

V. Additional Support

Part of your training should include helping staff recognize when they're "in over their head" or when they are trying to manage a situation beyond their training and should seek additional help. Below is the excerpt from YMCA Camp Widjiwagan's staff manual that address this topic. Please take the time to develop your own so you and your staff have the same understanding of when they should pull in additional help. Remember, Widjiwagan's staff manual look through the unique lens of our program so it might not meet the needs of your own program!

For staff training:

- Have staff role play talking with a camper about why they are going to pull in another person or why additional steps need to be taken to address a behavior/mental health concern.

Excerpt from Widjiwagan's staff manual:

Behavior and Mental Health

Emergencies which deal with behavior and/or mental health concerns that pose a threat to self or others should be treated as any other emergency. It is our priority to act in a way that safeguards the wellbeing (physical, mental, and emotional) of our participants. Contact Camp if the wellbeing of someone is at risk and cannot be managed in the field. You should also contact the appropriate authorities when necessary (i.e. you cannot reach Camp or determine that more immediate action needs to be taken).

Below are guidelines for how to approach mental health and/or behavior concerns in the field or at Widji. These situations come with a lot of grey area and there is hardly every one right answer. Trail staff should be prepared for the discomfort that comes with having to make a decision and not be certain that it is the correct or best option. In order to address this uncertainty, there are some "baseline" questions you can ask yourself to help you make a decision and identify when you should seek additional resources. If you call Camp, approach the conversation as you would with an injury or illness. Be prepared to describe the situation, the steps you have taken so far, and what you need from Camp.

Baselines

Ask yourself the following questions. If you answer "yes" to any of them, call Camp or seek additional resources.

- *Is the situation causing a camper to not eat or sleep?*
- *Are there signs of self-harm?*
- *Is the behavior disruptive or destructive?*
- *If a behavior is disruptive, work with the camper to set expectations and continue to coach them and provide feedback. If the behavior is destructive to self or others, seek additional help or call Camp.*
- *Is the behavior or mental health concern beyond your ability to manage in the field?*
- *Do the negative impacts of the behavior/mental health concern on the trip outweigh the benefit to the camper being in the field?*
- *Has the camper expressed suicidal ideations, thoughts, or behaviors?*
- *Is a significant risk present?*
- *Is anyone at significant risk?*

Thank you for joining the conversation! Please reach out if you have any questions!

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