

american *CAMP* association®

Standards

Newsletter

Spring 2007

Greetings from Kathy

We are learning what it means to live in a world of constant change. It's become a cliché—and yet we have to adjust over and over to the implications in our own lives. The tension for those of us involved in ACA accreditation is that for the summer of 2007, more than 1,300 visitors must be able to understand, interpret, and score the 373 items named as “standards” for camps unequivocally and with the same meaning. If it applies, the answer is either “yes” or “no.”

But as soon as we determine what is “yes” and “no” for today, we are likely tomorrow to become aware of new realities. The bodies the National Standards Commission (NSC) rely on for training and benchmarks (e.g., American Red Cross) change. New activities compel us to add or alter standards or interpretations (water parks, team belays). Research related to risk demands attention to new safety practices (ground cover at playgrounds, tire inflation). The above pattern has been true since the standards program was implemented . . . but in cycles of several years. Today, we must expect to change in a much shorter timeframe.

We have introduced a model with 2007 standards that can be responsive to this reality. You have already experienced much of it—the Accreditation Process Guide in loose-leaf format, the updates posted on the Web as they are made, instant communication by e-mail to seek clarification or provide additional information to reshape the interpretation.

It's been a little “messy.” We (staff and NSC) are learning how to make quick but sound decisions. You (standards chairs, instructors, and visitors) are trying to figure out how to record and process the updates and changes so that you are confident that you are making the visit with accurate information. Thanks for your participation—your e-mails, your critiques, your suggestions. We have used them all.

Please do these things in the next six months:

- Do pay close attention to the information about how the system is going to work.
- Do develop the system that will work best for you to track the changes and make sure you are using the latest information.
- Do keep sending us your feedback about what is working, what you need to make it better, and the changes you are seeing so that we can be confident that we really are addressing best practices for the camp experience in 2007 and beyond.

— *Kathy Trotter, NSC Chair*

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New Score Form

Attention all Visitors and Associate Visitors! The official score form has a new and improved look from last year and from some of the earlier trainings! Here are ten tips to help you with the form:

1. The signature portion of the form must be completed for the visit to be official. Score forms without the signatures cannot and will not be processed! Make the visit count—collect the signatures. Please record all signatures in ink.
2. The Profile needs to be checked for accuracy and must be returned with the score form.
3. Comments can be made in the comment sections following the group/set of standards being scored. Please remember to initial comments using “VIS” for the visitor comments or “CD” for the camp director comments. Use additional paper if you run out of space. Please record all comments in ink.
4. Use pencil to score answers on the form (easier to correct if you make a mistake!).

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5. Mark an X over “yes”; “no”; or “DNA” to indicate your compliance decision.
6. Mandatory standards are bold and italicized.
7. The “W” column indicates a written standard and is only informational as you score. You do not need to mark that column in any manner.
8. Refer to the instruction section on the score form for clarification regarding the abbreviations on the form.
9. Indicate the camp name and number on each page as requested.
10. Remember to indicate all modes you are scoring for the camp.

National Standards Commission (NSC) Interpretation Highlights

This year marks the first year that the Standards team has been able to provide continual updates of interpretation changes with the field. After a major revision, questions often arise during trainings that may require additional interpretations by the NSC. We post new interpretations as soon as they are available so everyone can remain as current as possible. The updates will be color-coded with the corresponding posting date so you can track the changes easily. We will have a black-and-white, full-text version of the changed standards available in May for folks to download free from the Website. For the most up-to-date listing of interpretations go to www.ACACamps.org/accreditation/interpretations.pdf.

The following interpretations are standards with significant changes:

PD-23B Additional Firearm Safety

Issue: What is a “bullet trap?” and repercussions of changes in the industry recommendations on how to handle spent lead bullets.

PD-23B, bullet #4 has been suspended for this summer.

Therefore, remove from the interpretation (first sentence in second paragraph): “The back stop should . . . pollute the groundwater.” Remove from Compliance Demonstration: “and plan for disposal of bullets”

PD-24A Protective Headgear

Issue: Wearing a bike helmet when NOT engaged in bike program activity.

