



## CAMP PREPARATION AND SAFETY

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### **Camp Preparation Checklist**

Whether your children will be attending day camp or a sleep over summer camp, they require the same guidance, assurances, and security from parents and camp counsellors. It is vitally important for parents to ask these very important questions to ensure that their children have a memorable and safe camping experience.

- Is the camp recognized and accredited through Canadian Camping Association (CCA)?
- Does the camp have medical protocol, emergency aid, and safety procedure policies?
- Will the camp counsellor give you a copy of all their policies?
- What is the camp's policy for handling emergencies, i.e. lost child, injured child, sick child, allergic reaction, food poisoning?
- Are they thoroughly familiar with the camp's protocol in case of an emergency?
- What kind of medical staff is available? Does the camp have a nurse on site and is he/she available 24/7?
- Is the camp affiliated with a medical facility and/or hospital?
- How are the medications stored, distributed and recorded?
- How are camp staff screened? Do they have the appropriate licenses, certifications and references?

- Are staff required to go through a criminal background check?
- What type of Fire Safety training is provided for the staff and counsellors to keep the campers safe? Does the camp have a plan to prevent and respond to fires? Does the camp hold Fire Drills?
- Does the camp have an evacuation procedure?
- Are staff trained to recognize and report child physical abuse and do they have a clear understanding of inappropriate disciplinary procedures?
- Are staff trained in recognizing signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse?
- What is the camp's policy on disciplining children for bad behaviour and in what type of circumstance would a parent be contacted?
- What is the ratio of staff to children? The camp counsellor should explain how supervision of the campers takes place especially for field trips, swimming and overnight camp sites
- Who supervises the children when they are near or in water? Are these people certified lifeguards? Do they have proper documentation?
- Parents should obtain all emergency contact information for camp staff.
- Are the meals and snacks nutritional?
- Is there an attendance and dismissal from camp policy? Parents should confirm with the camp counsellor how the child is to leave the camp and with whom.
- How does the camp screen visitors? Is there a method in place to make sure unauthorized visitors are not allowed access to children?
- Will the camp give my children a tour of the camp including the fun places and the areas that are off limits?



### **For Developmentally Challenged Children**

- Does the camp have the appropriate facilities, grounds and vehicles to accommodate developmentally disabled or challenged children?
- What are the additional requirements for children with cerebral palsy, autism, mental disability or epilepsy?
- What is the ratio of staff to children?
- Does the camp have a Health Director that is located on site during camp operation?

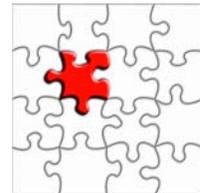
## Before your children leave for camp ensure the following issues have been addressed:

- Make sure your children receive a pre-camp physical examination by the family physician or paediatrician before they leave for camp.
- Ensure that your children's vaccinations are up to date.
- Camp staff should have a copy of your children's health history including immunization dates, medical conditions, medications, and allergies.
- Camp staff should have all emergency contacts for all children as well as the physician's name, telephone number, fax number, and the date of the child's last visit.
- Give your children plenty of sunscreen (SPF 30 or greater). Teach your children why it is so important to use sunscreen regularly especially when they are outside for prolonged periods of time. Even on cloudy or hazy days, they can still get a sunburn.
- Give your children a water bottle/canteen and discuss the importance of staying hydrated.
- Pack light-coloured, lightweight clothing that fits loosely so that body temperatures will be kept at normal levels.
- To keep the bugs at a minimum teach your children to avoid scented soaps, perfumes and hair products.
- Teach your children to be safe in the water and remind them to follow camp rules in and around pools, lakes, ponds and other bodies of water.
- Encourage your children to report any incidences of bullying, illness, injury or child abuse to staff members.



