

THE SITUATION ROOM

With Comments

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These situations, or ones similar to them, have occurred in higher education camp settings. We offer them below together with comments, which are ideas for reflection and discussion rather than definitive answers. Among the comments you'll see some titled From the Session. These incorporate ideas that the group generated during the conference. Feel free to use these scenarios in your own campus for training. If you do so, kindly give a shout out to the Higher Education Protection Network.

#1. Medication

Camp enrollment is underway! You are a Camp Director and your program involves several off-campus trips for rock climbing and other physical activities.

You notice on a young boy's medical form a medication called Diastat you're unfamiliar with. The parent notes it is "like an epi-pen." As a responsible person, you research the medication and learn it is a pre-measured gel in a dispenser that is delivered rectally. Diastat helps control seizure activity.

You do not have a nurse who provides care to campers, and you are constantly reminding your counselors about public perceptions, so administering the drug out in the open may compromise your message and cause inaccurate accusations from bystanders.

You seek advice from the Title IX Coordinator, who links you to the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator. The ADA Coordinator tells you to provide a one-to-one trained staff to assist this child throughout the six-week program.

1. Earlier in the summer, you met with the parents to discuss the specific care for the child. However, they acted nonchalant about the administration of Diastat. You still feel uncomfortable about the whole situation. What can you do to ease the stress for yourself?
2. What safeguards will you put in place to administer the medication?
3. Because it is a week before camp, you've already hired your staff and do not have any more room in your budget to hire someone specifically for this child. What do you do?

Comments:

1. Gathering more information can help guide you through this situation. Consider these three potential information sources:
 - a. Contact a nurse in the student health center. Even though she doesn't work with your camp, she is still a resource and can help you understand the steps for proper medication administration.
 - b. You can also ask the parents for advice, as they are very open to continuing the conversation about their son.
 - c. Do a Google search to find the manufacturer's instructions for administering Diastat. Notice that the instructions indicate, among other points, that the person administering the medication should: be able to differentiate cluster and ordinary seizures; receive training from a doctor and; check the patient for the indicated period after administering the medication.
2. Provide safety and full opportunities for the child. Designate at least two staff to be assigned to the child and go through a training on seizures and administration of the medication. Continue to provide the same opportunities for this child as any other, unless written restriction is received from the parents.
3. Adjust staffing as needed. Shift a couple of children around to other groups to comply with the staff/child ratio. As Camp Director, be more available on outings and more hazardous activities as a backup. Continue constant communication with the parents through the summer to ensure they understand what activities their son is participating in.
4. From the session: Get a note, advice, or instruction from the child's doctor. Consider developing a standard operating procedure. Make sure to move the other children away from the child having the seizure and keep them occupied elsewhere. Have the designated staffer who will administer the Diastat work with the participant in advance about the process.

#2. Non-compliance

The summer is right around the corner. In your job as Youth Protection Coordinator, you send your *fourth* reminder to complete the required background check form, training for all camp staff, and the pre-camp checklist. The fourth reminder email only goes to one camp, which seems constantly to wait until the last minute.

You've gone out of your way to help them get organized and explained the importance of getting their paperwork in on time, but it seems to do no good. The Camp Director wants to work with you, but seems to find a plethora of excuses for every request.

Because he employs student-athletes during this camp, he claims he doesn't know until late May/early June if they are actually staying for the summer. Then, he says, it is hard for him to get them to commit to working at the camp until mid-June, which is when the camp starts.

1. What else can you do to encourage this camp to complete its registration, training, and background checks in a timely manner?
2. Do you have any policies or protocols in place to avoid this situation?
3. Who could intervene within the university to change this camp's pattern of non-compliance?

Comments:

1. Start the process before the student-athletes leave for the summer. If they are even vaguely interested in working the camp, have them complete the required paperwork and training prior to leaving at the end of the semester. This way, if they come back to work the camp, their paperwork is already completed.
2. Registration must be received three months before the start of camp to ensure the camp is configured in the registration software. Camp Directors must complete a pre-camp checklist to ensure all paperwork and training has been completed.
3. HR may help put urgency on the background checks. Other champions for the cause may put pressure on Deans and Athletic Directors.
4. From the Session: Charge a late fee. Survey the possible counselors in advance about whether they expect to work at the camp and, if so, start the required processes in advance for those individuals. Conduct an audit of the program. Many institutions do have policies and protocols in place to avoid this situation. For allies to intervene with the universities, consider the athletics director, legal affairs, deans or other liaisons within the schools, vice provost, or employee relations.

