

Understanding the Royal Family KIDS Policy

For the protection and safety of the children we serve, it is Royal Family KIDS policy that once an adult volunteer builds a relationship with a child through Camp and Mentoring Club, the relationship ceases on the last day of Camp or Mentoring Club.

1. "Grooming" a child, as a pedophile does over a period of time, could begin at Camp and continue after Camp or into Mentoring Club, if the relationship is permitted without sufficient supervision and accountability. This extends the church's liability and RFK's liability. Any extended relationship under the auspices of RFK is discouraged.
2. Due to the complexity of the Social Services System, future contact with the children is very difficult to maintain and a broken relationship is much more harmful to a foster child than no extended relationship at all.
3. Counselors and Staff should make **no promises** of continued written or phone contact with the children after Camp. Social Media contact between RFK volunteers and Campers or Mentoring Club Kids is strictly prohibited under the RFK Rules and Policies. It is for the protection of the children and the RFK volunteer that social media is restricted.
4. Some of the children have court orders describing whom they can be in contact with, and keeping their locations confidential. No matter what the child tells the Counselor or Staff member, the existence of these court orders must be acknowledged and adhered to. RFK volunteers may not always have the full story on every Child's situation.

Limited Exceptions to Relationships Outside the Boundaries of Camp and Mentoring Club

CAMP

For Camps who do not have an active Mentoring Club there is opportunity to see and serve the children from Camp at other times of the year. If a Director chooses to host an event or a volunteer desires to pursue a relationship with a camper (Post Camp) the following guidelines must be adhered to:

All correspondence with Social Workers or Caregivers is to be initiated by the Camp Director/Mentoring Club Director Only. Camp volunteers are not permitted to contact Social Workers or Caregivers until given permission to do so by the Camp Director/Mentoring Club Director.

Special Event

Example: Christmas Party

1. Social Services, Caregiver and local RFK Directors knowledge and approval.
2. Verification of sufficient supervision, accountability, and if necessary, insurance coverage for a special event.
3. Clarity that the event is not an RFK sponsored event but rather a church hosted event. Invites and promotional materials may not contain RFK logo or language.

Continued Relationship with Camper

RFK volunteers who want to continue a relationship with the child outside of any RFK program, are to go through the County and become a "County Volunteer" covered under the County's insurance program and under the County's Supervision. That volunteer must also make it clear that they are no longer serving as a Royal Family KIDS volunteer until such time as the Camp or Mentoring Club comes around again.

Any RFK volunteers wishing to have additional visitation or experiences with a child should have a written letter acknowledging their volunteer status with the County and should be signed by the following:

1. County Social Services Department or assigned Social Worker.
2. RFK Camp / Mentoring Director.
3. Child's Caregiver.

Director Discretion is Advised: Camp Directors should prayerfully and carefully consider the volunteer and child before moving forward with a camper/volunteer relationship. Again, foster children's lives are filled with people who don't keep their promises. The Director should be certain the volunteer understands the damage done to a child when a promise is not kept or the relationship does not succeed. Proceed cautiously.

Mentoring Club

The RFK Mentoring Club spans 9 months of the school year and allows for volunteers who are a part of the Mentoring Club Staff or Mentors to spend time with the children enrolled in Mentoring Club. Christmas parties and special events are a natural occurrence within the Mentoring Club. Mentoring Club rules and policies apply during the Mentoring Club months.

RFK Mentoring Club Staff and Mentors are not permitted to meet with Mentoring Club Kids once the last Mentoring Club meeting has taken place. Mentoring Club has a start and end date to allow mentors the option of not continuing the mentoring relationship and also gives the Mentor Director a small break from supervising the relationship before the next Mentoring Club year begins.

However, due to some of the bonds made through mentoring, volunteers sometimes desire to continue the relationship after Mentoring Club has ended. The following guidelines must be adhered to when a continuing relationship is desired:

1. Mentoring Club Director must approve and give written permission for the relationship to continue.
2. Mentoring Club Kid's Social Worker and Caregiver must also provide written permission to continue the relationship.
3. Clarity, through a written letter, that the relationship is not under the Royal Family KIDS umbrella and will not be supervised by any RFK leader.

