



Camp Programming & Risk Management

Having Fun is Being Safe

Managing a camp is an intensive and highly nuanced experience that requires a great deal of careful planning and preparation. Ultimately, your goal is to keep campers engaged and safe for the duration of their time with you. [FULL STORY >](#)



Operating multi-site Camps

Operating youth camps on campus comes with a number of risk management concerns. There are numerous considerations to address prior to bringing youth on campus. [FULL STORY >](#)



Best Practices Project Launched!

Beginning in 2013, a group of senior Canadian recreation professionals initiated a project to develop a series of Best Practices for the Campus Recreation field. [FULL STORY >](#)



Communication with Parents before Camps Start

Creating a solid foundation for parent communication is a priority task that should be accomplished prior to your program starting date. [FULL STORY >](#)

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Sweaty Palms?

RISK MANAGEMENT BLOG

- > Want to learn the nuts & bolts about negligence – and what it looks like in the recreation setting?
- > Want to look at **RISK** through a series of different lenses?
- > Want to find out what your **appetite** for risk is? How risk **averse** you are?

Check out our new blog www.sportrisk.com/blog – and get involved in the discussion!!

Youth Camps

It's that time of year again – summer camps are just around the corner, and camp staff are gearing up!

Youth Camps present a unique opportunity for Campus Recreation departments to connect with the community. However, since camps cater to minors they are 'high risk' programs which must be carefully and expertly managed. Three articles on camps are featured covering different aspects of camp operations. Also – check out the list of key resources for camp administrators.

Also featured in this issue is an update on a unique risk management 'Best Practices' assessment tool set for launch in Fall 2015!

Ian McGregor, Ph.D.
Publisher

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Camp Programming and Risk Management

Having Fun is Being Safe

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Ultimately, your goal is to keep campers engaged and safe for the duration of their time with you.

Introduction:

Managing a camp is an intensive and highly nuanced experience that requires a great deal of careful planning and preparation. Ultimately, your goal is to keep campers engaged and safe for the duration of their time with you. With that in mind, everything you do in camp management has a risk management component. In this article, we will discuss some methods and strategies to assist in the preparation of your camp.



Camp Programming and Risk Management continued page 2

- Section One revolves around the development of a strong theoretical foundation for your camp, including the development of philosophy, mission, and values, and will also discuss methods for developing and training staff to best uphold these foundational elements.
- Section Two gives an overview of programming and activity development ideas and reviews the importance of schedule templates.
- Section Three discusses the necessity of external research and becoming comfortable with state, local, and university standards on childcare.
- Section Four illustrates principles of the shared responsibilities of risk management, including the crucial component of transparency and interaction with parents.

It is imperative to develop (or review) the foundational elements of the program.

Section One: Camp Preparation & Staff Development

Before approaching questions surrounding the risk management practices of your camp program, it is imperative to develop (or review) the foundational elements of the program. Whether you are starting a program from nothing or looking to improve upon an existing one, spending time systematically evaluating your mission, vision, values, and philosophy for camp can give you a significant methodology for decision-making. It is during this process that you can begin to apply some tenets of successful risk management to the foundation of your program—namely, how central is camper safety and well-being in your mission, vision, and values?

Ask the question: does this align with our pillar of providing safe, fun, and diverse experiences for our campers?



In our experience in camp leadership, whenever we had a major question or decision, whether it was related to programming, staffing, procedures, or policy, we could comfortably reflect back to our foundational principles and ask the question: does this align with our pillar of providing safe, fun, and diverse experiences for our campers?

Of course, we are not the only ones who need to apply these principles in camp. Whether you have a staff of less than 10 or more than 100, the reality of a successful program is that you, as a director and leader, cannot physically be with all the campers all the time. Instead, your employees are often the ones who will be making the critical decisions in the daily operations of camp. This underscores the necessity of incorporating student development concepts into your camp program. Ultimately, you may develop an excellent operational and risk management plan for your camp, but without a strong staff to consistently apply it, you can be left with subpar results.

Camp Programming and Risk Management continued page 3

Actively devote time and resources to recruiting your staff members from the campus population.

One strategy we found to be successful in developing a great staff is recognizing the strong employees we already had on staff in other areas of our department; these students and employees have valuable transferable skills for the camp setting—use these to your advantage! Additionally, actively devote time and resources to recruiting your staff members from the campus population (or community, if possible). Although you can always train a new employee, finding staff members with previous experience in childcare can significantly improve your program. In comparison to other areas of campus recreation, finding employees with previous experience is beneficial and perhaps even necessary. These individuals, however, often need to be found, and coordinated recruitment are impactful in hiring the right staff.