#3 Bullying

During Basketball Camp, you see a small group of 10-year-old boys discussing their shoes. You've seen this same conversation a hundred times, so you think nothing of it. Later, you receive a call from a concerned parent telling you her child is being bullied. You watch the small group interaction the next day and notice the child who is supposedly being bullied is choosing to hang out with the same group of kids.

1. What steps, if any, do you take to protect this child from bullying?
2. If the conversation is inappropriate, what do you do to intervene?
3. What conversations, if any, do you have with the parent of all children involved?
4. How can you prevent this from happening?

Comments:

1. Watch and listen more closely to the situation. Be sure to notify your camp staff working with the child so you have additional witnesses and help during this observation. Stay in touch with the child to see if she is having a fun time at camp.
2. If you heard the conversation, intervene immediately by letting the kids know why the conversation is not appropriate. Follow-up with the parents if necessary. Next, round up the group and have a conversation about appropriate discussion at camp. Make the discussion seem planned, so the child who felt bullied doesn't appear to have tattled. It never hurts to set boundaries and ensure inappropriate conversations are not happening in other groups.
3. Address the situation so the parent knows what happened from your point of view. Let the parent know the steps you are taking to address the problem. Open the discussion for the parent to ask questions or make comments. You may find out more about the story, which may need to be shared with your staff.
4. Have a discussion with all the campers at the beginning of camp. Let them know what is not tolerated and set the expectations for the environment you want to see. Identify staff who will listen to the campers if they have a problem, giving campers an outlet if something is happening. Train your staff to discuss all problems with you to avoid any failure in communication. While you can work to prevent problems, you can't guarantee that none will occur. It's also useful to maintain documentation about the steps you've taken.
5. From the session: Have regular welfare checks to connect with campers on a regular basis. Have a continuous presence of the leaders within the groups for interaction with campers. Campers need to know someone is watching. Communicate early and often so everyone understands expectations for campers, to reduce the risk of surprises. When you do intervene, use Code of Conduct and progressive discipline policies. Take a holistic approach to

intervening with the group of kids so, for example, the whistleblower doesn't take heat. Make personal contact with the parents to confirm that information relayed back to them is accurate.

#4. Recovering from Tragedy

During a wrestling camp, an incident occurred in the bathroom between two of the boys – Bob Boy and Charlie Child. Bob pushed Charlie into the wall, causing him to fall to the floor. Bob left the bathroom, while Charlie walked out five minutes later after regaining consciousness. Neither told anyone what happened in the bathroom.

Later that night, Charlie started vomiting and his mom took him to the hospital. The hospital staff, unaware of the earlier situation in the bathroom, diagnose Charlie with a stomach virus. The next day, Charlie is found dead in his room from an apparent suicide by hanging.

1. There are still multiple days left of Wrestling Camp and some of the other participants are learning of Charlie's death. How do you handle the conversations with the participants and parents?
2. Bob tells another participant, Kris Kid, what happened in the bathroom. Kris tells you, the Camp Director. What is your first step?

Comments:

1. The situation is devastating. Stay mindful about what you say and how you act. Reach out to your Public Relations team to help you formulate your responses. Seek a grief counselor to come spend the day(s) at your camp.
2. Discuss the situation with your Public Safety Department. Depending on whether they are sworn officers, they may be able to initiate an investigation and conduct interviews. Continue to work closely with the grief counselor, Public Relations team, and any other appropriate party on campus. Support your staff during this time, keeping them informed and comforted.
3. From the session: Over the remaining days of the wrestling camp, provide free counseling. Don't release sensitive details about the death of the child, for reasons of privacy and the ongoing investigation. After disclosure of the bathroom altercation, contact law enforcement, legal office, and similar functions. The two situations may or may not be related. (This scenario, in essence, occurred at a Chicago-area elementary school.)

#5. Lost Child and Busy Dining Hall

Six programs with 500 youth eat lunch at approximately the same time in the dining hall. The youth include 15 boys, ages 9 to 12, enrolled in a college-sponsored soccer camp. This is the third day of their camp. The dining hall is open to the campus community during the lunch period.

At 12:30 pm, as planned, the soccer campers gather in the building lobby to return to their program. Counselor Caring notes that one camper, Les Lost, is not there. The group waits 10 extra minutes but Les does not appear.

1. What should Counselor Careful, the soccer camp, and the college do?
2. How would you suggest supervising a dining hall situation like this?
3. Would your answer to #1 change if:
 - a) The camp was for kids ages 6 to 8 rather than 9 to 12?
 - b) The dining hall was open to the public, not just the campus community?
 - c) It was the first day of camp, rather than the third day?
 - d) The camp was for girls rather than boys?

