



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR THE SUMMER OF THEIR LIFE

A Guide to Overnight Camp

YMCA CAMP CARSON

# Contact Us.

## Camp Address:

2034 Outer Lake Road  
Princeton, IN 47670

## Camp email:

[carsonoffice@ymcacampcarson.org](mailto:carsonoffice@ymcacampcarson.org)

Email us throughout the year. This is the best option for contacting us regarding registration questions and concerns.

## Camp Office Phone:

812-385-3597

During camp season this is the best way to contact us for urgent matters. You can also contact us here to talk to camp leadership about your camper's experience

## Camp Website:

[www.campcarson.org](http://www.campcarson.org)

Check out our website for more information on camp and register online!

## Social Media:

Instagram: [@ymcacampcarson](https://www.instagram.com/ymcacampcarson)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/campcarson>

We post weekly tips and FAQs in the Spring, to help you and your camper prepare for Camp!

Table of Contents

The YMCA Camp Carson Experience

- Mission & Program
- Staff
- Facilities
- Financial Assistance

Camp activities & ACE at Camp Carson

Safety & Health

Important details for parents

Check-in & Check-out information

3

5

8

10

13

# The YMCA Camp Carson Experience

**OUR MISSION:** The YMCA of Southwestern Indiana, Inc., following the example of Jesus Christ, responds to community needs by serving all people, especially youth, through relationships and activities that promote healthy spirit, mind and body.

## Life Skills and Values

At the core of our program is the cabin group and the lessons that come from living together with 12 other people. Through this experience, campers learn life skills and values that will serve them throughout their life. Our focus and guarantee that your child will learn more about the character values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, Faith, and Responsibility while at camp helps set us apart from other experiences. We also focus on creating an environment where campers are accepted, challenged, and empowered (ACE).

**ACE** is at the heart of everything we do. We firmly believe that if campers feel **accepted** and know they belong, they are much more willing to stretch their comfort zones and take on the **challenges** at camp. It is our hope that self-confidence gained through these challenges will **empower** our campers to take home an awareness of how they can facilitate acceptance in daily living as well as the confidence to take on any challenge they face.

To implement ACE, we are very intentional about every aspect of camp. Whether it be at an activity area or with a cabin group, we are committed to developing young people who are caring, responsible, honest, respectful and of strong faith.

- Campers know they are accepted and learn to accept those that are different from them, and this environment enables our campers to truly stretch their comfort zones and take on new challenges without fearing embarrassment should they not reach their initial goal.
- With everyone at camp cheering for each other through thick and thin, campers discover it's OK to try and try again. With each challenge attempted, self-confidence grows stronger.
- This self-confidence leads to a tremendous feeling of empowerment which translates on to all sorts of situations - meeting new people, holding a conversation, trying out for a sport, a choir, debate team...
- Ultimately, we hope campers strive to always ensure others feel accepted, take on new challenges, grow in confidence and self-esteem and leave camp feeling empowered to take on some of the bigger challenges that they encounter in the journey of life.

## Staff

Our Staff is comprised of young adults who complete at least one week of specialized training each year. Staff are chosen for maturity, commitment to children's growth and a love for making a difference. We also partner with international camp organizations to hire counselors from around the globe. We typically have 8-10 countries represented each Summer, and campers love learning about other cultures and countries.

## Facilities

YMCA Camp Carson sits on 300 acres of property, with over 8 miles of trails that are utilized for various activities (horseback, dirt bikes, mountain bikes and hiking). However, the core camp activities are located in a central 40-acre area around Lake Seminole. This includes the Camper Cabins, Dining Hall, a staffed Healthcare facility, Boathouse, and Lodge. Campers sleep in modern cabins that still have a rustic and homey feel of camp. Cabins house 12 campers and 3 staff, with a restroom in the cabin.

## Affordability for all

As a YMCA, we realize families have differing abilities to pay for camp and have instituted a 3 rate pricing option. The camp program is the same regardless of the rate you choose, and we trust families to best select the rate they are able to pay. Rates B and C are subsidized by generous donors.

RATE A - The actual cost of providing a week of camp for a child. If you're able to pay this amount, please do.

Rate B - This rate offers a partial subsidy for the camper.

Rate C - This rate offers a larger subsidy for the camper.

