

# HIGHLAND LAKES

## Camp and Conference Center

### THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES CHILD PROTECTION LAWS

#### RULES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

#### REQUIREMENTS

##### Why Is It Important?

The Texas Department of State Health Services, which is the licensing agent for public camps is now requiring new criteria for camp workers and adult sponsors. This new law requires any adult who has contact with children at camp to be screened for criminal and sex offender records.

In addition, the adults are also required to take a one hour training course and pass a test regarding child protection and reducing the risk of child abuse and molestation. This new law applies to all state licensed youth camps, and is meant for the safety and protection of the children.

Statistics show that many child molesters are known and trusted by their victims. Many molesters seek out situations and atmospheres where they are trusted and accepted by those around them, such as the local church. They could even disguise themselves as the ideal children or youth worker in churches or other similar organizations. We do not want to give the impression that camp is automatically suspecting or accusing any of our staff or sponsors at camp of this type of behavior. However, we must be aware of how molesters work and do everything within our power to protect the children that God has entrusted to us.

The best way to deter abuse from happening at our camps is to develop an environment that puts the offender, rather than the child, at risk. An adequate screening process, proper supervision and accountability will discourage this type of offender.

The required "state approved" one hour training course informs all adults of the effects of child abuse, the methods of operation of child molesters, the signs and symptoms of abuse to watch for and the proper method of reporting abuse. The course also focuses on ways for adults to guard against any situation that could put themselves at risk for accusation.

Highland Lakes Camp will gladly comply with these state regulations in order to serve the children of our area. We have a responsibility not only to the children, but to the parents and churches we serve to provide a safe and secure environment to learn about God's eternal love.

According to Texas State Law, all adult counselors / sponsors that have any direct contact with underage individuals at a Camp must have:

1. A criminal background check performed prior to contact with underage campers.
2. A sex offender background check performed prior to contact with underage campers.
3. Attend and participate in a one hour child abuse and sexual abuse prevention and recognition class; as well as pass a written exam prior to contact with underage campers.
4. Proof of criminal and sex offender background checks, along with proof of satisfactory completion of prevention / recognition class, must be secured in the camp office for the duration of the event and become permanent record on file.
5. Upon successful completion of the Child Protection test, the test administrator (church) must keep the **original** Certificate of Completion on file for two (2) years.

Child abuse and Sexual abuse, real or alleged, must be reported to proper authorities.

##### This is how you can accomplish these requirements:

The Criminal and Sex Offender background checks may be completed by registering online at <https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/>

It is **IMPORTANT** that you register as an organization that provides **Volunteer Children's Activities**.

1. A criminal background check may be performed online at [www.records.txdps.state.tx.us/](http://www.records.txdps.state.tx.us/) for a nominal charge. It is the sponsoring churches responsibility to perform these checks and submit proof of proper documentation at camp registration.
2. A sex offender background check may be performed online at <https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/> for no charge. It is the sponsoring churches responsibility to perform these checks and submit proof of proper documentation at camp registration.
3. Upon request, Highland Lakes Camp can provide a DVD containing the state approved Child Protection Training session and written test material—Price \$10. Call 888-222-3482 to order.
4. The following documents must be submitted with each Camp Adult Registration (Medical/Liability Release form): (1) Criminal background check, (2) Sex offender background check, and (3) A photocopy of the certificate issued by test administrator upon successful completion of the Child Abuse and Sexual Abuse Prevention/Recognition Class .

The new training requirements and other information can be found on the Department of State Health Services web site at [www.dshs.state.tx.us/youthcamp/default.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/youthcamp/default.shtm)

