



Deciding to send your child to Camp

Deciding to send your child to camp can be a difficult decision for parents. Most parents experience fears and concerns and have many questions about whether the camp experience will be a positive one for their child. These concerns and questions are often felt more intensely by parents of a child with special needs. Parents often worry if the child will be cared for as well as he is at home, or if the staff is well trained and caring, and whether the child will have fun and make friends easily, and so on. Although most parents do quite a bit of worrying about their child going to camp, most of their fears never become realities and the child comes back from camp with stories of the wonderful times he had. Perhaps by looking at some of the benefits you and your child will gain from a camp experience, the decision will not be as difficult to make.



The Camping Experience

Social: Camp provides the opportunity for your child to meet, share, and work successfully with other children and adults.

Sharing a tent/cabin with others, having a swimming "buddy", or helping out your team on a scavenger hunt are some examples of activities that build social skills and good relationships. Some camps are "specialty" camps where your child will be with other children with similar illnesses or disabilities. Other camps provide a more integrated experience.

Physical: All camps provide a wide range of activities to which the child may not usually have access. Physical activities help to introduce, reinforce, or refine gross motor skills. These experiences also allow him/her to cooperate with other people and gain confidence in his / her abilities.

Learning: Many activities at camp will provide your child with fun and educational experiences in a setting other than school. Remembering the names of wildflowers, taking a nature walk, or learning the words to a camp song are all ways of developing language, memory, while promoting general learning skills.

Respite: While your child is enjoying his/her experience at camp, you can also take this opportunity for rest and relaxation. It is important for you to take some time for yourself and refresh. This is also an opportunity to spend some more time with your spouse and other children in the family.



Questions....

It is important to think about the physical and emotional needs of your child (and your needs as well) when deciding whether to send him to a full-day camp, one or two week residential, or a partial-day recreation program. You may want to consider a shorter experience for younger or first time campers. You need to decide whether your child will feel more comfortable at a camp that specializes in working with children having a specific disability, or going to a general camp program. Some of the questions you may want to ask are:

- Is the staff well trained in working with children with specific disabilities or special healthcare needs? What is the ratio of counselor to campers?
- What types of activities will the camp offer and what skill level are needed to be successful?
- Does staff have a system for communicating clearly with the child? Are one to one aides available?
- What safety precautions have been taken at the camp and what are the emergency procedures?
- Are trained medical staff present at all times? What equipment / supplies will you need to bring to camp?

- Are parents involved in the program?
Can you phone or visit the camp
during a session?
- What is the cost of the program?
Are there additional monies needed
to bring to the camp session? Is
financing help available through
agencies, other sources?

These and many other questions may be asked of the Camp Director and staff. Most camps provide an opportunity to visit the camp with your potential "camper" to see the facilities and get information about the program. The more information you can gather, the more comfortable you will feel with the decision you make.

The right camp experience can provide unique fun and educational opportunities and enrich your child's life with happy, warm memories. Your child can gain a new appreciation of his/her qualities and abilities and share them with others.

Finding A Camp

New Hampshire Camp Directors Association at 1-800-549-CAMP
or online at:
<http://nhcamps.org>

SENDING YOUR CHILD TO CAMP



NH Family Voices

A Family to Family Health Information Center

129 Pleasant St.

Concord, NH 03301

Phone: (800) 852-3345 X 4525

or (603) 271-4525

E-mail: nhfv@yahoo.com

Web: www.nhfv.org



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