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Good Camping for Children and Youth of Low Income Families; Some Suggestions for Camps Concerned About Providing Equal Opportunities for Children and Youth.

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Guidelines are offered for positive camping experiences for poverty children and youth. There are sections on community organizations which can offer services for camp placement, recruitment of campers from among disadvantaged groups, and the orientation of new campers to camp (including such practical suggestions as the types of food and snacks which should be available). Also discussed are some characteristics of this group of young people, some of their special needs, and the camper-counselor relationship. (NH)

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**GOOD CAMPING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF
LOW INCOME FAMILIES**

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CAMPS CONCERNED ABOUT
PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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INTRODUCTION

Youth of low income families from the inner city are, as are all other youth --

"like all other men;

like some other men;

like no other man."*

This pamphlet describes the special efforts of many kinds of camps to provide camping experiences for these children and youth.

Late in the season for planning for summer 1967, the President's Council on Youth Opportunity requested the Children's Bureau to prepare suggestions that would help camps to extend opportunities to children and youth of low income families. A review draft was prepared and distributed with the cooperation of the American Camping Association, national voluntary youth serving organizations, some public school districts, and various religious organizations. The many thoughtful reviewers criticized, commented, or took issue with the suggestions in the draft. We acknowledge, with gratitude, their many contributions to this pamphlet.

Although much may be said about what can be done to help young people, it remains a fact that everybody has an important part to play in creating experiences that are useful and essential to the development of children and youth, including the children and youth themselves. Few social settings can provide a more ideal environment for the healthy development of children and youth than learning from living with a small group of their peers in the out-of-doors. This is camping -- the subject of this pamphlet.

Although the content of this pamphlet is focused on summer camping, good camping is not confined to the summer months. Rather, the complexities of urban life point to the importance of year-round opportunities for camping for more young people.

As a part of the national effort to enhance the development of all children and youth, particularly those of low income families, many camps

* Kluckhohn, C. and Murray, H.A.: PERSONALITY IN NATURE, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE.

increased the opportunities for good camping for young people in the summer of 1967. For many of the private camps, voluntary and public agency camps, and church camps, serving a diversity of young people of this Nation was not a new experience. This had always been done. But, for some others, reaching and serving young people of low income families required special effort. The following pages describe the nature of these efforts to provide good camping to young people of low income families.

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GOOD CAMPING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF LOW INCOME FAMILIES

PERSPECTIVE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

With an increasing population crowding into our Nation's metropolitan areas, there is a growing segregation of families by color, economic status, and education. In areas where the residents have meager incomes and limited formal education, the prevailing conditions of the community combine to deny or defeat the hopes of young people for themselves and the hopes of their families for them. These conditions tend to be perpetuated from generation to generation.

Generally, these residential areas lack resources proportionate to the needs or the potentials of the residents. Usually, the families are poorly sheltered, poorly fed, and poorly clothed. Medical care is insufficient to assure good health. And although there have been some gains in the quality of education available in low income areas, this Nation has not yet been able to help each student achieve his optimal intellectual development, particularly in schools in the inner city. These handicapping conditions are compounded by the absence of recreational resources and the various economic and social supports that encourage the development of children and youth who reside in the more affluent sections of the community.

Young people and their families who live with the hazards of poverty may be aware of the existence of camps. However, even when camping is available to them, they may not respond to the announcements of camping opportunities for a variety of reasons. One reason could be that their experiences with "strange agencies not of the neighborhood" may not have been easy, pleasant, or even satisfying to them. Another reason may be that the parents are never too sure what tomorrow will bring. Under such circumstances, they do not expose their children to the possibility of a disappointment. Life is hard. And these parents do not want to make it harder by planning ahead for something that may not be possible when the time comes.