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

It is our desire to make camp accessible to all families. Through many generous donors, funds are raised each year to provide scholarships toward a camp experience. Assistance is awarded based on income level on a sliding scale, dependent on number of persons in the household. Extenuating circumstances are also considered.

### FOSTER CARE SCHOLARSHIP

A kind donor has provided funding to offer summer camp scholarships to young people in Foster Care.

### C4 MILITARY CAMPER SCHOLARSHIP

To provide partial scholarship funds for NEW campers from Military families. These scholarships are made possible by a generous donor who established this fund for this purpose.

### FENNEMAN SCHOLARSHIP

Thanks to special donors, these partial scholarships (50% off Rate A) are offered to middle income families who do not qualify for traditional financial assistance. Requirements include community service hours, good grades and a good citizenship rating at school. Available to first time Camp Carson families.

**PLEASE NOTE:** In order to help as many campers as possible, Scholarships are awarded for one week of camp, except for the LIT and CIT which are two week programs.

Financial Assistance applications are available at <https://www.campcarson.org/financial-assistance>.

### REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Please see our website to register for the current summer, view session dates and program rates at [campcarson.org/summer-dates-and-rates](https://www.campcarson.org/summer-dates-and-rates).

# Camp Activities

## BASIC SCHEDULE

7:00am Get Ready for the Day  
 7:40am Chapel for Morning Inspiration  
 8:00am Breakfast  
 8:45am Cabin Clean Up  
 9:15am Activity Areas  
 12:15pm Lunch  
 1:15pm Rest Hour  
 2:15pm Cabin Activities/Free Swim  
 5:30pm Dinner  
 6:15pm Rec Hour/Evening Program  
 8:30pm Showers/Devotions  
 10:00pm Lights Out

**CAMPERS DESIGN THEIR ACTIVITY SCHEDULE:** Our unique morning program design creates the opportunity for campers to experience the true freedom of choice on activity selection.

## WATERFRONT ACTIVITIES ALL AGES 7-16

BLOB	ZIP LINE	ROLLING LOGS	ROCKIT*
TOM SAWYER SWING	RINGS*	TRAPEZE*	KAYAKING*
SWIM SHALLOW END	WATER CANNON	WATER BASKETBALL	CORCL
CANOEING	SLIDE*	WATER GAMES	PADDLE BOARDS
WATER VOLLEYBALL	SAILING**	SWIMMING - DEEP END*	

Off-site Canoe trips for Ridge Top cabins.

\* Must be a band swimmer, camper has passed the swim test.

\*\* Can sail with a staff member if not a band swimmer.

## LAND ACTIVITIES ALL AGES 7-16

FISHING	ARTS & CRAFTS	WOODWORKING	GAGA
ARCHERY	CLIMBING WALL	SOCCER	SAND VOLLEYBALL
NATURE	BLACK HOLE	BASKETBALL	
RIFLES	HUMAN FOOSBALL	GIANT SWING	

POTTERY - TABLE HAND BUILDING PROJECTS

AGES 8 and up (except LIT and CIT)

- Horseback Trail Riding - available to OVERNIGHT campers at an additional fee

AGES 11 and up

- Pottery Wheel
- 55' Alpine Climbing Tower
- Mountain Bikes - Feet must be able to touch the ground while seated on the bike.
- Dirt Bike Trail Riding (Returning Dirt Bikes) - Available to Traditional and LIT campers at an additional fee, after completion of First Year Dirt Bikes at Camp Carson.

## MORE THAN AN ACTIVITY

Through intentional use of things like our ACE concept, we strive to ensure that while campers are at program areas, they are learning so much more than just an activity skill.

Throughout their participation, they are also learning life skills such as teamwork, communication and problem solving. We also intentionally focus on increasing camper understanding of the YMCA core values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and faith.

## CHALLENGE BY CHOICE AT ACTIVITIES

Our "challenge by choice" philosophy encourages campers to stretch their comfort zones and discover they can do so much more than they imagined. Campers receive lots of encouragement to "go for it" but in the end, it's always the camper's choice to take on the challenge before them.

## ONGOING SKILL DEVELOPMENT OPTION

Campers can choose to participate in activities from a simply recreational perspective or work on the recognition skill development program which we track throughout their years at camp. Most of our activity areas have 5 skill level to achieve. At the end of the week, a certificate goes home for each level achieved.

