

# FAQs - Frequently Asked Questions

## **Staffing Information / Qualifications:**

### **Q: Who are the camp staff? How are staff members trained?**

A: Our staff is comprised of young men and women with a sincere interest in helping children learn and grow in a safe, and fun environment. All of our staff are certified in basic first aid, adult, child and infant CPR, and Lifeguarding (both pool and waterfront). Many staff members are also certified with higher levels of first aid, professional CPR, and wilderness first aid. Many of our staff are professionals in the education field, and many are students. The average age of our staff is twenty one and they come from all over the world, which lends a cultural cohesiveness found nowhere else! Staff is selected based on many criteria including previous experience and credentials in our program activities. During an intensive pre-camp orientation period lasting one to two weeks, staff expand on their own experiences regarding program areas, and participate in workshops dealing with topics such as behavioral management, problem solving, special programs, creativity, etc.

### **Q: What is your staff to camper ratio?**

A: 1:5 overall. This does change throughout the day based on the level of risk in particular programs. Whitewater Kayaking for example will never have more than a 1 to 4 ratio because of the risk potential. On the other hand, cooperative games may have a 1 to 10 ratio due to lower risk level.

### **Q: When are campers supervised?**

A: All campers are supervised most of the time with the exception of running errands or going to the bathrooms with their buddy. All camp activities are staff led and supervised. Staff live in the campsites with the group. At NO TIME during the night are campers left alone in the campsites. There is a buddy system in place to insure that each camper is accounted for. Parents have the right to request to see staff certifications and qualifications.

### **Q: What about tipping?**

A: Our Staff is comprised of students & teachers and as such rely heavily on the income they generate during the summer!! They have elected to work with your children for long hours, working tirelessly during your child's stay at camp to ensure they are safe, having fun and are making memories that will last a lifetime. Any tip is greatly appreciated!!! Please put your tip in an envelope with your child's counselors name on it and give it to the counselor on the last day of camp. All tips are split amongst the Junior and Senior staff member that worked with *your* child. Thank you for your generosity!!

## **General Camp Information:**

### **Q. Required Paperwork?**

A. On the website there is the medical waiver and additional equipment lists and waivers you will need to fill out for your child's stay at camp. The medical form must be signed and filled out by child's physician at physical. **Paperwork must be completed in full and returned by June 24th!** Balances are due on June 24th also. **Any family who turns in paperwork at camp drop off should expect to also turn in a check or cash to cover the \$25 late paperwork administration fee. No exceptions.**

### **Q. Why a Native American theme at camp?**

A. If we all learned from the attitude and lifestyle of the American Indian- "We would live in balance, Walk with pride, we would respect all living things and our decisions would be based on how the action would affect the seventh generation". In camp we work on four qualities, **Respect** (others, self & nature), **Circle** (circle of friends, relationships & life), **Sharing** (of yourself with others and with nature), **Silence** (learning by listening). These qualities represent our circle of friends and how we want to grow up! Ask your kids what they mean to them.

**Questions and Answers about your camper and their camp session:**

**Q: What age groups are represented, and in what percentages?**

A: We have recently expanded our day camp program to offering two half-day sessions for 4-5 year olds! Camper ages will typically range from 6-17. Campers are grouped in co-ed groups according to age. Our Trailblazer campers tend to be older since it is the more focused, traveling resident camp program.

**Q: Where do campers sleep?**

A: Campers sleep in tents most of the time. Some tents are 2 people others are up to 4 people. While on out-of-camp trips they sleep under tarps or in tents, which they learn to set up. We do have access to shelter for bad weather.

**Q: Do campers have to swim?**

A: No! Programs are there for them if they want to participate. If a child is not going to swim, they still must have their swimming abilities evaluated on opening day in order to participate in any activity that involves water (even kayaking) We encourage everyone to try, but always follow our "Challenge By Choice" philosophy.

**Q: What do campers bring to camp?**

A: Please see the equipment list provided in your confirmation materials, since they are specific to your child's session. Please don't hesitate to call with questions regarding equipment!

**Q. What about electronic games, radios, IPODS, cell phones, and other gadgets?**

A: Absolutely not! These are the things we are trying to get away from. Please don't pack them as they will get taken away during your child's stay at camp. No exceptions. Parents are welcome to call the office to check in on their children, but we do not want campers with phones at camp.

