



Protecting Our Children

Camp Safety—What To Ask

(NAPSA)—Summer camp can be a fun experience that leaves your child with a lifetime of memories. Asking questions about safety can help ensure that your child comes home from day camp or sleep away camp with nothing worse than a sunburn or bug bite.

“To ensure that your child is entering a safe environment, you should check out the program thoroughly before your child steps on the bus,” says Nancy McBride, national safety director for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). NCMEC recommends parents consider these questions when selecting a camp program:

Is my child ready for this program and interested in it? Consider your child’s interests and developmental ability. Sending a child away to camp for a week may be difficult if he/she has trouble making it through a sleepover at a friend’s house. Try to observe the program ahead of time if you can and see if it matches your child’s interests.

Does the program screen everyone who will come in contact with my child? Ask if references are checked and if the organization does in-person interviews with new staff. Many youth-serving organizations run both state and federal background checks on volunteers and staff for prior criminal activity or sex offenses.

What type of supervision does the program provide? Make sure the



program is licensed and that there will be adult supervision of your child at all times. Make sure you are aware of all activities and field trips. More staff and fewer children mean that more eyes will be watching your child. Ask what the staff-to-child ratio is when evaluating a camp or day camp program.

How does the program treat campers? Look for an atmosphere that fosters communication between campers and staff members. Ask if the camp has a child protection policy and if staff are trained in how to apply it. Find out if training in child behavior management is provided to counselors.

Have I talked to my child about safety? Practice basic safety skills with your child and teach him/her to get out of dangerous or uncomfortable situations. Instruct your child to tell a trusted adult if anything makes him/her feel scared, uncomfortable or confused.

To get more summer safety tips, visit www.missingkids.com or call 1-800-THE-LOST (843-5678).