

Birch Trail Camp Policy for Campers and the Internet

The Internet is a wonderful tool that allows people to stay in contact and access lots of information. We believe that our campers can use the internet in a safe and productive way. However, cyber bullying has happened at many camps where campers or staff have harassed, threatened, demeaned or otherwise defamed other campers or staff in an e-mail, Instant Message, blog, social networking profile or other Internet medium. This can happen through the use of text, photographs or other images. Because of this and our desire to keep Birch Trail a positive place for its campers and staff we have created a policy of expected online decorum, guidelines and policies for these kinds of communications, along with the consequences for any violation of policies.

We view e-mail, IM and social networking sites, like Facebook.com and MySpace.com, as positive ways for you to express yourself and keep in touch with your friends. As a camper you have the right to exchange e-mails or IMs with other campers and invite other campers to be on your "friends" list in any way that you *and your parents* see fit.

When it comes to exchanging contact with anyone on our staff, however, *your parents must take full responsibility for you to do that. This includes giving or getting an e-mail or IM address, cell phone number, social networking profile, weblog or any other Internet contact.* (We tell this to the staff during orientation). It's not that we don't think your relationships with your counselors are important. They are! It's just that, once they leave camp, we can't take responsibility for what happens between you and them—*only your parents can.* We have enclosed a parent communication permission form *which your parents must sign before a counselor can give you any contact information or take any contact information from you.* We recommend you look it over with them so you aren't surprised by what it says.

Regarding e-mails, IMs and comments you might make to other campers on social networking sites, we ask you:

- a) to keep what you say positive and respectful of staff and campers alike;
- b) not to use obscenities, vulgar or sexual language;
- c) not to say mean or threatening things to or about other campers or staff;
- d) not to post pictures online that would embarrass or violate anyone's privacy;
- e) not to pose as another camper online or spread false information about anyone or say damaging or threatening things to or about anyone;
- f) not to use a website or blog or e-mail to talk about things that are against camp policy, like using drugs or alcohol or bullying or sexual things; and
- g) not use the Birch Trail logo and/or name without expressed written permission from the directors.

Most communication is positive, and that's great! In the rare case where there might be any negative messages to other campers or staff, our policy is to call the parents of campers who send those messages and share the content with them.

We will use any legal means available, including contacting the police and the FBI, to track the source of any offending or threatening communication if we need to.

Any camper who violates any of our policies regarding the Internet or other communication might have to leave camp, might not be able to come back to camp and might even have to answer to the police or other law enforcement authorities.

We want you to be safe on the Internet. ***If you receive a threatening e-mail, IM or message on your personal website—one that is mocking, uses vulgar or harassing language—here is what you should do:***

- a) Do not respond to the message or retaliate, because it might encourage the sender or get you into trouble.
- b) If possible, record the message onto your hard drive.
- c) Print out a copy of the message, then close it but ***do not delete it.***
- d) Tell your parents about it and have them notify the local police or, if necessary, contact your Internet service provider (like yahoo, aol, earthlink, g-mail, etc.).
- e) If you suspect that the sender is from camp, call us immediately.
- f) You or your parents can also contact Pedowatch (www.pedowatch.com) or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.nemec.org).

Camp is meant to be a fun, safe and happy place for all of us. We need your help to keep the way people from camp communicate with one another positive and in the spirit of camp — a way that makes everyone feel safe.

I have read Birch Trail Camp's Policy for Campers and the Internet and agree to abide by the rules and recommendations of this policy. I understand that if I fail to do so I may be subject to dismissal from camp or may not be allowed to return. If the law is broken, the appropriate authorities will be notified.

Camper Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____