Actively look to build team and create bonds between your staff members.

Speaking of training, once you have your personnel hired and ready to start working, they must be oriented and trained to the program. As simple as it sounds, actively look to build team and create bonds between your staff members—they must want to work with each other and understand as a group the significance of the shared responsibility of childcare. It is during this initial group development process that the foundational elements of your program, including your approach to camper safety and well-being, can be delivered.

Furthermore, in the training process, it is helpful to consider the different learning styles of your staff; trainings should be a mix of hands-on, lecture, testing, and reading, to name just a few styles. Concurrently, look to provide ongoing resources for your staff, especially regarding child behavior, risk management, and safety—what videos, books, handouts, and manuals are available to you? Training, especially regarding risk management, should be an ongoing focus for the duration of your program, implying the necessity to deliver materials that can facilitate this ongoing education.

Lastly, take advantage of the personnel resources on your campus; for example, are there experts in child behavior, pedagogy, or motor development at your university that can deliver information and resources to your employees?

Consider the different learning styles of your staff; trainings should be a mix of hands-on, lecture, testing, and reading.



Section Two: Activity Programming

As discussed in the introduction, your ultimate goal with a camp is to keep your campers safe and engaged for the entire duration of time they are in your care. We've all heard the saying "idle hands are the devil's workshop"; in a camp setting, idle or bored campers have the potential to create serious distractions, which can lead to greater issues of safety for all campers. With that in mind, this section will discuss some strategies for developing a wide variety of safe and fun activities and programming for your camp, so that you may always avoid "idle hands."

Camp Programming and Risk Management continued page 4

Adopt a “campus is our playground” mentality.

One tactic that can be used to your benefit in developing a variety of activities is to adopt a “campus is our playground” mentality. In other words, take advantage of existing resources on your campus, whether that is internal to your own department (such as adventure education) or external (such as on-campus research labs or museums.) Along with this, embrace diversity in activities—just because you may operate out of a recreation facility does not mean you have to play sports or be active 100% of the time. How can you be creative with the facility space you have at your disposal?

Creating an activity database will assist in developing strong activities that are interesting, diverse, and safe.

Logistically, look to develop a scheduling template for your camp program that gives you a consistent methodology and on a daily basis, can easily identify the open times you must fill with activities. Such a template can simplify the process of planning camp activities and shifts the focus to content and safety, away from things like timing. Our experience in developing strong camp activities was also aided by drawing from established curriculum models in physical education—as our camp is recreationally based, pulling ideas from successful PE curriculum gave us an immense amount of resources to plan our daily activities. For example, we were able to utilize information on lesson planning, which significantly impacted our approach to the timing and structure of activities, especially in working with campers in different age groups and at varying stages of physical and motor development. Two models that we found especially helpful were Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982) and Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994), however there are many other models that could be used depending on your approach.



Regardless of where your activities may come from, it is highly recommended that you track all activities you offer, and save this in an activity database, while also assessing or evaluating their success in the camp setting. In this process, not only can you review whether an activity is enjoyable for campers, but you can also make note of any potential safety or risk management issues that may be occurring in your program. Creating an activity database will assist in future days (weeks, or summers) in developing strong activities that are interesting, diverse, and safe.

Camp Programming and Risk Management continued page 5

Ensure that you are closely following expectations at the university level on things like child safety, appropriate facility usage for minors, and background checks.

Section Three: External Research

Developing your program's risk management safeguards is predicated on a great degree of external research, which should occur on an annual basis and is one of the first steps in planning a successful and safe camp operation. As discussed in the first section, it is imperative to consistently review your policies as they relate to risk management, both from a practical standpoint as well as to ensure your program is in accordance with state, local, and university guidelines. Although guidelines and laws may vary from state to state, there is a wide variety of information that must be reviewed in advance of your program. For example, continually review childcare guidelines that can be found in your state's Department of Child and Family Services (or comparable department), which can give insight into things like caregiver to camper ratio or guidelines for reporting abuse. Although your camp may not be exactly the same as a childcare facility, it is highly important to have a deeper sense of comparison and context of childcare regulations and expectations—many parents may look at your camp as “daycare” and as such, understanding their expectations is beneficial.

Beyond the state level, ensure that you are closely following expectations at the university level on things like child safety, appropriate facility usage for minors, and background checks. In light of the Freeh Report, released in 2012, many campuses have reviewed and changed procedures and policies with regards to the safety of minors on campus. In some cases, there may be required professional training seminars, documentation of practices, required criminal background checks of staff, and external review of your child safety procedures and policies.

