

## DEALING WITH UNUSUAL GUEST CHALLENGES

Several campgrounds recently had to resolve disruptions or challenges posed by guests who explained their behavior as caused by PTSD. Other incidents we have seen over the years have involved guests who report depression, loneliness, anxiety or other issues. It is important for Campgrounds to respond to guest actions and behavior, not the guest's alleged personal issues.

**Hypothetical Situation 1:** At 11:30 pm, Campground receives complaints that guest is making excessive noise. Campground staff member confers with guest, who becomes enraged. Guest gestures and moves around excitedly, speaks in a loud voice with rapid speech. As the incident unfolds, other guests begin appearing, watching. The Campground representative calms the guest down and asks everyone to go back to their campsite. The next day, the Campground manager stops to see the guest.

**Appropriate response:** Campground manager informs guest that the incident cannot be repeated or the guest will be asked to leave. The manager informs the guest that the incident violated the campground's quiet hours.

**Inappropriate response:** The manager asks the guest if there is something wrong. The guest apologizes and states that the guest has an emotional illness. The Campground manager responds with sympathy for the issue and expresses hope that they get help.

**Hypothetical Situation 2:** Campground is summoned by reports of a loud family quarrel. On arriving at the campsite, Campground staff discovers a couple arguing outside their camper. One of the couple is yelling loudly at the other about something that happened earlier that night. The other person is crouched in a defensive posture and looking very angry. The Campground staffer asks them to be quiet and stop arguing. They go into the camper and are quiet. The next day, the couple comes to the Campground office to apologize. One of them indicates they were deployed several times and have severe PTSD.

**Appropriate response:** The campground manager tells them the issue was the manner in which they acted. They will be asked to leave the campground if there is another altercation.

**Inappropriate response:** The campground manager apologizes for triggering the guest's PTSD and thanks them for their service. The manager asks the guest to pursue counseling or get help.

In both of these instances, the appropriate response is to deal with the action and stop there. If a campground manager starts trying to deal with a guest's emotional or mental condition, the campground could be drawn into a possible violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. By responding in a way that indicates the campground believes that guest has a mental or emotional illness – which is a disability – the campground may end up being asked to “accommodate” the disability. There probably is no suitable accommodation for someone having an angry outburst. If the campground decides, later on, to remove the guest, the guest

may conclude they were removed because of their disability. By addressing the guest's condition rather than their behavior, the campground may have indicated that they perceive the guest to be disabled.

#### FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR.

If a guest violates quiet hours and causes a disruption, it does not matter why. What matters is that they have misbehaved and need to be corrected.

Avoid letting yourself becoming aware of guests' personal issues. You are there to provide them with lodging, not treatment.