



## **Counselor Guidelines and Responsibilities**

### **Neringa's Mission**

Neringa's Mission is to provide for an experience with a special focus on the Catholic tradition, Lithuanian culture, and personal development for various age groups.

#### **I. Catholic Tradition**

Faith is an ongoing interior journey. Everyone has a different understanding of God because of what was learned and personally experienced. At Neringa, together we daily turn to God in praise and thanksgiving, commending to God our needs and intentions. We entrust all our camp activities, every camper, counselor, and person at Neringa to Our Lord. Counselors are asked to take advantage of the various opportunities at Neringa to nurture their own faith. In being open to growth, sharing our faith understanding and experience, we help one another sense God's presence and blessing.

It has become tradition that Thursday night, after campers are in bed, the counselors gather in the chapel for Mass or prayer. We take this time to quiet ourselves, pray and reflect on our own mission at camp in God's presence. Many former counselors remember Thursday night as counselor prayer time and join us in spirit and prayer.

#### **II. Lithuanian Culture**

Neringa is a Lithuanian cultural immersion camp. We strive to create a Lithuanian ethnic atmosphere, to teach our campers as much as we can about our common heritage, and to instill pride and love for Lithuanian culture.

#### **III. Personal Development**

To work cooperatively and to support one another is the 'golden rule' of Camp Neringa. The uniqueness of Neringa is that we do not limit ourselves to our own designated or primary tasks. Everyone looks for ways to help with another's responsibilities. By working together we enable each other and balance out our own weaknesses. Counselors are challenged to be aware of each other's needs, demonstrate initiative to assist, and encourage one another, as each is challenged in their own particular way. Constructive feedback helps develop skills and facilitates positive experience. It is precisely this kind of cooperation and working in a community that makes Neringa so rewarding for counselors.

### **Counselor Responsibilities**

#### **I. Campers**

##### **Methodology**

Our primary focus is the campers. We strive to provide a supportive and safe environment in which campers can be challenged to develop their own talents and personality and to grow in self-awareness. Counselors share and participate together in all the campers' daily activities to demonstrate that the program, as well as the campers themselves, are worthy of attention.

Example teaches more than a written rule. At Neringa we use positive instruction and not punishment, threats, scare tactics, ridicule, humiliation, or bribery. Physical expression is never acceptable e.g. to strike, push, shake, or slap a camper. If it is necessary to reprimand or discipline a camper, the correction must be correlated to the misbehavior, i.e. it must seek a greater good and higher value. A counselor's common pitfall is to allow for concessions in order to win the love, atten-

tion, friendship or compliance of the campers. Years of experience show that regardless of what children say, they always respect discipline, fairness, and consistency and sense when this is broken. To ensure cooperation, instruct the campers of the policy and enforce it.

### **Cabin Responsibilities**

Counselors are directly responsible for their own cabin members. Spend time with your cabin in order to know them better and to be aware of the group dynamics. Help your children cooperate, be friendly and respect one another. You may have to resolve conflicts too difficult for the children to handle on their own. If you have a problem with a child or the group, consult with the Program Coordinator or Executive or Assistant Director.

On registration day, be in the area of your cabin to allow **parents** to meet you and discuss any special needs for their child. Parents need to have confidence in you as they place their child into your care.

Counselors for the **youngest campers** need to be with them as much as possible to help them understand what is going on. It is equally important to monitor their hygiene, eating habits, and interpersonal relations daily.

In the **mornings**, counselors are expected to wake up before their campers to be personally prepared as the morning bell rings. Campers who wake up earlier often need to be prompted to stay quiet to allow others to sleep until the bell rings. Counselors lead their own cabin *mankšta*, to give the day a playful and healthy beginning.

In the **evenings**, the youngest campers return to their cabins after evening snack and prepare for bed. Lights are turned off as soon as all are in bed. Counselors are encouraged to read or tell stories to the younger campers. Scary stories should never be told because they can seriously affect sleep and instill feelings of insecurity. The middle-aged cabins return to their cabins, prepare for bed, and have lights out by 10:00p.m. The Program Coordinator may allow the oldest campers to gather together in a prearranged common area until 10:00pm following the evening program, at which time their counselors accompany them back to the cabin to prepare for bed. Evenings are a natural time for reflection and discussion; think of how best to spend this special time with your cabin, which always adds to the memories of camping. The time between the end of the evening program and preparations for bed is not free time for counselors. Counselors must continue to monitor their campers' conduct. Counselors are NOT to leave the cabins until the children are asleep (not merely quiet). You may spend time with other counselors for fellowship only after the children are totally asleep.

Counselors eat **meals** together with their cabin members to ensure that campers are polite, eating properly, and that they clean up. Two campers remove the dirty dishes and clean the table. Several counselors monitor the afternoon and evening snack to help with discipline and provide an opportunity to be available to campers.

Each counselor makes a **cleaning** schedule and posts it on the bulletin board inside the cabin; cabin hygiene is important not only for health reasons but it also fosters respect for one's environment. Oftentimes, camp experience is a unique time when the children are in charge of their self-care without the help of their parents; consequently, they learn a lot about themselves and their habits. Thus, it is important to ensure that the chores are done daily. The older-aged cabins are also assigned to clean the commonly used general areas. This cleaning schedule is posted in the dining room. Everyone needs to feel responsible for the cleanliness and safety of the entire campsite. Everyone is asked to turn off unnecessary lights, shut doors, pick up trash, etc. On the last day of camp, it is to your advantage that the campers clean their respective cabin's living areas, toilets, sinks, and surrounding grounds. The counselors of each cabin are ultimately responsible to the administration for the final condition of the cabin.

