a unique part in the prevention of bullying, as outlined in the following section of this policy.

Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians are encouraged to help prepare their child for camp and take an active role in contributing to a positive climate of inclusion and respect. This can include going over Beacon's code of conduct and bullying policy with their child, as well as talking about proactive strategies for how to ensure cooperation between other cabin mates and making sure that each cabin mate feels included. Parents should emphasize that if their child feels excluded by others, they are to let their cabin leader know right away.

Cabin Leaders

Cabin leaders are the front line in prevention, as they have the most personal interaction and influence with their campers. As a cabin community is established at the outset of a camp session, cabin leaders are encouraged to partner with campers to generate group agreements that promote a cabin climate of caring and respect. These agreements should reflect an attitude of inclusion and acceptance, and should also attempt to be worded in positive terms, rather than negative (For example: "I will take care of others and respect their property" instead of "I will not steal from my cabin mates"). Cabin leaders may also engage campers in conversation around what can be done to repair the harm or what consequences should be put in place if one or more individuals does not follow one of the agreements. Campers should be active participants in creating these agreements, and all campers should concur in the cabin in order to create accountability and respect in the cabin community.

Session Directors

While planning for their session, session directors should be intentional in creating an atmosphere that is reflective of God's love, where each camper can feel accepted, respected and safe. At Beacon, we believe that it is within this positive camp environment that campers best experience what it means to have new life in Christ.

Being intentional about bullying prevention includes both building staff capacity to cultivate a positive camp environment, as well as ensuring that all aspects of camp programs (i.e. games, crafts, lessons, devotions, staff interactions, etc.) encourage cooperation, inclusion, and respect. As they shape and plan camp programming, session directors will pay special attention to scenarios where potential power



imbalances could be exacerbated and will be careful to ensure that all identities of campers are respected and honoured.

Part of this intentional programming would be to provide a range of activities that can be enjoyed by a diverse population of campers. This could mean ensuring that boys' camps are not too focused on sports, or that girls' camps are not too focused on crafts. This also includes providing a range of activities for different levels of abilities/disabilities, ensuring that each camper has an opportunity to participate as fully as possible in camp programming.

Another aspect of programming where session directors need to be sensitive when planning sessions is to ensure that speakers, teachers, or anyone presenting to the camp (i.e. talent shows, cabin awards) are inclusive in terms of language, content and impact. No camper or specific population should be singled out, poked fun of, or put down.

At the beginning of each camp session the session director should make it clear to all campers that Beacon is a place of respect, love and inclusion and that all forms of bullying are unacceptable. This should be communicated clearly to the entire camp community on the first day of the session, most likely during the introductory presentation. They should also communicate that all bullying should be reported to either a cabin leader or session director. Along with this explanation of the reporting procedures, session directors should explain some of the possible consequences, including the possibility of the camper(s) engaging in bullying being sent home. It should also be communicated to campers that staff are available to support and solve problems together – campers are not alone.

Camp Administration

Beacon's year-round staff provide support and training for all volunteer session staff to ensure that they are properly prepared for situations that may need to be addressed during camp sessions. This begins with staying up to date regarding bullying research, so that this policy and related procedures stay relevant to the manner in which children and youth are dealing with bullying in culture today.

In addition to this research, camp administration will also ensure that all bullying policies and procedures are being adhered to during camp sessions, including the "bullying talk" during the opening of a camp session and the availability of camp session staff to work with campers who may need additional support in this area. Year-round staff, particularly the Executive Director and Office Coordinator, will act as a resource for session directors and cabin leaders to ensure that they feel adequately supported while they volunteer at Beacon.

Reporting and Responding Guidelines

Bullying can have detrimental social, emotional, physical and psychological impacts upon all individuals involved, including campers targeted by bullying, those engaging in bullying, and those who witness bullying. Campers impacted by bullying will not



get the most out of their camp experience and can feel disconnected from the community.

Beacon takes every reported incident of bullying seriously, and will ensure that staff members are equipped with positive intervention and support strategies to promote camper safety. Beacon believes in open and ongoing communication to ensure campers feel that they can report bullying safely, and that staff members' responses to bullying are effective and supportive.

The following roles outline how various parties should respond to the reporting of a suspected situation involving bullying.

Campers

Any camper involved in bullying either as a camper targeting others, a camper being targeted by bullying or those witnessing bullying should report this immediately to their cabin leaders or session directors. Campers should be immediately verbally recognized for having not done wrong, as reporting bullying is the most effective way of making sure that it stops for good.

The staff who received the report of bullying will then take over the process of ensuring that the bullying stops. Campers should realize that no matter their involvement in the bullying, they are expected to be meaningfully engaged in repairing the harm and learning better ways of interacting with their peers. During the process of repairing the harm, campers will take direction from camp staff as they work to make reconciliation happen.