## GETTING TO ACTIVITIES

While camp covers a 300-acre property with over 7 miles of trails, the core camp activities are located in the heart of camp. Lots of open space makes it easy for campers to identify their destination as they move from activity to activity - spending more time "being there" not "getting there".

Campers travel from activity to activity with a "truddy" which could campers or staff. Program team members are stationed in all areas to ensure that campers find their way to their next activity destination.

## FREEDOM OF CHOICE BENEFITS

Campers have complete freedom to choose the activities they wish to participate in and the amount of time they spend there. There are numerous benefits for your child with this system.

- Campers are able to explore and give lots of things a try including activities they may not have been aware of prior to camp.
- Campers who find interest in some activities more than others are able to spend more time there as opposed to being stuck all week at an activity he/she does not enjoy.
- Campers may come to camp with a friend but they may not be interested in all the same things. With teamwork, respect and cooperation, open schedule allows campers to pursue his/her individual interests.
- Campers who are go-getters can challenge themselves to try every activity and earn lots of skill levels, concentrate on upper levels at their favorite activities or both. For those who enjoy a more relaxed pace, they are also able to fine tune skills in focused areas of interest.
- One incentive we offer is the Carson Junior Award which is given to every camper who earns the first level at our core activity areas. The first level usually takes 20-30 minutes, and on Wednesday-Friday, they can easily move through several activity areas. We track skill levels from year to year so campers can continue to develop upper level skills and work towards the Carson Senior and Rocker awards.
- All campers will learn and exercise the important life skills of decision making and goal setting. Because they are free to explore, they will discover a lot of things about themselves and most importantly gain the confidence to keep trying new things and taking on challenges when they return home.

## ACTIVITY PROGRAMMING IN A WEEK OF CAMP

- On Sunday afternoon, campers will go on a camp tour with their cabin to see all of the activities available to them. On Monday and Tuesdays our campers move through zones at camp. There are three zones on Monday and Tuesday, each with four activities that they will have open choice to attend. Campers can experience all our activities with a smaller group of campers. This allows them to learn our signing in/out procedures and moving through programming with “truddys.” Campers then build their confidence and knowledge of camp to prepare them for programming the rest of the week.
- By Wednesday, we hope they have become comfortable at camp and are now more confident to try a new activity or pursue more skill levels at an activity they have already tried. For this reason, the Wednesday through Friday morning schedule moves to an “Open Choice” format. Open choice allows campers to move between activities at a pace of their choosing – they can stay at an activity for as little or as long as they wish. Campers sign in and out of each activity area and there are several staff available to ensure campers can find their way to their next activity.

## CAMPER BEHAVIOR POLICIES

We maintain a consistent behavioral policy across all of our programs. On the first day of camp, all campers learn about the guidelines, boundaries, and rules of camp. Staff take time to let campers know the boundaries of acceptable behaviors. Then, each cabin creates its own Cabin Agreement with guidance from their cabin counselors, allowing them to develop their own rules for they will treat each other during their time at camp.

Our first priority is to maintain the safety of all campers and staff members at camp. We do have behaviors and situations that can result in the dismissal of a campers and include (but may not be limited to) the following:

- Bullying (physical, psychological, emotional, etc.) including hate speech.
- Aggressive and inappropriate physical contact
- Possession of drugs and paraphernalia, alcohol, tobacco (including vapes), or weapons (including knives or other dangerous items).
- Endangerment to self or others
- Verbal threats to campers or staff.
- Running away at camp.
- Stealing.
- Destruction of property and other’s belongings.
- Any behavior that violates the safety of others.

An important way to set your camper up for success is to set the expectations of appropriate behaviors prior to their arrival to camp. We encourage sharing these policies with your camper, so they feel prepared. We also ask that you share any concerns that you may have about your camper’s behavior with our director team so we may support them. Please note that refunds will not be issued for campers asked to leave YMCA Camp Carson, and dismissal is at the complete discretion of the executive director.

