



Effective Supervision at Camp

An overview of key strategies and best practices for effective supervision of campers to maintain a safe and incident-free camp experience.

What is Active Supervision?



Active Supervision is a strategy used by professionals to keep children safe and accountable, while also supporting their learning and development. It involves intentionally and frequently moving around, monitoring, listening, and interacting.

Active Supervision promotes a safe environment and prevents injuries in young children. It requires focused attention and intentional observation at all times. Staff use active supervision strategies to make sure children of all ages explore their environments safely.

Guidelines for Active Supervision

- **Never let your guard down**

Counselors must always be alert and attentive, even during downtime or less structured activities.

- **Spread out for better coverage**

When supervising a group, counselors should position themselves strategically to see as much of the area as possible.

- **Buddy system for safety**

Younger campers should always be accompanied, and older campers can be paired up to look out for each other.

- **High alert for water activities**

Counselors must be in the water or on the banks during any water-based activities, even with lifeguards present.

- **Survey the area**

Survey the area for any liabilities or hazards and make sure you have proper child to adult ratios before allowing kids in any area. Once you are in a play area continue to ensure that area stays safe.

Guidelines for Active Supervision

- **Always Face the Campers**

Counselors should never have their backs to the campers. Instead, they should position themselves to have a clear view of as many campers as possible.

- **Line Leaders for Safer Walks**

When walking campers in a line, counselors should position themselves at the sides or back of the line to see all the campers. Assign a responsible camper to lead the line.

- **Roam the Area**

Counselors should not stay in one stationary spot, but rather roam the area they are supervising to get better angles and make their presence known to the campers.

- **Stay on Your Feet**

Counselors should be on their feet as much as possible, only sitting during designated breaks. Sitting can make them less alert and diligent in supervising.

- **Lead by example**

Counselors should model the behavior they expect from Campers.

Coverage for Large Group Areas

Avoid Clustering

Do not have all counselors standing or sitting in the same area. Spread out to cover more ground and have better visibility of the entire group.

Take Different Positions

Position counselors at the front, sides, and back of the group to ensure 360-degree supervision and coverage.

Utilize Elevation Changes

If the area has any elevated surfaces, have some counselors stationed there to gain a better vantage point and see over the group.

Avoid Blind Spots

Carefully assess the space and positioning to eliminate any blind spots where campers could go unnoticed.

Communicate Boundaries

Clearly define the supervision area and boundaries for the group, ensuring all counselors understand their assigned zones.

Effective Line Management

Positioning Counselors in the Line

When walking campers in a line, counselors should position themselves on the sides or at the back of the line. This allows them to see all the campers and maintain effective supervision, rather than walking at the front of the line with their backs turned to the group.

Keeping Sight of Campers

By being on the sides or back of the line, counselors can keep all the campers in their line of sight. This ensures that they can quickly identify and respond to any issues or concerns that may arise during the line walk.

Designating a Line Leader

Counselors should place a more responsible camper at the front of the line as the line leader. This allows the counselors to focus on maintaining supervision and oversight of the entire group, rather than having to lead the line themselves.



No Unsupervised Moments

Campers should never be allowed to go anywhere out of a supervisor's sight. The buddy system should be used to ensure campers are always accompanied by another participant and supervised by staff. This prevents any unsupervised moments where a camper could wander off, get into danger, or engage in unsafe behavior.

Continue to be Active - Even During Down Time



- 1. Sit with campers at meal times

Avoid a counselor only table.

- 3. Engage with campers

Interact with campers to monitor their behavior.

- 5. Position yourself strategically

Station yourself where you can see the most campers.

- 2. Monitor movies, board games, and breaks.

Sit with and engage with campers even when they have quiet time.

- 4. Avoid distractions

Keep your focus on the campers, not your phone or conversations.

Water Activity Supervision



1

Counselors must be in the water or on the banks during all water activities, even with lifeguards on duty

2

Avoid sitting off to the side or in the shade - be actively engaged and swimming with the campers

3

Maintain constant vigilance and supervision - never let your guard down around water

4

Enforce the buddy system and know where each camper is at all times

5

Set up clear boundaries and keep campers within your line of sight

6

Actively participate in the activity and be prepared to assist if needed

Camper to Adult Ratios

Age Group	Recommended Adult-to-Camper Ratio
Preschool: Ages 3-5	1 adult per 8 campers
Early Elementary: Ages 6-8	1 adult per 10 campers
Elementary: Ages 9-12	1 adult per 12 campers
Middle School: Ages 12-14	1 adult per 15 campers

**TAKE SUPERVISION
SERIOUSLY AND YOU
WILL HAVE A SAFE AND
INCIDENT FREE CAMP!**

