

Self-Harm/Suicidal Ideation

If you have reason to believe that a child or staff member is planning to harm themselves or others, **you are required by law to report it to Mechuwana's executive director** who will report it to the proper authorities. As camp staff, we must take threats to physical safety extremely seriously.

If someone tells you that they want to self-harm, harm another, or struggles with suicidal thoughts/ideation...

Remain calm: Stay calm and take your time.

Listen: The person obviously has entrusted you with something very personal. Now it's your turn to listen to them. Do your best to actively listen.

Never agree to keep silent: A camper/staff may want to tell you a "secret," but only if you promise not to tell anyone. *Never* agree to this. If you discover that a camper/staff wants to self-harm, harm others, or is struggling with suicidal thoughts, you must report it. If you make a promise to them and then break it, they will feel betrayed. If it comes up, you can say:

"I promise not to tell any of the other campers/peers, but I can't promise not to tell anyone. If I have to share this with someone else, I will tell you who I am speaking with, and you can be there when I tell them if you want ..."

Do not give advice: The camper may ask your opinion. This is a difficult situation. While you may feel overly emotional, you need to remain objective. Try to tell them that they made a good choice by telling you.

Report it to director: Tell Mechuwana's executive director or camp nurse immediately. The camp is obligated to make sure everyone in their care is safe.

Write down everything you remember: After the discussion with the camper/staff, and as soon as you are free to do so, write down everything you can remember about the conversation. Write down everything you both said. Little details may be significant.

Recognize your own needs: Listening to your camper/staff can be taxing. Be sure to take time to debrief the situation with Mechuwana's executive director and recognize your own needs when providing care to others.

All of us need to be on the lookout for the signs of physical harm at all times. Report even the slightest suspicion to Mechuwana's executive director or camp nurse.