

# **Mt. Palomar Bible Camp Camp Volunteer Training Packet**

**San Diego Christian Foundation**

# Introduction

This manual is intended to cover the basic procedures, rules, and policies that you may deal with at Mt. Palomar Bible Camp on a daily basis. It is also intended to give you an understanding of what is expected of you as a Camp Counselor/Volunteer, as well as the conditions and provisions of your involvement and performance and discipline standards. This packet should give an account of the policies that you will need to know, however, any questions that are not answered here can be asked by contacting your Camp Director or the Executive Director.

## **Mt. Palomar Bible Camp**

The San Diego Christian Foundation's Mt. Palomar Bible Camp has provided a life-changing spiritual experience for young people throughout San Diego County for over three decades. Each summer, young lives draw closer to Christ through the weeklong elementary (youth), middle, and high school camps. Free from the many distractions and obligations of their day-to-day lives, the campers grow in their knowledge of God's Word; establish friendships with other Christian young people; and many commit to follow Christ for the rest of their lives through baptism. Camp also provides an opportunity for those who are new to the church to learn more about the wonders of God. The connections that the campers build with each other and with Christ are long lasting and influence their lives in incredible ways for years to come. Further, the spiritual seeds planted during this experience help to grow and strengthen the body of Christ in San Diego County and beyond.

In addition to the incredible spiritual experience that it provides, one of the most amazing aspects of Mt. Palomar Bible Camp is the fact that volunteers primarily operate it. The individuals who serve as directors, nurses, counselors, and staff sacrifice their personal time because they recognize the importance of camp. Further, although the volunteers go to camp to serve and not to be filled (we ask that the volunteers are strong and stable in their walk with God before considering the opportunity), they leave with a sense of renewal and reconnection with the Lord. The spiritual atmosphere of Mt. Palomar Bible Camp is undeniable and provides a unique service opportunity.

Mt. Palomar Bible Camp is located 38 miles east of Oceanside off Highway 76 atop beautiful Mt. Palomar at the Palomar Christian Conference Center (PCCC; [www.pccc.org](http://www.pccc.org)). The surrounding pine trees and breathtaking views from the PCCC are testament to the beauty of God's creation. In addition, the PCCC provides the perfect venue for spiritual activities, like fireside worship, devotionals, and prayer walks, as well as recreational activities such as basketball, softball, swimming, and hikes.

# Guidelines for being a Camp Counselor

- 1) Complete the Counselor Application forms and turn them into your camp's Director(s) or to the address listed on the form. The Executive Director must approve your application prior to your coming to camp.
- 2) The age requirements for each camp are as follows:
  - a) Elementary Camp: Must be a Senior High student and/or older
  - b) Jr High Camp: Must be graduated from High School, College age or older.
  - c) High School Camp: Must be going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of College.

## **Mentoring Program**

We are blessed to have so many young people interested in the spiritual lives of our youth that we wanted to have a program in place to help “grow our own” and nourish them so they will be successful in their counseling careers. If you do not meet the age requirements as listed above but have a hearts desire to be a counselor, you can apply to be a mentee at camp. You will need to find an approved counselor who is willing to mentor you during the week at camp. This person will be responsible for you, your actions and guiding you in how to be the best counselor you can be.

# Role of a Camp Counselor/Volunteer

*“So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” (Lk 5:16 NKJV).*

Jesus often fled the familiar people and places around him as he longed for a closer connection with God. Several times in Scripture God used the wilderness to create a solitary place for Jesus. A time to restore, prepare and empower Jesus' body, mind and spirit for ministry. There were also times that Jesus withdrew with his closest followers. The reason was the same: to find a place where he and others could draw strength from God.

For over forty years, the Churches of Christ and the San Diego Christian Foundation have worked to provide young students the opportunity to retreat from the noise and distractions of daily life to draw close to God. As counselors and staff, it is our privilege to help with His mission. In serving young men and women by teaching, nurturing, and, sometimes fighting for souls, we help campers get to a “place” where God can do some of his best work.