As it has been less than three years since the Freeh report, it is vitally important to realize that we are still on the cusp of many changes in the area of campus safety and risk management. Continual evaluation and careful research can keep you abreast of these changes and position you to ensure the highest level safety for your campers.

Section Four: Whole Family Experience

Parent orientations can be scheduled before camp starts and parent handbooks can be sent to all parents or posted on websites.

In order to ensure a holistic focus on camper safety and well-being, consider taking the attitude with your camp to view each camper as a family and to have a significant emphasis of transparency with parent interactions. There are a multitude of methods for parents and other caregivers to learn about your camp programs. For example, parent orientations can be scheduled before camp starts and parent handbooks can be sent to all parents or posted on websites. These can function as an opportunity to clearly outline your camp policies and methods on important areas of camp, such as behavior management. Furthermore, as a camp administrator, it is significantly helpful to

be open to different methods of communication with your camp parents, which increases the opportunity for dialogue and transparency.



Camp Programming and Risk Management continued page 6

Transparency is necessary regarding your risk management strategies, which also includes your approach to things like behavior management and camper discipline.

This transparency is necessary regarding your risk management strategies, which also includes your approach to things like behavior management and camper discipline. With this transparency, parents can be included and hopefully be part of the solution to any issues you may have with their children. For example, we utilize an Incident Report for staff to fill out whenever they encounter and manage disciplinary or behavior issues with a camper. Within this report, counselors are required to record in detail, the methods they use to work with the camper. The parent/caregiver, at pick-up, has the opportunity to read through the report, offer feedback, and sign off and acknowledge receipt of report. This example illustrates the depth and importance of incorporating “the whole family” into the camp experience.

It is also important to realize the significance of even the smallest factors of your camp risk management. For example, the process for checking campers in at drop-off and releasing them at pick-up may, on the surface, seem like a fairly simple policy and procedure. Considering the importance of documenting camper arrival and departure as well as ensuring that campers are released to approved individuals, it is necessary to systematically review this procedure as you would with other areas of risk management. Furthermore, education, transparency, and communication of the policy with parents can be helpful on a practical level in ensuring a smooth and comfortable experience for parents while they are around the program.

Conclusion:

Everything in camp management truly has a risk management component!

This article is guided by the concept that camp risk management and safety is found in all areas of camp management. We have highlighted as examples the importance of recruiting and developing staff, reviewing your program foundations, developing and improving activity offerings, conducting external research, and incorporating the whole family into the camp experience. As you plan and prepare for your camp, maintain the focus that even areas that may not directly imply risk management will need to be viewed with a camper safety emphasis. As we have seen, everything in camp management truly has a risk management component!



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Online Risk Assessment: New features!

Do you have the skills and knowledge to conduct an internal Risk Management audit of your department? How well do you stack up compared to other schools – and how will you know?

Why not leave it to the experts?

McGregor & Associates' exclusive 'Online Risk Assessment' provides key benchmark data for your department (relative to over 100 North American universities), and uncovers critical gaps in your risk management plan.

Which programs and administrative areas are addressed?

- 8 individual program surveys: Aquatics; Fitness/Wellness; non-credit Instruction; Intramurals; Outdoor Program; Youth Camps; Sport Clubs; Weight Room (each survey takes 5-10 minutes to complete).
- 6 administrative surveys: Risk Management Plan; Emergency Response Plan; Facilities & Equipment; Rentals & Special Events; Waivers; Travel.

What do you get from McGregor & Associates?

A detailed report which includes:

- Graphic comparisons with other universities of program and administrative scores: your benchmark data!
- Graphic internal comparisons between all program unit scores: highlights program inconsistencies.
- Detailed analysis and breakdown of program and administrative scores: pinpoints vulnerable areas.
- A comprehensive list of recommended (and doable) strategies for immediate action.
- The 'Top Five' priorities identified for your department.

Added bonus! – our new 'Global Risk Assessment'

This new (optional) survey looks at the other key risks your department confronts on a daily basis: Financial Risks; Human Resources Risks; Reputational Risk; Security Risks; Data Risks.

Cost of Online Risk Assessment: \$1250

NIRSA members receive

20% discount

- Cost effective (no need to fly in someone to conduct audit)
- Focus is on 'high-risk' areas ensures audit process is not overwhelming
- Conducted by McGregor & Associates – THE experts in Risk Management.

Don't put it off – act now!

For more information: Go to
<http://www.sportrisk.com/risk-assessment>

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Some Key Camp Resources

Ian McGregor, Ph.D.
President, McGregor & Associates



There is a ton of great resources out there to help you administer safe, successful and fun camps. The following is by no means comprehensive, and represent a selection of key resources recommended by a select group of camps professionals.