Another reason why families with low incomes may not have their children sign up for camp is that they know camp costs money, and they know also the family income barely covers the essentials. Most of these families have dignity and pride. They do what they can for their children, but they protect them from situations in which they may be embarrassed or hurt because they lack clothes, equipment, or the money required. Some parents and their children read the "Required Clothing and Equipment" lists on the camp brochure. And they know they cannot meet the demands. Other families may not enroll their children for camp because they do not know what needs to be done, nor how to do it. Some parents may be afraid to send their children to camp because they are unsure how they will be treated by the other campers as well as by the staff. They may even be unsure that the camp would provide the kind of experience their children might enjoy. Sometimes, too, parents prefer to keep their children at home with them rather than having them go to places the family has never visited and with persons who are strangers to the family.

A few parents may be so burdened with managing their own lives and caring for the family that they have no energy to invest in thinking about camping for their children. Others may need older children to stay at home to care for younger brothers and sisters. For some other parents, mention of camps may recall for them migrant farm labor camps or armed forces camps. Only a very few will have pleasant recollections of camping as children, or a recent experience with camping for some of their children. Briefly, low income families will have as many differing responses to announcements of camping opportunities as do all other families.

Similarly, some camps have not included children and youth from low income families for various reasons. Until relatively recent times, voluntary youth serving agencies, more often than not, had few members from low income areas. Their camps were usually unable to accommodate all the youth who wanted to enroll for camp. Thus, many voluntary youth serving agencies restricted camp enrollment to members only. Such operating policy generally resulted in "segregated" camps.

Private and church camps had similar practices. As noted previously, the affect of these practices limited camp enrollments to young people of a specified racial, ethnic, religious, or economic class.

These camps were reluctant to include campers from low income families for many reasons. They knew from many sources that including these young people would be costly in time, money, and effort. They assumed that regular campers and their families would object to associating with children from families with a different style of living or of a different color. Some camps anticipated a loss of campers and income if they changed the social composition of the camps. These realities cannot be ignored. But they can be managed.

Among the many camps of this Nation, there have always been those that considered the social composition of the camp to be an essential ingredient in the camp program. For years, these camps have had an enrollment policy that has made it possible for children from many different backgrounds to enjoy living and learning together in a camp community.

For well over a decade, this Nation has been struggling to redefine equality and to create environments for equal opportunity, particularly for children and youth. Aware of the potential that camping offers to help counter the converging social forces that constrict opportunities for children to learn together, camps have committed their resources to increasing camping opportunities for young people from low income families and for those who, for other reasons, lack a fair chance to achieve their potentials.

GETTING CAMPERS TO CAMP

Camps have reported their experiences in getting young people from low income families to camp. These experiences point up steps that are essential in assuring a satisfying adventure for everyone involved. These steps include:

1. Selecting a disadvantaged population. The camping experience can add to the campers' understanding of people. At the same time, the camp is contributing, in some measure, to equalizing opportunities for children and youth of low income families. These youth are disadvantaged in various ways:

- The economically disadvantaged. Public and voluntary agencies differ in the guidelines by which they determine human need. However, a yardstick in general use by Office of Economic Opportunity programs states, for example, that a yearly income of \$3300 is the poverty line for a city family of four; for a family of 6, \$4200; for 8, \$5300; and so on. Thirty million Americans live below the poverty level -- and more than half of them are under 18 years of age.
- Those disadvantaged by color, particularly Negroes, Mexican-Americans, Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Orientals. Recognizing the insidious damage that results from racial discrimination, the Nation is now directing its energies to the job of correcting this wrong.
- Those disadvantaged by their parents' lack of education. For many parents, their limited education carries with it the inability to secure employment, housing, medical care, clothing, or food equal to the needs of the family. This can be a defeating experience for the head of the household. This defeat may be compounded when the father or mother is unable to help the children with their school lessons at a time when a good education is essential "to get ahead."
- Those disadvantaged by residence in a community or a section of the community in which public services are insufficient to meet the needs of the residents. When schools, housing, health services, garbage removal,

street cleaning, police protection, transportation, recreation, library service, community organization and other social services are inadequate to maintain human dignity, all the residents -- children and adults -- are deprecatated in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

This enumeration of disadvantages includes only hazardous situations in urban communities. There are many other disadvantaged young people in any community: Those who are physically or mentally handicapped; those who are neglected, abused, or abandoned; those who are born unwanted; those who are not loved; and those whose parents are unable to carry their parental functions. Each of these children lives without the advantage of wholesome conditions for human development. Although resources for helping these children and their families are on the increase, the services available are not yet equal to the need. However, the focus of this pamphlet will be on the children and youth who are disadvantaged by income, color, education, and residence.

