

January 15, 2026

Statement from the Jewish Federation of Madison Executive Committee

To the Camp Shalom & Greater Madison Community:

Jewish Federation of Madison (JFM) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all members of our community—especially children entrusted to our care at Camp Shalom. Camp Shalom is a program of JFM, which has been in continuous operation for nearly 70 years. We are therefore devastated to share information about an incident that has caused harm and trauma to a camper and their family. We recognize the significant pain this has caused and are determined to respond with accountability, care, and meaningful action.

During the final days of the 2025 Camp Shalom season, JFM staff were informed of a report of sexual assault of a minor camper by an adult counselor. Camp Shalom staff reported the matter to Child Protective Services (CPS), consistent with JFM’s obligations as a mandatory reporter. CPS logged the report and a Dane County Sheriff’s Office investigator was assigned two days later. The staff member in question was subsequently sent home, directed not to return, and will never be eligible to work for any JFM program again.

While we believe that staff undertook all legally required reporting related to this incident, the JFM Executive Committee and board did not receive formal notification of the incident from JFM professional staff until December 22, 2025.

JFM and Camp Shalom take our responsibilities to our campers, their families, staff members, and the overall community very seriously. This unacceptable delay represented a serious and unacceptable breakdown in internal communication and oversight. We are profoundly sorry for the impact of our actions on the family and our community, and we are committed to making significant and appropriate reforms.

Following the mandatory reporting, the Dane County Sheriff’s Office conducted a law enforcement investigation over the course of several months which included interviews with more than 40 individuals. The Dane County Sheriff’s office ultimately referred its findings to the Dane County District Attorney’s Office, which decided not to file criminal charges.

Dane County Child Protective Services (CPS) also conducted a separate detailed investigation that concluded that the abuse of the camper was credible and substantiated. The CPS report also criticized the response from camp administrators before and after the initial mandatory reporting to CPS.

These seemingly contradictory outcomes may be confusing and deeply upsetting; however, the difference may be explained by the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard of proof required for criminal prosecution and conviction. We recognize that this distinction does not lessen the harm or the questions our community may have. Regardless of any external investigatory conclusions, JFM takes our responsibilities to everyone in our community very seriously.

We are taking immediate steps to address identified failure points and to strengthen our governance practices moving forward. This includes initiating an independent, external, and thorough review process of camp policies and operations supported and informed by subject matter experts. JFM has long maintained industry-standard safety practices, including criminal background checks,

reference checks, and a two-counselor staff rule on buses. JFM will evaluate additional safeguards pending the findings of the review.

However, we recognize that policies alone are not sufficient. Culture, training, escalation, and accountability must and will be strengthened. Going forward, we are implementing a dedicated, trauma-informed point of contact and a defined cadence for family communications, guided by outside experts, with clear escalation and oversight. We will not tolerate any harm at any time to any child entrusted to our care.

To that end, JFM is partnering with respected, experienced nonprofit organizations including Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center (Madison) and seeking advice from other experts in child safety and abuse prevention to enhance prevention, reporting, and response protocols.

This work will include:

- A comprehensive audit of camp policies, procedures, and reporting pathways
- Enhanced training for JFM leadership and all Camp Shalom staff
- Ongoing oversight and accountability measures to ensure adherence to policies and expected practices
- Updated guidance on prevention, documentation, escalation, and response practices
- External support resources for families and community members
- Confidential avenues for community members to raise additional concerns or allegations

Hearing this, you may be worried about your own child and wondering if or how to talk to them to ensure they have not been harmed in any way. We are attaching a resource to support you in having conversations with your children. [View here](#)

In addition, we have engaged Safe Harbor as an independent resource to provide support. We will continue to review additional resources to provide to the community as needed, including:

- [Safe Harbor](#), 608-661-9787
- [Dane County Child Protective Services](#), 608-261-5437
- [Dane County Sheriff's Office](#), 608-266-6014
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#), 1-800-656-4673

JFM will also extend such support to the entire local community across all programs, including with religious institutions as well as unaffiliated families who entrust their children to our care.

As an initial aspect of our commitment to restoring trust, ensuring accountability, and charting a new course forward together, we have accepted the resignations of the Jewish Federation of Madison Executive Director, Camp Shalom Director, and Jewish Federation of Madison President. We extend our appreciation for their prior service to our organization.

JFM Executive Committee will provide Camp Shalom and greater community updates on the independent review process and initial policy changes, consistent with privacy and legal guidance. This will include listening sessions in collaboration with our external partners to provide as many answers as we can to rebuild trust and to ensure that Camp Shalom can continue providing a safe, fun, and meaningful experience.

We are committed to transparency, learning from these very unfortunate events, and ensuring that our governance, protocols, culture, and leadership fully reflect our responsibility to protect children and promote a thriving Jewish community and values.

Our entire community and especially our children deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Jewish Federation of Madison Executive Committee

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