What resources do **you** use and recommend? Use the link at the bottom of this article if you'd like to share your favorites.



Organizations and Websites

American Camp Association	www.acacamps.org
High Five	www.highfive.org
ACTUA	www.actua.ca
Ontario Camps Association	www.ontariocampsassociation.ca
Ultimate Camp Resource	www.ultimatecampresource.com

Texts/ Books

'Camp is for the Camper'	www.acacamps.org/einstitute/camp-is-for-camper
'Basic Camp Management'	https://www.acabookstore.org/p-6106-basic-camp-management-an-introduction-to-camp-administration.aspx
Good Kids, Difficult Behavior	www.amazon.ca/Good-Kids-Difficult-Behavior-Doesnt/dp/0965635341

Online Courses

Youth Camps	www.sportrisk.com/online-course/youth-camps
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Videos/ Webinars

Negligence Awareness Training for Camp Staff	www.sportrisk.com/series-a-negligence-liability
Pool Training	www.ktla.com/videobeta/watch/?watch=6ba7268f-98b3-4776-be86-29543c97e0d2&cat=c3d15e20-be56-43b6-b206-de573751f1ac&src=front

Specific Issues

Bullying	www.prevnet.ca www.witsprogram.ca
Conflict Resolution	www.equitas.org/en
Behavior Management	http://ow.ly/LctyB

Blogs

Summer Camp Program Director	http://summercampprogramdirector.com
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CLICK HERE to share your Favorite Youth Camp Resources



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Operating multi-site Camps

The need for consistency

Jeff C. Heiser
Senior Assistant Director, Recreation
UC Davis



These issues are multiplied if you are considering running youth camps at multiple sites across campus or at off-campus sites.

Conduct a serious assessment of the potential new location.

It is critical that you designate point people at each camp location to ensure that your finger is on the pulse.

Introduction

Operating youth camps on campus comes with a number of risk management concerns. There are numerous considerations to address prior to bringing youth on campus including staff recruitment and training, emergency response procedures, facility management, and program quality and routines. These issues are multiplied if you are considering running youth camps at multiple sites across campus or at off-campus sites.

While this would allow you to diversify your program offerings and serve more participants, you have the additional responsibility of ensuring that all program sites are up to the same standard of operation. To ensure that the quality of your program is of the highest level, conduct some initial research and assessment, regardless of the location of your program.

Site Visit

Before taking your camp program “on the road” it is important to conduct a serious assessment of the potential new location. As a director, you should visit the location during times when your program would be operational. When doing so make note of the other users that frequent the site and consider how they would impact your program and how your program would impact their business. The importance of the site visit is to determine how your camp program’s presence would impact the location that you are researching.

Designated Site Person

As the director of a youth program, you cannot be everywhere at once. For this reason it is critical that you designate point people at each camp location to ensure that your finger is on the pulse of each one. These designated point persons should be capable of handling most situations, but you should also establish criteria for when you will be contacted for support (e.g. medical situation, parent complaint). Regular check-ins should be scheduled in advance to discuss how each camp is going at the various sites. These designated point persons are the liaison between you and the parents/guardians, so it is critical that you select qualified staff to represent you and the program well.

Operating multi-site Camps

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Emergency response plans will vary from site to site.

Consult with local parking authorities as they can help determine the best area for check-in.

All program areas should have consistent procedures and routines.

Site Specific Emergency Response

Emergency response plans will vary from site to site. While “remain calm” is pretty universal, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of your new site to manage any potential risk. You will need to familiarize yourself with established emergency response plans in your new sites. This includes knowing the basics of where the nearest emergency exits, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers are located. You should also know the fire evacuation routes and meeting locations for any emergencies. Local EMS and Fire Departments may already have site specific procedures so it is essential to know how they access buildings in emergencies.

Check-in/out

Hopefully you have established a solid check-in and check-out routine at your home base. You will need to recreate this seamless process wherever you take your camp program. This includes exploring where you will hold check-in and check-out, where parents/guardians will park and how they will access the location, and whether or not additional signage is needed. You should consult with local parking authorities as they can help determine the best area for check-in that will maintain the flow of traffic.

Communication

You will need to establish routine communication plans with all staff. How will off-site staff notify home base about issues such as absent campers, forgotten lunches, sick staff members, parent complaints, etc? You’ll want the on-site designated point person to handle many of these situations, but the home base should be aware of them, especially if they become a pattern. Open and routine communication could prevent the same mistakes from happening again, even if it is just a simple fix such as correcting or adjusting the message going out to participants.