Organic Circumstances for Continued Relationships

Sometimes a camper will come into an RFK volunteer's life through organic circumstances. Here are some examples:

- Camper begins attending volunteers home church and RFK volunteer is a Sunday school teacher or youth volunteer
- Camper signs up for a sports team and RFK volunteer is a coach or parent on the team
- Camper attends the same school as RFK volunteer's children

These are just a few examples and there are many ways a volunteer may end up regularly seeing a camper. You are serving the children in your community so this is only natural! When volunteering at church or school or on a sports team, etc... the volunteer is under the supervision of that organization and is covered by the organization's insurance. Therefore, these types of relationships are acceptable and clearly outside the boundaries of Royal Family KIDS.

Volunteers should clearly understand that the RFK programs are designed to be impactful in the lives of the children over the course of the "limited time" that we have with them. We are but one of the "building blocks" in their lives. We have planted the seeds and we must allow others to continue the process that God ultimately has for their lives. RFK volunteers should trust that God will continue the good work He has begun in them.

PRAYER PARTNER FOLLOW-UP

During Camps and Mentoring Clubs, a follow-up letter should be sent to each prayer partner who has been involved throughout the year praying for RFK. Share good news about special events that took place during RFK. This makes the need for prayer more relevant to the person who has devoted his/her time to this much needed ministry.

Share practical answers to prayer that the Counselors/Mentors or staff may have experienced at Camps and Mentoring Clubs.

Suggestion:

Near the end of the Camps and Mentoring Clubs, ask Staff to write out a brief sentence or two about something special that happened to., "Mary learned for the first time that her name is in the Bible and she enjoyed reading her Bible;" or "Jim has trouble paying attention in school and wants the Lord to help him improve in this area of his life."

Personal anecdotes and requests like these are reminders to the prayer partners that their prayer is vitally important and was felt throughout the week.

CAUTION: Information regarding the child's personal past or references to it **cannot and should not** be shared in these letters to the prayer partners.

Close by thanking the prayer partners for their willingness to make a difference in the life of an abused or neglected child.

DONOR FOLLOW-UP

Royal Family KIDS Camps and Mentoring Clubs can only be made possible if donors provide the funds.

When contributions are solicited through church offerings, be sure that correct records are kept of who made contributions. These names should be followed up with a letter.

This kind of recognition is **minimal**. Any additional acknowledgment is great, i.e. a small memento enclosed in the letter, a small gift representing RFK (key chain medallion, starfish lapel pin, etc.). These are keepsakes that continually remind donors of their involvement and keep RFK before them throughout the year.

Volunteer Follow-up

Once a well-trained team has been assembled and has accomplished great things at camp, it's important to stay connected at some level.

When volunteers have come from various churches, it is even more critical to have a simple plan to stay connected.

After Camps and Mentoring Clubs, most volunteers are burned out and done. Allow time for recuperation and then find some method to stay connected.

Keeping the Team Together

- Share stories, fresh information or prayer updates with the team over email or a closed Facebook page.
- Have a quarterly meeting at a volunteer's house for dessert and fellowship.
- Once Camp and Mentoring Club planning starts for the new year, some Camps and Mentoring Clubs open up general meetings for the entire team.
- Invite or require all volunteers to participate in the Camp and Mentoring Club community fundraisers.
- Have a barbeque after Camp and Mentoring Club

Staying connecting with the volunteers is an important way to keep the team together and to feel the pulse of their lives. Many Camp and Mentoring Club teams have bonded over the years. They become dear friends and go through many life experiences together, including the tough experiences.

Inform the volunteers that they can call upon each other, or the leadership team, for prayer support when they go through hard times.

It's not easy to recruit and train good volunteers. Don't let volunteers drift away and feel unwelcomed simply because nobody communicated with them after camp. Volunteer follow-up is important!

Debriefing

Why Debrief?

- It helps volunteers make sense of what has happened.
- It provides a neutral space to verbalize feelings and thoughts.
- It is a preventative process allowing volunteers to verbalize emotions, helping to prevent deeper emotional issues from developing.
- It brings closure to Camp and Mentoring Club.
- It affirms the volunteer and what they have experienced by being heard.
- It allows God to bring healing into areas of pain, loss and disappointment.
- It gives direction and a positive movement toward the future.

Do not underestimate the need and the power of debriefing after Camp and Mentoring Club!

Camps and Mentoring Clubs can be very difficult on certain volunteers. Volunteers will need a safe place to unload and unwind, to process and make sense of what has happened **before** returning to a non-RFK environment and speaking to family members and co-workers.