2. Tapping community resources to find new campers among disadvantaged youth. Today, an increasing number of services are directed toward helping low income youth and their families. Some of these services include: Special programs under provisions of titles I and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity, including the Community Action Programs, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), the Job Corps, and, in addition, the Mayor's Councils on Youth Opportunity; programs provided through State and local public welfare programs, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), public assistance, child welfare services; and Medicaid programs provided through State and local health departments, including maternal and child health services, crippled children's services, school health programs, and children and youth health projects.

Through the President's Council on Youth Opportunity, summer planning grants have been made available to the Mayor's Councils on Youth Opportunity in 50 major cities. This is an added central resource from which information on needs and plans may be obtained.

In addition to these cooperative Federal-State or Federal-local community programs, some voluntary agencies provide services to residents of low income areas. These services, though not uniformly available in all communities, are provided to low income families and their children through settlements and neighborhood centers, family service associations, the Salvation Army, the Volunteers of America, and the national voluntary youth serving agencies such as Boys' Clubs, Girls' Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YWCA's and YMCA's, Camp Fire Girls, Big Brothers, churches, and others. Many of these organizations include camping in their programs.

This listing is by no means inclusive of all the resources that may be tapped to find youth who need camping opportunities. Rather, it is a list of services and organizations with continuing responsibility for the well-being of children and youth. Camps should make known to these agencies and organizations their interest in providing camping opportunities to youth of low income families. Camps will find that these agencies can work with them in selecting campers, in helping these children and youth to get ready for camp and in getting them to camp, in assuring the maximum benefits of camping, and in following up on the gains made by the camper during the camp season.

Such working together by camps and agencies is essential to encourage the development of youth. Discontinuities in programs add to a young person's uncertainties about life. They serve to confirm his view that "Nobody cares about me" -- that "I don't count." In his eyes, all that adults seem to care about is that "he stays cool" and "out of the way."

3. Recruiting campers from among the disadvantaged. When a youth is comfortable because he knows his way around, for example, in his own neighborhood, trying something different may take a lot of courage. When he hasn't had many "successes" as determined by "other people," he is not eager to risk himself any more than he has to with "those other people." As a result, getting youth from low income families to camp often involves "selling" camp through face-to-face contact between camp personnel and the potential camper and his family. Such camp personnel have to respect and like human beings enough to care a lot about a stranger -- they have to be people with the capacity for compassion.

After camps secure the names of potential campers, they may want to arrange with the recommending service to visit with the family along with someone known to the boy or girl and the family.

The camp representative may want to have a few photographs or slides to show what camp life is all about. He may not use these on the first visit, but may wait until after several visits when the family has reason to believe this person can be trusted and that he will be going with the youth to camp, or will be there when he arrives.

Where camps have had campers from the neighborhood in the past, it has been found helpful to enlist the assistance of these campers in telling potential new campers and their families about camping.

Other organization camps have equipped Community or Neighborhood Aides of Community Action agencies of the local OEO programs with information about camping opportunities. Usually this involved agencies in a coordinated effort that provided families with a choice. In some commu-

nities, public welfare workers provided families with information about camping and were able to arrange for payment of a portion of the camp fee. They also arranged for physical examinations and corrective treatment as needed by the children and youth who chose to go to camp.

It is suggested that the recruiters give attention to the mutual interest that both the parents and the camp have in providing opportunities for children. Where possible, parents and their children should be introduced to the camp through a picnic or similar event at the campsite. Transportation for such events will have to be provided for the children and their parents at no cost to them.

Further, in order to make a physical examination physically and psychologically manageable for those unaccustomed to health care, it may be necessary for camp or other agency personnel to accompany the youth. For some of those in need of treatment, it is helpful to the children and the family to be taken to, or be met at, the treatment facility by a familiar, trusted person.

