

Welcome to the Fall 2008 Standards Newsletter! In our efforts to "go green," this newsletter is being sent electronically. We do hope you'll find this newsletter both interesting and useful!

The Standards Team continues to be committed to communicating on a regular basis to keep you, the Visitors, updated and ready for the 2009 season (and beyond!). Feel free to contact any of us at: Rhonda, rmickelson@ACAcamps.org; and Kim, kbrosnan@ACAcamps.org.

Notes From the Standards Team

Many Thanks!

What can we say when hundreds of volunteer visitors give thousands of hours conducting 910 visits to camps that are seeking accreditation? We can say Thank you very much!

Thank you for your hard work, your integrity, and your willingness to give of yourself to learn, grow, and promote the camp experience and the camp profession.

Quick Statistics (comparable 2007 data in parenthesis)

- 911 accreditation visits were conducted (862)
- 1088 visitors made these visits "happen" (1025)
- 150 phone calls were made to visitors due to a question about a score form (158); 67 visits were conducted by one person (54)
- 27 camps (2.9%) failed visits (20; 2.3%)
- Most missed Standard: HW-6 (Health Exams) (HW-6, same)
- Most missed Mandatory Standard: HR4A (Disclosure statements and National Sex Offender Public Registry check) (HR-4A, same)

Challenges from the National Office

1. Please, please, please double check score forms for blanks. This is the #1 challenge for ACA staff members as we check the forms. A Tip: Turn the form so you are looking at it horizontally. This allows a different perspective and helps you see the "blanks."
2. Verify the camp director has signed the form.
3. For each NO score, there should be a comment! It can be a statement as simple as "no written documentation" if that is what is missing.
4. Please send score forms in to the national office IMMEDIATELY after the visit. Too many times we have received a score form two to four weeks AFTER the visit!

5. Please remember to complete the Immediate Corrective Action (ICA) process for all mandatory standards scored NO. (We had several visitors who did score a NO for a Mandatory and did not obtain the ICA information.) A list of potential "fixes" is on the ACA Web site. It is a great resource to print off and put in your *Accreditation Process Guide*.
6. Visitors MUST be current ACA members. If a nonmember "visitor" conducts a visit, it will count as a one-person visit. Sections are only allowed a limited number of one-visitor visits.

The "Life of a Standards Score Form"

As visitors, all of you know the importance of the score form in the whole visit process. Have you ever wondered just how all of those Xs actually get turned into the necessary data? Follow the "life of one score form" and then multiply this process by 911 (number of score forms touched in 2008)!

Here's the short (and simple) "trip":

- Score form is received via U.S. Mail! Envelopes are opened and each page is date stamped (all eight pages!).
- The camp number and name is verified and written on all eight pages if not done by the visitor. The camp is checked to make sure dues and fees are current.
- The visitors' member numbers are verified (to make sure they are correct as well as to make sure the visitor is a current ACA member).
- Visitors are given credit for their visit.
- A member of the Standards Team reviews each form to confirm:
 - The areas scored match what is stated on the camp profile.
 - All appropriate standards are scored.
 - There is a comment for all "no" scores.
- There is an ICA form for each "no" on a mandatory standard
- If something is missing on the score form, a "call form" is completed, a phone call is made, and the score form corrected.
- The score forms are then scanned, uploaded to an FTP site where they are captured by the data entry firm.
- When the data has been entered, the information is transmitted back to ACA and "dumped" into our master score form (very large excel report).
- All of the data provided for reports and throughout this newsletter came from the excel report!

Once the 2008 accreditation season is "done," all score forms will be archived for historical purposes.

Most Misunderstood Standards

HR-4A — Staff Screening

Once again, this standard was the most often missed mandatory standard. Twenty-nine camps missed this standard and needed to complete the Immediate Corrective Action (ICA) process. The mandatory portion of this standard requires camps to check all staff — paid, volunteer, and contracted against the National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) and to have a signed Voluntary Disclosure Statement from these same staff. This was most often missed because camps were not clear that the NSOPR had to be checked. Camps that missed this standard thought that checking their local or state sex offender public registries, or using an

outside company or contractor to do background checks, would be sufficient for meeting compliance with this standard. Unfortunately, only FBI fingerprint-based background checks would meet this standard, other than actually checking the NSOPR itself. Occasionally, this standard was missed because a camp did not have Voluntary Disclosure Statements from the staff.

OM-1 — Review of Foundational Practices

The standard calls for written evidence of a policy that was put into practice, which recommends the Foundational Practices are reviewed annually. The Foundational Practices is a stand-alone document that precedes the standards in the [Accreditation Process Guide](#). These Foundational Practices are specific processes and practices that have been associated over time with quality camp management. Most of the practices are former standards that have become commonly accepted by camp professionals and/or the public.

