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PARENT'S GUIDE TO CAMP LAUREL

Parent's Guide to Camp Laurel

Table of Contents

Introduction to Camp	page 3
Purpose of Camp	page 3
Camp Activities	page 4
Senior Program	page 4
Mail	page 5
Phones	page 5
Camper Discipline	page 6
Emergency Medical Procedure	page 6
Drop Off procedure	page 7
Pick Up procedure	page 7
Evaluation	page 8
Parent Orientation	page 8
How to get more involved	page 8
What your child needs to bring	Addendum

Introduction to Camp Laurel

Welcome to the **Parent's Guide to Camp Laurel**. Whether your child is new to camp or if they are a returning camper, this guide will help you through every aspect of our camping program. We look forward to sharing the best experience that Camp Laurel has to offer with your child. For over ten years we have provided camp programs to children and their families living with HIV and AIDS. While Camp Laurel did not invent camping, we have all but perfected it by taking advantage of over 50 years of camp experience.

Camp Laurel, accredited by the American Camp Association (www.acacamps.org), uses camp sites specifically selected for the needs of each program. We strive to provide a venue so our campers may enjoy nature in a breathtaking setting that encourages them to will explore new challenges while growing physically and emotionally.

By now you have signed up for a camp session and have returned the **Camper Application** or **Update Application**. If we need any additional information, we will contact you immediately. This will assure that your child is best served in our camp setting.

On behalf of the Camp Laurel Board of Directors and staff, we welcome you to the continuing tradition of Camp Laurel.

Purpose

The mission of Camp Laurel is to give children living with HIV and AIDS an opportunity to experience wilderness camping in order to enrich their lives. Camp Laurel will provide opportunities for each child to broaden his or her capabilities and to heighten his or her self-esteem.

Camp Laurel is a non-profit organization dedicated to:

- Offering a unique camping opportunity for children living with HIV and AIDS
- Creating an atmosphere where children can forget about their illness and enjoy life
- Offering a safe, structured environment for all campers
- Providing a supportive environment to children with special needs
- Providing a novel and unique experience to campers

And the best part of the program is — it's FUN!! Campers make new friends, have new experiences and learn important lessons all at the same time. No other extra-curricular activity can even hope to match what we offer. But don't take our word for it. Just ask any of the hundreds of former campers, what a wonderful experience Camp Laurel can be. It truly is the experience that will last a lifetime!

Camp Laurel Activities

Here are some of the activities your child may engage in at Camp Laurel:

Lakefront

Led by our fully trained Red Cross certified lifeguards, your child can canoe or paddle into adventure on a pristine and beautiful lake.

High Ropes Adventure Course

This program, which brings campers to new heights above the trees, can build self-esteem and courage. Our trained staff of experts will lead your child through this exciting program.

Low Ropes Adventure Course

Our leaders will guide your child and their cabin group through a series of problem-solving skills. Children learn to work in a group on our Low Ropes Challenge Course.

Archery

Our archery instructor will teach your child how to safely shoot a bow-and-arrow and aim for the target.

Arts and Crafts

Your child can learn how to make wonderful keepsakes, which will remind him or her of the camping experience for years to come.

Nature Center

Our nature instructor will lead your child through our nature program that will teach him or her about some of the biggest trees and the smallest flowers in the world, and many of the other wonders and gifts of the great outdoors.

Mountain Biking

Your child will experience the thrill of off-road-bicycling on camp trails in a safe, structured environment.

Soccer, Basketball, Volleyball

Your child will experience the excitement of team sports in a supportive environment.

Pool

Your child can enjoy the cool relaxation of our outdoor pool.

Evening Programs

Your child's cabin will participate with the other cabins in various friendly programs (like a scavenger hunt or campfire). There will be a new and different program for your child every night of the session.

Overnights

During our Summer Camp program, your child will get to experience camping in the wilderness for one night during the stay at Camp Laurel. The evening includes making a campfire, cooking on an open fire, pitching a tent, and other backpacking skills.

Campfire

Various nights throughout the week, your child's cabin will entertain the camp with skits, songs, and silliness at our "infamous" campfire program.