Ordinarily, recommended uniform, clothing, and equipment lists are based on experience with middle and upper income families. Camp personnel modify and adapt these lists as necessary to assure that each hopeful camper may get to camp. But this very process can be deprecating to a family. Some camps have now revised such lists to include only minimum essential clothing and equipment. In addition, because low income families have no margin for demands beyond food, shelter, and a minimum of clothing, the campers should be outfitted before setting out for camp. These provisions can be handled simply by camp administration without embarrassment to the camp, the camper, or his family. For example: "Camp is different from city living. There are some things you need in camp that you don't need in town. Some folks who think every youth should have the adventure of going to camp have provided the money to make sure each camper has what he needs. All they are asking of you is that you try out camp. All they are asking for themselves is the satisfaction of knowing that you had the chance to go to camp."

If the camp does not ordinarily provide bedding, it will usually be necessary for the camp administration to provide blankets, sheets, and pillow cases. This can be done in town or at the camp. It is important to make sure there is an ample supply to take care of "accidents" and to provide for "the cold" that comes with fear of new situations.

Citizens have responded well to coordinated community appeals for sleeping bags to be dropped off at fire stations or other convenient depots. Donated bags have been cleaned by cleaning firms as their contribution to the summer camping program. Other camps have purchased disposable sleeping bags that are now on the market.

The camp needs to make provision for transportation. Getting to the right place at the right time is made more manageable and less uncertain for campers if the person in contact with the family arranges to pick up the campers and deliver them to the bus or train, and sometimes directly to the camp.

This doesn't mean that these youth aren't competent and able, or that they are dependent. Rather, they are reluctant to gamble themselves in situations with which they are not familiar and to venture into strange territory alone.

ORIENTING NEW CAMPERS TO THE CAMP

Getting settled into camp will go well if the camp staff member who made the contact with the family is on hand to greet the new camper and to show him around. This "trusted person" may want to enlist the help of several experienced campers of about the same physical size as the new camper. These "old" campers should be handpicked because they are competent without any compelling need to show off -- handpicked because they have been able to "tune in" and get along with a wide range of older or younger campers.

Open spaces, distances, silence, darkness, unfamiliar noises, strange animals, bugs, snakes, or even sitting at a table with strangers can be hard for some young people. It takes time and encouraging experiences to feel capable of managing strange situations and environments. Some simple supportive structure for the first days can ease the period when the camper is getting familiar with darkness and strangeness. These include:

1. Arranging to have the "trusted" staff member assist the new camper with "settling in." If it is not possible to free a counselor to make contact in the city, an alternative arrangement may be that of assigning a skilled, mature counselor and an "old" camper to greet the new camper and to help him or her settle in.

2. Providing the campers with broad beam flashlights and access to a "buddy" for trips to the washhouse in the night. It goes without saying that the novelty of having a flashlight requires a more than ample battery supply and occasional activities that demonstrate ways to have fun with flashlights besides "bugging" cabin or tent mates when they want to sleep.

3. Having the first meal or two chuck wagon or picnic style. This informality helps campers over their uneasiness about sitting down for meals and eating with others. A cache of foods and familiar snacks should be easily accessible. These might include potato chips, corn chips, milk, pizza, sodas, cold cuts, domestic cheese, fruits, and bread or submarine rolls. These items may not represent the ingredients of the nutrition planned by the dietitian. But they are probably familiar foods to the new camper. With so many new things, it is wise to provide some comfortable escape hatches such as being able to eat familiar foods whenever one is hungry or anxious. It will be found that these youth will be heavy on milk and bread for the first few days.

4. Helping the new camper make up his bed. The "trusted" staff member may want to do this while he explains the use of rubber sheets as a precautionary measure used with new campers until they get used to the cold, dark nights.

This staff member or the "old" camper (buddy) can also show the youth how to make a warm, comfortable bed "snug as a sleeping bag" by making hospital bed corners and tucking the bed clothes under the mattress. If the camp has a limited supply of blankets, several overlapping layers of newspaper may be spread between the springs and the mattress to give the sleeper the thermal advantage of the "California blanket" (hobo designation of the use of newspapers for body cover while sleeping).