Comments:

1. Do not delay. Begin a search immediately. Make an announcement within the dining hall. Contact campus public safety. Provide searchers with a description of the child, his clothing, and his name. Search the immediate area around the dining hall, the route back to the soccer camp, and throughout the camp's facilities. At an early opportunity, contact Les' parents and ask about Les' habits. Your campus public safety staff may call upon local law enforcement. It's better to escalate the situation early than to wait and hope for the best.

As a prevention and planning step, your campus public safety might consider receiving training and adopting a policy on searches for missing children. For a sample policy, visit

http://www.missingkids.org/en_US/documents/Model_Policy_Child.pdf

For training, consider the Missing Kids Readiness Project, sponsored by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

<http://www.missingkids.org/MKRP>

2. Supervising this dining hall is a challenge. Options might include:
 - a. Post monitors at all doors while children are eating, to keep eyes on who comes and goes.
 - b. Require each camp to have sufficient staff in the dining hall to supervise its own campers.
 - c. Require each camp to have colored lanyards, tee shirts, or other unique identifiers for its campers.

3. The first three factors may affect the urgency of the situation. The fourth would probably not.
 - a. Younger children have a narrower “zone of safety” which they can navigate successfully without adult supervision. The urgency of the search would be heightened for a younger child.
 - b. A dining hall open to the public and largely populated by children during certain times heightens the risk.
 - c. A child might more easily become disoriented on the first day of camp. In this situation one might search a bit longer within the premises, but not the point of significant delay in contacting public safety or local law enforcement.
 - d. Gender would be irrelevant.

From the session: After realizing the child is missing, secure the dining hall doors. Ask other campers if they have seen the child. Quickly check the immediate area. Then promptly notify police and parents simultaneously and let each know you’re talking to the other. For general supervision of the dining hall, station employees to staff the exits and the bathrooms as observers. Have campers start to eat before the counselors go to get their own food. Group the younger campers together.

The answers would not change if the child is younger. If it’s the first day of camp, the urgency may be somewhat higher. On day three, you know more about the child and their behaviors. The child may be a “wanderer” or someone who likes to hide. Gender doesn’t affect the response. Campus police can help provide training, such as a scenario-based program for camp staff on lost children, lightning, and other emergency topics. Another perspective is to call the police first, rather than conducting your own search, to eliminate the risk of delay in locating the child. It’s better to call to get a jump on the situation. At one institution, two young children left to go visit a relative and walked 8 blocks before they were locate. What length of time is appropriate for conducting a quick immediate search before calling campus police? Maybe five or ten minutes, but no more.

#6. Camper's Disclosure of Abuse at Home

Ten-year old Fatima is in tears. During lunch she spilled grape juice on her new yellow camp tee shirt. She has tried rinsing it but the stain just won't come out. Counselor Caring asks her what's wrong, and Fatima confides that her dad will probably beat her for ruining the new shirt. Counselor Caring believes that Fatima is speaking honestly. It's 1 pm. The dad is coming to pick up Fatima at 3 pm. The program immediately calls you, as the Youth Protection Coordinator.

1. What steps will you take?

Comments:

Fatima is signaling a real risk of physical abuse at home. This is sometimes termed an outcry. While the college, the camp, and the youth protection coordinator have no authority to take Fatima into protective custody, the child welfare agency, law enforcement, or both may have this authority. Try to get them on-site within the next two hours to assess the situation. Provide reassurance and comfort to Fatima, who might prefer to stay with the other campers or to remain in the presence of staff (two staff people, not one!).

If the father arrives first, try to stall. If he takes Fatima away, provide that update to the agency/law enforcement. Remember that the father's legal rights are superior to those of the institution, the camp, and the youth protection coordinator. You've done what you can by providing notice to the relevant authorities.

From the session: Call the authorities, as directed by the state child abuse law. Also call campus police. Notify the supervisor. While campus police are on the way, address the child's immediate needs. Give her a new camp tee shirt, if available. Make sure she's in a safe place. Assist the authorities. Create documentation of what occurred. The next day do an after-action review, evaluate how things went, see whether policies were followed, and identify possible improvements. Also check in with Fatima to see how she is doing. If she doesn't return the next day, call the authorities again.