This body of knowledge (in the form of a list) should be reviewed annually, noting any changes or issues that need to be addressed to assure that these Foundational Practices are applicable to the specific camp's setting. Written evidence may be dated check marks and notations in the document related to the Foundational Practices or other notations regarding the review process of this body of knowledge. The ACA-Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM contains a review sheet listing the Foundational Practices.

HR-9A — Camper Supervision Ratios

The intent of this standard is to confirm that campers are supervised in a ratio that meets their social and developmental needs and the breakdown of supervision is easily visible by age groups. It is also intended that those ratios involve only those staff that have the responsibility, authority, and training to supervise campers. Be aware of camps that may be averaging staff-to-camper ratios often including every staff member on the site, even those not trained to work with campers, which may mask supervision ratios that do not meet the minimum required by the standard especially in the younger age groups. You should ask to see the age/group breakdown and check to see that it is in practice.

A special note: Many of the ACA summer Hotline calls and general calls to the ACA office involved situations of camper behavior and supervision. Many of these situations develop at times when campers are in less structured or unstructured activities with minimal or no staff supervision. The intent of HR-9 in total is to help camps think through their supervision policies for the protection of both camper and staff. As visitors, we can help guide that process by asking appropriate information-gathering questions when scoring the standard. A complete summary of this past year's Hotline calls can be found in the fall 2008 issue of [The CampLine](#).

Questions and Answers

Ask the Team!

Question: With the revised score form, I am confused if I should use pen or pencil? I'm afraid to use pen in case I make a mistake. What do I do?

Answer: In our current method of data entry, the score forms are scanned. We have found that when only a pencil is used, the image is not captured by our scanner (yes, it is a different scanner and process than used prior to 2007). A pen must be used for at least part of the "x." Solution: As you mark the score form

initially, make 1 line using a pencil. As you CHECK the score form for blanks, use a pen to "cross" the X. This gives you a chance to revise a miss-marked standard AND helps in checking the form for blanks.

Question: What is NSOPR and why is it a big deal?

Answer: NSOPR stands for the National Sex Offender Public Registry. It is a free, Web-based service of the U.S. Department of Justice. It is the Web site required to be used for screening in Standard HR4A and will only reflect certain types of criminal sexual behavior. At this time, it is the only NATIONAL database of its type.

Question: Are Written Documentation Previews (WDP) required?

Answer: While a WDP is not required by ACA National, some sections have considered making it a requirement of the visit. WHY? It is one method by which a Section knows a camp is preparing for a visit and has the strong potential of being ready the day of their on-site visit. Also — as the purpose of ACA Accreditation is education, the WPD is a valuable resource!

Question: Do WPDs have to be conducted in person?

Answer: NO! In the electronic world of today, the WDP can be conducted via the Web as well as in-person. Many camps have their application, health forms, significant staff information, parent information, etc. already on their Web site. Use this resource as well as asking a camp director to e-mail you documentation to review in the comfort of your home/office.

Question: Someone told me I should read past Standards Newsletters. Where do I find them?

Answer: You can find past Standards Newsletters as well as other useful information on the Visitor's page of the ACA Web site. Visit: <http://www.acacamps.org/volunteers/standardsvisitors/> to see the resources available!

From the NSC

Meet the National Standards Commission (NSC)

It sounds almost impossible to have a group of eight people that can think broadly and specifically enough to deal with the scope of issues involved in developing and maintaining an accreditation program for U.S. camps:

- In settings from the Northwoods of Minnesota to the Caribbean waters of the Florida Keys to an urban park in New York City to a college campus in Los Angeles.
- Offering activities from kosher cooking to extreme sports to circus training to scuba diving.
- In sync with laws and regulations and licenses and certifications of all kinds and that change constantly.
- Assuring a high level of consistency across the country through a cadre of trained volunteers.

The NSC is a team of "ordinary" camp professionals with the extraordinary commitment and perspective to address these challenges. Together they represent private and public, for-profit and nonprofit camps;

mountains and waterfront and forested settings across the country; agencies and businesses related to camps; personal expertise in a wide range of camp activities; and an openness to learning whatever it takes to maintain a quality accreditation program for this increasingly diverse industry.

Additionally, they share their personal leadership gifts for team building, for provoking "out-of-the-box" thinking, for defining the details of a proposed standard, for anticipating the implications of an action to the larger organization, and most importantly, for how the standards will improve the camp experience for the camper and the camp.