## CAMPER BEHAVIOR – ENCOURAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR AND PREVENTING UNSAFE BEHAVIOR

We believe that through our programming and extensive training that our staff members experience – we can create a positive camp experience for all. All behaviors – whether they have a positive or negative impact – have underlying functions. We practice mitigation in our programs by eliminating opportunities in our control of functions that produce undesirable behaviors. We believe that high quality programming that offers choice, positive relationships, and confidence is a major preventative tool and encourages positive outcomes. This means that our camp leadership team stays up to date on camp standards and youth development tools, utilizing a range of evidence-informed tools and resources that support the safety, emotionally and physically, of campers. From meals to camp activities to camp traditions, you can expect these features across our camp.

If you have specific concerns about camper behaviors – from past behavior issues to new challenges – we ask that you let our director team know ahead of time. This offers us an opportunity to explain our approaches in further



detail, answer questions you may have and communicate any concerns you may have with our frontline summer staff who will be caring for your campers.

### CAMPER BEHAVIOR – HANDLING UNSAFE BEHAVIOR

In the event that a camper exhibits a behavior that does not align with our policies, the steps below help guide our actions. Please note that if at any point, any behavior escalates into described behaviors above, some of these steps may be streamlined and brought to the attention of the director team and camper's family immediately. All behavior issues are different handled on a case-by-case basis by our director team.

#### FIRST INSTANCE:

- A supervisor will be alerted and may provide immediate guidance and initiate a phone call home. This phone call aims to alert parents of the camper's behavior, the next steps, timeline and gain insight from parents.
- Staff members will immediately stop and identify the unsafe behavior with the camper(s), and the camper may be asked to step away from their current programming. The goal of this conversation is for the camper to understand why it is not tolerated and to prevent the behavior from reoccurring. The behavioral specialist will be looped in and advise as needed.
- After the conversation has concluded and expectations for future behavior has been set, the director team will share these with the camper's family.

#### SECOND INSTANCE:

- All previous steps will be repeated as needed. Parents/guardians will be called.
- A Behavior Contract will be completed, if this has not yet been done, with the camper and staff members outlining the future expectations and consequences of positive versus unsafe behavior.
- An incident report documenting the behavior, conversations with both the camper and family members, and outcomes will be completed to have on file if necessary.
- Our Director Team will advise on the ongoing behavior issues.

#### THIRD INSTANCE:

- When a camper's behavior has persisted and not improved, additional behaviors arise, behavior negatively impacts the experience of other campers or staff or is becoming dangerous to themselves or others, all previous steps will be repeated as needed, including contacting the camper's family.
- Additionally, the director team will formulate either a solution that may keep the camper in camp, or if this is not an option (at discretion of executive director), they will formulate a plan with the camper's family to plan pick up from camp for the remainder of the camp session.

## Safety & Health

Our first priority is the safety and health of your camper. We have strict safety protocol at all activities, especially the waterfront. Our new Health Center is staffed through the summer by two medical staff available to campers 24 hours a day. Please read below for additional detail.

### CERTIFICATION AND STANDARDS

YMCA Camp Carson adheres to the very highest in health and safety standards and is proud to be accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA). ACA accreditation is maintained by the camp's affirmation of continued compliance with applicable ACA standards and state and federal laws by submitting an annual Statement of Compliance, completing an annual Accreditation Report, and participates in the peer review visit at least once every five years. Developed exclusively for the camp profession, this nationally recognized program has been formulated to promote safe and professional practices in all aspects of camp operation including site, health and safety, food service, staff and program quality. YMCA Camp Carson has voluntarily submitted to this independent appraisal done by camping experts and has earned this mark of distinction.

### CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT AT CAMP

At YMCA Camp Carson, summer camp counselors are positive role models and mentors who are focused on the needs of campers both in the cabins and the activity areas. We personally interview each candidate, secure a minimum of three personal written references and perform a national background check for all new and returning counselors.

Staff training week concentrates on effective cabin leadership and includes heavy emphasis on teaching skills. Staff are required to complete 40 hours of online training and testing prior to on-site staff training. In addition to traditional camp training, all of our staff are also certified in First Aid, CPR, AED, O2. We also certify our lifeguards as Waterfront Lifeguards.

We maintain an overall staff to camper ratio of 1:4 in the cabin and 1:3 on the grounds with the inclusion of our program staff. Our high ratio ensures each camper receives positive interaction with their counselors each and every day.

