



# Camp & Retreat Ministries for the Dakotas and Minnesota Conferences of the United Methodist Church



•Lake Poinsett•Koronis Ministries•Kowakan Adventures•Northern Pines•Storm Mountain•Wesley Acres

## Social Media and Communications Guidelines

**Purpose:** To provide a set of guidelines for staff and volunteers with regard to their online activity and interaction with campers that protects staff, volunteers, and campers. All camp staff (paid staff and unpaid volunteers) should be aware of the need to avoid being in a one-on-one situation with a camper when “out of sight” of others. This includes situations at our physical camps, as well as on the web.

In general, Camp and Retreat Ministries for the Dakotas and Minnesota Conferences of the United Methodist Church (DK/MN UMC CAMPS), positively views social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube, Vimeo, etc.), personal web sites, and web blogs positively and respects the right of staff and volunteers to use them as a medium of self-expression. (Note: For the purposes of these guidelines, the term “staff and volunteers” will include all summer seasonal staff, unpaid volunteers, and permanent employees.) All camp staff and volunteers can be viewed (correctly or incorrectly) as representatives of DK/MN UMC CAMPS, which can add impact to your public reflections on the organization (whether or not that is your intent). Because of this, our camps require that staff and volunteers observe the following guidelines when referring to the camp (its programs or activities, its campers, and/or other employees) in any/all communication platforms.

**Photographs & Videos**—DK/MN UMC CAMPS staff and volunteers are prohibited from using their personal online accounts to post any photos/videos of campers. DK/MN UMC CAMPS asks for, and must receive written permission from, each camper’s guardian/s to use camper photos/videos in written and online materials. Legal action can be taken against those who violate this policy. Any photos/videos taken (always avoid cabin/living/changing areas) by a staff and volunteer member may be given to the local campsite office to be posted on the camp’s website and social media outlets. It will be up to the discretion of each campsite staff to decide whether or not to post any photos/videos. Lead Deans (primary leader) may use their discretion to share photos to specific UMC camping event sites provided they first check with the camp director to ensure parental permission has been granted.

**Use of Personal Social Media Sites**—DK/MN UMC CAMPS staff and volunteers must recognize that they are role models for campers at all times, and should limit their public profile to information, comments, photos, etc. that are appropriate should a camper or parent view them. DK/MN UMC CAMPS staff and volunteers must agree to be respectful of DK/MN UMC CAMPS (its employees, volunteers, campers, and its policies) in all social media postings, blogs and other mediums of online communications. (Note: Although some sites may offer privacy settings, staff and volunteers should be aware that the Internet is a public domain. Staff and volunteers are expected to be aware of these guidelines regardless of their privacy settings.)

**Camp Logos**—DK/MN UMC CAMPS staff and volunteers are prohibited from using camp logos on personal social media pages or websites without written permission.

**Communication during Camp Emergencies**—In case of an emergency at camp, we have procedures in place to communicate with parents, churches, media, or any other outside groups. It is DK/MN UMC CAMPS policy that the Director of DK/MN UMC Camp and Retreat Ministry, the Camp Site Director or

designated representative handle all media communications including communication with parents and/or churches as needed. DK/MN UMC CAMPS requires all other staff and volunteers to refrain from posting happenings of an emergency on their own social media profiles or sites.

### **Camper – Staff – Volunteers Communications**

DK/MN UMC CAMPS understands that interacting with campers after a camp session can be extremely positive, as it helps to nurture and support the many ways participants experienced Christ, Creation, and Community while at camp. However, as with any such communication, DK/MN UMC CAMPS cannot guarantee the kind of supervision, oversight, or program structure that will be present in such a situation outside of camp. For the protection of staff, volunteers and campers, staff and volunteers should abide by the following guidelines on appropriate interaction with DK/MN UMC CAMPS participants after a camp session is over.

- **Communicating privately with campers via email, text messages, phone calls, or Social Media:** DK/MN UMC CAMPS strongly discourage staff and volunteers from communicating directly with underage campers. Camping’s “golden rule” states that whatever occurs between leaders and campers while attending events on-site needs to be done out in broad daylight in the company of other adults. Similarly, whatever communication takes place between leaders and campers should be done in a way that allows other adults access to what is shared. This is for the safety and protection of staff and volunteers as well as for the safety and well-being of our campers. If the camper is under 18 years of age, DK/MN UMC CAMPS strongly recommends that staff and volunteers do not communicate with campers privately unless arrangements have been made and approved by the camper’s parents/guardians, church staff and volunteers, and the camp director. This also applies when campers under the age of 18 initiate contact with staff and volunteers.

- **Communication with Campers:** Camp staff and volunteers are not allowed to give out personal information to campers. This includes phone number, email, user names, personal mailing address, etc. If a camper wishes to stay in touch with staff and volunteers after their camp session, DK/MN UMC CAMPS recommends channeling communication through the local camp or lead Dean (primary leader) for any event. This type of communication between campers and staff and volunteers is encouraged insofar as it is a positive, healthy relationship for all parties. It is DK/MN UMC CAMPS position that staff and volunteers do not have ongoing continual personnel communication with campers, unless arrangements have been made and approved by the camper’s parents/guardians, church staff and volunteers, and the site director.

- DK/MN UMC CAMPS strongly advises staff and volunteers not to personally interact in any way with campers outside of camp without the awareness and approval of the camper's parents/guardians. DK/MN UMC CAMPS encourages any such gatherings occur in public, in a group of at least two adults, and multiple students. This also includes private conversations using email, text messages, phone calls, or Social Media.

**I have read and understand the above guidelines and agree to their terms.**

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Staff or Volunteer Signature

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Date