

## **OVER THE WALL**



# **MISSING CAMPER** **POLICY & PROCEDURES**

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

**Over The Wall recognises the potential for campers going missing whilst in our care and the potential danger they could be in should this occur.**

**We will take all preventative measures to minimise such an occurrence and will act swiftly and decisively when a camper is reported missing to help ensure they are found safe and well.**

Policy Date: June 2016  
By: Mark Dwyer - Camp Director  
Status: Live  
Originally adopted: 2014  
Next review: October 2017

## **1. Policy Statement**

Over The Wall recognises the potential for campers going missing whilst in our care and the potential danger they could be in should this occur. This policy outlines the preventative measures we take to minimise that risk and the direct actions we will apply in the event of such an incident.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Campers and Critical Incident Management policies and procedures.

To achieve the highest level of safety and wellbeing for our campers we work closely with the facility managers where we operate our Camp programmes.

## **2. Staff duties**

Staff and volunteers will comply fully with our Safeguarding Campers policy, practices and procedures as the basis for protecting the safety and well-being of our campers.

## **3. Communication**

OTW staff and volunteers will be briefed on this policy and its procedures at each camp location. There will be one exercise at each camp to test our response and this will be recorded in the Camp Incident Log.

In the event of a missing camper occurrence falling within the definition of a 'critical incident' the procedures as outlined in the Critical Incident Management policy and procedures will be followed.

## **4. Minimising Risk**

The proactive measures outlined in Appendix A describe the measures we put in place to minimise the risk of campers going missing.

## 5. Procedures

When a camper is found to be missing, the following procedures will be applied and, where appropriate, adapted according to each camp's layout -

- The person identifying the occurrence should contact a member of the OTW Staff Team immediately
- Ascertain where the camper was last seen and quickly retrace the steps of the camper and the group
- Immediate liaison with Beach Patrol to ascertain any potential clinical issues
- If the camper is not found at this stage the Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director will call "the green folder has gone missing" over the radio.
- The Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director will notify the site facilities team.
- Team Leaders will switch to radio channel two and be advised of the identity of the missing camper so they can immediately check the area where they are located.
- Each Team leader will be asked to allocate volunteers from their group who will receive instruction and form the Search Team.
- The missing camper's Team Leader will discretely ascertain from the Team if there had been any indication of where the missing camper may have gone.
- Remaining volunteers will continue activities, where appropriate and safe to do so, and keep campers engaged.
- The Search Team, where possible, will be issued with radios, a torch and sitemaps and will be assigned actions by the Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director which will include the following immediate tasks
  - two members will be despatched to each pre-identified area of risk with specific instructions. Facilities staff will lead and coordinate the search at any waterfront location.
  - two members will be sent in a vehicle to check the immediate and pre-identified road routes.

- two members will, if appropriate, be sent to where the missing camper was last seen and will wait there.
  - two members of the Search team will carry out a search of the camper's room, adjoining rooms and toilets.
  - the remaining search team, and those returning from allocated tasks, will carry out a systematic search as allocated by the Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director.
- *Important notes for searchers -*
- Stay calm so as not to upset or scare the other campers
  - When searching look up, down, in, behind, and under (360 open door search).
  - Ensure you are clear and precise with communications on the radio
  - Make sure you do not put yourself in any position of risk when searching which could itself become an incident.
- A member of the OTW Staff Team will act as a Log Keeper and will record the names of the volunteer pairs, the time and the area they are assigned and all information being relayed about the incident.
  - Once an area is searched thoroughly, the Search Team members will return to the Camp Office to await further instructions.
  - Communications for the incident will be managed on a dedicated radio channel in order that messages can be relayed without the remaining campers being aware at this juncture.
  - If the missing camper is found the person who finds him/her should call "the green folder has been found" over the radio making sure to indicate their location. All Search Teams will return to the Camp Office or elsewhere as directed. The Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director and the Med Team Leader will make their way to the location to provide support as necessary
  - If the missing camper has not been located after the initial searches have been carried out, as outlined above, the police will be contacted for their direct involvement.

- Photographs of the missing camper should be printed off and made available for the Police prior to their arrival.
- Enquiry should also be made to ascertain if the missing camper has access to any mobile phone and if so the number and provider should be obtained and passed to the Police.
- At any point before this if there is any suspicious element to the incident the police must be notified immediately.