We follow all Child Safety Guidelines from YMCA of Southwestern Indiana, Inc. We take abuse prevention seriously. Each employee and volunteer are required to participate in multiples on the topic and are considered mandated reporters according to the law. Background checks, screenings, and supervision is done with intentional care toward keeping each child safe. Our safe environment and child protection policies include ensuring that no two people are to be alone, away from the group. As mandated reporters, any YMCA employee is required by law to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. We encourage our camp parents to make sure your children understand physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries, and that anyone who violates those boundaries should be reported to camp administration.

Hand washing and hand sanitizing stations are available throughout camp. Camp maintenance staff cleans high-use areas throughout the day.

### HEALTH CARE AT CAMP

YMCA Camp Carson takes seriously its responsibility to provide all campers with a healthy camping experience. We maintain a well-equipped health center with camp medical staff on-site 24 hours a day. In addition, all of our counselors hold current certification in First Aid, CPR, Oxygen, and AED and are thoroughly trained to properly handle emergency situations. We also have an Urgent Care in Princeton and Gibson General Hospital (only 10 minutes from camp).

## INJURIES AND ILLNESS AT CAMP

The majority of bumps, scrapes and bug bites are treated at camp by the camp medical staff. Parents are contacted by phone by our Health Center staff if symptoms of illness are presented or significant injuries. We will contact you and partner in decision making for health care visits or camper pick-up. Please plan accordingly and have emergency contacts in the area in case of pick-up.

## MEDICATIONS

ALL medications (including vitamins) must be given to the camp medical staff on opening day at check-in.

- Prescription drugs must be in the original container with current dosage clearly stated on the container and labeled with your camper's full name.
- If your camper requires any non-prescription drugs such as Zyrtec etc., these medications should also be in the original container in order to provide the camp nurse with all the appropriate medication information.
- The Health Center is stocked with basic Tylenol and Ibuprofen etc. so it is not necessary to bring these to camp. Please do not bring vitamins for the one week of camp, unless necessary.
- Please double check that medications are not expired.

Keeping ALL medications out of the cabin helps ensure the safety of all campers. All unused medications will be placed in your camper's luggage on closing day.

At camp, medications are stored in locked cabinets in our Health Center or Health Office in the Dining Hall.

Medications are dispensed by the medical staff at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, at the Dining Hall and at bedtime at the Health Center. If your camper's medication schedule is different, please discuss with the medical staff when you turn in your camper's medications during Check In.

## PREVENTIVE HEALTH MEASURES BEFORE AND DURING CAMP:

**CAMPER HEALTH EXAMINATION, HEALTH HISTORY AND IMMUNIZATIONS** - A completed Camp Health Examination Form must be completed for each camper. The is completed, signed and dated by a licensed physician. The physical date must fall within 24 months of the camper's arrival at camp. The Health History must be filled in and updated annually for your camper, this is found in your forms and documents section of your parent portal. Immunizations must be filled in on your health history form or sent in to Camp Carson via mail, email, or uploading to your forms and documents section.

**HEAD LICE PREVENTION** - If your child has had head lice or has been exposed through a friend or family member, please have a nurse or physician carefully check your child's scalp before opening day. The presence of head lice should be treated and then rechecked before coming to camp. We will do a lice screening on opening day during your camper's tour. You will be contacted if your camper has lice and we will discuss treatment options and camp options.

**HYGIENE:** Cleanliness is a key component to keeping campers healthy. Campers will wash their hands prior to meals and sanitize frequently throughout the day. Bathrooms are cleaned each da.. Camp clean-up takes place each morning and campers assume responsibility of cleaning their cabin areas. Campers utilize their bathrooms in the cabin to get cleaned up and brush their teeth in the morning and evening. Showers are every evening during the week.

**ILLNESS/FEVER PRIOR TO CAMP ARRIVAL** - Contagious diseases spread quickly in the camp setting. Our expectation on Opening Day is that all campers arrive in a healthy condition. If your child has a fever or is experiencing nausea or unusual pain, please delay his/her arrival time until 24 hours after illness or pain has abated and there is no elevated temperature.

**SWIMMERS EAR PREVENTION** - To minimize internal ear infections, swimmer's eardrops are administered after each visit to the swim lake. These are explained during the swim test for your camper.

