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Vraj Youth Camp

Counselor's Handbook

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Minimum Qualifications:

- Desire and ability to LOVE children unconditionally
- Desire and ability to work with children
- Ability to accept supervision and guidance
- Ability to relate and work with one's peer group
- Ability to assist in teaching and supervising activities
- Possession of good character, integrity, and adaptability
- Possession of enthusiasm, sense of humor, patience, and self-control
- MUST be at least 17 years of age, as of first day of the first camp on current year, for younger kids camp
- MUST be at least 18 years of age, as of first day of the first camp on current year, for older kids camp

Under the guidance / direction of:

Camp Director, Adult Volunteers and Head Counselors

General Responsibilities:

- To identify and meet camper's needs
- To carry out camp programs and goals
- To fulfill assigned duties
- To provide leadership and guidance to campers
- Expected to respect and follow daily schedule

Specific Responsibilities:

- Be aware of camper's health and mental health issues
- Enforce camp safety regulations
- Recognize and respond to opportunities for problem solving for your assigned campers.
- Supervise all aspects of the camper's day (this part requires you to be always Awake and with the assigned campers)
- Promote healthy hygiene (i.e. Brushing at Night & taking showers)
- Promote Health and safety protocols (i.e. maintain personal space with everyone)
- Respect personal property, equipment and facilities and encourage campers to do the same
- Adhere to policies and rules of cleanliness, punctuality and sportsmanship as to set an adequate example for campers
- Learn likes/dislikes of campers and interact with them based on their individual needs
- Create opportunities for interaction among campers
- Provide opportunities for each camper to experience success during camp

- Help each camper meet the goals established by camp for healthy and happy spiritual, physical and mental development
- Encourage children to participate in camp activities and provide an example by participating yourself with your assigned group.
- Assist and guide campers in creating quality campfire skits and participate with them to increase their comfort level
- Bring up any and all issues of concern with counselors and head counselors
- Assist adult volunteers and head counselors with any and all possible tasks
- Follow the given daily agenda; ask head counselors or adult volunteers questions if you are unclear
- Maintain good relations with parents, volunteers and other adults
- Cooperate and communicate with other counselors and camp members
- Promote proper etiquette while in the mandir and on campus

Guidelines for Morning Routine:

- Wake your campers up; Do not make them wake you up
- Always stay with campers during the morning walk, yoga and darshan. Participate and set a correct example.
- Spread out amongst the campers and counselors during the morning walk, yoga and darshan

Meal Setup and Cleanup:

- For each meal of the day (breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner, and bedtime snack) there will be one counselor assigned for setup and one counselor assigned for cleanup
- When it is your group's turn to setup: make sure **you and** your campers put out all necessary utensils specific to each meal.
- When it is your group's turn to clean up: make sure **you and** your campers
 - a) wipe the tables
 - b) clean any messes or spills
 - c) push in all chairs and leave the dining hall presentable
- Both assigned counselors for each meal (regardless of whether you are setup or clean up crew) should report to the kitchen fifteen minutes before the meal to see if any help is needed in food preparation
- Encourage all campers to maintain cleanliness, mannerism and calm in the dining hall
- Do not encourage campers in over-eating, food wastage, spills or other inappropriate behavior in the dining hall

Counselor Bedtime Policy

All counselors are expected to give one hundred and ten percent of their energy and attention to the program. For this reason, counselors must allow themselves a good night's rest. After a camper's bedtime, counselors are required to keep a constant watch over their campers while they have free time. Also, counselors are required to be back in their cabins by 12 am at the ABSOLUTE LATEST, however it is the camp director's decision to advance that time. If he/she says that 11 pm is late enough, that will be the latest you will be allowed to stay up. No exceptions beyond that point will be permitted. Counselor should be asleep within his/her assigned room at night.

In addition, napping during the day will NOT be permitted. Your primary responsibility is to your campers; you are required as a counselor to interact with them, care for them and guide them throughout the day. Every effort should be taken to ensure that your campers know that you are there for them at all times. Napping takes you away from your campers and therefore, will not be allowed at any time.

If you are found in violation of this bedtime policy, you will be warned once before being given extra chores and tasks as a penalty. Further consequential action will be taken on further failure: Your parents may be notified and you will be asked to leave camp for the remainder of the week.