5. Helping the new camper to get acquainted with the site and the camp resources. As with most other campers, these young people will want to find out about the camp. It is helpful to arrange for them to explore the camp soon after "settling" into the camp or the tent.

6. Having familiar activities in the living unit on the camper's first night away from home. A young person may be a little restless and may have difficulty in getting to sleep when "lights out" is scheduled. This may be particularly true for young people who are used to the noise of a city, the activity in a small household, and the erratic schedules of low income families that are built more on family situations than on being sure growing young people have a certain number of hours of uninterrupted rest. For these reasons, the first night for young people from the lower income inner city might include familiar activities such as a ball game, various adaptations of basketball, or a scavenger hunt with teams, followed by some substantial refreshments.

If some of the young campers cannot settle down, a staff person may tell a quiet tale of adventure and accomplishment of young animals or young people. If some of the older youth have trouble settling in for the night, it may be helpful for the "trusted" staff member to stay with the youth and to chat about what the campers can look forward to the next day and about other subjects of interest to them. It may also be necessary to provide for a counselor to be on duty all night.

The only point to be made here is that the "new camper" needs to have the chance to manage himself in a new situation in which everything is different. If he can have the chance to see how and why the camp operates as it does without getting in a hassle about "rules" or having a competitive struggle with camp staff, the new camper will be able to manage himself and become a contributor to the camp life and his own development.

Campers, like other people in new situations, have to test the limits. This taking measure of self and the situation is a familiar problem with which camp personnel have to deal with each new group of campers.

Children and youth need to know what is expected of them and why, as well as what the limits are and why. Limits are as important to growth as are encouragements to use creatively freedom and self. Arranging for just enough structure of rules, regulations, and staff to support new campers and yet to allow them room for initiative in developing their own controls require skillful judgment. It calls for knowledge of campers, staff, and the camp resources, respect of the personal capacities of campers and staff, the skill and adaptability responsive to developments. In part, staff can prepare for eventualities by considering various situations and alternative courses of action within a framework of helping campers move toward self and group management according to their developing competencies.

USING CAMPING FOR ADVENTURE, SELF-DEVELOPMENT, AND FUN

Resident camping, in particular, can provide an ideal environment for learning by doing. The experience of living with a small group of peers in the out-of-doors can afford unlimited opportunities for managing self and for sharing responsibility for the management of the affairs of the cabin, unit, and camp. Through the range of individual and group activity and action, it is possible for young people to acquire new perspectives of self, other people, and the world about them. In so doing, they can develop skills, abilities, and understanding essential to living competently as individuals and as participants in a democratic society.

Possibly of equal importance for young persons is to have ready access to fun, adventure, and excitement without the clutter of schedules, regulations, or procedures that are not understood. For some, the enjoyment may be the leisure and the encouragement to try themselves out in safe situations where the only test is a measure of personal and group pleasure or accomplishment.

Some Characteristics of Youth from Low Income Families

Children and youth from low income families have strengths. They have liabilities. These strengths and liabilities are like those of all other youth. However, one important difference is that children and youth of low income families have usually had their liabilities held up to them more than their strengths. It is their strengths that may be so valuable to the young people, to the camp, and to the other campers.

Although some characteristic traits of many of these youth are listed here, they are intended only to help counselors and camp administrators to respect these differences and to gain an understanding of these youth.

Youth who have been subjected to prolonged economic or social deprivation have usually learned a repertoire of responses that are used to protect their integrity as persons.

Children and youth from low income families may behave in any or all of the following ways:

They may be withdrawn and uncommunicative; they may be restless and hyperactive.