**Q: What kind of medical facilities does the camp have and where is the nearest hospital?**

A: All camp staff are certified in CPR, Wilderness First Aid (or higher) & Lifeguard Training. The camp has an on-site first aid quarters staffed by either an RN, EMT, nursing student, professional rescuer, or Health Care Supervisor who follows standing orders from the camp doctor or Camp Nurse. Our in-depth Health Care Plan and standing orders are approved by the Camp Physician who is located in Westfield and monitors our Health Care. All basic first aid and routine health care are handled in camp by your child's staff members. Campers that need to be taken to the doctor's office or emergency room, or have continuous or severe health problems have their parents/guardians notified as soon as the details of the situation are available. The Southwick Ambulance and Rescue service is 2 minutes away from our Southwick program headquarters, and Noble Hospital is 10 minutes away in Westfield. Campers must have on file an up to date physical (within last 18months) and copy of updated and current immunizations. If immunizations are not up to date parents must inform camp staff at registration and exemption paperwork must be completed. Parents are responsible for communicating any special considerations, concerns (medical or behavioral) to staff PRIOR to session start date.

**Q: Where do the campers come from? That is, are they local, national, international?**

A: All over the world! Our most popular cities are Granby, Westfield, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. From there we have campers from all up and down the east coast, several from Florida. We have even had campers from Texas, Taiwan, California, Brazil, Bahamas, France, Germany, England, and Spain!

**Q: What kind of living/eating/recreational facilities does the program offer?**

A: **Living:** Campers live in tents at their campsite. Staff tents are set up nearby campers.

**Eating:** Our Campers eat "family" style with their staff in their campsites. Meals are prepared by the group on an open fire or camping stove. Clean up is also done as a team by the campers. Staff closely supervise this process. Meals and snacks are meant to be nourishing, easy to prepare, and are planned to meet a wide variety of likes (hopefully avoiding dislikes). We have a full service kitchen if it is needed. If your child has any special requirements we recommend talking with our camp director.

**Recreational:** Our facilities consist of a main building with partial kitchen, a group shelter/dining area, indoor solar showers, camp office, two maintenance and equipment storage areas, two large playing fields, activity porch, indoor heated pool with changing facilities, and secured tarp shelters with picnic tables.

## **CAMP POLICY**

### **Q: How are behavioral problems handled? What is the camp policy regarding discipline?**

A: We do not "suspend" or in any other way limit a child's participation in camp activities unless his or her behavior causes disruption or harm to another child or children. A well-run camp program will keep children fully involved and allow little time for campers to become bored. In addition the program must be balanced enough to prevent campers from becoming overtired. These are two main factors that can lead to behavioral problems. Our program is designed to address these key factors, and in addition with our smaller enrollment and low staff to camper ratio we are more able to pick up on tired and bored campers *before* a problem arises.

Campers that have severe behavioral problems that continuously disrupt camp life are sent home. These are extreme cases and happen rarely, but it should be noted that the camp is here for ALL children and cannot be successful if one child begins to demand all of the staff's time and effort. Milder behavioral problems are handled with "in-camp" tried and true methods that fit the "crime". Often we will try to give the child MORE supervised responsibility to improve behavior, an example of this is a child that has trouble fitting in with his peers may be put in "charge" of some minor task that is now "their" responsibility. It is amazing how children can rise to the challenge! Occasionally we need to give some children "time-out" in the office or at a picnic table. This time-out is limited to no more than one activity period at a time. Disruptive children in high-risk areas are not allowed to participate until behavior permits them to do so safely. An example of this is in the climbing program: Campers that do not follow the safety procedures are removed from the group until their behavior deems it is safe for them to continue. Continuous disruptive behavior in this area will cause campers to be permanently removed from the program with no discount. Parents are always contacted if there is a possibility of their child being sent home from camp. Any parent or agency that signs up a child and withholds information regarding, the child's special needs or medical concerns, will be dealt with in a most serious manner. The director must accept all special needs children into the program. Parents must call and speak with the director, so we can be sure all parties will benefit from this experience. We don't want to set kids up for failure! Parents have the right to review our health care, discipline policies and grievance procedures upon request.

### **Q: What are the safety regulations? What kind of supervision is provided?**

A: Safety regulations are imposed in general camp activities as well as the different program areas. These safety issues are made known to all campers on opening day and at the beginning of each activity the first time they attend. General safety regulations are noted on the camp policies. All policies are made with camper's well being in mind and none are imposed with the intent to make any camper miserable! Policies include such things as: no sandals on hiking trails around camp, no throwing anything especially rocks, treat all people nicely, water shoes in lakes and rivers, no swearing or spitting, etc. Parents with specific questions may contact the Director at any time to discuss any of the camp policies. Campers are supervised at all times during their stay at the camp. Campers are never left alone at night in the cabins or campsites. High-risk activities are limited to low numbers of campers for safety reasons. Disruptive children in high-risk areas are not allowed to participate until behavior permits them to do so safely.