Each counselor makes sure that his/her cabin comes to **flag ceremonies** punctually, respectfully, acts appropriately in the flag area and is ready with their “šūkis”.

At **swimming time**, accompany your cabin to the gathering site for ice cream and then to the pond, after which you may return to the camp proper. A schedule for counselors to assist the lifeguard in monitoring the swimming area is posted in the dining hall.

### **Responsibilities Toward All Campers**

We strive to ensure the emotional and physical **safety** of all of the campers while they are at camp. Any camper who is a danger or threat to him/herself, others, or the camp must be referred to the Program Coordinator or Executive or Assistant Director.

If any camper reports any form of **physical, emotional or sexual abuse** having occurred prior to camp (e.g. at home, school) or at camp, report this information to the Program Coordinator or Executive or Assistant Director. Do not deal with this information on your own, even if this information is relayed in confidence. For the welfare and protection of the child, Camp Neringa is required by law to report all allegations of abuse to the Department of Social Services.

On **night watch duty**, two counselors remain by the cabins (while the other counselors may gather for fellowship) until midnight. These counselors are there to help campers should there be an emergency or a need for discipline. Counselors who serve night watch duty are released from early morning duties the next day.

Refer all campers’ **phone call** requests to the Executive or Assistant Director. Do not disrupt any program to call a child to the phone. If a parent calls, relay the call to the Executive or Assistant Director or Program Coordinator or take a message.

Administer simple **first aid** yourself (e.g. cleaning a cut and putting on a bandage). If there is a more serious wound, refer to the staff person in charge of the infirmary. ALWAYS consult the Program Coordinator or Executive or Assistant Director before taking a child to the camp doctor or emergency room. Ensure that the campers do not have any medication in the cabin. Only medication that was specifically given to you by the designated nurse, not by a child, can be in the counselor’s room. All other medication must be kept in the infirmary.

## **II. Program**

Every counselor has been asked to prepare a specific program area which the instructors do not cover e.g. sports, games, art, word games, nature, storytelling, special hikes, obstacle course, etc. These activities should be meaningful, challenging, fun, creative, educational, and void of distasteful humor or sarcasm. In addition, each counselor contributes to the preparation and presentation of the evening program.

### **Prayer and Spirituality**

Prayer is included in camp life to help experience faith as a part of our everyday lives. We begin and end each day with prayer. Morning prayer may be together as a camp or in smaller groups. Evening prayer is generally prayed together at the conclusion of the evening program. All meals begin and end with common prayer. Throughout the two weeks, time is scheduled for liturgical prayer and reflection.

### **Daily Schedule**

The Program Coordinator prepares a daily schedule. Each counselor may make program requests. Speak with the Program Coordinator in advance to see what is being planned. Please write your program requests to facilitate scheduling for the Program Coordinator.

### Staff Meetings

Meetings take place every day after breakfast in the dining room to review the daily schedule. Short meetings may also occur at any other time and especially after other meal times; therefore, before leaving the dining hall, ask the Program Coordinator if there is a meeting.

### Cabin Meetings

Cabin meetings are part of the program, providing an opportunity for discussion, reflection, planning, working out problems, and maintaining group cohesion within the cabin. Prepare for these cabin times to maximize this opportunity for constructive self-help and growth within and among the cabin members.

## **III. Responsible Counselor Behavior**

Please use common sense regarding your own behavior: respect all campers and co-workers and adhere to these Counselor Guidelines as well as the Personnel Policies. Do not leave camp grounds without consulting the Program Coordinator. As counselors are role models for campers, be sure to follow camper rules with your own example: (a) dress appropriately (e.g. no spaghetti straps or low cut shirts for women, and men must wear shirts), (b) do not chew gum or eat candy, (c) limit the use of electronics to what complements the program, and (d) checking emails or cell phones should be completed only when children are not present. Counselors must be back in their cabins when night watch ends; proper rest is important to have the necessary energy and alertness as each day is always very intense.

### Harassment Policy

Camp Neringa respects the rights and dignity of our campers and staff and makes every effort to maintain a camp free from harassment and any physical, sexual, verbal or psychological abuse. Counselors are prohibited from using profanity or touching campers in a sexual manner. Camp Neringa does not tolerate any type of material that can be considered offensive or pornographic and any type of indecent exposure. Counselors must be aware of and make every effort to protect campers from bullying. Counselors should strive to be in the presence of at least one adult when in the presence of children. All counselors have to complete the Diocesan Safe Environment program and adhere to its directives. In case of any incident, please report it immediately to the Executive or Assistant Director.

### Use of Alcohol, Drugs, and Smoking

Vermont law prohibits alcohol consumption by anyone under the age of 21. During the children's camp sessions, Neringa is alcohol free. This is intended to improve everybody's safety and camping experience while at Neringa. Counselors' good example is of the utmost influence in the children's lives and the children's character formation.

The use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited at all times.

Counselors may smoke only in the work shed and never in the presence of children. No smoking is allowed in other buildings or elsewhere on the grounds.

**\*\*\*Violation of these rules and guidelines can result in corrective action up to and including termination of employment (or volunteer status) and removal from all camp activities.**