**SUN AND HEAT** - Most activities are in shaded areas or in the water. Water bottle filling stations are available throughout camp, and Campers will fill up each morning and afternoon before leaving the cabin. ALL campers are required to apply sunscreen prior to morning and afternoon activities. Campers who need additional applications of sunscreen are reminded to do so.

## Important Details

### BIRTHDAYS AT CAMP

Having a birthday while you're at camp can be pretty special. We have decorations for the camper's cabin, and sing Happy Birthday to celebrate the special camper in the Dining Hall.

### CABIN MATE REQUESTS AND CABIN ASSIGNMENTS

We try to honor mutual cabin mate requests if campers are within one year of age or grade of each other. **A vital part of the camp experience is making new friends and building new relationships.** We cannot accommodate requests for more than 2 mutual cabin mates. It can be overwhelming for a camper to be in a cabin with a large group of other campers who are already friends, so we will split large groups of campers from the same school, etc.

Cabin assignments are made 2-3 days prior to check-in and are not released prior to Check-In day. You will receive an email prior to arrival if we are NOT able to meet your cabin mate request.

### CANTEEN (CAMP STORE)

The Canteen is open each day at designated times. A selection of t-shirts, souvenirs, ice cream, beverages, candy and salty snacks are available. Campers are limited to 2 sugary snacks each day (sugary snacks refers to candy and soda).

**Please deposit canteen money to your camper's account online prior to your camper's arrival**

- Access your Parent Account
- Click on the View Accounts section
- Select your camper and click "Fund"
- Enter in an amount and your credit card information, click "Fund Account"

We recommend a \$50 deposit for snacks/drinks and camp T-shirts or souvenirs. For campers for two weeks, we recommend a \$100 deposit.

**Please DO NOT allow campers to keep money in the cabin, and do not pack food for campers.**

Canteen refund information:

A canteen summary of your camper's account can be viewed online at any time in your Parent Account. Two options are available for any remaining funds in your camper's account on Friday:

- Donate remaining funds to provide camp scholarships for children of military families
- Receive a refund back to your original credit card.

If you do not specify on your form at check-out, we will automatically designate any remaining funds to scholarships for children of military families.

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

It is our desire to positively influence the character of each camper we serve, and **we respect and welcome children of ALL faiths**. We accomplish this by carefully weaving the YMCA core values of Caring, Respect, Honesty, Respect and Faith throughout our programs. Living in a cabin with 14 other people, and exploring activities with new friends gives campers the opportunity to exercise these core values every day. It is our hope that campers will take these life skills with them as they return to their home, school and community relationships.

The core value of Faith is shared through morning chapel, taps talks, and cabin devotions each evening. We also hold a Body, Mind, Spirit ceremony each week in which we share with our campers the importance of each of these important areas for every individual.

## DRESS CODE

Camp is a very active, outdoor environment, and at times can be a little messy! Please send comfortable "play" clothes that can get wet and dirty if needed. Stains won't really come out if we go on a mud hike!

We expect our campers to dress in camp-appropriate clothes. On land, campers should wear a shirt at all times and we ask that there are no midriff shirts. Sandals should have back straps, and it is best if they cover the toes for safety purposes. Flip flops are allowed only in the showers. Camp serves families from all walks of life, so please do not pack clothing with suggestive slogans or political messages.

For swimming, boys must have board shorts/swim trunks, (no speedos) and girls can wear a one-piece suit or a tankini that covers the stomach.

We recognize that this dress code may seem a bit conservative or restrictive, but it is intended to ensure the safety of your child at camp and online. This includes the possible use of photographs that are made available to all camp parents, as we are aware that nationally there are reports of photographs of young people being gathered online by those with inappropriate outlooks on young bodies. As camp is a very active outdoor environment, and often around water activities, we are challenged to provide exciting and fun photos for parents, but also be respectful of the imagery. Obviously no photograph is taken with the intention of presenting inappropriate imagery of any child, and we certainly don't want to inadvertently create embarrassing or awkward moments for any child or family.

