



PENDOLA CENTER
Catholic Diocese of Sacramento

Dear Parents.

Camp Pendola has always taken the safety and well-being of our campers – your children-very seriously. After all, giving your children over to the care of other people is perhaps the greatest act of trust you as a parent can engage in. We aim to do everything we humanly can to earn and keep that trust. We also know we cannot do this without your help. With more and more children using the internet, cell phones and other technologies at younger ages, we appeal to you as parents to partner with us to assure that your children continue to have the safest, most wholesome experience with us at Camp Pendola as possible.

Cell Phones

Camp Pendola has a “no-cell phone” policy at camp. Aside from the fact that cell phones do not have reliable service, they are expensive and can get lost or stolen and that the camp environment is not kind to such items, there is a basic problem with campers having cell phones at camp and that is trust. When children come to camp they - and you - are making a leap of faith, temporarily transferring their primary care from you as their parents to us and their counselors. This is one of the growth-producing, yet challenging aspects of camp. As children learn to trust other caring adults, they grow and learn, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges. We believe this emerging independence is one of the greatest benefits of camp. It is one important way your child develops greater resilience. Contacting you by phone may prevent us from getting to problems that may arise and addressing them quickly. Sending a phone to camp is like saying to your child that you as the parent haven't truly come to peace with the notion of them being away from you and in our care.

Digital Photographs

Another drawback of having cell phones at camp is many of them have built-in cameras. It has happened at some camps around the country that children have secretly taken photographs of other campers or staff during changing or showering times and later uploaded those images onto the internet. (If you belong to a health club, chances are it has a “no cell phone” policy). To lessen the possibility of this happening we have decided to *ban all personal digital cameras and suggest that if your child wants pictures from camp, that they bring a disposable film camera.* The use of digital cameras may be integrated into some of our programs, but their use will be controlled and monitored. Digital pictures are taken during the summer by staff, and are available for viewing on our website. Please help us maintain a safe environment by explaining this to your child (see the accompanying note on “Policies for Campers.”)

Cyber-Bullying and Harassment

It has happened at camps (and schools) around the country that a few campers have sent rude, demeaning, intimidating or vulgar emails or texts to other campers or have created false screen names to harass members of the camp community or spread false and damaging information about them. To be sure most Internet communication is fun, positive and one important way campers stay in touch with their friends. Our “Policy for

Campers," which you are being asked to read over and then read with your child, covers our response to the issue. In addition, there is *an outline of the steps you or your child should take should they receive an abusive, demeaning or otherwise threatening or inappropriate Internet communication.*

Being familiar with these steps are a recommended part of the overall safety and healthy practice to have in place with your child if they are online, regardless of whether they attend camp or not. Sharing them with you is one way that Camp Pendola can support your effort to protect your children whether they are in camp or not.

Your Kids, Our Staff after Camp

We recognize that campers and counselors develop close, trusting relationships with one another at camp and that these relationships are healthy, wholesome and beneficial to campers and staff alike. We also recognize that it is natural for campers to want to keep in touch with their favorite counselors after camp. As a camp we do not encourage or sanction the exchange of contact information between campers and our staff, nor do we take responsibility for what may occur as the result of such contact. *Therefore, our policy is to forbid the exchange of contact information of any kind between campers and our staff, whether paid or volunteer.* If a parent or legal guardian wishes their child to exchange such information with a camp staff member, the parent or legal guardian must sign a written form expressly granting this permission and accepting full responsibility for what ever may occur as a result.

Working Together to Keep Your Children Safe

There are many positive and exciting ways for youngsters to enjoy the healthy benefits of the internet and other technologies. As advocates for children, Camp Pendola wishes to work with you to keep those experiences safe, healthy and positive. If you wish to discuss this policy with me, or any other concern you may have, please call me at (916) 733-0141.

Sincerely,

Lori Rosene
Director, Camp Pendola