

For more information, dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000 /www.childcareinfo.org

Summer Camps

It's never too early to think about your child's plans for the summer. Summer camps offer children:

- A fun opportunity to try new activities and meet new friends
- A safe place to enjoy summer while families are working

Summer camps are not a “one size fits all” decision. There are many options to consider: day, overnight, and specialty.

Day Camps:

- Provide campers with various activities during daytime hours
- Not as expensive as overnight camp
- Many day camps serve children aged 5 and older
- Some may service children as young as 3 years old
- Typical hours are 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
- Many day camps offer extended hours for working families

Overnight Camps:

- Provide children with an overnight camping experience
- Create a close sense of community
- Typically serve children 7 years and older
- Can be located close by or in another state
- Are usually more costly than day camps



Specialty Camps:

- Provide a more specialized experience for your child: horseback riding, hands on science, computers, basketball skills and more
- May offer half day or full day programs
- Serve children of various ages and abilities
- Are designed to meet a child's or family's unique needs: faith based, bereavement, ADD, autism, academic and more



There are over 1,000 day and overnight camps throughout the state of Connecticut. So how do you narrow down your search? Together as a family, you can consider the following:

- Your child's personality and interests (sports, arts, drama, music, academics, etc.)
- Your child's special needs or limitations (academics, health, social skills, etc.)
- The experiences your child wishes to have
- The amount of structure suitable for your child
- Whether your child is a first time or veteran camper
- Preference of co-ed camp or all-girls or all-boys
- Camp size
- Your budget
- Camp schedule
- Location

After you decide what type of camp best meets your needs, contact 2-1-1 Child Care. Child Care Referral Specialists can assist you with referrals to licensed and license exempt camps throughout Connecticut.

Once you have made your selections, contact the camps and ask the following questions:

- Are you licensed by the State Department of Public Health?

Licensed camps must follow many regulations that help to assure the health and safety of campers. Licensed camps must have local approval from the health department and fire marshal. Each camp is inspected yearly by Department of Public Health staff.

- Are you accredited by the American Camping Association?

Camps that are ACA accredited comply with up to 300 standards. This accreditation is voluntary and assures families that camps have gone beyond basic requirements for health, cleanliness, and food service.

- What are your goals, policies, and philosophy?
- What is unique about your camp?
- How long has the camp been operating?
- What are your daily activities?
- What happens if the weather is bad?
- What is the tuition? Are there additional fees?
- Is financial aid available for campers?
- Do you accept Care 4 Kids? (CT's subsidy program for eligible families)
- Is transportation provided?



- Is there a refund policy?
- What is the staff to camper ratio?
- What is the education level and past experiences of your counselors?
- What type of background checks are conducted on all camp employees?
- What training has your staff received?
- Are counselors trained in First Aid and CPR?
- How do you handle both minor medical needs as well as emergencies?
- What accommodations are made for children with special needs?
(Keep in mind that camps can accommodate your child's special needs only if they are aware of them)
- Is there a doctor or nurse on staff? On call?
- Do you administer medication?
(Some camps do not administer medication)
- How do you meet the needs of children with allergies (bee stings, food, chemicals, etc)?



- Do you provide meals? If so, how are they prepared?
- What kind of insurance do you have?
- Who maintains the campgrounds and facility?
- How does the camp maintain safety, security, and supervision?
- What is the procedure for allowing deliveries or visitors to enter the camp?
- Will transportation be offered? If so, what supervision is provided on the bus or vans?
- What percentage of campers return? What percentage of counselors return?

Day camp or overnight camp?

Some children may want to attend an overnight camp. Before making that decision, families need to determine if their child is ready for that type of experience. In addition, the parents need to decide if they are ready for their child to be away from home for an extended period. Keep in mind that any uneasy feelings you might have can be sensed by your child. Some camps provide day camp services for children of all ages, but an overnight experience for certain ages. If you decide that you and your child are ready for an overnight camp, the benefits for your child can include:

- the opportunity to experience new things
- the development of independence, coping and social skills
- and memories to last a lifetime

Here are some questions to ask the overnight camp director:

- Where do the children sleep?
- How are the campers supervised?
- Is a counselor with the children at all times?
- Where are the toilets, sinks, and showers located?
- What are the policies regarding calls from home, receiving packages, visitation, etc.?



Resources to help you in your search for summer camps:

www.childcareinfo.org

www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Youth_camps/youthcamps.htm

www.acacamps.org/newengland

www.summercamps.com

www.kidscamps.com

www.ctcare4kids.com