## HOMESICKNESS – PREPARING FOR CAMP

Preparing for the camp experience is often something that is overlooked or misunderstood. However, if you plan and discuss the camp experience with your children, it can help create a powerful set of first camp memories. At YMCA Camp Carson we strive to create a safe, fun, and welcoming environment for all campers. However, it's natural for some children to experience homesickness – or as we say at camp, missing home – especially if it's their first time away from home. Here are some tips for you to do a home before your child's camper experience:

- Visit Camp Carson – give us a call or email to schedule a tour – this allows your child to familiarize them with camp surrounds, staff and activities. This can help ease the anxious feelings and build up excitement!
- Practice Sleepovers – arrange overnight stays at friends' or relatives' homes to help your child get comfortable away from home
- Talk about Camp Positively – highlight the new activities, friendships, and fun experiences that they will experience at camp
- Involve them in Preparations – let your camper help pack their bags so they feel in more control and familiar with their belongings
- Set Realistic Expectations – explain that it is completely normal to miss home and reassure them that they will have a great time and the feelings usually pass
- Connect with our Director Team – contact a member of our director team if you or your camper have any serious concerns ahead of camp

## HOMESICKNESS AT CAMP

On occasion, some campers may experience homesickness. We explain to our campers that everyone at camp experiences some level of homesickness, even our staff. During the week, campers and staff quickly become a community for the week, and most homesickness is resolved within a day or two. If your camper experiences a higher level of homesickness and is having unusual difficulty working through it, we will give you a call to inform you of your camper's progress and seek your advice moving forward. It will be a partnership to create the best experience for your camper.

Here are some things to do during their week:

- Encourage staying busy – engage in camp activities and immerse themselves in the fun rather than dwelling on missing home
- Send encouraging letters – write letters and emails that focus on the experience rather than what is happening at home or how much you miss them. Let them know how proud and excited you are of them for coming to camp
- Comfort Objects – send your camper's comfort objects with them to camp (blankets, stuffies, etc.)
- Avoid promising an Early Pickup –promising that campers can go home whenever they choose can discourage them from fully engaging with the camp experience and could enable homesickness. Reassure them that they can do this!
- Trust the Counselors – our trained staff are skilled in helping our campers adjust to camp – encourage your child to talk to their counselor or camp staff if they are feeling sad or missing home
- Give It Time – most campers feel better after a few days – remind them that their feelings are temporary and that they'll soon be having fun.

## LAUNDRY

Please make sure campers have enough clothing for their one or two-week stay. We do not typically offer laundry service, but we will check in with our two-week campers at the end of the first week to be sure their clothes, bedding, and towels are still fresh.

## LOST AND FOUND

We do everything we can to help your camper keep track of their belongings. **PLEASE** label your camper's belongings, and talk to your camper about what they are packing for camp. As stated on our application parent agreement, YMCA Camp Carson is not responsible for articles of clothing or personal belongings damaged or missing in transit, loss or theft. We do keep Lost and Found for two weeks after your camper's sessions, but due to storage and sorting capacity being limited we donate items after those two weeks. Please reach out to the office at [carsonoffice@ymcacampcarson.org](mailto:carsonoffice@ymcacampcarson.org) or 812-385-3597 with details of your items that are lost and we will do our best to track them down.

## MEALS, SPECIAL DIETS and FOOD ALLERGIES

All meals are served family style, and campers eat together with their cabin group. YMCA Camp Carson strives to provide balanced healthy meal options for campers. Breakfast includes a hot entree as well as a cereal, fruit and yogurt bar. Lunch and Dinner includes a hot entrée and a full salad bar. Fresh fruit is available to campers throughout the day. For those who may need a PBJ, we have Sun Butter and jelly available.

**Special Diets:** If your child has dietary restrictions or food allergies, please document your camper's needs in the Health History Form. Adjustments can be made for special medical diets such as gluten and other allergies. Our staff will make your camper aware of food offering that contain your camper's allergens. Menus for your camper's week can be provided to you prior to camp. If you have questions or would like to discuss specific needs, please call us at 812-385-3597 prior to Summer Camp.

## PARENT EVALUATIONS

Parents receive a survey request from us at the end of your camper's week. We truly value your feedback, and ask that you respond to this survey we can better serve our camp families. We welcome your feedback at any time, you are invited to call or email our office. Campers will also participate in surveys during their stay at camp. This feedback helps us continuously improve & ensure that our campers have the best experience.