**AS SOON AS THE POLICE ARE NOTIFIED THIS OCCURRENCE BECOMES A CRITICAL INCIDENT AND THE PROCEDURES OUTLINED IN THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY SHOULD BE FOLLOWED.**

**At this juncture, every effort will be made to keep the missing camper's family informed. In the first conversation they should be asked for details of any telephony the missing child may have that the camp team are not aware of, including the make, model and provider. This will confirm/assist GPS search capability.**

## **6. Post Search**

The Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director will work closely with the camper and the camper's team to identify the root cause of the camper leaving the group. The camper will be given the support and time they need to explain what led to this situation. The Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director will decide what further action is required.

The Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director will contact the campers parents/guardians to inform them of the situation and any further actions that might be required.

## **7. Recording Missing Camper Incidents**

All missing camper related incidents, including practice drills, will be recorded in the Incident Log for that particular session.

In the event of a critical incident a detailed log should be maintained as described in the Critical Incident Management policy and procedures.

## **8. Responsibility and Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually for currency and accuracy by the Camp Director or individual delegated by him/her. This does not preclude any changes taking place at any other time due to changes in practice or legislation.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **STEPS TAKEN TO MINIMISE RISK**

#### **Camper Application Forms and Screening**

The application form for those wishing to attend camp is comprehensive and seeks to actively identify any psychosocial or behavioural issues which may impact on a child or young person's ability to participate within the camp environment. This includes, but is not restricted to, the identification of known disorders or diagnoses which may impact upon a child or young person's well-being and safety whilst at camp.

OTW clinical and operations staff examine all applications and make contact with parents or health and social care professionals to clarify and discuss any psychosocial or behavioural issues being experienced by a child or young person. One outcome from this is that we can identify children and young people who may be at risk and unsuited to the services we provide.

#### **Pre Camp Information**

Successful applicants receive an information pack prior to attending their allocated Camp session. The information pack contains important details that aim to set the child or young person up for a positive and successful experience at Camp. Parents/guardians are asked to review the 'Camp Rules', 'Behavioural Challenges', and 'Safeguarding Guidelines' with their child so they are aware of expectations and responsibilities while at Camp.

#### **Camper reception**

A photograph of each child will be taken upon arrival at each camp and retained by the staff team. This can and should be made available to searchers.

## **Staff and Volunteer Training**

All staff and volunteers are provided with training on a range of issues including the procedures outlined in this policy and our Safeguarding Campers Policy and Procedures.

Knowledge is checked and verified rather than being assumed.

## **Team Rules**

When campers arrive at camp they are placed in teams based on age and gender. On opening night the whole Camp group gets together for a welcome and introduction to the Camp session. During this time, OTW's Camp Rules are reiterated to the whole group. One of the first activities carried out by individual teams is for them to sit down with their Team Leader and Teammates and identify their (the camper's) 'Team Rules'.

Team Rules are written down and are the camper's definition of what is and is not acceptable behaviour whilst they are at camp.

## **Camper Supervision and Two Adult Policy**

OTW operate a staff and volunteer to camper ratio of at least 1:1 and make it clear in training and practices that volunteers accompany campers at all times. In any situation where a camper may have to be on their own away from other campers there will be at least two adult volunteers and/or staff present. In this way, OTW provides safeguards for volunteers, staff and campers ensuring our volunteers and staff are always on hand to identify any developing or escalating problem.

Staff and volunteers carry two way radios to enable quick and efficient communications, particularly in emergency situations.

Team Leaders and Team Mates are responsible for carrying out routine 'nose counts' to ensure each member of their team is present. Important times for this are -

- During activities
- Transitions from one activity to another
- Meal times
- Med Shed visit transitions
- Once programming has finished at the end of the day

## **Pre Camp Site Visits**

The Camp Director will visit each camp location in advance of camp taking place and in conjunction with the site facilities manager will identify risk areas in the

immediate vicinity including water hazards, steep gullies, nearby building works etc. These will be recorded by the Camp Director in the Site Health and Safety Assessment.

### **General Awareness & Reporting**

Staff, volunteers and campers are briefed and made aware of the need to be constantly aware of any unusual interest from, or presence on site by, persons not associated with the camp.

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to politely enquire with such individuals who they are and what they are doing and report anything suspicious to the Camp Director/Assistant Camp Director who in turn will actively consider the need to alert the police.

### **Daily Meetings**

There are a number of daily meetings held during Camp sessions to ensure any information regarding behavioural, medical or safeguarding issues is available to relevant staff and volunteers. Issues are recorded, monitored and addressed accordingly.