## Prepare for Homesickness before it Happens

- ▶ Determine whether your children are ready for camp. Children who have never spent a night away from home are not emotionally equipped to handle such a venture on their own without the guidance and security of their parents. If your children clearly state they have no interest in going to camp; then they are not ready. Some children are ready to go to camp particularly if they have an older sibling or close friend that will also be attending the same camp.
- ▶ Children may need some practice being away from home before they go camping. Perhaps they could spend a weekend at their grandparent's home or a week at their friend's cottage. Try to follow the same rules as a camp, for instance, if communication tools such as phone calls or emails are not permitted then do not use them while your children are away.
- ▶ Involve your children in every aspect of getting ready for camp. Which camp would they like to attend? How long would they like to stay? Does the camp suit your children's age,



interests and capabilities? Use a calendar as a visual tool to show them how long they will be at camp, when they will be leaving, and when they will be returning. Take your children shopping with you to purchase camping supplies, labels for clothing, and toiletries. Pack your children's camping bag together and don't forget to follow the camp instructions on what to pack, and how to pack it.



- ▶ Talk to your children about homesickness. Tell them that it is a normal emotion and that many people feel homesick. If you have a story you can relate to your children about the first time you went camping, or were away from home - this is a good time to do so. Tell them you understand it is hard to feel homesick but that you are confident that they can work through it. Give them some coping strategies: a family picture, special stuffed animal, a letter from Mom and Dad, etc. Teach them how to write a letter home and tell your children that you can't wait to receive a letter from them in the mail. Show them how to stay busy, make good friends, and find fun things to do.

- ▶ Tell your children to talk to their camp counsellor and other staff if they are feeling homesick so that they get the support and understanding they need.
- ▶ Parents can mail a letter to their children ahead of time so that it is waiting for them when they arrive at camp.
- ▶ When the first day arrives, make sure you arrive for drop-off according to the camp guidelines. Help your children get settled in and ask them to introduce you to the camp counsellor. Parents should stay cheerful and positive and avoid negative comments like, "I sure hope you can do this." or "How will I survive without you?" Assure them that they will have a lot of fun, make good friends and have a memorable camping holiday.
- ▶ If your children call you on the telephone in tears and ask to come home, offer them empathy and tell them that you understand how hard it is to feel homesick. Offer encouragement and tell them that you know they will feel better soon and have a good time. Remind them of the coping skills they discussed before leaving for camp. Try to instill a sense of confidence and assure them that they are in control of how they are feeling and you know that they can make it better. When the telephone call is over, place a call to the camp counsellor and tell them that your children need some extra TLC and to engage them with activities with the other children. It is a good idea to ask the Camp Counsellor for a return phone call to receive an update on how your children are doing.



## Canadian Camping Association



Canadian Camping Association  
Association des camps du Canada

**The Canadian Camping Association/Association Des Camps Du Canada (CCA/ACC)** is a non-profit, national

federation comprised of nine provincial camping associations:

British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The camps in Prince Edward Island maintain links with camps in Nova Scotia. The CCA/ACC represents over 700 camps across Canada.

The CCA/ACC is dedicated to the development, growth and promotion of organized camping. Canadian camps provide safe, healthy, nurturing, natural, recreational and educational communities. Camps contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of the campers.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- ▶ to present the image of organized camping on a national level
- ▶ to administer national camping affairs
- ▶ to act as a liaison between provincial camping associations
- ▶ to provide guidance, advocacy and resources for camping leaders
- ▶ to encourage the development and maintenance of high standards in camping and to disseminate information concerning pertinent developments and regulations
- ▶ to develop and promote research and disseminate results
- ▶ to train camping leaders through the Canadian Camp Directors Course
- ▶ to administer a national awards program



### **CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAMP**

Choosing the right camp from among the number and variety of camps available can be overwhelming. Parents need to begin by talking with their child and together creating a list of requirements and expectations. Consider:

- ▶ The child's interests and the activities he hopes to experience at camp
- ▶ The desired characteristics of the campsite.
- ▶ The distance from home that is acceptable to the child and his family
- ▶ The length of stay.
- ▶ The child's physical, medical, dietary and emotional needs.
- ▶ Whether the child is willing to go alone or prefers to go with a friend
- ▶ Whether a single sex or co-ed camp is preferred
- ▶ Whether a secular or religiously-based camp is preferred
- ▶ The limitations of the family's budget. Provincial Camping Associations provide information on available financial assistance.

Parents often ask at what age a child should begin overnight camp; however, considering readiness is more significant than age.