Some volunteers may even need additional counseling time or a small group environment with a professional. These volunteers are often people who have been through abuse themselves, or those who have never been exposed to abuse at the level seen at Camp and Mentoring Club.

Many volunteers will need **assurance** that they have made a significant impact in the lives of the children they served for the week. They will need to know that the growth and hope that was planted at Camp and Mentoring Club will continue to grow for eternity. This is a common cause of concern for many volunteers. **Reassure, Reassure, Reassure.**

Debriefing is not just about the difficulties and challenges of Camp and Mentoring Club, it should also contain the funny stories, the salvation experiences, the growth and the risk that was seen and heard at Camp and Mentoring Club.

Debriefing is usually done before the Welcome Home Dinner or dessert, with just the volunteers from camp. If the debriefing is incorporated as part of the Welcome Home Dinner or dessert, volunteers will be less likely to open up in front of people who were not at camp. Some volunteers may not need a debriefing time, they may not have had a difficult week, or they may not have had a challenging child or experience. However, for every volunteer that didn't have a difficult week, there may be many who did. These volunteers may **desperately** need time to unwind before they grab their suitcase and return to their present life. Give them that time and opportunity.

Some volunteers may not be able to bring to words all that they are experiencing or feeling at that moment. Don't force communication, but acknowledge and recognize that they have been impacted and that they may need additional prayer, resources or follow-up.

Goals of debriefing

- Let volunteers speak of their emotions.
- Let volunteers ask some questions and seek additional help if they need it.
- Participation in debriefings should always be voluntary.
- No one should be criticized for how they feel.
- Allow free expression of feelings with acceptance, support, and understanding from each other.

This type of debriefing is not an evaluation of what went right or wrong during Camp and Mentoring Club. Issues such as, how well the schedule worked, or the quality of the food should be covered in a separate evaluation meeting or feedback form. This type of debriefing is about people's emotions and the relationships they built during RFK. Discuss the great things that were accomplished, and the possible struggles that volunteers may be experiencing.

Many additional resources can be gathered from Professionals who have experience with debriefing and from searches on the Internet.

Be prepared for a volunteer who clearly needs more assistance. It would not be healthy to send a volunteer home if they are struggling with deep emotional wounds, fears, or questions. Offer the assistance of your leadership team, or try and get close friends to stay with the individual until they can talk through and walk through their experience. The power of listening and prayer in these moments is critical.

Occasionally, a volunteer is so stirred by RFK, that they feel they must do more. They should take time before making any decisions about signing up to be Foster parents, or CASA workers. Many volunteers do take this path, but they need time to make that decision in a less emotional setting.

If volunteers feel they must stay in contact with Foster children in general or with specific RFK Kids they have met, refer to the "follow-up" restrictions in the Directors Manual. If they desire further contact outside of Camp and Mentoring Club, they need to go directly to Social Services and become a volunteer under one of the programs offered by Social Services.

Some volunteers may not be able to articulate what they are feeling or experiencing right after Camp and Mentoring Club. They may need days or weeks to process everything. Debriefing itself is not a counseling or therapy session, but it may lead to it for some volunteers. Offer the volunteer the opportunity to contact the leadership team or a specific Counselor, Social Worker, or Therapist in the coming weeks in case they need to.

Resources

Dr. Jeannie Gergen did an hour-long training at a RFK conference several years ago. The title is, "**Developing a Debriefing Program at Royal Family Kids' Camp.**" PowerPoint slides are available. Debriefing from 2008 LIFT - <http://royalfamilykids.org/leadership-conference-resources/>

Use the debriefing cards available from RFK, or make your own. The Debriefing cards come with clear instructions for use. They can be used in small groups at tables or in separate rooms, or in larger groups. The debriefing cards allow people to pick cards about how they feel and simply express their feelings or emotions. Leaders or facilitators can also draw out the quiet volunteers by asking them which cards they choose and why. This is often helpful to begin simple conversations and recognize how the volunteer is doing.

This may take 15 – 30 minutes.

POSSIBLE CAMP DEBRIEF QUESTIONS-

(Feel free to add additional questions. These questions are not required, just suggestions. Answers should be brief, excessive detail is not helpful at this stage).

