Eden Village West Social Justice Policy: Embracing the Sanctuary Model

Introduction to the Sanctuary Model

At Eden Village West, we are committed to fostering an environment where social justice is understood and practiced within the framework of the Sanctuary Model. This model, distinct from the Activism Model of social justice, emphasizes creating a space akin to a utopian bubble, where our campers and staff can explore and experience the world as it could be, rather than as it is.

The Sanctuary Model is not about direct political action or addressing current politics. Instead, it's about nurturing a space where the values that inform politics and social justice are lived and learned. By focusing on long-term change, we aim to imbue our campers and staff with principles such as chesed (loving-kindness) and openness. These values, we believe, will inform their actions and perspectives once they step outside our sanctuary.

Boundaries of the Sanctuary Model

The Sanctuary Model at Eden Village West is defined by its focus on positive, long-term change, rather than immediate political activism. This approach means certain topics and modes of discussion are more appropriate than others within our camp environment. Our goal is to create a space where everyone feels safe, respected, and open to learning and growing together.

Integration with Our Values

In alignment with the Sanctuary Model, our camp operates on the values of “love your neighbor”, “inclusive community”, and “free to be who you are”. These values guide our interactions and the way we approach discussions of social justice. We believe that by living these values within our camp, we are preparing our campers and staff to carry them into the wider world.

Guidelines for Conversations

<u>Staff-Camper Conversations:</u>

- Political discussions are not appropriate between staff and campers.
- Staff may share personal, lived experiences in a way that aligns with the Sanctuary Model’s values, as long as it doesn't cross into political discourse.

- Conversations about social justice should be camper-initiated and camper-led. Staff should provide support and guidance, ensuring these discussions are conducted with kindness and respect.

Camper-Camper Interactions:

- Campers are encouraged to engage in conversations that reflect the camp's values of kindness and openness.
- Discussions should be respectful, inclusive, and non-political.
- Staff will support campers in maintaining a respectful dialogue, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

Staff-Staff Conversations (Within potential earshot of campers) :

- Political discussions among staff are not permitted in front of campers.
- Staff members are encouraged to engage in 'Eden Village West style soul-talk,' focusing on personal growth, community building, and the values of our sanctuary.
- All conversations, regardless of topic, should be approached with nonviolent communication, consent, best judgment, and the principles of authentic relating as outlined in staff training.
- Staff are expected to be role models for campers, demonstrating how to engage in meaningful, respectful conversations without delving into divisive or political topics.

Staff-Staff Conversations (In settings away from campers) :

- Before initiating a conversation on sensitive topics outside of the Sanctuary Model, staff must seek clear and affirmative verbal consent from other participants.
- Consent should be obtained in a manner that respects the individual's freedom to opt-out without any pressure or fear of negative consequences.
- Conversations on sensitive topics should occur in private settings, away from campers and non-consenting individuals.
- Staff must ensure that such discussions do not interfere with camp activities or responsibilities.

Principles of Communication

- Nonviolent Communication: All members of the Eden Village West community are expected to practice nonviolent communication. This involves expressing ourselves honestly and receiving others empathetically, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

- Authentic Relating: Conversations should aim to build genuine connections, encouraging openness, vulnerability, and honesty within the boundaries of our community values.
- Respect and Inclusivity: All discussions, regardless of the participants, should be conducted with respect for diverse perspectives and backgrounds, upholding the spirit of inclusivity and kindness that defines Eden Village West.

EXAMPLES

Between Staff and Campers
Appropriate Conversation:

- **Topic:** Environmental stewardship
- **Example:** A camper asks about the importance of recycling and composting. The staff member shares a personal story about how they started composting at home and the positive impact it has had on their life, emphasizing the value of caring for the environment.

Inappropriate Conversation:

- **Topic:** Current political debates
- **Example:** A camper brings up a recent controversial political decision. The staff member starts expressing their personal political views and debating the merits of the decision. This conversation is inappropriate as it directly involves current politics, which is against the Sanctuary Model's principles.

Among Campers
Appropriate Conversation:

- **Topic:** Cultural diversity
- **Example:** Campers from different backgrounds share their cultural traditions and discuss the importance of understanding and respecting different cultures. This aligns with the values of inclusive community, free to be who you are, and creative living.

Inappropriate Conversation:

- **Topic:** Arguing over political figures

- **Example:** A group of campers starts arguing about their opinions on various political leaders. This conversation becomes heated and divisive, which is not in the spirit of the Sanctuary Model's focus on unity and understanding.

Among Staff
Appropriate Conversation:

- **Topic:** Personal growth and experiences
- **Example:** During a break, staff members discuss their experiences with volunteering in different communities and how these experiences have shaped their perspectives on social justice. This is appropriate as it aligns with personal growth and non-political aspects of social justice.

Inappropriate Conversation:

- **Topic:** Heated political debate
- **Example:** A group of staff members engages in a heated debate about a current political issue, taking stances and potentially creating a divisive atmosphere. Even though staff discussions about politics are not strictly forbidden, this scenario does not align with the spirit of 'soul-talk' and could impact the camp's harmonious environment.

General Guideline

The key to appropriate conversations under the Sanctuary Model is focusing on personal growth, cultural understanding, environmental stewardship, and other non-political aspects of social justice. Discussions should be respectful, inclusive, and aimed at fostering a sense of community and understanding, rather than division or debate over current political issues.