



# Regulated Children's Camps in New York State

## What Families Need to Know

This guide provides some key information for families who are considering sending their child to a New York State-regulated children's camp. It's a good idea to visit the camp or interview the camp operator before enrolling your child. Learn more about each of these topics at **[health.ny.gov/camps](https://health.ny.gov/camps)**.



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New York State-regulated children's camps have a permit to operate from their local health department and must meet the requirements in Subpart 7-2 of the State Sanitary Code. There are additional requirements for camps enrolling campers with disabilities.

## Considerations for Choosing a Children's Camp

### Staff Qualifications and Training

Camp staff must meet minimum qualifications for age, training, and experience. There are more qualifications for staff overseeing activities like swimming, boating, horseback riding, and riflery, and for staff at camps for children with developmental disabilities. Camp staff with direct responsibility of a camper with a disability must be trained in the camper's specific needs.

Camp directors must undergo background checks and disclose whether they have any criminal convictions. Camp operators are required to check whether camp staff and volunteers are listed on the New York State and National Sex Offender Registries.

### Supervision

Camps must have a minimum number of staff to supervise campers. Extra staff are required for activities like swimming, archery, and riflery, and for all camps enrolling a child with a physical or developmental disability.

### Camper Health

Camps are required to have a health director, which could include a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, or EMT. Depending on their certification, they may or may not be licensed to perform specific duties. Camps must also have First Aid and CPR certified staff on-site to respond to medical emergencies and assist the health director.

The camp must maintain a written medical plan approved by their local health department. This plan must describe the medical, nursing, and first aid services provided by the camp. Injuries and illnesses must be reported to the local health department during the camp season and are thoroughly reviewed.

Camps must keep a confidential medical record on file for every camper. You will need to provide your child's history of immunization, illness, disability, or allergy. Specify current medications, special diets, and activity restrictions.

A camp may recommend or require that campers have received specific immunizations. The Department of Health strongly recommends that all campers are up to date on their childhood vaccines.

Visit **[health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/childhood\\_and\\_adolescent.htm](https://health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/childhood_and_adolescent.htm)** for more information.

### **Food Safety**

Local health departments inspect food preparation and handling activities to ensure safe and sanitary practices.

### **Facilities and Fire Safety**

Camps must follow building and fire safety requirements and maintain facilities in safe condition.

### **Camp Safety and Activities**

The camp operator must have a safety plan approved by the local health department that outlines emergency procedures and supervision for activities and trips, staff training, camper orientation, and maintenance of facilities. Camp trips and activities must be led by staff with appropriate training and expertise. Proper protective equipment for the activity such as helmets and life jackets should be provided by the camp.

### **Swimming and Water Activities**

If a camp offers swimming or boating, they must meet specific requirements for staff certifications and activity supervision during water activities at camp and off-site. Swimming activities at camp pools and beaches must be supervised by an aquatics director and aquatic staff are required to be trained in CPR. Campers are required to wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets when boating.

Camps must use safety measures to prevent drowning including swim testing, providing specific areas for campers based on swimming ability, and implementing a buddy system which pairs each camper with a buddy of similar swimming ability. Be sure to let the camp know if your child is not a strong swimmer or is nervous around water.

## Responsibilities

The New York State Department of Health, local health departments, and camp operators have specific responsibilities to parents and guardians under the children's camps regulations.

### Responsibilities of the Camp Operator

- To inform you and the local health department of any incident involving your child, including serious injury, illness, or allegation of abuse.
- To screen the background and qualifications of all staff and volunteers.
- To train staff about their duties.
- To provide supervision for all campers 24 hours a day at overnight camps, and during hours of operation for day camps.
- To maintain all camp physical facilities in a safe and sanitary condition.
- To provide safe and wholesome meals.
- To develop, follow, and share approved camp safety plans.
- To provide you written notification during enrollment that:
  - the camp must have a permit to operate;
  - the camp must be inspected twice yearly; and
  - camp inspection reports and required plans are available for review.

### Responsibilities of the Local Health Department

- To review and approve the required written camp safety plan.
- To inspect camps to ensure:
  - all physical facilities are properly operated and maintained; and
  - camper supervision meets health and safety requirements.
- To review and approve the camp's application and issue a permit.
- To investigate reports of serious incidents of injury, illness, and all allegations of abuse.
- To provide parents or guardians an opportunity to review inspection reports and required plans.

## More Information

Contact your local health department for more information or questions about children's camps regulations, complaints, or inspections. Find your local health department at **[health.ny.gov/environmentalcontacts](https://health.ny.gov/environmentalcontacts)**.

## Checklist for Parents and Guardians

### General

- ✓ Does the camp have a permit?
- ✓ What is the length and cost of the camp sessions?
- ✓ What is the daily schedule?
- ✓ What kind of activities or trips are available? Can my child choose between different activities?

### Qualifications, Training, and Supervision

- ✓ Do staff meet minimum qualifications?
- ✓ What are the camp's supervision procedures, including disciplinary policies?
- ✓ Are campers supervised by counselors who have the maturity and experience to make decisions that could affect the health and safety of campers?

### Camper Health

- ✓ Will my child's medical needs be met?
- ✓ Is a health director on-site or on-call at all times?
- ✓ How and when will I be notified if my child becomes ill or injured?
- ✓ What camper medical information do I need to submit?

### Nutrition

- ✓ Are meals or snacks provided by the camp?
- ✓ Does the camp serve food my child likes?
- ✓ Are special meals available for children with food allergies or dietary restrictions?
- ✓ Are safe food practices observed in the camp kitchens, dining areas, and food services?

### Facilities

- ✓ What are the sleeping accommodations?
- ✓ What is the distance between activities?
- ✓ How much time will my child spend outside versus inside?
- ✓ What does the camp do in bad weather or during extreme heat?

### Camp Safety and Activities

- ✓ Do counselors supervising specialized activities have additional training?
- ✓ Does the camp provide the proper safety equipment for activities?
- ✓ How is transportation provided for camp trips?

### Swimming and Water Activities

- ✓ Do aquatics staff have the necessary certifications and on-the-job training for their position?
- ✓ How are campers supervised while swimming?
- ✓ How are campers tested to determine their swimming ability before participating in aquatic activities?
- ✓ How are bathing areas marked off for various swimming ability levels?