### **Q: Can campers use the phone? What about email?**

A: NO. Phone calls to the campers are not permitted. We have found through the years that the majority of homesickness occurs with the PARENTS, not the campers! We invite you to call the Director as often as you need to check in and insure your camper is doing well. Please do not request to talk with your child's counselor as they are not in the office, they are out with the kids! We will contact your child's counselor if you have major concerns and arrange for them to call you or we will pass a message.

### **Q: Can the camper have visitors?**

A: No. Wilderness Experiences Unlimited does not have visiting days during the summer season. Our program is set up to be flexible for campers to make choices about what they will do during their stay. This includes many out of camp activities by the hour, day or two days. Parents and visitors that "drop-in" will not always find their child in camp! The most important reason for restricting visits to campers is that a camper goes through a period of adjustment when they arrive at camp. For some campers the transition from home to camp is a difficult one. Once campers have made this adjustment they adapt very well and a visitor can disrupt this transition causing the camper to have to start all over again!

**Q: How does the staff handle homesickness?**

A: As previously stated, most homesickness is with the parents, not the campers! When handled properly, camper homesickness disappears within a few hours at camp. Our policies are to keep enrollment small to allow for overall camper supervision (potential homesickness easily spotted and prevented), keeping campers busy (we never have hours of free time for campers to wander aimlessly!), keeping campers involved (letting them make many of their own decisions about their activities), close counselor interaction (the staff is THERE for them, not on time off or away in program while campers are in cabins during times like rest hour and at night), and finally by keeping the focus on the "now" rather than on home.

Campers that begin to develop homesickness are talked to about all the fun things they will do at camp, what they have already done and accomplished, etc. Long discussions about "mommy and daddy and the family pets" etc. can lead the child to think mainly about what they miss, not what they are doing now or what they can look forward to doing. Nearly 95 percent of the time this diminishes or eliminates homesickness. Parents are encouraged to write to their campers and include telling their child how proud they are that they are doing so well in camp and look forward to hearing all about it when they come home, and NOT to write about how they miss them and can't wait for them to come back! As also stated elsewhere, feel free to call the Directors any time during your child's stay, we will be happy to give you detailed and honest reports about your child and their activities here at camp!

**Q. What kind of rules are there?**

We want the camp to be fun for everyone and to run as smoothly as possible. Therefore, we have instilled some important rules that must be adhered to. We expect all Camp Community members to be supportive of their fellow members at all times.

Each group creates a **Full Value Contract** - Which are the rules the groups expects each member to follow during the week, all members agree to this contract "the contract" is referred to if problems arise. Smoking, drinking alcohol, the use of drugs, sneaking out after lights out, and other unacceptable behavior are all strictly prohibited. If a camper fails to follow camp rules, he or she will be expelled immediately **with no refund**.

Failure to follow all reasonable directions of any staff member is also grounds for dismissal without refund. At Wilderness Experiences Unlimited, we believe in a cooperative spirit. Therefore, all campers are asked to work together and do some light chores such as cooking and cleaning throughout the session. These will be on a rotating basis, and never take up too much time. They can even be fun! :-)

**The fine print:**

This camp must comply with regulations of the MDPH & be licensed by the LBOH.

ALL FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY OUR OFFICE NO LATER THAN JUNE 24TH

OUTSTANDING BALANCES DUE ON JUNE 24TH. LATE PAYMENTS AND PAPERWORK WILL RESULT IN A \$25 ADMINISTRATIVE FEE APPLIED TO YOUR ACCOUNT.

THERE IS A \$25 SWITCHED SESSION FEE FOR ANY / ALL CHANGES IN REGISTRATION (once initial deposit has been paid)

THE 25% DEPOSIT IS NON-REFUNDABLE & NON-TRANSFERABLE. ENTIRE CAMP TUITION WILL BE HELD FOR ALL CANCELLATIONS MADE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF CAMP START DATE.

Camp programs are non-transferrable and non-refundable, if your child misses days of camp, we will miss them, but are not able to credit your account.

**At the end of camp your child will be tired, dirty and proud!**

Give them a hero's welcome at home!

They have just accomplished some major growing!!

***If you feel we could have done something better - Please tell us.***

***If you feel we did a great job -Tell all your friends, relatives, & coworkers.***