Change Interpretation: The intent of this standard is to require helmets while engaged in program activities related to bike program activities. Standard PD-24A includes any bike program activity . . . the camper or a vendor. This standard however does not apply to riding four-wheeled pedal bikes. If bike riding occurs outside of the bike program, helmets do not need to be worn, but all riders are encouraged to wear helmets as a way to model good safety practices.

PC-15 Protective Headgear

Issue: Clarify who has to wear helmet and when

Replace Interpretation: The intent of the standard is that protective headgear will be used by active participants in any activity in which a head injury could result from the impact of a falling rock or loose object, or hitting the head

when climbing, falling or swinging. The type of headgear must be appropriate to the situation.

An active participant is defined as:

- in spelunking, anyone participating in the activity.
- in any kind of climbing or high ropes activity (including a zip line), the person on belay.

This standard applies to both indoor and outdoor climbing experiences that use a belay system. A zip line is considered a “high ropes” activity even if there are no other elements. See the Glossary for further definition of high ropes, low ropes, and initiatives.

Aqua zips (zip lines that end in water) are an exception to this standard. Experts have determined that protective headgear should not be worn if zip line participants end up in the water. However, helmets should be worn if the participant is belayed to the aqua zip platform, then the helmet removed once the participant has reached the launch platform for the aqua zip line. If access to the aqua zip does not require a belay, then a helmet is not needed.

Camps are encouraged to define in their policy any other situations where they want other participants to wear helmets (i.e., belayers, persons in the “drop zone,” persons waiting on real rock walls, etc.) either for safety or to model good practice.

PH-Program Horseback Riding

Modify Applicability Box (p.262): “If only pony rides are offered, Standard PH-1 is the only applicable standard unless the ponies are stabled on the property—then PH-9 and PH-10 are also applicable. Standards PH-1 through PH-10 are applicable to all camps that provide all other horseback-riding activities for campers, staff, . . .”

Add DNAs: PH-2 through PH-10

PH-15B Rider Apparel

Issue: Appropriate foot wear

Add a Second Paragraph in the Interpretation: “Footwear must be enclosed with a flat sole and discernible heel to prevent the foot from sliding forward through the stirrup. When tapaderos, “peacock” stirrups, or a similar device is used to prohibit the rider’s foot from slipping through the stirrup, any enclosed shoes, such as athletic shoes, are acceptable.”

Written Documentation Preview

The Written Documentation Preview (WDP) is an important element of the educational process of the standards program. Statistics confirm that documentation reviews (formerly called pre-visits) lead to successful accreditation visits! While best done person-to-person in the months prior to the start of the summer camp season, the WDP can also be done by a mail or electronic exchange of documentation with a phone follow-up.

The WDP is intended for use with all written documentation standards, even though some written standards will still need to be verified during the camp visit. The purpose of the WDP is to:

- A. Educate the camp director/administrator on the adequacy of the camp's paperwork before the on-site visit and scoring. This preview gives the camp ample opportunity to ask questions and make needed corrections prior to the on-site visit.
- B. Reduce the time needed to review all the documentation during the on-site visit, and allow more time for observation and discussion.

The documentation review process is a shared responsibility. The visitor who reviews the written documentation reads the camp's written policy/procedure required by the standard or checks the certification and/or the documented training. The visitors at the camp then only need to check that the procedure is being followed or that the person named as certified is at the site.

Actual scoring is done at the time of the on-site visit. On the day of the visit, after verifying compliance through observation, "SEEN" items can be marked YES on the score form. Remember: all standards are scored according to what is seen during the on-site visit.

Finally, a visitor other than the assigned on-site visitors may complete the WDP. In that case, the form will be forwarded to the on-site visitors.

For camps and visitors interested in the preview option, the WDP checklist and additional information can be found at: www.ACAcamps.org/accreditation/07Preview_Checklist.doc.