- They may be hostile to authorities either through their silence (usually termed insolence) or through actual physical violence. Most frequently, physical violence is surreptitious, on the hit-and-run order, or is a breakdown in control during a violent argument. This latter situation usually arises only when they are pushed to the outer limits of frustration, deprecation, or defeat.
- They may have difficulty in concentrating on a given interest or task. These youth frequently have had more failures than successes in the main stream of their communities. For this reason, they haven't learned to trust themselves to keep trying. In other words, they haven't had enough successes to hope. This means they may stop short of their capabilities because they are baffled by the problem. A helping hand at the right moment may introduce a youth to a new view of what he can do.
- They may have little understanding of the relationship of what they know and can do in solving problems, of how to get along with strangers, of how to manage their own lives. Counselors can help them make the connection by referring to the abilities they have demonstrated and which the counselors have observed.
- Some characteristics of these youth that show up in classrooms may be more easily accommodated in camps. Disadvantaged children and youth often "...talk out, fool around, play tricks, tap feet and pencils, make noise, don't sit still and screen out the teacher's voice."1/
- In addition, "many disadvantaged children -- seem to be suspicious, to carry a chip on the shoulder, to feel picked on. They may pull away from and resent a teacher who in all friendliness puts a hand on them."2/

No one of these ways is exclusive with low income youth. They also may be the ways children and youth of middle and high income families have learned to manage the bombardments on their personal integrity. However, these behavior styles are more prevalent among disadvantaged youth.

Much of the conversation of inner city youth may be sprinkled liberally with obscenities and profanity. Such words are simply handy,

1/ Noar, Gertrude: TEACHING THE DISADVANTAGED. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1967. (p. 6.)

2/ Ibid (p. 7).

familiar ways of expressing their feelings. Usually, there is no reason for a counselor to get upset about their use. He can, on occasion, ignore them; or, if this is not possible, he can dismiss them with: "That is one way of expressing your anger. You are capable of doing it in more acceptable ways." Later, when the counselor and the youth are alone, the counselor can comment on the rough language and how it can get in the young person's way because "It isn't appropriate in some situations."

Stealing is not a new problem in most camps. Younger or older people steal for many different reasons. Youth from low income families may have learned in their neighborhoods that anything you can get away with is fair gain. Such attitudes as these may result in "scapegoating" the camper who is different.

Various methods have been used by camps to recover lost, mislaid, or stolen property. One of the chief concerns is to recover the item, return it to the owner, and prevent a recurrence of such incidents with a minimum of distrust and recrimination. Some counselors call the camp unit involved together to report that an item is missing. Then everyone is asked to look for it. The counselor explains, "In camp, we can get along best if we respect each other and each other's property. That is one sign of growing up." He indicates he will place a box in some designated spot where everyone passes. He suggests that the item should be in the box before a given time. If it isn't, and there is sound reason to believe the item was stolen, then the unit will have to meet again and discuss next steps. Hopefully, this will not be necessary because, as the campers are told, they can use their time for more interesting activity.

Some Rules of Thumb for Working With Low Income Children and Youth

Generally, it is found that children and youth of low income families are like all others. Possibly, the most critical situation to be handled by camp staff and campers is their fears of the unknown "strangers" and what to expect of each other.

Because of the abundance of information and misinformation about classes of people, arranged in neat statistical packages with trim labels, both campers and staff may discover the individuals who are unlike those stereotypes. Camp staff in particular may learn to respect the strengths of these young people as well as to become increasingly sensitive to their special needs.

Some Strengths That May Be Evident

Some of these young people from the age of 4 or 5 years have had to shift for themselves. They have had to help out at home by looking out for the baby, delivering messages in the neighborhood, running errands, and sometimes scrounging for food. They have a strong sense of independence, autonomy, and initiative. Because some have had to manage

with little, many have developed the skill of taking what is needed when it is available.

In addition, they have had to learn to care for themselves, to defend themselves against teasing, exploitation, and physical aggression frequently practiced by both adults and older brothers and sisters who have cared for them. This means they may have more facility with action than with discussion or other means of problem solving.

Another strength is their sense of family and their willingness to identify with "the underdog" in situations where it appears an injustice is being done. These are qualities that are usually admired and cherished. However, when a situation develops in which these youth pit their protest against the adult, these qualities seem to diminish in value. This is not to say that adults should not be firm. Rather, it does say that adults should listen to all sides of the argument; should try to factor out of the situation what is important and essential to be learned by the campers; should try to be fair; and when in error or when it is evident the adult has acted on a misunderstanding, he or she should admit to it and consider next steps.

