

Dealing with Tricky Parent Situations

How to stay calm, respectful, and supported when conversations get difficult

Most parents are supportive and positive, but every now and then, Age Managers may face questions, complaints, or challenges from a parent or guardian. It can feel uncomfortable—especially for volunteers—but with a few strategies and a calm mindset, you can manage the moment with confidence.

1. A parent questions your approach or decisions

- “Why isn’t my child doing more water activities?”
- “I don’t think the group is being run fairly.”

What to do:

- Stay calm and listen without interrupting
- Thank them for their feedback, even if you disagree
- Briefly explain your decision if appropriate, or say:
- “Thanks for raising that. I’ll check in with our JAC (Junior Activities Coordinator) and get back to you.”

2. A parent is upset in front of the group

- Raises voice, appears frustrated or confrontational

What to do:

- Stay respectful and avoid matching their tone
- Offer to continue the conversation away from children
- “Let’s step aside to talk about that—it’s important to me that we sort it out calmly.”

3. A parent is upset in front of the group

- Tries to take over an activity
- Ignores safety instructions or disciplines other children

What to do:

- Gently clarify roles:
- “Thanks for your help—it’s great to have support. For safety reasons, we need all instructions to come through the Age Manager.”
- Let your JAC know if it continues so the issue can be addressed more formally.

4. A parent complains about another child

- “That child pushed mine.”
- “They shouldn’t be allowed to join if they act like that.”

What to do:

- Stay neutral: “Thanks for letting me know. I’ll keep an eye on things.”
- Don’t disclose actions taken about another child—just assure them it’s being addressed.
- Report concerns to your JAC or club leadership if needed.

5. General Tips

- **Stay calm and professional** – You’re a volunteer, but you’re also a leader.
- **Stick to facts, not feelings** – Avoid getting defensive.
- **Use supportive language** – “I understand that was frustrating,” or “Let’s work through this together.”
- **Know when to refer it up** – If it feels like too much, say:
- “I think it’s best if we loop in our Junior Activities Coordinator on this.”

6. Helpful Phrases

- “I appreciate you bringing that to my attention.”
- “Let me take that on board and follow up.”
- “I’m here to make the experience safe and fun for all the kids.”
- “Would you mind if I check with the JAC and come back to you?”

Final Thought: You’re Not Alone

You’re not expected to handle every issue by yourself. If a parent interaction feels inappropriate, stressful, or unresolved—speak to your club’s JAC, Patrol Captain, or President. Supporting you is just as important as supporting the kids.

