

Why Is It Important?

The Texas Department of State Health Services, which is the licensing agent for public camps, is now requiring new criteria for camp workers. This new law requires any adult who has contact with children at camp to be screened for criminal and sex offender records. In addition, the adults are also required to take a one hour training course and pass a test regarding child protection and reducing the risk of child abuse and molestation. This new law applies to all state licensed youth camps, and is meant for the safety and protection of the children. You may view these requirements at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/youthcamp/default.shtm>.

Statistics show that many child molesters are known and trusted by their victims. Many molesters seek out situations and atmospheres where they are trusted and accepted by those around them, such as the local church. They could even disguise themselves as the ideal children or youth worker in churches or other similar organizations. Although our camp has been fortunate to have no such incident reported to date, we must be aware of how molesters work and do everything within our power to protect the children that God has entrusted to us.

The best way to deter abuse from happening at our camps is to develop an environment that puts the offender, rather than the child, at risk. An adequate screening process, proper supervision and accountability will discourage this type of offender.

The one hour training course that will be given informs all the adults of the effects of child abuse, the methods of operation of child molesters, the signs and symptoms of abuse to watch for and the proper method for reporting abuse. The course also focuses on ways for adults to guard against any situation that could put themselves at risk for accusation.

Camp Copass will gladly comply with these state regulations in order to serve the children in our care. We have a responsibility not only to the children, but to the parents and churches we serve to provide a safe and secure environment to learn about God's eternal love.

Requirements

According to Texas State Law, all adult counselors/sponsors that have any direct contact with underage individuals at a camp must have...

- 1. A criminal background check performed prior to contact with underage campers.**
- 2. A sex offender background check performed prior to contact with underage campers.**
- 3. Attend and participate in a one hour child abuse and sexual abuse prevention and recognition class and pass a written exam prior to contact with underage campers.**
- 4. Proof of criminal and sex offender background checks, along with proof of satisfactory completion of prevention/recognition class, must be provided in the camp office for duration of the event.**

Child abuse or Sexual abuse, real or alleged, must be reported to proper authorities.

This is how you can accomplish these requirements:

1. A criminal/sex offender background check may be performed anytime online at <https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/> for a nominal charge. It is the sponsoring church's responsibility to perform these checks and submit the names of those counselors on a church letterhead signed by the church pastor.
2. Access the CPT curriculum & materials at: <http://www.campcopass.com/child%20training%20curriculum.php>. If you have any questions, please contact the Program Director at 940-565-0050 or programdirector@campcopass.com.
3. Criminal and sex offender background checks, along with proof of completion of child abuse and sexual abuse prevention/recognition class, must be submitted at camp registration.