#7. Transgender Housing

Pat, age 14, is transitioning from male to female. She now wears girl's clothing, has long hair, and is developing breasts. Some of her friends from elementary school know that she used to be a boy. Her parents have registered her for a week-long overnight cheerleader camp and contacted you, the youth protection coordinator, to explain the situation. They ask about assigning roommates for Pat and maintaining her privacy. The

cheerleading campers sleep three-to-a-room, and each hall shares a common bathroom among nine girls.

1. How do you respond to Pat's parents?
2. What steps do you take for Pat?
3. What do you tell Pat's roommates?
4. Another parent calls, angry that Pat is in the program with her own daughter. How do you respond?

Comments:

1. Start by determining whether the institution has a policy on transgender rights and a staff member who assists with LGBTQ issues. If so, involve the staff expert in the situation. Also consult a lawyer about legal protections for transgender people in the jurisdiction.

Consider taking a positive approach with Pat's parents, stressing that the institution wants to provide Pat with a great camp experience. Given the ages of the campers, however, this may require some adjustments and flexibility. Campus LGBTQ policies that apply to college students do not necessarily adapt well to the needs of younger people.

2. Perhaps Pat has two friends who would be comfortable rooming with her. If so, it would be prudent to notify the friends' parents about the situation, so they are not taken by surprise. The shared bathroom situation is more complicated, however, because other youth might become aware of, and concerned about, Pat's original gender. Look for creative solutions. Is there a single room with its own bathroom that Pat could occupy? Or a triple room with its own bathroom? Perhaps Pat could live in a three-room suite with two counselors (who would both need to be present simultaneously if possible) and a bathroom. If the residence hall does not have a workable solution, perhaps Pat could attend as a day camper or live in a nearby hotel with one of her parents. Whatever the housing arrangements, also address the campers' daytime bathroom and locker room areas. The situation calls for creativity, flexibility, and respect for rights and privacy on all sides.
3. One would probably not want to have Pat room together with other campers who are unaware of her transition. If the region is very accepting of LGBTQ rights (think, say, San Francisco), perhaps parents and campers could be asked upon registration whether they would be willing to room with a transgender person.

4. To address the angry parent of another camper, listen attentively and show you understand the concerns. You might explain the college's LGBTQ policy or, in the absence of a policy, its general approach. Without making the discussion about Pat, outline your efforts to balance the rights of all parties. If the parent remains deeply troubled, this may not be the right camp for his or her child.
5. From the session: Parents might initially call the camp director, who would call the youth protection coordinator. Pat might opt for a private room. Ask the parents what they would like. One institution brought together camp director, LGBTQ staff, and parents for an open conversation. Talk through the issues. Look for a single room. At one institution, the parents decided not to send the child to camp. Female-to-male transition may be less noticeable. One institution no longer hosts an overnight football camp (for various reasons). At another institution, the parent and the prospective camper had different opinions on how the institution might accommodate the camper, so the youth protection officer had to navigate between the opposing views. In another institution, the parents were unaware of the child's public gender identity; at home the child identified by the birth gender. Some families will disclose the gender identity issue in advance to the camps, others will not. Institutions and the ACA are starting to develop material on transgender campers.

#8. Outside Camp and Camper Allergy

Camp STEM, a non-profit group, has contracted with Utopia College to conduct a summer camp for girls interested in STEM careers. The campers will be in 5th and 6th grade and will spend a full week on campus, sleeping in residence halls and eating in dining halls. Camp STEM has contracted for laboratory space in the allied health building. Campers will be using chemicals and standard lab materials.

Two days before camp begins, the Camp STEM director calls to tell you, as Utopia's coordinator of outside camps, that she has just learned one of the campers has multiple chemical sensitivity. The child is allergic to latex, solvents, smoke, volatile organic compounds, perfumes, and common cleaning products. The Camp STEM director demands to know what you are going to do to protect the child.

1. What are your next steps?
2. Who is responsible for accommodating the camper – Camp STEM or the college?
3. Will you communicate with the parents? If so, when and for what purpose?

Comments:

1. Review the contract between the college and the camp with, as needed, assistance from the legal office, risk management, or similar experts. Check whether the contract assigns responsibility for compliance with civil rights laws, disability accommodation, or other relevant topics. Bring the situation to the attention of the disability support services staff and the relevant facilities staff. Ask the camp director what chemicals the campers will be using. If you're lucky, perhaps the allied health labs have recently managed to accommodate someone else with similar allergies. If not, two days provides little time to conduct a thorough assessment of the situation. Provide the camp director with the available information, even if it is incomplete.
2. Each party will claim that the other party is responsible for accommodating the camper. If the contract protects the college, it will place the legal burden on the outside camp, or at least require the camp to provide the college with more advance notice of disability issues.
3. If the college is on solid legal ground that Camp STEM bears the legal responsibility, the college may wish to convey this to the parents, perhaps also mentioning steps the college has taken to cooperate with the camp. Consider obtaining legal assistance in preparing these points, whether conveyed orally or in writing.