## Service to Campers

- 1) **Be fervent in your prayers.**
  - a) Please find time before camp to reflect on the camp's mission and the week's theme.
  - b) Meditate on what you hope God will illuminate and ignite in the campers (Eph. 1:18-19).
  - c) Ask God to give you awareness, boldness, patience, strength, and endurance during the week of camp (2 Tim. 1:7).
- 2) **Be a spiritual compass and guide at camp (1 Tim. 4:12-16).**
  - a) Recognize that God has a distinct purpose for you at camp (Eph. 1:4-13).
  - b) Set aside personal needs and struggles. This week is not about you, but about how God can use you to positively influence someone else's life (Phil. 2:3-4).
  - c) Engage campers on a personal level. Learn their names and be interested.
  - d) Be a witness to Christ's transforming power (2 Cor. 3:18).
  - e) Be open and vulnerable while being attentive to a camper's need for learning and growth (1 Tim. 4:15-16).
  - f) Model a genuine desire or thirst for righteousness (2 Tim. 2:22-24).
- 3) **Consistently give your personal strength and energy to campers (1 Cor. 15:58).**
  - a) Campers are “needy” people. Late nights, difficult campers, and long days spent engaging campers and participating in activities can bring the strongest of counselors to their knees...or to their bunks.
  - b) If you need to take an hour nap during free time, ask the nurse or director if you can grab a quiet bunk in their rooms. Be sure to notify other counselors of your plans.

- 4) **Be a worship companion to the campers (Heb. 10:24).**
  - a) Sit with campers during worship times and activities.
  - b) If you can, arrive a bit early to worship times to find a good spot.
  - c) Try to spread out among campers.
  - d) Know that campers want, or will in time want, you to worship with them.
  - e) Be attentive to and prayerful for the campers seated around you.
  - f) Be careful not to show favoritism or give special privileges to certain campers.
  
- 5) **Be attentive to the spiritual and emotional needs of the campers (Rom. 12:9-13).**
  - a) Help synthesize teaching, daily themes, and nighttime experiences.
    - i) Find random opportunities to “check-in” on how the day is going for the camper.
    - ii) Make specific comments and/or ask questions about what has happened or is happening during the week.
    - iii) Be observant. Take note of body language or other signs that might indicate that one of the campers may need individual attention.
    - iv) Find “teachable moments” that help campers apply biblical principles to personal challenges.
  - b) Campers can express strong emotions without understanding what they are feeling. Know that:
    - i) Emotions can be a product of adolescence. With that in mind, do not to minimize their emotional needs, but be careful with “drama.”
    - ii) Past pains and hurts can re-surface. Expressing emotions is usually the first reaction.
    - iii) Be sensitive to camper’s emotions; however, be careful that campers are not responding to a personal attraction by monopolizing your time.
    - iv) Help campers understand their emotions by helping them articulate what they are feeling.
    - v) Affirm what the camper is feeling by paraphrasing. For example, “So you’re saying...” Try to have another counselor present during the conversation to give an additional perspective and as a witness.
    - vi) Emotions can sometimes be confused with spiritual truths.
    - vii) Campers may simply want more attention; give it to them in doses, but make sure that your efforts with one camper do not cause you to overlook another camper’s needs.
    - viii) Maintain your own emotional balance when emotions are high.
    - ix) Recognize that we are not trained professionals, and some of the issues are out of our scope as camp counselors. Seek immediate feedback from the director or nurse if you are unclear with the severity of the issue.
    - x) Be cautious about promising campers that you will not disclose your conversation. Be upfront with them that you may need to get some help to deal with what you discuss.
    - xi) Try your best to be as objective and empathetic as possible about issues or situations that the camper discusses during your conversation. Remember, you are only hearing one side of the story (Phil. 1:9-10).

- xii) Know that even though you may be the first to hear about a situation, it doesn't mean you have to be the one to deal with it. Do not hesitate to inform the Director(s) or nursing staff if you need help.