Cabin Leaders

As the primary caregiver during the camp session, cabin leaders are often the first person to whom campers will report bullying or suspected bullying. They have a responsibility to affirm a camper's perspective, and let them know that they are safe, that their concerns are valid, and that the cabin leader will follow up and ensure that the bullying stops.

A cabin leader's first responsibility is to make sure that all campers are safe and not in danger of immediate harm. Once that's done, they should talk to all parties involved in a private conversation, in order to hear each camper's side of the story. If camper stories agree, the cabin leader should then make sure that those who bullied others apologize for their actions and understand that they cannot be repeated. Once those actions are completed, the cabin leader should report to the session director that an incident of bullying has occurred.

If camper stories do not agree, the cabin leader should immediately inform the session director, while ensuring that campers are properly supervised at all times (it is not acceptable for campers who are in conflict to be together and unsupervised, as this may result in further harm).



Session Directors

A session director will receive a report of bullying directly from the camper themselves, or from a cabin leader who is dealing with the situation. As a respected authority figure, it is important for the session director to understand that they represent both Beacon and God to the campers involved. All interactions with campers should be filled with generosity towards children or youth who are developing a sense of right and wrong. Session directors have the responsibility to model Christian responses to anger, sadness and fear to campers.

If a camper reports an incident of bullying directly to a session director, they should follow the steps outlined in the Cabin Leader section of these reporting guidelines. They should then inform camp administration that a situation has occurred, so that they can receive support from year-round staff.

If a cabin leader reports an incident of bullying to the session director, they should first make sure that the previous steps have already been accomplished (listening individually to each camper, taking notes as necessary, determining if the stories agree). If so, they are to speak with all campers involved (as a group or individually, as the situation warrants), making sure that campers understand how seriously Beacon takes bullying, and that consequences sometimes happen as a result⁽²⁾.

If a cabin leader reports an unresolved incident of bullying to the session director where the campers cannot agree on what happened, the session director should immediately inform the year-round staff (Executive Director). Camp administration will work with the campers, cabin leaders and session directors to determine what may have occurred, and what the next steps forward may be. At all times, it is important for session directors to remain calm and level-headed about the situation, so that all parties can be assured that a positive, God-honouring outcome can be found.

Camp Administration

Year-round staff are the final stop before parents are notified of a suspected or confirmed bullying situation. The session director must inform camp administration whenever there is a situation involving bullying, and discuss the strategies deemed to be effective for supporting the campers involved.

The Executive Director will listen to a summary of the situation, documenting as necessary. They will then ensure that the strategies that the session director has deemed effective are put in place, including calling parents or guardians to discuss consequences for bullying behaviour.

Parents/Guardians

Parents or guardians will be consulted in all situations regarding bullying. They should expect a phone call regardless of their camper's involvement in the situation, so that Beacon's staff can partner with them to make a decision that will support the healthy and safe development of their child.



When receiving a phone call, parents can expect to be given a summary of the situation, a list of the actions taken, and a request to discuss further action. This notification will either come from the session director or camp administration, depending on the involvement of their camper and the severity of the situation. Beacon staff will attempt to inform parents of the situation on the same day that the situation has been identified to them.

Beacon is committed to developing a caring and inclusive community. We need to hear about experiences of campers who did not feel safe or supported while at camp. If parents or guardians have concerns that their child was targeted by bullying at Beacon and feel those concerns were not appropriately addressed by staff, they are encouraged to call the Beacon office and speak to staff about their concerns.

Training/Communication

This policy will be trained and communicated to all workers and volunteers during their initial workplace orientation. Staff who do not demonstrate a clear understanding of this policy will be re-trained. This policy will be reviewed annually, and any changes will be communicated to staff through additional annual staff training.

Conclusion

Beacon is committed to an environment that is free of bullying, and that includes all campers. This policy and the resulting procedures are designed to mitigate instances of bullying before they occur and minimize the effect of bullying if it does happen while at camp. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to staff through re-training, and will be posted on Beacon's website under the Parent Information page. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to Beacon's Executive Director.



Notes

- (1) All definitions are taken from *Bullying - we can all stop it: A guide for parents of elementary and secondary school students* (Ontario Government). This guide can be found online at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/bullying-we-can-all-help-stop-it>. Expanded definitions and research can be found in the *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144* (Ontario Ministry of Education), which can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.pdf>. Both documents were accessed on January 20, 2018.
- (2) Consequences for bullying must always fall in line with a reasonable response to the situation. Under no circumstances may staff deprive campers of activities, necessities or opportunities. For younger campers, time-outs to cool down may be appropriate, while older campers may have the opportunity to repair the harm by writing a letter of apology or offering to help those have experienced bullying with something that needs to be done. In extreme situations, and in discussion with parents, a consequence for bullying may be that campers are sent home for the remainder of the camp session.