#9. Relationship of Counselor and Camper

Cameron is a 21-year old counselor at a college camp for inner city girls. He finds that a 17-year old camper, Linda, is very introverted yet seems to open up around him. Cameron begins to give Linda extra attention, always sitting with her at lunch and having conversations with her during breaks and at the end of the day.

Cameron senses that Linda is beginning to “come out of her shell” because of the extra attention. He feels pride that, as a counselor, he is making a difference in her life.

Another counselor, Carla, notices that Cameron and Linda are often times seen together and away from the group.

1. What steps should the camp counselors and youth program leader take?
2. Why?

Comments:

1. Regardless of Cameron's feelings of pride and accomplishment, he has developed an inappropriate relationship with Linda. He needs to be equally available to all participants and to avoid creating special friendships. Carla

should report the situation to the camp director. If the camp has a prohibition on special relationships between counselors and campers, and Cameron received training on this, he may need to be removed.

2. If Cameron is merely warned, he and Linda may shift their relationship “underground” and out-of-sight. The relationship may deepen into one of intimacy. Youth camps should err on the side of protecting minors rather than staff. Higher education institutions believe inherently in learning and improvement. The primary goal here is not, however, to mentor Cameron so he can improve as a counselor. He violated a rule about which he had been advised in advance.

#10. Illicit Substances and Camper Discipline

It’s 1 am. A residential camp counselor detects a distinctive odor coming from a dorm room. She suspects marijuana use. Three 17-year old campers occupy the room. The counselor contacts the camp director. The camp’s behavior contract prohibits both smoking and possession of marijuana (although the state has legalized recreational marijuana for adults).

1. What actions should the resident hall camp counselor and camp director take about this situation?
2. What possible issues and ramifications may arise from this scenario?
3. When is the appropriate time to contact the student’s parents?
4. What if the parents cannot be contacted; are unavailable to come pick up their child; refuse to pick up child early; or refuse to believe their child has done this?
5. Should the campers automatically be expelled from the camp? Automatically barred from attending the institution?
6. Should the college press criminal charges?

Comments:

1. The counselor and camp director need to know who’s in the room and whether the substance is marijuana. Campus public safety is the best ally in the situation, given its officers’ likely experience with drugs and room searches. Assuming the substance is marijuana, the counselor and director need to remind the occupants about the prohibitions on any smoking and on marijuana. Public safety should confiscate the marijuana. See below for

discussion of punishment.

2. Issues and ramifications include: grounds for dismissal from camp; relations with the parents of these campers; relations with other campers and their parents; the appropriateness of a residence hall room search; and inequitable and selective enforcement because “everyone else has been doing it too.” The media may become involved, giving rise to potential concern among the wider community, the legislature, and the state’s executive agencies.
3. Waking the parents at 1 am may be the best course of action. Some institutions might wait until the morning.
4. Assume that the camp has provided information to parents and campers in advance about the camp’s policies. Parents who refuse to be involved in their child’s life may be committing child neglect. The campers might be; housed for the duration of camp with two staff members; reported to child welfare authorities, who could be asked to take custody; or left in the general camp population with a stern warning about the consequences should they disregard any camp rules or otherwise fail to cooperate fully.
5. The campers could be automatically expelled, if the substance was indeed marijuana. The circumstances may call for some lesser sanction. A decision on barring them from college enrollment at the institution should be left to admissions officials. Admissions decisions are typically made holistically, considering the applicant’s full record. One instance of marijuana possession may not raise an absolute barrier to acceptance to the college. If, however, the camper has already been accepted, the infraction could serve as the basis for rescinding the admission.
6. Absent some aggravating circumstances, the college will probably not opt to press criminal charges.
7. From the session: Notify the camp director who then calls the police. The right to search dorm room varies for public and private institutions. The parental waiver form may have waived the campers’ privacy rights. Call the parents. Be careful not to disclose the names of the other children. At one institution, police not allowed to talk to campers without parents being present. If parents can’t be reached, try the emergency contact. In one actual situation, a camper who used drugs was released into the custody of an older sibling who was 18 (and who had provided the marijuana). The strong consensus was to dismiss the campers immediately. Most participants felt that the incident would not create an automatic barrier to the youth being admitted to the college. An infraction by an applicant who has already been accepted might lead to a different outcome.