## **Responsibility to Camp**

- 1) **Ensure that the camp's non-negotiables rules are respected at all times.** (See Appendix - Living by the Rules)
  - a) Prior to camp, each camper will be sent a list of non-negotiables to help establish boundaries. Each camper (and his/her parent or guardian if he/she is under 18) will sign the document to indicate his/her agreement to abide by these rules during the week of camp.
  - b) All counselors are expected to follow the same standards listed on the "Living by the Rules" sheet.
    - i) If you suspect a fellow counselor is not honoring the non-negotiables rules, please talk to the counselor or the camp's director.
  - c) Discipline campers who disrespect non-negotiables or make poor decisions.
    - i) Having a good rapport prior to disciplining a camper is a critical first step.
    - ii) Dispense discipline carefully, appropriately and proportionately.
    - iii) Adapt the degree of discipline to the needs and disposition of the camper.
    - iv) Know that if you make a "threat," be prepared to follow through with it.
    - v) Try not to react too quickly to any discipline situation.
    - vi) Sometimes it's best to use the "chain of command" to dispense discipline.  
*Chain of Command:* Counselors -> Director(s) -> Executive Director -> President of the SDCF Board of Directors.
- 2) **Monitor dress code.** (See Appendix - Living by the Rules)
  - a) If a dress code is clearly being broken, make sure to address it. It is most appropriate to have a female counselor approach a female camper and to have a male counselor approach a male camper about a dress code violation. When addressing this issue, explain what about the outfit is inappropriate, and/or how it does not honor the camp's dress code. End the conversation with asking the camper to change clothing.
- 3) **Monitor physical safety.**
  - a) Anticipate possible threats. For example, the camp's Lifeguard is preoccupied with talking to a friend while on duty.
  - b) Communicate apparent risks to campers, staff, and director. For example, "That hamburger smells kind of funny!"
  - c) Maintain safety awareness through verbal reminders. For example: "Hey, don't throw water balloons so close and make sure you throw them below the neck."
  - d) Make sure campers are not throwing water balloons at unarmed or unprepared people. Note: water balloons are only to be thrown below Asher Lodge (where the camp office and snack bar is located).
  - e) Be proactive and remove hazards before someone gets hurt. If you think this includes fellow counselors, check with the director first.

- f) Campers must be accompanied by at least one staff person during hikes. Notify the director and nurse about departure times; hike locations; and estimated return time. Be sure to always carry a radio and first aid supplies. If any campers with asthma or allergies will attend, be sure to bring along their required medications.
- g) Familiarize yourself with poison oak, poison ivy, and stinging nettle to avoid personal and camper contact.

**4) Protect emotional health.**

- a) Discourage (and never participate in) jokes or teasing based on ability, aptitude, sexual history or experience, race, or economic status. No matter how well you think they can handle it, jokes are only to be at the counselor's expense, never at the expense of the camper.
- b) Be very cautious with practical jokes. Practical jokes can bond counselors and campers; however, they can quickly and easily get out of hand.
  - i) Campers will surprise you with how intolerant they are of practical jokes. Even the most confident, well-adjusted, easy-going campers can react negatively.
  - ii) Be sure you are well acquainted with the camper before you consider even the mildest of practical jokes.
  - iii) Stop any plots to perform a practical joke on campers who are intolerant, new, or "on the fringe."
  - iv) Discourage campers from plotting a practical joke on someone who might react negatively.
  - v) Be careful and use good judgment if you are considering a practical joke on a fellow counselor. Including campers in your antics should be avoided.

**5) Ensure that a camper's personal space and property is respected.**

- a) A camper's bunk and bag is an extension of their soul; some campers are flexible and open with it, others are sensitive and protective.
- b) Be sure to monitor bunk bed selections when campers arrive on the first day. Do not allow anyone to touch or move someone's belongings off of a bunk without their permission.