New Instructor Course Site Needed for December '07

- Do you know of a great place in your section to host a New Instructor Course?
- Have you held an educational event there or have other information about the facility?
- Does the site offer: semi-private or hotel-style housing, on-site food service, nearby airport (within forty-five minutes), and meeting rooms with audio visual equipment?

The deadline for submission is July 1, 2007, with a notification date of August 1, 2007, so let's hear from you and bring this wonderful course to your section.

For a submission form, please contact Cindy Andrews at candrews@ACAacamps.org.

What We Learned From Last Year—2006 Visit Recap

Last summer the national office processed 892 score forms. Of these, 36 percent or 324 of the forms required calls to visitors to correct errors or clarify scoring questions. While we appreciate that the majority of visitors are conscientious and submit score forms in a timely way, we need your help with a few scoring suggestions.

- Inappropriately marked DNAs were the leading cause of calls to visitors last summer. Thirty-two percent of all calls made to visitors were related to miscoded DNAs. Remember to read the applicability boxes that precede each section and some subsections.
- Blank "bubbles" were the second cause for calls to visitors. As you finish the visit, take a deep breath and slowly review

Future Standards Newsletters

This newsletter will be your final "paper copy" of the Standards Newsletter. We are moving to an electronic version that will be e-mailed every fall and spring to all visitors, instructors, trainers, standards chairs, and section executives. If for some reason, you need to have a paper copy, please contact the Standards team at accreditation@ACAacamps.org or call 765-342-8456.

the score form. Any item that is not a "yes" must have a "no" or "DNA" score. Have the lead visitor, second visitor, and camp director review the form. Seem silly? Twenty-nine percent of all calls from the national office to visitors regarding score forms included a decision on blank "bubbles."

- Missing or confusing comments about a "no" came in third. First, remember that every "no" score requires a comment. If a "no" score is missing a comment, expect a call. Second, if you change a score from "no" to "yes," strike or erase the comments. Each score form is reviewed for consistency, so a comment without a corresponding "no" results in a phone call. Third, if you are using the score form to reflect a conversation with the director or make a suggestion that is not scoring related, please be clear that the comments are only informational.
- Confusion about how to score Staffed Public Facilities (SPF) came in at number four. Most often the problem was a misunderstanding about who was responsible for the conduct of the activity. The key to decision making about scoring staffed public facilities correctly is for the camp director to answer the question, "Do I have total supervision of the staff in this program?" If the camp does not have this control, you score "staffed public facility" even if the facility is not used by the general "public" or is managed by the camp's own sponsoring organization.

Thanks for your attention to these "lessons learned" from last year. Please visit the ACA Web site at www.ACAacamps.org/accreditation/interpretations.pdf for updated edits and interpretations to the Standards. Remember, if you are uncertain or confused during the visit process, you are welcome to call your standards chair or the national office. If we are diligent with problem areas and implement some simple steps to solve these problems, we are hopeful that next year you won't hear from us — though we do enjoy talking with you!

Thanks for devoting your time and expertise to the success of the ACA standards program. We couldn't do it without you!

To check resources available to you, log on:
www.ACAacamps.org/volunteers,
 select "Standards Visitors" from "Local Positions."



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Standards Products Available

American Camp Association's Accreditation Process Guide (2007 Edition)

This resource is a dynamic, field-friendly, binder-format guide for camps that features ACA's 2007 camp program and services accreditation standards and implementation guidelines. The guide also includes the easy-to-use Accreditation Resource CD-ROM.

ACA's Accreditation Process Guide Organizer

The Organizer, designed to accompany ACA's Accreditation Process Guide, presents each standard in a loose-leaf, hole-punched format for easy insertion into the Guide binder with a lined note-taking feature for ease in recording and updating standards implementation activities.

ACA Accreditation Process Guide CD-ROM (2007 Edition)

This "all digital" version of the **ACA Accreditation Standards Guide** is a two-disc CD-ROM set that features the entire Guide in easy-to-use PDF format on a CD-ROM as well as the Accreditation Resource CD-ROM.

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