Consistency of Procedures

All program areas should have consistent procedures and routines. Regular site visits during key times such as check-in, check-out, lunch and down time will give you an idea if standard procedures are being utilized. A parent should be able to check-in their camper at any location and have a similar experience. Staff should be present at in-service trainings and staff meetings to ensure everyone is receiving the same messages about procedures. You can build in “site specific” meeting times during your all-staff meetings, but common practices should be taught, understood and implemented from one location to the other.

Operating multiple program sites can be a great addition to your program. Being able to offer a variety of new programs and serve more participants can have a positive impact on your program. It is essential to ensure that your quality of programming is consistent regardless of location. This can be achieved by doing some extra research and assessment on the front-end. The bottom line is that your customers are expecting the same level of programming, service, and safety regardless of location.

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Online Courses Spring 2015



Risk Management for Recreation Professionals: May 11 - June 5

<http://www.sportrisk.com/online-course/risk-management-for-recreation-professionals>

Strategic Risk Management: May 11-June 5

<http://www.sportrisk.com/online-course/strategic-risk-management>

Sport Clubs: May 25 - June 26

<http://www.sportrisk.com/online-course/sport-clubs>



Course lasts 4 weeks, with a Class Limit of 16 participants.

To view the Course Outline or to Register, go to: www.sportrisk.com/online-course

Register NOW! *“One of the great advantages of the online format is that you can work at your own speed, in your own time...”*

Best Practices Project Launched!

Ian McGregor, Ph.D.
President, SportRisk

The approach was unique in that the focus was on documenting Recreation Best Practices as opposed to Standards.

Beginning in 2013, a group of senior Canadian recreation professionals initiated a project to develop a series of Best Practices for the Campus Recreation field. The approach was unique in that the focus was on documenting Recreation Best Practices as opposed to Standards.

The motivation for the project arose out of an expressed need by the group (and others) to find out what Best Practices other campuses were implementing - to determine how their own practices measured up (i.e. benchmarking).

The project was successfully launched in the Spring of 2014 to twenty (20) post secondary institutions in Canada.

The following is a summary of the steps involved in the project - from Best Practices survey development to the generation of reports and recommendations.

This article also details the next steps in the project – including a Fall 2015 implementation in the USA.

This article also details the next steps in the project – including a Fall 2015 implementation in the USA.

Development of Best Practices

- A group of Campus Recreation experts developed 17 Best Practices surveys:

Programs:	Intramurals; Instruction; Sport Clubs; Youth Camps; Outdoor Program
Facilities:	Aquatics; Arena; Weight Room; Fitness Studio; Climbing Center; Fields; Facilities-General
Administration:	Risk Management Committee; Emergency Response Plan; Travel; Waivers; Demographics

- Surveys were developed as a series of statements, and each statement received a 'weighting' (from 3 to 1) to reflect its relative importance to other statements.
- Survey respondents were asked if (a) they were currently implementing the practice (b) planning on implementing it, or (c) not planning on implementing it.
- A scoring system was developed (a) to help universities determine where they stand re. Best Practices, and (b) to facilitate benchmarking between Universities.
- A report format was developed to graphically illustrate comparisons between universities, and to provide a series of 'Recommendations for Action'.



Best Practices Project Launched!

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Pilot Project

- Four Canadian Universities participated in a pilot project.
- These 4 schools completed all 16 Best Practices surveys (on SurveyMonkey).
- Based on the results, further refinements were made to the surveys to ensure clarity and consistency.

Project Implementation

In 2014, twenty (20) post-secondary Canadian institutions participated in Phase 1 of the project implementation (an additional 15-20 Canadian schools will participate in Phase 2 in 2015).

Next Steps

In late fall of 2014, a 'NIRSA Steering Committee' was formed to assess the feasibility of expansion into the US market (NIRSA schools). The Steering Committee's task was to:

- Review the existing Best Practices surveys and comment on their applicability and transferability to the US market.
- Review the scoring and weighting system for all Best Practices statements.
- Suggest additional statements to be added to the surveys.

As a result of this review by the Steering Committee, strong support was expressed to expand the 'Best Practices Project' into the NIRSA market.

Next steps include:

- Implement a Spring 2015 pilot project at 3 US schools (Alabama; Colorado State; Georgia South).
- Launch the project to US schools in Fall 2015.
- Expand the content of the final report to include features like comparison between institutions by state, institutions of similar size etc..