**6) Ensure that respect is given to Mt. Palomar's rules and staff housing.**

- a) Remind campers that we are guests.
- b) More specific considerations:
  - i) Noise levels must be minimized after 10PM.
  - ii) Pick up trash as you walk around the grounds.
  - iii) No shaving cream.
- c) No food or drinks other than water in the cabins.
- d) Keep cabins picked-up and bathrooms clean during the week.
  - i) Directors will have access to cleaning supplies.
- e) Inspect camp facilities prior to the arrival of campers; i.e., room/bathroom cleanliness, damage walls/doors, broken windows, torn screens, etc. This will



prevent us from being held responsible for the prior camp's damage. Report any damage or questionable damage your camp's director.

**7) Monitor and ensure that basic needs are being met.**

a) Sleep

- i) Fatigue will limit what a camper will get out of the week. Late nights impacts a camper's ability to concentrate during morning Bible lessons, can affect their mood, and can limit their ability to participate fully in "sacred moments."
- ii) Some of the most effective ministry is done late at night between campers and many times with counselors. Use your best judgment when implementing bedtimes.
- iii) Process of getting campers to sleep.
  - (1) Help camper's be sensitive to and respectful of other camper's need for sleep.
  - (2) Lights out in cabins is 11PM (12AM on Friday night).
  - (3) Be careful using threats to get campers to sleep. A threat can easily become a challenge, as it can turn on you by creating more excitement. If you do say there are going to be consequences, be prepared to follow through with your threat.
  - (4) Go easy on the scary stories. Campers will surprise you with how the mildest of stories will disrupt their sleep and unsettle their feelings of safety.

b) Hydration

- i) Remind each camper to drink a full glass of water with each meal and be sure to set this example.
- ii) Limit soda consumption. No soda during breakfast (this goes for counselors, too!).
- iii) Respond to signs of dehydration by alerting the camp nurse immediately.

c) Food and Nutrition

- i) Make sure campers are eating full, well balanced meals. No candy before lunch.
- ii) Be aware and monitor campers who have severe food allergies. The nurse will notify counselors of these campers.
- iii) Also, be aware that many campers are prone to body image issues (esp. among girls). Talk to the nurse if you suspect a camper is restricting his/her diet and is lacking needed nutrition for camp activities. For example, eating only salad at every meal is not enough to sustain daily camp activities.

d) Hygiene

- i) Please ensure your campers bathe on a regular basis.
- ii) The nurse has back up deodorant available free of charge.

**8) Be on time to events and activities.** Make sure that you know the daily schedule, so that you can encourage campers to be on time to events and so that you can set an example.

- 9) Attend all staff meetings/trainings prior to and during camp.**
- a) It is important that you arrive on the mountain by 4pm on the Sunday prior to camp, so that you can participate in all team-building activities and meetings related to camp. Your attendance will ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding planned activities and will promote effective communication among staff members.
  - b) It is imperative that you attend all morning meetings (and any other impromptu staff meetings) during camp to ensure that you are aware of the day's activities. These meetings provide a forum for counselors to discuss the progression of camp, any issues with campers, and other items that are pertinent to providing a successful and rewarding camp.
- 10) Ensure that physical boundaries are honored at all times.**
- a) Know and support the non-negotiables on Public Displays of Affection (PDAs).
  - b) A counselor may hug a camper appropriately, or counselors may share an appropriate touch, but there are boundaries that are always to be honored (between campers as well).
  - c) Absolutely no kissing or boyfriend/girlfriend relationships between campers and counselors.
  - d) Male-to-male and female-to-female ministry and counseling are the rule of thumb for one-on-one situations. If private conversation is necessary, ask the camper to invite a close peer to sit in on the conversation. *Suggested locations:* Stella Wright gazebo, volleyball courts, bleachers overlooking sports field, table and chairs area in front rooms 102 & 103 Spruce lodge.
  - e) No hugging, slapping, or other kinds of touching that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate. This is true of all interactions: counselor-counselor, counselor-camper, and camper-camper.
  - f) Be sensitive to and respectful of a camper's right to limit even casual contact that violates personal boundaries, even if the contact is non-sexual.
  - g) Be sensitive to structuring contacts (such as group prayer circles) that are limited to hand holding; give the option of arm-to-shoulder.
- 11) Evangelism**
- a) Male-to-male and female-to-female ministry is the rule of thumb as well as the three person rule. As a counselor you should never be alone with a camper. If Bible study is requested by a camper of the opposite sex, ask the camper if you could invite another counselor to sit in on the study. *Suggested locations:* Stella Wright gazebo, volleyball courts, bleachers overlooking sports field, dining room, and table and chairs in front rooms 102 & 103 Spruce lodge.
- 12) Follow legal and camp guidelines for reporting the disclosure of abuse.**
- a) Tell the camp director and nurse if the camper discloses the following to you:
    - i) They want to physically hurt someone or themselves,
    - ii) Someone has physically hurt them recently or in the past,
    - iii) Or, if they have been touched inappropriately recently or in the past.

