Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy

All camp staff of LWLBC are legally required to report any suspicions of abuse or neglect of minors.

Understanding Abuse and Neglect
Below are definitions of abuse and neglect, to help identify what is or isn't child maltreatment. The following definitions have been taken from the MN Department of Human Services.
Important to remember is that a perpetrator can be anyone, including parents/guardians, family, other adults, strangers, and even others peers/minors or the victim themselves by self-infliction.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is any physical injury or threat of harm or substantial injury, inflicted by a caregiver upon a child other than by accidental means. The impact of physical abuse can range from minor bruises to severe internal injuries and death. Physical abuse does not include reasonable and moderate physical discipline of a child that does not result in an injury.

Mental Abuse: Mental injury is harm to the child's psychological capacity or emotional stability evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment of the child's functioning.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is the subjection of a child to a criminal sexual act or threatened act by a person responsible for the child's care or by a person who has a significant relationship to the child or is in a position of authority.

Neglect: Neglect is the most common form of maltreatment. Neglect is usually involves the failure of the child's caregiver to:

- Supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical or mental health care, or appropriate supervision
- Protect the child from conditions or actions that endanger the child
- Take steps to ensure that a child is educated according to the law.
- Exposing a child to certain drugs during pregnancy and causing emotional harm to a child may also be considered neglect.

Suicide Risk and Threats
The threat of self-harm is as important to pay attention to, report and respond to as harm committed by someone else. If a child makes a serious threat of self-harm, or suggest they are contemplating hurting themselves it is important to take that seriously. Not all comments and threats will actually lead to action, and not all children who make threats have an actual plan. Any comments are a sign of asking for help, and it is important in our few days with campers for them to know they are cared for, safe and supported.

If a child makes a serious threat, follow-up with them immediately. If you are not the best person to have that conversation, then involve supervisors immediately. Asking the child if they have ever seriously considered suicide, or has a plan is an important place to start. That tells the child most importantly that they are cared for, and also is a good way to gauge how at-risk they are. If the child exhibits symptoms such as: refuses to talk, is defensive or aggressive, continues to be violent or

dangerous, or has violent/dangerous plans then the family and mental health professional must be involved for evaluation. Contacting local police or emergency services may be necessary to secure the immediate safety for the child. Careful supervision of this child is essential throughout the time they are in the care of LWLBC.

Signs of Abuse and Role of LWLBC in Observations

Though LWLBC cares for campers for a very limited time, there is still a responsibility for the overall well-being of children. All campers bring with them a unique set of needs; emotional, physical and behavioral. It is important to understand that children with similar behavioral issues, do not necessarily have similar histories, or needs. All children are different, and it's important to treat each case with care. It is difficult to recognize clear signs or symptoms of abuse, and impossible to determine connection between behaviors and causes, unless you are a mental health professional. It's important to understand that LWLBC does not ask their staff to take on the role of assessing campers diagnoses, or core behavioral issues. However, it is the responsibility of camp staff to pay attention to campers, and if there is mounting evidence of possible maltreatment, or concerns of a campers well-being, to report those to the Site Director. Once a report is made to a Site Director, then appropriate other adults, family, or authorities will be involved and a process put in place to investigate.

Some possible signs and symptoms of abuse:

- Depression or Anxiety
- Aggression, hostility, anger, mood swings
- Hyperactivity
- Withdrawal from activities, and interactions
- Delayed emotional development
- Low self-esteem, confidence
- Attention seeking
- Reluctance to leave camp
- Attempts at hurting themselves, suicide
- Unexplained injuries, especially those not matching explanation
- Headaches or stomach aches with no apparent medical cause, that won't go away
- Major injuries that have not been attended to prior to arrival at camp
- Sexual Abuse: sexual behavior and knowledge unusual or inappropriate for age
- Blood in child's underwear
- Abusive behavior to other children
- Poor hygiene, lack of appropriate clothing, personal items needed for camp
- Stress about next meal, eating a lot at one sitting, or hiding food for later

Suspected Child Abuse: Responding and Reporting

If a Child Reaches Out to You...