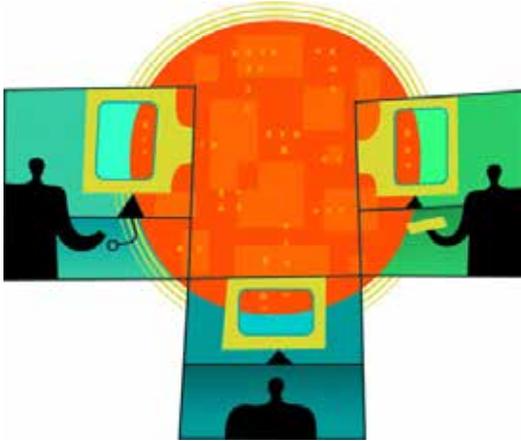


In late fall of 2014, a 'NIRSA Steering Committee' was formed to assess the feasibility of expansion into the US market (NIRSA schools).

Stay tuned! The next issue of this Newsletter (September 2015) will provide details on how schools can subscribe to the Best Practices project.

2014/15 SportRisk Webinar Training Series

Staff training is of critical importance to a successful Campus Recreation operation!



In conjunction with NIRSA, McGregor & Associates have developed 28 Webinars (9 NEW!) designed to complement your fall/winter training programs. These Webinars are strategically organized into 7 unique Series:

(A) Negligence & Liability (B) Risk Management (C) Sport Clubs (D) Travel (E) Emergency Response (F) Waivers (G) General

All Webinars are \$50, and there is One FREE Webinar (see Series G #4)

Special 'NIRSA-only' deal – purchase all 28 Webinars for \$675 (a 50% saving)!

General Information

All Webinars	Accessible at any time, on any computer, for whole academic year (Sept 1, 2014 – Aug 31, 2015)
Delivered by	Content experts - saving staff time in preparing and delivering training material.
Webinar length	Typically 15-30 minutes.
Target Audience	All Campus Recreation staff <i>(Note: All 'Negligence Awareness Training' Webinars focuses on student staff)</i>
Pricing	All Webinars are \$50 (except the Freebee!)

WEBINAR TRAINING MODULES

Series A: Negligence & Liability Series

1. Understanding Negligence
2. Negligence Awareness Training for (part-time) Intramurals Staff
3. Negligence Awareness Training for (part-time) Summer Camps Staff
4. Negligence Awareness Training for (part-time) Weight Room Staff (tracking option included!)

Series B: Risk Management Series

1. Risk Management Committee

2. Determining Risk Profiles of programs and facilities
3. Nuts & Bolts of Risk Management Planning

Series C: Sport Clubs Series

1. Budgeting
2. Transitioning
3. Classification Systems
4. Sport Clubs Council
5. Sport Clubs Officer Leadership and Training
6. Concussion Management
7. Hazing
8. Safety Officer Training
9. Negligence Awareness Training for Sport Clubs Officers

Series D: Travel Series

1. Travel: The Basics (for all staff responsible for travel)
2. Travel Planning Tools using 'Google Docs' (for all staff responsible for travel)

Series E: Emergency Response Planning Series

1. Emergency Action Plan – Putting it Together
2. Emergency Action Plan – Training, Rehearsals & Drills
3. EAP Best Practices
4. Emergency Response Plan: Student Training

Series F: Waivers

1. Waivers Simplified
2. Waivers 101 (more detailed)

Series G: General

1. Medical Screening Simplified
2. Event Planning Simplified
3. Climbing Wall Safety
4. Using Google Docs in Recreation (FREE)

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For more information and to order: go to www.sportrisk.com/NIRSAwebinars

Communication with Parents **before Camps Start**

Getting Off on the Right Foot

Shannon Vaccaro

Assistant Director of Sport Clubs & Youth Activities
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

