



Summer Safety Manual

Summer is about to arrive and with it comes many fun and exciting things. Unfortunately, it can also bring anxiety and fear to many parents who worry about the safety of their children in a more unstructured or unsupervised environment. Each year children head off to sleep away camp, attend day camp, and move to summer homes or bungalow colonies. Most children have positive and wonderful experiences; however, it is your job to constantly be vigilant to ensure your child's safety.

Sexual abuse is a sensitive, painful topic and can be very frightening but it doesn't have to be. Take the time to discuss this crucial topic with your child. As parents, we have a responsibility to overcome our resistance in talking about abuse. You will be giving your child the tools he/she needs to stay safe.

HOW DO YOU EDUCATE YOUR CHILD ABOUT THEIR BODY?

- Explain to your child that the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit are private and NO ONE (not even a family member) should be touching them, looking at them, or playing a game involving those parts (unless that person has a legitimate reason i.e. a pediatrician).
- When talking to your child, use the actual names of the body parts because it helps the child should they ever have to report abuse.
- If you are uncomfortable and unsure how to begin this discussion, your pediatrician is an excellent resource. Have them instruct your child that any unwanted approach/touch/threat should be dealt with by running away and yelling for help. Use the pediatrician's talk to help you open up the conversation on this topic.

HOW DO YOU ENSURE YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY IN THE CAMP YOU CHOOSE?

No camp is immune to sexual abuse. It is your job to make sure that the camp your child attends has policies and procedures in place to minimize the risk of sexual abuse. You have the right and obligation to ask questions. Do not be intimidated or ignored. These questions should be directed to the administrating staff such as the camp director and/or head counselor.

Some questions to ask:

- Has the camp had any previous problems, complaints, or lawsuits filed against them? Is the camp accredited or licensed?
- How is a staff member hired?
Are there screening procedures or background checks? Do they ask for and check references? Are there clear behavioral guidelines that need to be signed by each counselor and staff member?
- What type of training do staff members receive regarding recognizing, preventing, and reporting child sexual abuse?
- How are campers made aware of what to do if they feel unsafe? Who can they talk to?
- Under what circumstances are staff members allowed to be alone with a camper? The answer should be NONE.
- Are at least two adult counselors assigned to sleep in each bunk?
- Is the camp aware and able to monitor the behavior and interaction of older children with their younger peers?
- What is the policy if a staff member is thought to have done/ been accused of harmful behavior?
- What is the policy if another child is thought to have done/ been accused of harmful behavior?

HOW CAN YOU RECOGNIZE POTENTIAL ABUSERS?

Although there is no official definition of an abuser, below are some guidelines to look out for:

- Whenever someone seems overly interested in your child, take notice. Most people in the world are good and mean well, however sexual predators are masters at “grooming” their victims by insinuating themselves into their victim’s life and becoming someone the child likes and trusts. Camps routinely forbid their counselors to babysit or spend time with campers outside the confines of camp for precisely this reason. Make sure your child’s camp understands this danger and is willing to enforce this rule.
- Shockingly, almost a third of sexually abused children are victimized by an older child. Child to child abuse is the fastest growing form of abuse. This is why it’s important to know what the camp policies are regarding how much contact is permitted between different age groups and how well supervised the groups are.
- Make sure that no adult is ever allowed to be alone with your child. The only way abusers can do what they do is by having uninterrupted, private access to a child.

HOW CAN I GIVE MY CHILD THE TOOLS FOR SAFETY?

- Tell your child the “No, Run, Tell” rule. They have the right to scream no, then run and tell someone. Encourage your child to keep seeking help until they feel they are safe and being heard.
- Reinforce “running and screaming” and any other material / skill taught in a curriculum (e.g. if your child had a program in school, review and practice what was learned).

Role play various scenarios using puppets, stuffed animals, toys and book (e.g. “pretend I want to give you a kiss and you don’t want one...Remember to look at me, stand tall, and use a strong voice”).

- Every child molester will ask their victims to keep the abuse a secret between the two of them. Teach your child that it is never okay for someone to tell them to keep a secret. Explain the difference between a secret and a surprise. A surprise has an expiration date where the surprise is publicized. A secret is for no one to share or ever know.
- Be clear with your child that no matter what an adult or another child tells them regarding abuse (threatening words, no one will believe you, you liked it, etc.) they will NEVER get into trouble for reporting. Emphasize that this does not constitute Loshon Hora or any other Aveirah and that it is in fact a mitzvah to report such matters.
- Do not ever force your child to hug, kiss, or talk to any adult when they don't want to. Respect their choice and feelings of discomfort. By doing so you encourage them to refuse to be victimized. It is not chutzpah to say "no" regarding their bodies, even to grownups.
- Teach your child that adults/older kids DO NOT need help changing, using the bathroom, or with their private parts.
- Adolescents should learn about: the concept of Yichud, unwilling exposure to pornography (a common theme amongst sexual predators), and letting adults know about situations in which they see or experience something questionable or inappropriate.

