

“For Parents - Preparing for Camp”

There are many ways to help children prepare for camp that in the end will make the camp experience more enjoyable for the parents, children, and camp staff. The following list offers several suggestions:

- Parents and campers should read books about going to camp. Examples of two children's books are *“Off to Camp”*, which is a realistic view of resident camp; and *“Pinky and Rex Go to Camp”*, which helps a reluctant child decide to go to camp.
- Parents and children should speak with other parents and friends to learn about their experiences with camp, particularly the camp facility your child is going to.
- Learn about the camp environment, the daily routine, activities, etc. Visit the camp.
- Encourage the child to pick out their own clothes, to help with packing, setting the table, using a broom and cleaning up. If the child takes daily medication, ask the child to remind the parent when the medication should be taken.
- If your child is on medication for ADD, don't automatically give them a drug holiday while they are at camp. A drug holiday decision should be made jointly by the family (parents and child) and physician, with appropriate input from the Camp Director about the camp schedule and activities.
- If the decision is made to take a drug holiday, inform the camp nurse that the child is on a drug holiday as well as the specific nature of the child's problem and coping strategies. If problems arise, camp staff may need to call and talk to you about the problem.
- If your child has physical, emotional, social, psychological, or other special needs make sure that the camp staff is aware of what these special needs are before the child arrives at camp. Counselor assignments can then be made on the basis of the needs of those persons in that particular camp.
- Problem solve with your child about anticipatory camp problems: “What if you lose your flashlight? What will you do if you don't feel well?” Think through options to solve the problem. Write down the suggestions, choose one to try, and decide if it would work. If not, try another solution to the problem.
- Walk in the dark with your child, using a flashlight and listening to night sounds (which are different in the country than in the city).
- Talk to your child about not being able to talk to them by telephone while at camp. Explain how difficult it would be for 75-125 campers to phone home.
- Correspondence at camp is primarily through the mail. Parents should send one letter before the child leaves for camp so they will receive mail the first or second day. Practice writing letters or postcards; this is often an assumed skill that has never been used. Pre-address and pre-stamp envelopes and postcards for your child. Make sure you use the word “love” in your letters rather than the word “miss”.
- Homesickness is a normal part of the adjustment process to separation from family. discuss feelings the child has had when leaving home to go to school, staying all night at a friends or relatives, or being left alone at home for the first time. The feelings the child experienced were natural, normal and didn't last too long.
- Prepare yourself for the separation. Your child will be well cared for, and it is normal to have mixed feelings of pleasure and sadness when your child goes off to camp. Often it is more difficult for the parent than the child.
- If you feel the need, you may contact the Camp Director before and/or during you your child's week at camp.