- 13) Facilitate involvement.**
  - a) Draw the campers into the life and meaning of the camp by encouraging them to participate in a variety of the camp's activities.
  - b) Find activities in which the camper is most interested and comfortable.
  
- 14) Be flexible and responsive to unexpected jobs or requests for help.**
  - a) Depending on the circumstance and the need, counselors serve in many different roles.
  
- 15) Participate in activities.**
  - a) The attitude and involvement of a counselor can make or break an event. Be excited and involved, and set a standard for the campers.

# Counselor/Volunteer Certification

I have read the materials within the training packet and I agree to abide by them throughout the week of camp. I understand that if I do not abide by them, I may be asked to leave the camp early.

Also remember that your social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, My Space, Twitter) must be free of any language, pictures, conversations, or any other content that is inconsistent with a Christ-centered life. You must be willing to remove any material considered inappropriate by the SDCF or Camp Directors. You may be disqualified from being a Counselor/Volunteer if content on your site is deemed inappropriate or does not set a Christ like example.

Counselor/Volunteer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX

## Living by the Rules

Our goal is to provide a safe Christian environment for all campers. Below is a list of rules that we must enforce to protect our campers and maintain our high standards. Parents - please review these rules with your child. Parents and campers should sign below, indicating the camper's commitment to live by these rules while at Mt. Palomar Bible Camp.

1. Males may not enter female cabins and females may not enter male cabins.
2. Campers may not leave their cabins earlier than 7:30 a.m.
3. Absolutely no lighters, matches, or any other fire-producing devices will be permitted at camp.
4. You may not reassign other campers to others beds or dorm rooms. Other campers' possessions, including bedding, are completely off limits.
5. You may not leave the camp for any reason without the expressed permission of the Camp Director. This includes for hikes that are not organized by staff.
6. All campers must attend all organized activities.
7. Displays of affection beyond handholding will not be permitted.
8. Swimsuits may not be worn other than to, from and in the swimming pool. Campers must cover-up while walking to and from the pool area.
9. Modest clothes are required. Shorts should fall on the lower half of your thighs. Bare midriffs are unacceptable. To prevent undergarments from being exposed, tank top straps should be 1.5 inches wide and pants must be secured around the waist or hips. Camp staff reserves the right to request that campers promptly change their clothes if campers are not dressed modestly.
10. Electronic devices including radios, CD players, iPods, Game Boys, laptops, etc. are not allowed.
11. Tobacco, drug or alcohol use will not be tolerated and will require the camper be sent home.
12. No knives (including pocket knives) or weapons of any kind are allowed. Violation will mean the camper may be sent home.
13. If staff must speak with a camper multiple times about behavior that is not in line with camp standards and/or is a disruption to camp, that camper can be sent home at the discretion of the Camp Director(s).

**I agree to behave in a manner that is both respectful of Mt. Palomar Bible Camp staff and campers, as well as the Palomar Christian Conference Center staff and facilities. I will comply with the rules of Mt. Palomar Bible Camp as outlined above. I understand that violation of these rules may result in disciplinary action, including the possibility of being sent home. IMPORTANT NOTE: If a camper must be sent home, the parents agree to come and pick him/her up without a refund.**

Camper Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_