HOW CAN I EMPOWER MYSELF AS A PARENT?

- It is important to remember to stay calm. When sexual abuse is addressed properly, children can heal and lead healthy, productive, and happy lives after abuse.
- Trust your instincts and act on them. Be aware of red flags such as children having very strong feelings toward or against any casual adult in their lives.
- Don't cave in to fear tactics (e.g., threats of ruining shidduchim, community alienation, and rejection by yeshivas, etc.). Not addressing sexual abuse properly is much more detrimental to life than addressing it.

WHAT ARE OTHER WAYS TO KEEP MY CHILD SAFE THIS SUMMER?

- When riding bicycles, scooters, skateboards or rollerblades, your child should ALWAYS wear a helmet. According to the *Insurance Institute for Highway Safety*, helmet use has been estimated to reduce head injury risk by 85 percent. Model responsible behavior for your child by never riding without a helmet yourself. Make this a nonnegotiable rule.
- Many wonderful childhood memories have been made while sitting around a campfire on a summer evening. Make sure to discuss safety and responsibility while near an open flame so this experience does not turn deadly. There should be no roughhousing, running or pushing near a fire. It is a good idea to model for your child what you consider a safe distance to be maintained at all times. It is important to reiterate time and time again to NEVER wander away from the group whether it is alone, with an adult or another child. This is a perfect opportunity for a predator to take advantage of your child's trust in an unsupervised atmosphere.
- Make applying sunscreen part of your child's morning routine. Excessive exposure to direct sunlight can result in sunburn. According to the *Skin Cancer Foundation*, skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States despite it being so preventable. Teach your child sun protection methods such as wearing hats, sunglasses, long clothing, seeking shade and of course applying sunscreen.
- Teach your child to swim! This skill cannot be taught too early. Babies can learn techniques to keep their faces above water until help arrives (*Infant Swim Self Rescue Program*). Children of all ages should feel comfortable in the water. That being said, no child should ever be unsupervised near a body of water. Whether you are at the pool, beach, or lake a supervising adult MUST be present at all times.
- Have a plan if your child gets separated from you in a public area. Role play different scenarios with your child so in the event of an actual emergency he/she does not panic and is able to follow the set plan. It is important to note that your child should seek help from a woman with children (even a non-Jew) before asking for help from a male. Statistics have proven this to be the safer option.

- Discuss with your child what to do if they arrive home/to the bungalow and no one is there. No child should be home unattended. The plan could include going to a neighbor (who is aware of this plan and is usually available around that time frame) or locking the door and calling you or a designated family member. Think about what works best for your family and is the safest option. Please don't get complacent and pretend that it's okay since your child has been home alone before. It only takes one time for a predator to take advantage of such a situation and destroy a child.

WHAT DO I DO IF I NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For any information, help, or questions, please contact your local Magenu office.

Mental health professionals on our team will guide you every step of the way.

Magenu Brooklyn
 2294 Nostrand Avenue
 Brooklyn, NY 11210
 718-408-SAFE (7233)

FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE:

❖ Beth Israel Victims Services	212-420-4516
❖ Binyamin Tepfer, PhD,	516-426-5415
❖ Chaya Mermerstein, LCSW	212-420-4442
❖ Cheryl Friedman, LCSW	212-420-2883
❖ Eli Perlman, LMSW	347-729-4735
❖ Faye Wilbur, LCSW	718-435-5700 x: 209
❖ Relief Resources	718-431-9501
❖ Tzvi Gersten, LCSW	917-648-6415
❖ Shloimie Zimmerman, PsyD	718-338-4477
❖ Sovri Hotline	888-613-1613
❖ Takanot, Mount Sinai	212-423-2147

REFERENCES:

- Debbie Fox, LCSW
- Shloimie Zimmerman, Psy.D.
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- www.stopitnow.org
- <http://www.momsteam.com/health-safety/preventing-sexual-abuse-at-summer-camp-five-tips-for-parents>
- The ABC's of Camp Safety- Aleinu Family Resource Center.



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