



RISK NOTE

SUBJECT: Risk Management Consideration in Planning Overnight Camping Events for Clients

Nature can be a healing force and may offer therapeutic benefits to clients undergoing difficult treatment or otherwise facing health challenges. For many participants, an overnight camping trip may be their first or only camp experience. It provides a valuable experience for clients and caregivers and is often a welcomed respite to families.

With careful planning the overnight camping trip can be managed to best ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. We recommend a comprehensive policy that includes consideration of the following:

1. Internal review and approval of the program.
2. Limit participation to clients in treatment only and, where necessary, a parent or caregiver. Inclusion of other relatives, siblings or friends broadens the scope of responsibility and increases the risks.
3. Camping activities should be age and skill level appropriate. All instructors should be qualified and competent.
4. Informed consent and waivers should be obtained from the client. If the client is incompetent or less than 19 years of age, the client's committee, representative or substitute decision maker, parent or guardian should sign on behalf of the client. All reasonably foreseeable risks should be disclosed.
5. A pre-trip meeting with families may be appropriate where the objectives of the activity can be discussed as well as trip plan and rules. Awareness of behavioural expectations, campsite boundaries and assembly procedures should be discussed and documented.
6. Plan adequate supervision in advance of each trip taking into consideration the client's health, mental health and safety needs.
7. The campsite and surrounding area should be visited prior to the trip to determine suitability of the facilities, access by emergency vehicles and identification of any special hazards such as cliffs or rapids.

8. Establish a relationship/rapport with the owners of the campsite/recreation facility or association prior to the camp date.
9. Obtain proof of commercial general liability from the owners of the campsite/recreation facility or association.
10. When organizing transportation to and from the camp, consider the adequacy, safety and insurance coverage for vehicles transporting staff, clients and/or volunteers. Motor vehicles must be well maintained and operated safely by operators holding BC drivers' licenses and appropriate third party liability insurance. Develop procedures for stops en route to the campsite to ensure vehicles are secured and supervision of clients is maintained. Special attention should be given to 15 passenger vans [15 Passenger Vans - Safety Concerns and Basic Loss Prevention](#).
11. Designate a trained staff member or volunteer who will be responsible for providing first aid and transportation of an injured client, if necessary. This individual(s) should be dedicated to the task, allowing for adequate supervision to continue while they administer care.
12. Provide instruction and safety precautions against known hazards such as wild animals, fire and water safety.
13. Sufficient and nutritious food should be properly stored and prepared with consideration to any special dietary needs.
14. Communications must be maintained throughout the trip. Ensure that overnight camps are not established in areas where there is no telephone or cell phone reception. Ensure sufficient communication devices are carried with back-ups in case of malfunction.
15. Pre-trip supply checks should be done. Provide gear lists to clients including the requirement for adequate footwear, sun hat, rain gear and other clothing appropriate to the needs of the trip. Also consider individual needs (e.g. medication, orthopedics, etc.).
16. Develop an emergency plan that includes a search plan for lost clients, a staged process to deal with emergency evacuation and emergency contact information for (parents) family and emergency responders. Information must include health information that will be needed in an emergency as well as the emergency contact information.
17. Provide on-site supervision with night checks. Also encourage the use of the buddy system among clients.

Updated: April 2008

Published by the Health Care Protection Program

It should be clearly understood that this document and the information contained within is not legal advice and is provided for guidance from a risk management perspective only. It is not intended as a comprehensive or exhaustive review of the law and readers are advised to seek independent legal advice where appropriate. If you have any questions about the content of this Risk Note please contact your organization's risk manager or chief risk officer to discuss.