Although generalizations are deceptive, many of these young people are open to change. Usually they are not running away from life; rather they are running toward life. They are seeking "a break." And ordinarily they need it, because they have known the hazards of poverty, discrimination, congestion, and the absence of family or community resources.

Some Opportunities That Increase Their Strengths

Resident camps provide a freedom from restraints imposed for orderly classrooms, for safely negotiating traffic as pedestrians, for managing large crowds on small playgrounds, and for all those other constraints on the energy of the young. In camp, there should be the chance to learn and to make use of skills necessary for games and sports. The capacity to manage and to act independently can be of help to the group in planning its program. The variety of new situations confronting campers can afford opportunities for these young people, and others, to discover interests and abilities of which they were unaware. It has been found that the demands of group living can release and encourage concern for each other, mutual respect for the special contributions of each member of the group, and the satisfaction and security of well-being and achievement. Some of these youth may never have had such an experience outside of an autonomous street corner gang.

Many times, these youth may need help with reading, writing, calculating, and verbal expression. There are always occasions in camp life where these skills are functionally relevant. With the help of counselors

or peers, the situation can be exploited to increase the camper's skills in one or another of these areas. For example, curiosity about the habits of snakes, animals, fish, or insects may send campers to nature books; dramatizing stories, events, social problems, or situations usually helps young people with their reading, writing, and speaking habits, as well as gives them the chance to discover untested aptitudes and interests.

Ready access to food and regular meals may be a novelty to some campers. It may take a number of meals before there is enough assurance to join in the table conversation and to enjoy eating with others. But with understanding camp staff, the campers can manage this situation as well as others. Initially, table manners may be awkward, but when it is evident that there is always enough food and there are comfortable ways of eating with silverware, these youth can manage.

Deprived adolescent youth of the inner city have been able to use work situations, work and/or travel camps with interest and satisfaction. Such provisions provide a chance to do something that is significant to them and others, to exercise skill and power in a matter of concern to them, and to provide satisfaction in achievement. The tasks should be manageable and possible of completion in units that are understandable, visible, and recognizably useful. Travel camps seem to have value in the fact that the youth are "going somewhere" and "doing something."

Basically, the same rules of thumb apply in working with low income youth as with all other young people:

- Liking them.
- Respecting them.
- Feeling with them.
- Helping them to manage themselves.
- Providing them with support necessary to help them to achieve their objectives.
- Setting limits and helping them to understand why.

Camper-Counselor Relationships

Some low income youth are not accustomed to receiving attention from adults. They may find a one-to-one contact with a counselor uncomfortable. But there are innumerable opportunities at camp for casual, planned contacts between counselors and campers, such as washing dishes, chopping wood, boating. These circumstances can be the occasion for

listening, for asking questions -- to learn, to understand, to feel with the youth.

If the counselor is too tired to invest in listening and understanding, he should skip the contact. One thing is reasonably certain -- it is easier for an adult to deceive himself than it is for him to deceive children and youth about his interest in them and their concerns.

Camps committed to including youth from low income areas will employ counselors from minority groups. Such counselors are more likely to understand the needs and problems of youth from minority groups -- Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Indians, etc. But, more importantly, such persons are adults, models with whom the youth may identify. And their presence attests to a world of equal opportunity. Personnel with minority backgrounds may be those indigenous to the neighborhood with whom campers may be familiar, or personnel of the minority backgrounds who are sensitive to the problems of disadvantaged young people but who are now studying at a university or are otherwise employed out of the neighborhood.

Some camps, extending camping to low income youth for the first time, have employed a skilled staff member as a "floater" who understands the problems of disadvantaged youth and can help the counseling staff to manage situations before they build up to difficulties for campers, the staff, and the camp.

Studies report that disadvantaged youth can be helped most effectively in groups of from 7 to 10 members. Such groups appear to be small enough for personal attention of the counselor and large enough to avoid the demands of too much closeness.

Such studies also indicate that these youth learn best when exposed to experiences in which they manage the situation successfully and, in the process, add to their skills or knowledge. In other words, they see, they do, and, along the way, they talk about what happened and why it is important to them.

