

Sexual Misconduct Policy of Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp

Introduction

An evangelical camping ministry is a people of God gathered to bear witness to the reign of God, in all that they do, for the sake of the world. There are many ways this witness takes place. Gospel centered preaching and sacramental life, educational programs, pastoral care, sacrificial service and advocacy for others are but a few examples. For the sake of the church's witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we must be forthright, open, and clear about the integrity and the standard of conduct to which the church's called and appointed leaders are held accountable. The policy described below deals with sexual misconduct in this light.

The policy is intended to provide safeguards for the faithful witness of the camp and its ministry. The policy stands with and protects the victims. The policy seeks to inhibit rumors, innuendoes, and other practices that unfairly challenge the vital and important camping ministry.

Theological Framework

God's mission and ministry in the world is the redemption and restoration of all creation (Colossians 1:20). God's activity is to redeem what is lost, restore what is broken, and offer salvation and hope where there is transgression and despair. This policy is intended, always imperfectly, to provide a context for that gracious activity. It must be clear that God's restorative work is not without pain, suffering, discipline, and struggle. To live the life of faith is to enter a community that does not shy away from the struggle toward restoration. The policy outline below has as its goal redemption. Redemption of the victim of abuse, the community of faith in which the abuse happens, and the integrity of the Gospel, as well as the restoration of the perpetrator to a life of faithfulness. The policy seeks to be fair and consistent and, at the same time, evangelical. This policy indicates that within the parameters of the gospel and the witness of the church, flexibility, shaped by wisdom and prayer, is present. God's mission and ministry in the world is the restoration of all creation, and God's gathered people are called to live out that truth.

God gathers communities of faith to bear witness to God's reign for the sake of the world. This faithful witness attends to three dynamics within the life of God's people. An evangelical people are called to be a people of praise, righteousness, and compassion. The theological foundations for this sexual misconduct policy are congruent with this vision of faithful community.

Praise:

The faithful community, through its praise, acknowledges that God is the sole source of all life, hope and meaning. All that is, seen and unseen, is from God. More specifically, we affirm that God creates all persons in God's image, both male and female. This gift of life is given equally to women and men. Furthermore, God created humankind sexual, and human sexuality is a gift from God and thus reason to give praise and thanks. This theological foundation begins by giving thanks to God for all creation, male and female, and for the gift of human sexuality.

Righteousness:

The faithful community struggles to structure its life so that it might experience fully the gifts God graciously gives in Christ. Due to human sinfulness, often the very gifts of God become sources of destruction. This is evident with the gift of human sexuality. Often human sexuality is the basis for oppression and injustice, violating the intention of God. When the gift of human sexuality is misused, it is a sin against God, a sign of the fallenness of this creation, and contrary to the evangelical witness of the church.

The faithful community, as a righteous community, is responsible for providing standards for itself that reflect God's intentions. Policies, standards, and discipline have been and continue to be part of God's gathered people. The evangelical challenge is to shape these aspects of the community's life in such a way that the community witnesses to God's reign.

The righteous activity of the faithful congregation seeks to administer the community's life through teaching, caring, openness of communication, and supervision. The church is faithful when it provides resources and standards so that God's gifts might be known and those things that inhibit God's activity might be thwarted.

The absence of policies, standards, and discipline for the evangelical community denies the reality of sin and brokenness in all life. A faithful community must seek to provide structures to enable the fullest possible experience of God's gifts. It is this view of righteousness that demands a clear policy regarding sexual misconduct of the called leadership of the church.

Compassion:

The Christian church views the world through a God who delivered foreign slaves from Egypt and, in the person of Jesus, walked with and advocated for the poor and outcast. God, as a God of compassion, stands with and on behalf of the victims of oppression. The policies of the evangelical community view the world from this perspective.

A policy for sexual misconduct thus begins by standing with and on behalf of the victim. When sexual misconduct of the leadership of the church occurs, at least two victims can be identified. The first is the person who has been abused. The second is the gospel community that is called to bear witness to the Lordship of Christ.

This policy identifies the need to provide support, treatment, restitution, or protection to those who are victims and to prevent further victimization.

Another aspect of the compassionate life of the church is the breaking of the conspiracy of silence. When pain, oppression, and victimization are kept secret, the powers of sin and brokenness are encouraged. The evangelical community has the courage to appropriately tell the truth in love. Standing with and on behalf of victims means an openness to hearing and responding to their stories.

POLICY ON SEXUAL ABUSE AT CAMP:

Sexual abuse is a major scandal in our country today. Therefore, it is important that staff members understand, with sensitivity and wisdom, that touch is a loaded act. Pastors, AIM's, congregational leaders, Grandparents, and all volunteers are also staff in terms of this policy.