ACA's National Standards Commission (NSC) met in September in Indianapolis to review the summer of 2008 and to continue to look toward the future. Part of the three-day meeting involved ACA staff from different "Teams" (Education, Field Services, and Public Policy) as well as Art Wannlund, Volunteer Chair of the Education and Accreditation Task Force. This gave the NSC members direct access to ACA staff and key volunteers that are involved in professional development, connection to the Sections and visioning. These are large ACA areas of interest that are influenced by and have direct influence on standards and accreditation. Much of the time at this meeting was spent in critical discussion regarding the current standards as we continue to review them for applicability, relevance, and timeliness. The Commission also provided input to the Accreditation and Education Task Force. Be watching for more information from this Task Force!

Meet this dedicated group

- Nancy Garran, Massachusetts – Owner/executive director of private day and resident camps
- Linda Kotowski, Colorado – Recreation administrator for Aurora, CO Recreation Services
- Stan White, California – Executive director of a multi-site private nonprofit Christian ministry
- Ron Springs, North Carolina – Camp director for denominationally sponsored boys and girls summer camps
- Tom Riddleberger, New Jersey – Director of private resident sleep-away camps
- Bev McEntarfer, New York/New Jersey – Volunteer for international private nonprofit camp, camp director for nonprofit group helping make camp possible for the "underserved populations"
- David Sherry, Iowa – Director of YMCA Camp
- Kathy Trotter (Chair), Arkansas – former director of denominational camps; national consultant to camps, conference centers, and retreat centers

Overview Summer 2008

Top 10 Missed Standards – 2008 Summer

#	Standard	Number Camps	In 2007 Top 10? (# camps '07)
10	OM-17B	38	
9	OM-9E	39	
8	HR-21A	42	

7	SF-20	44	YES (65)
6	SF-16	45	YES (40)
5	OM-10	50	YES (48)
4	HW-12	53	YES (45)
3	SF-6	55	YES (35)
2	HW-11B	117	YES (100)
1	HW-6	146	YES (109)

Top 5 Missed Mandatory Standards – 2008 Summer

#	Standard	Number Camps	In 2007 Top 5? (# camps '07)
5	PA-30B	6	
4	PA-21	11	YES (19)
3	HW-2	11	YES (16)
2	PA-15	20	YES (13)
1	HR-4A	29	YES (25)

Summer 2008 Call Summary

We appreciate that visitors are conscientious and submit score forms in a timely manner. As we review these score forms and listen to the challenges of our visitors, we have identified challenging areas from the score forms. This year, we received 911 score forms at the national office. Of these, 150 (16 percent) required calls to visitors to correct errors or clarify scoring issues. Here are the primary reasons for calls to visitors:

- Missing or confusing comments is the leading cause for a follow-up phone call. Since every "no" score requires a comment; if a "no" score is missing a comment, expect a phone call. Additionally, if you change a score from "no" to "yes," (usually because of the 72-Hour Rule) this must be indicated with a comment. Occasionally those reviewing the score forms are confused by a comment that indicates one thing and a score that indicates another. Comments and scores need to agree with one another.
- Standards left blank are the second highest cause for calls to visitors. Here is a tip: As you finish the visit, take a deep breath and sit down one more time. Turn the paper horizontally and slowly review the score form from this perspective. All items need to be marked in some manner; any item that is not a "yes" must have a "no" or "DNA" score. Consider having the second visitor and camp director do this as well. Seems silly, but it is amazing what a new perspective can do to catch the dreaded blanks.

- Inappropriately marked DNAs is the third highest reason for a call. If you are uncertain during the visit process, re-read the entire text of the standard carefully. Things are often gray or have an odd applicability. Please remember that you are welcome to call your standards chair or the national office during the visit if there is confusion over the applicability of a standard or group of standards.
- Profile/Modes and scoring patterns that do not agree comes in as the fourth leading cause for phone calls to visitors. This is most often caused by inconsistency between the camp profile, the mode or modes indicated on the score form, and the standards that are scored. Begin your visit by talking with the camp director and determining what modes the camp operates with and the activities they actually offer. Then make certain that the profile, the modes indicated, and the scoring reflect the correct modes of operation and activities offered.
- Staffed Public Facility confusion is the final reason for calls to visitors. Remember, staffed public facility standards are only to be scored when a person or persons other than camp staff are responsible for the supervision and conduct of a given activity. These calls were typically related to the aquatics section staffed public facility standards more than the other program sections. More often than not, a visitor scored a few of these standards when the campers would swim off property but were guarded by their own staff. In these cases, the entire sub-section should have been scored "DNA" because the applicable standards (in these instances) were scored earlier in the aquatics section.