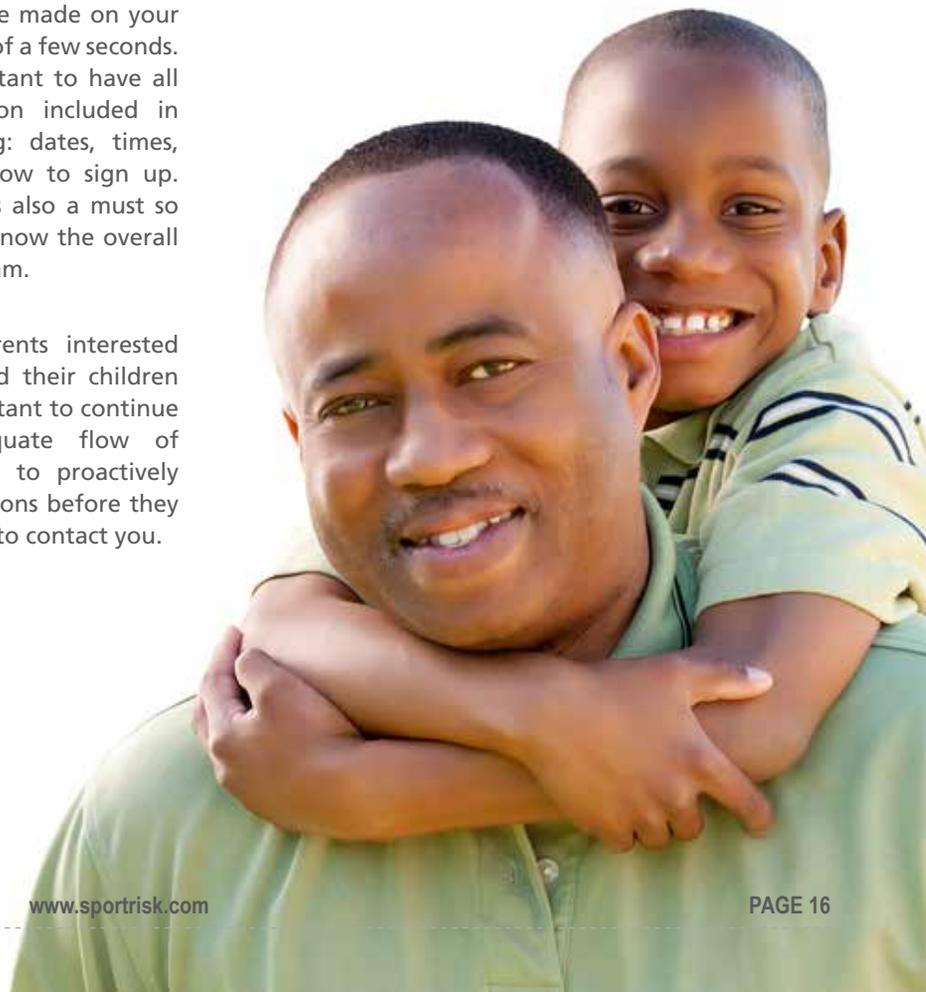
Relationships built with parents can set the tone for your entire summer camp experience.

It is important to continue providing an adequate flow of information and try to proactively answer parent questions.

Creating a solid foundation for parent communication is a priority task that should be accomplished prior to your program starting date. Relationships built with parents can set the tone for your entire summer camp experience, making any advance work done in this area well worth the time.

The first communication aimed at parents is the initial marketing piece designed to attract participants (in reality – parents!) to your program. Examples of those first messages might be an ad in the local paper, a poster or flyer at a local business, an ad placed in a school newspaper, any type of publication your program distributes such as a brochure, or your website with your camp information (to be found after a quick Google search). This initial piece of information is what will grab the parents' attention and a decision will be made on your program in a matter of a few seconds. It is therefore important to have all the basic information included in this media including: dates, times, location, cost and how to sign up. A brief description is also a must so that parents get to know the overall theme of your program.

Once you have parents interested in your program and their children signed up, it is important to continue providing an adequate flow of information and try to proactively answer parent questions before they have an opportunity to contact you.



Communication with Parents before Camps Start

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Consider designing a newsletter that can be sent out prior to the camp week about to start.

A great communication piece can be the creation of a Parent Survival Guide; a comprehensive information tool that has all the rules, policies, camper and parent expectations in one easy-to-manuever pamphlet. A few examples of topics to include are parent open house tours, materials needing to be returned (such as a waivers, check-out information and medical information), what to bring every day, what NOT to bring every day, how to communicate with camp, fee structures, deadlines and refunds, cancellation policies, medical information and check-in/check-out policies, disciplinary actions, - just to name a few! By giving parents this information prior to the program starting, you can always refer back to it if questions arise or you receive a "I didn't know that was the policy!" statement. Having expectations clearly laid out in print can minimize parents constantly bugging you for details – and help deter those trying to circumvent the system.

A follow-up survey can also be an opportunity to receive information on where your program might need some tweaking.

On a week-by-week basis, you might consider designing a newsletter that can be sent out prior to the camp week about to start, to give parents an idea of the activities coming up. By giving parents information about field trips, special events, swim times or other activities during the week, they can plan schedules accordingly. Today's children are more actively involved in camps than ever, and many parents rely on having a meticulously planned schedule to ensure maximum involvement and still enable themselves to run an efficient household. Assisting in the planning process for parents can help build a positive image for your program and aid decisions to re-enroll in future years.

A final piece of parent communication can be a follow-up survey asking parents and participants to give feedback on your programs. It is important to work carefully in the design of this piece of communication so that you receive information that will actually benefit your program, such as, "How did you hear about us?" This gives you, the programmer, an idea where to place your marketing efforts.