## PAYMENTS, CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

A **non-refundable** registration fee of \$100 per session is required at time of registration, and is applied to the total tuition fee. The remaining balance is due **by May 15th**. Registrations after May 15<sup>th</sup> should include the entire camp fee.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** I understand that if YMCA Camp Carson receives WRITTEN NOTIFICATION of cancellation prior to May 15, the family will receive a full refund minus the registration fee. After May 15, refunds **WILL NOT** be available.

However, there are two exceptions:

1. With a doctor-approved medical reason, with written notification.
2. IF YMCA Camp Carson can find someone from our waitlist to fill the open camper spot. Please note that the availability of campers on the wait list changes daily, and there is no guarantee of a replacement or refund.

## TELEPHONE

Campers may not bring cell phones to camp and Campers do not have phone access during their week of camp. A YMCA Camp Carson staff member will contact you in the event of an emergency or other situation. If there is an emergency at home or if you have a particular concern, please do not hesitate to contact us in the office while your camper is at camp.

Please respect our camp "no cell phone" policy and help your children understand the value of unplugging in order to be fully engaged

## WEATHER - SEVERE WEATHER PROCEDURES

Camp carries on through the rain, but if lightning is present, campers are restricted to covered areas. In the event of a tornado warning, all campers and staff move to the basement of the Dining Hall for safety. We have included a complete severe weather document in your Parent Account under Forms & Documents.

## CAMP PHOTOS

It's always exciting to see your kid enjoying YMCA Camp Carson, and we take hundreds of photos throughout the week. You will receive information at check-in with a link to access to new photos every day. We **TRY** to get photos of each camper every day, but sometimes it is just not possible to catch every activity area throughout the day. Please note that Wrangler and Dirt Bike campers may not be caught on camera as often, as their program takes them out onto the trails throughout the week.

**PLEASE NOTE:** By registering for camp, it is understood that permission is given to use pictures in which your child as a camper may appear in the Camp brochure, website or other promotional literature/posters used by the camp, YMCA of Southwestern Indiana Inc., American Camp Association, YMCA of the USA, or other camp affiliates.



# Check-in and Check-out Information

## CHECK-IN

Families will receive an email with detailed instructions in advance, and information is also included in your Forms & Documents. Please be sure all of your forms are submitted, and fees paid in full prior to arrival.

## CANTEEN DEPOSITS

Please make Canteen deposits online prior to your arrival at camp through your Parent Account. Please DO NOT allow campers to keep money in the cabin, or pack snacks for campers. (More Canteen information on page 13)

## DROP OFF CAMPER MAIL DURING CHECK IN

Everyone loves to receive mail! Sending mail by postal service can be slow. You may leave a couple of letters with us at Check-In. Write on the envelope the camper's name, cabin name, day you want us to deliver it, and we'll deliver to your camper on that day.

**Please do not mail or leave packages for campers – especially avoid food & snacks that attract critters to the cabins. Campers can buy snacks, drinks, stuffies, and shirts at Canteen.**

## CHECK-OUT

Families will receive an email with detailed instructions in advance and information is also included in your Forms & Documents.

## PHOTO ID IS REQUIRED

Camp staff will check your photo ID as part of the check-out process.

## PERMISSION TO LEAVE CAMP FORM

For the safety of our campers, staff can ONLY release campers to **adults listed on the Permission to Leave Camp form**. You may log into your parent account to review this form & confirm the adults listed. If you need to make changes, please call the camp office at 812-385-3597 BY THURSDAY.

## EARLY CHECK OUT PROCEDURE

The camper experience is designed for the entire week and is intentionally programmed through a progression of relationship building, challenges, personal reflection, and growth. If you do need to pick your child up early, please email [carsonoffice@ymcacampcarson.org](mailto:carsonoffice@ymcacampcarson.org). It is best if we receive this email prior to check-in day. If something comes up after your child is at camp, please call the camp office and follow up with an email BY THURSDAY.

## ON THE RIDE HOME

We have crafted a few open ended questions as conversation starters with your child on the car ride home, for you to better understand their experience and learn more about their week:

- What are the things you are proudest of this week?
- I noticed camp has a motto, ACE – Accepted, Challenged and Empowered! Can you tell me about that?
- Tell me about your cabin mates, counselors and cabin group activities.
- What are some goals you set for yourself?
- I saw a photo of you doing \_\_\_\_\_. Tell me about that.