THE SAFETY NAVIGATOR

COMPANION CHECKLIST

SUMMER CAMP SAFETY CONVERSATION CHECKLIST

thesafetynavigator.org

SAFE Summers FOUNDATION

WHAT IS THIS CHECKLIST?

Use this checklist after speaking with a camp to help you reflect on what you heard. A strong camp should be able to confidently answer most of these questions.

A SAFETY LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

- [ ] The camp has a clearly identified person responsible for safety.
- [ ] The camp describes regular safety discussions or briefings with staff.
- [ ] Staff are encouraged to raise safety concerns without fear of blame.
- [ ] Safety is described as everyone's responsibility across staff and campers.

B STAFF RECRUITMENT & SCREENING

- [ ] The camp conducts background checks for staff.
- [ ] Background checks are conducted every season or regularly, not just once.
- [ ] The camp conducts reference checks during hiring.
- [ ] Returning staff are re-screened or evaluated each year.

C STAFF TRAINING

- [ ] Camp leadership receives safety and emergency training before the season.
- [ ] Counselors participate in structured pre-camp training.
- [ ] Staff are trained in how to respond to emergencies.
- [ ] The camp conducts practice drills for emergencies.
- [ ] Campers receive a safety orientation when they arrive.
- [ ] Safety expectations are reinforced throughout the camp season.

D SUPERVISION & CAMPER RATIOS

- [ ] The camp clearly explained their staff-to-camper ratios.
- [ ] Ratios appear appropriate for the age of campers.
- [ ] Higher supervision levels are used for higher-risk activities.
- [ ] Staff are expected to provide active supervision, not passive observation.
- [ ] Each group of campers has clearly assigned supervising staff.

E SAFEGUARDING & CAMPER PROTECTION

- [ ] The camp avoids staff being alone with campers in private settings.
- [ ] Interactions between staff and campers are observable and interruptible.
- [ ] The camp has clear codes of conduct for staff behavior.
- [ ] Campers have multiple ways to report concerns or ask for help.
- [ ] Staff are trained in mandatory reporting and safeguarding responsibilities.
- [ ] The camp has clear supervision expectations in cabins or changing areas.
- [ ] Policies clearly define safe boundaries and supervision for interactions between campers.

F EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

- [ ] The camp has a written Emergency Action Plan.
- [ ] The camp identified common hazards specific to their location and activities.
- [ ] The camp has clearly defined evacuation routes and shelter locations.
- [ ] The camp has established relationships with local emergency responders (police, fire, EMS).
- [ ] Staff receive training on how to respond to emergencies.
- [ ] The camp conducts practice drills for emergencies.
- [ ] The camp explained how parents would be notified if an incident occurs.

G AQUATIC SAFETY (IF APPLICABLE)

- [ ] Certified lifeguards supervise all swimming or waterfront activities.
- [ ] Staff near water are trained in CPR, AED use, and first aid.
- [ ] The camp conducts swim ability assessments for campers.
- [ ] Swimming areas are clearly defined and supervised.
- [ ] Rescue equipment is available and accessible at water locations.

H RISK MANAGEMENT & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- [ ] The camp conducts risk assessments before the camp season.
- [ ] The camp reviews incidents to identify lessons and improvements.
- [ ] The camp was open about how they handle and learn from incidents.
- [ ] The camp could describe recent safety improvements they have made.
- [ ] The camp participates in safety initiatives or communities such as The Safety Navigator.

I COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

- [ ] The camp explained how they communicate with parents during the season and how the campers can communicate externally when required.
- [ ] The camp described when parents would be contacted about incidents.
- [ ] The camp clearly identified who parents can contact with concerns.
- [ ] The camp answered safety questions openly and transparently.

TIP FOR PARENTS

You don’t need every box checked, but a strong camp should comfortably address most of these topics and explain their safety practices clearly.