1. What did the campers accomplish this week? (Physical, spiritual, emotional...)
2. What did you accomplish this week? (Physical, spiritual, emotional...)
3. Describe a funny or insightful event from this week.
4. Did you or a camper have an eye opening experience?
5. Describe a "high" for the week for one of the campers you were involved with.
6. Describe a "low" for the week for one of the campers you were involved with.
7. What was your greatest "high" for the week?
8. What was your greatest "low" for the week?
9. What would help you feel better or reassured right now?
10. What is your take away for the week?

Possible Mentoring Club Debrief Questions-

1. What growth did you see in your mentee this year?
2. What did you most enjoy about your mentoring relationship this year?
3. What do you think your mentee most enjoyed about the mentoring relationship this year?
4. What was the hardest part of mentoring?
5. How did you work through that struggle and what did you learn from it?
6. What would you do differently the next time around?
7. What did God teach you about himself, you or your mentee this year?

RFK Debriefing Cards. A set of 130 cards packed in a vinyl zip bag. On each card are words describing emotions Camp and Mentoring Club volunteers experience during RFK. Instructions for use are included.

THREE LEVELS OF DEBRIEFING.

Deep Debrief

A deep debrief is facilitated by a Counselor, Psychologist, or other professional that the Camp, Mentoring Club or church may have a connection with. These professionals may have experience in helping others walk and talk through major events.

A deep debrief may use handouts, or some form of assessing impact, taking notes or breaking into small teams with facilitators.

This may take 30 – 60 minutes.

Mid level Debrief

A mid level debriefing might entail breaking into small groups with a professional or non-professional facilitator for each group. The groups could separate into different rooms or even sit around tables where individuals don't feel overwhelmed by a larger group.

The groups may have discussion time where everyone gets a chance to speak up. The facilitator acknowledges the highs or lows brought up that may need to be passed on to the leadership team.

After a set period of time, all the groups come back together and the facilitators may share stories or thoughts or have individuals share some of the stories, thoughts or experiences that were brought up.

There may be a need for follow-up regarding an RFK Kid, or a volunteer who needs more information.

This may take 15-45 minutes.

Simple Debrief

Use the debriefing cards available from RFK, or make your own. The Debriefing cards come with clear instructions for use. They can be used in small groups at tables or in separate rooms, or in larger groups. The debriefing cards allow people to pick cards about how they feel and simply express their feelings or emotions. Leaders or facilitators can also draw out the quiet volunteers by asking them which cards they choose and why. This is often helpful to begin simple conversations and recognize how the volunteer is doing.

This may take 15 – 30 minutes.

Wrap Up

When the debriefing is over, a facilitator should recognize and verbalize some of the major themes that have been mentioned and conclude with **reassurance** that great things have been accomplished, even if the results have not specifically been seen or heard. Tell a short story of an individual RFK Kid and how their life was changed, or is being changed because of sacrificial efforts of volunteers. Use a Scripture about planting seeds or the farmer's analogy that a farmer has to plant the seeds first and the harvest will come later. Close in prayer.

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

- 1 Corinthians 3:6

ONE FINAL NOTE

In 1984 I became aware of the plight of abused and neglected children. The statistics of 10,500 abused children in Orange County, California took on a significantly different perspective. Since the inception of RFK, the statistics have names like Shorty, Mike, Albert, and the list goes on.

That first year, I came back from Camp emotionally drained and spiritually wondering if I had really heard from God, or if I was a “do-gooder” or “bleeding heart.” I walked into the Senior Pastor’s office and he shared with me the story that he heard Bill Wilson use in describing Bill’s mission into kids Sunday schools in Brooklyn. It was such a positive, heart-thumping story. I want to share it with you because your involvement does make a difference.

On the southeastern shore of Australia, along the miles of coastline, starfish are washed up on the beach and then the tide usually takes them back out to sea. But this particular occasion, thousands of starfish were left on the beach. Because of the heat of the sun, it wouldn’t take long for the starfish to dry up and die. Early, at about 6:00 a.m., a man that was staying in a motel located on the beach went out for a jog down the shore. Also out that morning was a young boy frantically trying to save the starfish. As the man was jogging, he saw the young boy hurriedly picking up the starfish and throwing them back into the water. The jogger, curious, stopped and asked the boy, “I know what you’re doing, but do you really think it will make a difference?”

The boy paused for a brief moment and replied, “I don’t know mister, but I think it will make a difference to this one.”

Yes, emphatically yes, and on behalf of the first 38 children that year, the hundreds since then, and with God’s help, the children who you will reach in your community this summer . . . We are making a difference.

—Wayne Tesch
Co-Founder