They do well in non-elimination competitions in which individual prowess can be noted. It takes repeated successful experiences to learn the collective achievement of team play as in basketball, relays, baseball, or putting on a barbeque for the whole camp. Some youth lack experience in many sports and are reluctant to participate. There is no reason to push campers into activity. There is time to introduce them to needed skills through individual and group activities other than competitive team play.

When a counselor is not sure about what to say or do at a given time, he should try to find out from the young person how he sees the situation. Then, together, they can work out a plan of what to do.

In most camps, a few hazards confront the youth until they have acquired the skills to handle the tools, the boats, and themselves. An important part of releasing their power to handle equipment and themselves is stating the facts: "Each camper is important. He and we are here for the purpose of having a fun-packed camping session in which each person is a better person because he has been here. Each of us will sharpen up our skills; we will learn some things we didn't know; each will share what he knows, and each of us knows more than we think we know. While we are checking ourselves out, there are some rules we have to live with. These rules are for the safety of each of us." The counselor can follow with a listing of minimum essential rules. "Each of us is personally responsible for abiding by these rules."

It is wise to avoid any threats of consequences if rules aren't honored. Rather, it is better to build on an expectation that rules will be followed and provide supports in the unit and at waterfront to make sure that they are followed. Some youth may take several days to get used to routines. For this reason, staff may have to be assigned to the waterfront until the youth are bedded down for the night to avoid swimming or using the boats without supervision.

Some youth will have trouble going to bed and to sleep at night and getting up in the morning on schedule. Knowing this, it is wise to have the counselor stop by the camper's bed to nudge him along. The counselor may put this concern on the basis of his interest in "not wanting a good camper to miss his or her breakfast."

Much of a youth's aggressiveness and belligerence comes from fear. These fears grow with frustration -- of not being able to do what he expects of himself or what others expect of him, or not understanding what is expected of him, or misunderstanding the meaning of another person's behavior. Here again, if the counselor watches for cues from the camper, he will be able to ask before fists fly: "What's the trouble?" The counselor then takes time to listen.

One other good practice with low income youth is to do something with them. This includes dishwashing, cleaning, making beds, and performing the many other chores of maintaining a good camp. Too often, these youth have been told to do things but not helped to do them. It follows that they simply do not know how to do many of the simple housekeeping chores. They will learn them easily when a counselor works with them.

In the same context, youth with differences can work together to solve a common problem or around a shared interest. Such activity releases their potentials more effectively than competitive activity.

The persistent problem confronting the counselors and the camp administration is: What is most important for this young person to learn

at this time under these circumstances? Possibly, some of the essentials are not discipline of self, or fitting into the system, or the many other things. Rather, the basic essentials may well be:

- Learning from experience to respect himself.
- Learning from experience to trust "caring" adults.
- Learning from experience that caring adults recognize and respect his abilities, interests, and aptitudes.
- Learning from experience that he has the capacity to manage himself and a wide variety of situations.
- A series of successes the camper can recognize and that adults will acknowledge. All of them go a long way in helping the young person to learn respect of self.

Sustaining Youths' Development After the Season Ends

When the camp season is over, someone on the camp staff should be designated to inform the referring agency, the schools, the family, and others who are important in the life of the youth of his or her progress. This may be as important for his development as the camp experience itself. A "trusted counselor" should be the person who connects up the camper with those "significant others" in the inner city who can help the camper sustain and add to his development.

* * * * *

These notes are intended to describe broad central concerns and action of private and voluntary agency and church camps as they engaged in a national effort to change the life chances of disadvantaged young people. No attempt has been made to report the complicated elements and dynamics of relationships between campers, staff, the living group, the campsite, the family, and the institutions that comprise the nurturing environment. What constitutes the most optimum arrangements to encourage the development of the potentials of young people in camp settings remains unfinished business. But this statement of fact does not deny the compelling necessity for camps to act with all possible competence at their command to provide all campers with an environment for learning respect of self and others, an appreciation of the world about them, and how to work together for mutual well-being and fun.

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