Create a Safe Place

A. The power of the staff is tremendous. Therefore, any sexual contact, comments, or advances upon a camper are forbidden.

1. Sexual touch is contact with penis, vagina, buttocks, breast/chest area, and kissing anywhere by the staff, or having the camper touch the staff person. We are aware that you are living in a group situation with the campers; it is important to respect the camper's right to privacy and personal boundaries while showering and changing.
2. Staff members and campers must never be alone together in a one on one situation in isolation from the rest of the camp. In the case of sleep outs on the ballfield, etc., it is important that there is well-defined space between male and female campers. The counselors need to be with their own prospective groups, honoring the privacy of the other group as best as possible.
3. Hugging is done only in group settings and not alone with the camper. In addition, the hugs must be brief and preferably the "side to side" or "A-frame" kind of hug is to be used. Honor the other person's space by asking if you can hug them.
4. In addition to the above mentioned behaviors, the child has the right to reject hugs if he/she feels uncomfortable about them. Not every child comes from a background in which affection is openly displayed. Respect the child.
5. Discussion of sexuality is allowed only in group settings. No discussion of your own sexual experience is allowed. No sexual contact in front of campers, as described in 1.
6. We understand that courting relationships will occur between staff of similar age and that the appropriate modeling of relationships is lived and that personal boundaries are honored.
Guiding principals for relationships among RTALC staff:
 - a. There can be no dating/sexual relationships between full-time and summer staff members because of the age difference and the authority structure between these two groups. One will always have authority and power over the other person.
 - b. Summer staff relationships
 1. There can be no dating/sexual relationships between people when one person has more power/authority than the other person.
 2. This authority/power issue applies both to the full-time and summer staff. This would include volunteer staff and paid staff as well.
 3. If two staff members find themselves in a dating relationship with each other while employed by the camp, it is paramount that they do not openly display any sort of romantic affection in front of the campers. It is also not

appropriate nor allowed for the counselors to abandon their campers at night for liaisons with the other staff member in question.

4. If a staff member is in a dating relationship with a person not on staff, and this person comes for a visit, it is not allowed to have the significant other spend the night with that staff person. This applies to both summer and full-time staff.

5. Staff housing and rooms assigned to a specific gender are intended to be for that gender only.

6. All of the above cases refer to single staff members of this camp. Married staff are to remain monogamous in their married relationship with their spouse. Adultery and sexual harassment are not allowed in any form.

7. Intimate relationships between summer staff and congregational leaders, Pastors, Deacons, other volunteers, and campers are not permitted.

8. Making comments or remarks that are intended to sexually harass or intimidate others may be grounds for dismissal from RTALC programs. This applies to all persons in all RTALC programs.

9. Rainbow Trail staff will behave themselves in a way becoming to the philosophies and beliefs of the camp. Activities deviating from this standard will not be tolerated.

7. If you observe or hear about any violation of the rules listed here, you must report this to the director immediately. You are not expected to be a police officer, but to raise concerns and communicate.

B. Camp is the place where the staff is responsible for protecting campers from possible outside intervention.

1. Staff members are always to be alert for strangers on the site. If someone you do not know is around, it is your responsibility to go to that person and find out who they are and what they want.

2. No campers are allowed to leave the site with a non-staff person without permission from the Executive Director. Not even parents can take their children off-site without first checking in the office.

C. Camp is a place where campers can feel free to share any sexual abuse experiences with their counselor or a staff member.

At some point, your camper may tell you that someone has molested him/her. This may have occurred at home or at camp. If this happens, we want you to be prepared to help the child. Follow the guidelines below if a child indicates that he or she may have been the victim of abuse or exploitation:

1. If a case of sexual abuse is reported, staff members are expected to report this situation to the Executive Director immediately. Colorado law requires this. This holds true for physical abuse as well.

2. Our goal is to help the camper feel comfortable with his/her whole person, physical as

well as spiritual. Sensitive listening and proper referral is the means by which we can serve the camper best in this regard.

3. **DON'T** panic or overreact to the information disclosed by the child. We are aware that some of you may be victims of sexual abuse. Therefore, your initial reaction to the disclosure may be to go into denial or attempt to talk to the child to meet your needs. Do not do this.
4. Always believe the child, and tell him/her that you will try to help.
5. **DO** respect the child's privacy. It is important that you discuss the child's situation only with the Camp Director. It is forbidden to talk about this with anyone after it is reported to the Director.
6. Sharing experiences about sexual abuse is tough. Staff members are not to get involved in these issues. When a camper comes forward, it is important to listen, tell the camper that what they said is important and the need to tell the director. Then take the camper to the director. If not, more damage can be done than good. It is imperative that people who have experienced sexual abuse not be forced (re-abused) to relive that experience. Working with abuse victims is beyond the scope of most pastoral and camp counseling situations.

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