Take it Seriously & Listen – Give the situation all of your attention. This may be the first time a child is speaking about this to anyone, and you will need to have a clear report of what they tell you. Write details down, and ask appropriate clarifying questions, to make sure you are hearing and understanding what they tell you. Do not ask leading questions, such as suggesting specific perpetrators, if they have not provided that information. Ask open-ended questions, allowing the child to share what they are comfortable with. Remember, you are simply making note of what they tell you, it is not the job of the reporter to conduct a full interview, and you are not trained to do so.

Support - Take everything you hear seriously, and make it clear that you understand. Be clear that they have done nothing wrong; by telling someone, or to cause the abuse.

Get Help - Never tell the child you will not tell someone. Be conscious of their privacy, but involve leadership staff immediately. If you are concerned for their immediate safety, engage the necessary support, such as emergency services right away. If the immediate safety is not a concern, continue to be supportive of the camper, but to not dwell on the conversation, or the abuse. Re-engage them in camp activities.

Communicate - Report to Site Director or highest level on site immediately. If you have not already done so, you will complete an incident/accident report. The Site Director will be responsible for involving other adults as appropriate: church staff, families etc. The Site Director will make the contact with local authorities, which will either be Child Protective Services, or local Police Department.

Report - The Site Director will initiate report with local authorities, but the initial reporter may need to provide direct verbal, or written report of what they heard or observed. Local authorities will pass along information to appropriate county CPS. Once authorities are involved, they will determine whether it is necessary to conduct an investigation, interview the child, involve the family etc. At that point, LWLBC is taken out of the picture, unless needed further in an investigation process.

Remember, Reporting is Mandatory: Never err on the side of *not* reporting. Write down all information that a camper tells you, or you observe, that could be related to an issue of abuse or maltreatment. Report concerns to your Site Director immediately. Legally, you are bound to report anything you see, and can be penalized for not reporting. Additionally, you are provided immunity under the law from liability arising from the reporting of possible abuse, as long as your report is made in good faith.

Local Child Protection Services Contact Info

Camp Wapo and Ox Lake: Polk County, WI
Polk County Human Services Department: 715-485-8400, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Request to speak to the CPS Access Worker. After business hours and on weekends, please contact the Polk County Sheriff's Department 715-485-8300.

Luther Dell: Cass County, MN
Adult and Child Social Services - 218-547-1340 or fax 218-547-4054
After Hours Emergencies call: 218-547-1424

Wilderness Canoe Base: Cook County, MN
Child Protection Services: (218) 387-3620, Fax (218) 387-3020
Law Enforcement Center (218) 387-3030

Staff Protection from Allegations of Abuse

It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that healthy relationships exist with campers, and that there are appropriate limits of interactions.

Here are a few guidelines:

1. Have other staff members present when supervising showers or circumstances when children are dressing.
2. Never have a one-on-one with a camper without being in the line of site of another staff member, or adult.
3. Respect the privacy of the child.
4. Protect your own privacy, campers have a natural curiosity about you and your life. You should use common sense in discussing sensitive subjects and do not divulge details of your private life.
5. The child has the right to reject displays of affection if they feel uncomfortable with them. Not every child comes from a background where affection is openly displayed.

Should you be accused of any type of child abuse, you will be suspended (with pay for paid staff) while a confidential investigation is conducted.

Incident/Accident Reports

When do you fill these out?

You may need to deal with a camper who suffers from a physical accident, an emotional incident, behavioral concern, an abusive situation, and even thoughts of suicide. There may be near miss situations, intruders, improper items brought to camp and many possibilities of other emergency situations. All of these constitute an INCIDENT OR AN ACCIDENT and must be reported to the proper authorities. If you have any questions, ask your supervisor, and report anything you think might warrant a report, to make sure everything is covered.