Dress Code:

- Counselors are expected to dress neatly and appropriately for camp. You are required to set an example for campers.
- Counselors unsuitably or questionably dressed will be asked to change into appropriate clothing immediately
- Clothing with inappropriate language or messages (implied or stated) is not acceptable
- Only mid-thigh walking shorts are permitted. No spandex, boxer-type, low-cut tops, or short-shorts are allowed
- Skirts more than 3-finger above knee are not permitted
- Pants must be worn at waist level; underwear must not be visible
- Shoes must be worn at all times. Closed toe sneakers **MUST** be worn for sports and sports-related activities at all times
- No ripped or tattered clothing is permitted
- Shirts must cover shoulders completely
- Sundresses, halter tops, see-through shirts or exposed midriffs are not permitted

Counselor's Code of Conduct

- Profanities of any kind should not be used by any counselor. This includes talking to campers in a brash tone or using derogatory language and telling campers to “shut up.”
- Counselors are not to deal with campers or one another in a degrading or abusive matter. All problems, issues and concerns should be brought to the attention of the head counselors and are to be settled in a way which sets a proper precedent or example and is not disruptive to the program in any way.
- Physical or continual verbal abuse to any camper, counselor or volunteer will result in the dismissal of the violator.
- Counselors are expected to be with their campers at all times or doing their assigned tasks and duties. If you find yourself with nothing to do, report to the head counselors for directions.
- Counselors are required to be at and take part in all camp activities and events. This is extremely important as the campers will be directly affected by your level of participation and enthusiasm. Consistent tardiness or missing of camp activities, meals, darshans or classes will result in the dismissal of the violator.
- There is to be NO boys in the girls' rooms and NO girls in the boys' room at ANY time under ANY circumstances. This includes both counselors and campers. Violation of this rule will result in the immediate dismissal of the violators. Your parents will also be notified.
- In addition, if you are caught or suspected (with sufficient evidence) in a hanky panky mess during the duration of camp at any time, you will be immediately dismissed, your parents will be notified and you will be asked not to return to camp the following year. Also, in order for admission as a counselor the year after, you will be asked to complete certain hours of community service at Vraj during the year.
- There is to be no open displays of affection at camp. Counselors are to conduct themselves in a proper and respectful manner
- Counselors are not to leave the camp grounds during the camp session. If there is any type of emergency or need to leave the camp, please speak with the Director immediately.
- No cars are to be driven in the cabin areas. At the beginning of the week, park your car in the designated area and let it stay there through the duration of camp.
- The camp office is to be used by head counselors and adult volunteers only. No counselors are to be in the camp office without the permission and/or in the company of a head counselor or adult volunteer.

- Cell phones or other electronic gadgets should not be used for the duration of the camp. Camp director WILL ask to hand over all such equipment at the beginning of the camp.
- Counselors are to be tactful and respectful to head counselors and adult volunteers, as well as campers
- Counselors are responsible for helping to keep the campground clean. This includes all rooms, kitchen area, dining area, activity areas and outdoor areas.
- Counselors are not to bring any food, drinks, candy or gum to camp. Additional food and drinks are readily available if you or your campers feel hungry at a reasonable time of the day.
- Counselors are not to administer any medication to campers. All medicine is to be administered by an adult volunteer, head counselor ONLY.
- Counselors must be on time to the counselor class every day. Tardiness will be reprimanded.
- Alcohol, drugs or tobacco will not be tolerated at camp. Possession or use of these substances during camp will constitute immediate grounds for dismissal.
- Hazing and Bullying is a criminal act and it is not tolerated at Vraj camp. Both the Victim and witnesses' have the responsibility to immediately report such an incident directly to the camp Director with details and culprit. Without such cooperation, the camp director may not be able to take action. In such cases, Hazer, victim and all witnesses may be reprimanded, and may not be able to attend VYC camp in the future.

Conclusion

BE MINDFUL OF OUR PURPOSE HERE AT CAMP; TO PRESENT AN EXPERIENCE IN LIVING AND A MEANINGFUL LIFESTYLE TO THE CAMPERS. THE COUNSELOR IS THE KEY PERSON THE CAMPER EMULATES; AS WELL AS IS THE MOST VISIBLE IN THE LIFE OF THE CAMPER. HE/SHE IS THE ONE WHO CAN MAKE THE SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE ENJOYABLE, MEANINGFUL, AND ABOVE ALL, GOD AND CULTURE CENTERED!

DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN!

In closing, we would like to emphasize that our camp is about having fun and meeting new people. We would like all of our campers, counselors, and adult volunteers to walk away feeling enlightened by their experience. To the counselors and adult volunteers all we ask is that we are here for the kids. And to the campers we want you to remember that the camp could not exist without the counselors and adult volunteers. We hope that everyone has fun at this year's VRAJ camp