- ▶ Can the child make his own bed and look after his own belongings?
- ▶ Has the child spent a night away from home at a friend or grandparents' house?
- ▶ Is the child asking to go to camp?
- ▶ Has the child attended day camp? Day camp is an introduction to some aspects of the overnight camp experience – meeting new friends, being cared for by a counsellor and participating in camp activities with other children

## NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL CONTACT LIST

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**Canadian Camping Association** ([www.ccamping.org](http://www.ccamping.org))  
Email: [info@ccamping.org](mailto:info@ccamping.org)  
Contact: Jeff Bradshaw (*President*) [jeff@campwenonah.com](mailto:jeff@campwenonah.com)

**British Columbia** ([www.bccamping.org](http://www.bccamping.org))  
Email: [president@bccamping.org](mailto:president@bccamping.org)  
Contact: Bronco Cathcart (*President*)

**Alberta** ([www.albertacamping.com](http://www.albertacamping.com))  
Email: [info@albertacamping.com](mailto:info@albertacamping.com)  
Contact: Michele George (*Executive Director*)

**Saskatchewan** ([www.saskcamping.ca](http://www.saskcamping.ca))  
Email: [info@saskcamping.ca](mailto:info@saskcamping.ca)  
Contact: Donna Wilkinson (*Executive Director*) [donnaw@sasktel.net](mailto:donnaw@sasktel.net)

**Manitoba** ([www.mbcamping.ca](http://www.mbcamping.ca))  
Email: [info@mbcamping.ca](mailto:info@mbcamping.ca)  
Contact: Bryan Ezako (*Executive Director*)

**Ontario** ([www.ontariocamps.ca](http://www.ontariocamps.ca))  
Email: [info@ontariocamps.ca](mailto:info@ontariocamps.ca)  
Contact: Heather Heagle (*Executive Director*) [heather@ontariocamps.ca](mailto:heather@ontariocamps.ca)

**Quebec** ([www.camps.qc.ca](http://www.camps.qc.ca))  
Email: [info@camps.qc.ca](mailto:info@camps.qc.ca)  
Contact: Eric Beauchemin (*Executive Director*)

**New Brunswick** ([www.nbcamping.ca](http://www.nbcamping.ca))  
Email: [president@nbcamping.com](mailto:president@nbcamping.com)  
Contact: Stephane Richard (*President*) [stephanerichard@diabetes.ca](mailto:stephanerichard@diabetes.ca)

**Nova Scotia** ([www.campingns.ca](http://www.campingns.ca))  
Email: [info@campingns.ca](mailto:info@campingns.ca)  
Contact: Michael LeDuc (*President*) [Michael\\_LeDuc@ymca.ca](mailto:Michael_LeDuc@ymca.ca)

## Newfoundland/Labrador

Phone: (709) 686-2363/ (709) 686-9648

Contact: Malcolm Turner (*President*)



## THE MEANING OF CAMP ACCREDITATION

- ▶ Each provincial camping association determines comprehensive standards and administers an accreditation program to ensure a safe and healthy experience for the children and youth attending camps in their province.
- ▶ All camps are obliged to meet minimum regulations dictated by provincial and federal legislation in areas such as health care, food service, fire safety, transportation, boat and water safety, employment standards and building codes. However, accredited camps voluntarily abide by additional standards, which are deemed best practices by camping experts in areas such as safety, program, leadership and management practices.
- ▶ Regularly, provincial camping associations review their standards and revise them when needed to reflect current trends and changes in legislation.
- ▶ Each and every day, accredited camps commit to uphold the hundreds of standards that ensure the highest quality experience for children and youth in their care.

To obtain more information such as:

- The benefits of camping,
- How to choose a camp,
- How to register,
- How to prepare your children before camp, and
- What to expect once your children go to camp

please click on [www.ccamping.org](http://www.ccamping.org). They have a really wonderful website! It's one stop shopping for all your camping needs, inquiries, and that all-important – peace of mind!

You can also download a free copy of a complete handbook for camp parents: *Camp, The Best Time of a Child's Life!* on the Our Kids Go To Camp website. Written by Catherine Ross, CCA/ACC Executive Member.