A follow-up survey can also be an opportunity to receive information on where your program might need some tweaking.

All in all, parent communication is a vital component of a successful camp program. Much of the communication that occurs is not directly with parents, but done in an indirect manner through written media. Putting in some valuable communication planning time and effort prior to program commencement can help you get started on the right foot!

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Should Your Organization Get on the Selfie Stick Ban Wagon?

By Katharine M. Nohr, J.D.
Nohr Sports Risk Management, LLC

Does your organization have a policy regarding Selfie Sticks, GoPro Equipment and other electronic devices? If you don't, it may be time to evaluate whether to join in on the ban. The Lollapalooza Festival just announced that it will ban selfie sticks, GoPro attachments, monopods and other heavy professional camera equipment at its 2015 summer event, because such items could pose safety hazards. Other public entities have also banned selfie sticks, including The Art Institute of Chicago, the Seattle Art Museum, New York's Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian museums, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, Musee d'Orsay in Paris, The Palace of Versailles, and Rome's Coliseum.



Museums are particularly concerned with the long metal rods harming the art work, but there is also a concern that long sticks will hit other attendees, causing injury. There's also the concern that when people are focusing on capturing the perfect shot, using the selfie stick or "wand of narcissism", they become oblivious to their surroundings and may fall or trip. This is of concern at athletic venues where attendees can be hit by baseballs or fall from bleachers. Of course, it's not just selfie sticks and other photographic equipment that are banned. Sporting events tend to ban outside food and drink, skateboards, scooters, pets, and backpacks along with other potentially harmful items.



Should Your Organization Get on the Selfie Stick Ban Wagon?

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The 2015 Australian Open was the first grand slam tennis event to ban courtside use of selfie sticks, but created special “selfie-zones” where the stick could be used during the competition. Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspure of England’s top soccer league have banned selfie sticks from their stadiums on match days, because of their concern that the sticks can be used as weapons and compromise public safety. The sticks are also banned at Wembley Arena, the 12,500 seat North London indoor music arena and The O2, the UK’s stadium, which was used as a venue in the 2012 London Olympic Games. Soccer stadiums in Brazil have also banned the devices because of their potential to be used as weapons. It’s also likely that they will be on the list of banned items at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games.

Canadian Wayne Fromm invented the selfie stick, which was patented in 2005. It’s become popular as a tool for taking better images of a group or oneself to post on Facebook, Twitter and other social media websites. Their heavy use in South Korea caused the

government to rule that the devices with Bluetooth technology had to be certified. Anyone violating this law can be heavily fined and jailed for up to three years. The bans are spreading across the world as event organizers recognize the potential for harm. Consider evaluating your organization’s policy on selfie sticks and other equipment that could be used as weapons, cause distraction, harm other people or otherwise create a hazard. If you decide to add selfie sticks to your list of prohibited items, this rule should be communicated to attendees and consistently enforced.



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Check out our new blog www.sportrisk.com/blog – and get involved in the discussion!!

Got something to say - or an idea to share?

Across N. America, recreation professionals are finding creative ways to implement unique solutions to a number of challenging risk management issues. Many of their ideas have already appeared in this Newsletter.

Earn CEU/PIC credits for writing an article!

Are you willing to share your ideas? You may believe what you're doing is not of interest to others. **WRONG!** Professionals are always on the lookout for new/ different/ unique ways of doing things:

- Staff training programs
- Emergency Response Planning strategies
- In-service training ideas
- Participant medical screening strategies
- Online training courses
- Risk Management Committee operational guidelines
- etc. etc.

Share your ideas – by writing an article for the 'Risk Management Newsletter for Campus Recreation'!

This is not a 'refereed' publication. The focus of the Newsletter is simply the communication of ideas, procedures and programs that work.

If you'd like to explore this, or receive the 'Guidelines for Authors', contact Ian McGregor at mcgregor@sportrisk.com

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Risk Management Newsletter for Campus Recreation

Our goal is to provide timely information and practical resources to assist Campus Recreation professionals manage the risk of injury to participants.



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Talk to Us!

Tell us about ... Your Best Practices (practical, hands-on policies/ procedures/ training programs that really work for you)

Your 'sweaty-palm' issue (what keeps you awake at night). Ask for our feedback!

Your interest in contributing to the 'Risk Management Newsletter' by writing an article for an upcoming issue.

Contact us at mcmgregor@sportrisk.com

Next Issue Sept. 2015

Featured Topic: 'Sport Club Coaches'

Topics include:

- Minors on Campus
- More on Waivers
- Sport Clubs
- Risk Assessment
- Online Learning Opportunities

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