

# ESSENTIALS FOR CHOOSING SUMMER CAMP CHECKLIST

## THE BASICS

- Does the program's focus and range of activities match your child's interests?
- Does the camp's schedule and duration fit with your work schedule and family vacation times?
- Does the camp's proximity/location meet your transportation needs and your child's capacity to be away from home?
- Will your child feel comfortable with the camp's facility and group size?
- Is the camp able to meet any special needs (cognitive, social, physical, dietary or medical) your child may have?

## PHILOSOPHY & ACTIVITIES

- Is the camp's philosophy compatible with your values and approach to parenting? Is it a good match for your child's temperament and personality?
- What does a typical daily schedule look like? Is there a good balance between structure and freedom to choose activities? Is the level of physical activity or the amount of time devoted to particular activities a good fit for your child?
- Will the program encourage your child to try new things or things that he or she is not skilled in?
- Are you comfortable with the camp's approach to discipline and how the camp handles conflicts between children? How do you feel about the program's philosophy regarding competition and the level of competitiveness?
- Is the program accessible and welcoming to parents and families? Are families/parents provided with opportunities to get involved?
- Is there a policy in place on parent contact, and how is child homesickness handled?

## STAFF

- How are counselors recruited and screened? Are criminal background checks conducted?
- Are staff members trained in first aid, safety regulations, emergency procedures, behavior management techniques, specific procedures for supervision, and appropriate staff and camper behavior?
- Do the camp's counselor:child ratios meet ACA standards? (1:5 for ages 4-5; 1:6 for ages 6-8; 1:8 for ages 9-14; 1:10 for ages 15-17)
- Are at least 80% of camp counselors 18 years of age or older?
- Are at least 40-60% of the camp counselors returning from last year?
- Is the director experienced, and do they hold a higher education degree?

## PROGRAM OVERSIGHT & QUALITY

- Is the program licensed by the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education or accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA)?
- If not, what standards does the program adhere to, and how is the camp program evaluated and improved?

## HEALTH, SAFETY & NUTRITION

- What are the program's health, safety and nutrition policies and procedures?
- Does the camp have a system for knowing where your child is at all times?
- Are there medical routines and procedures in place for emergencies?
- Does the camp have policies and procedures for handling sick children?
- Does the camp employ medical staff or are there backup medical facilities nearby?
- Does the camp have direct phone access?
- Are meals and/or snacks provided and, if so, do they meet your nutritional criteria?
- If your child takes medication, has food allergies or a chronic medical condition, is the camp able to handle your child's needs?
- If the camp will be transporting your child, what vehicles are used and how often are they inspected? Who drives them and what training do drivers have?

## COST AND FEES

- Can you afford the cost?
- What does the overall fee include? Does it cover snacks and meals? Does it cover materials, such as arts & craft supplies, and all of the activities the camp offers? Are you required to buy a camp uniform or sports gear?

## REFERENCE CHECK!

Be sure to ask the program director what percentage of campers return each year. Get the names of parents with children the same age as yours who have attended the camp and ask them:

- What did your child enjoy most about the camp?
- Is there anything you did not like about the camp?
- Would you enroll your child in this camp again?
- May my child talk to your child about his/her camp experience?



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COLLABORATION BETWEEN