Senior Program

Camp Laurel offers older campers, ages 13-17, the opportunity to learn how to be leaders at Camp. Through the Teen Adventure and Leadership Challenge camps (for ages 13-16) as well as the Counselor-in-Training (CIT) program (for 17 year olds only) at Summer Camp, the Senior Program is geared to help campers become future Camp Laurel counselors. Campers participate in activities with a special focus on developing leadership skills.

Mail

Your child is going to get homesick. This is a fact. No amount of fun or inspiration will change this reality. In view of that, we encourage you to send your child mail.

This little detail will relieve and free their minds and hearts so their camp experience will be the best it possibly can. Remember: your child will be away from home for up to seven days (Summer and Teen)! And because we do so much at Camp, seven days seems like seven weeks. So send your child some mail— it'll make his or her day!

Here's how to do it:

Write a letter and make sure to mail it on the Wednesday or Thursday before your child leaves for camp. Mailing an item on the Wednesday or Thursday before departure day is the only way to insure it arrives before your child leaves Camp.

Address the envelope to:

Please see the enclosed Addendum for the address to a specific camp session.

Your children can also send mail to you or other family members, so you may want to provide them with a pad and pen, a couple of envelopes with your home address pre-written on them, and stamps. Remind your child to send the letter within the first few days or you may not receive it before they come back from Camp.

Phones

If there is an emergency and you should need to speak with the Camp Laurel staff, you will be able to call our emergency line at (213) 300-CAMP and speak with someone within minutes.

Camper Discipline

Children misbehave. This is a fact. When they do, it is necessary to impose corrections so that they will not repeat actions, which are antisocial, wrong, harmful, or are not in the spirit of Camp. It is important to us that you know what kind of disciplinary actions we will take with your child.

First, it is forbidden for any Camp Staff member to use physical force to punish a child. In other words, we will not hit your child for any reason. This almost goes without saying, but we want you to rest assured on this matter.

Second, we will not use physical force to control or restrain your child unless that child poses a danger to him or herself or another camper.

Third, we will not verbally or psychologically abuse your child. In our mind, such abuse is as inexcusable as physical abuse.

That being the case, what might we do to discipline your child?

The first action we take when a child misbehaves is to separate the child from the group and try to determine the root of the problem. Once we have done that, we try to remedy the problem while simultaneously making the child aware that his or her behavior is unacceptable. Once we believe we have eliminated the problem and we believe that the child understands the nature of his or her wrongdoing, we secure a promise from the child not to repeat the behavior.

Once this promise is made, we then assign an appropriate punishment for the child, as a reminder that all negative acts have consequences. The standard punishment includes, but is not limited to, prohibition from participating in a program activity.

If a child continues to misbehave, we will call you for help. Perhaps the threat of leaving camp will correct the problems.

If we determine, after consultation with you, that your child's behavior is detrimental to the camp program, we will ask that you come to camp and pick-up your child at your expense.

Emergency Medical Procedures

Should a medical emergency occur while your child is at camp, our medical staff will first assess the situation and decide the most appropriate course of action to take. We will call you, to make you aware of the situation, and inform you of the steps we intend to take.

Drop Off Procedure & Safety Rules

Sending your child to camp on that first day is sometimes a chaotic experience. In order to alleviate some of the chaos, we have created a sense of order on departure-to-Camp day.

First, you must arrive with your child, your child's belongings, and any incomplete forms at the time stated on your **Transportation Flyer**, which we will mail to you 2 weeks before camp.

Once you arrive, please proceed directly to the check-in table where your registration forms will be checked. The Camp Laurel staff will verify that all forms are complete.

Then proceed to the Medication Station. Complete the **Camper Care and Medication Form** and deposit your child's medications with the nurse. Once these steps are completed, your child will receive a name and luggage tag and then may proceed to load luggage on the bus and finally board the bus for Camp. At this point Camp Laurel will assume care and custody of your child.

Your child will be set to have GREAT FUN!! Don't forget to confirm our return date and time for your child's arrival.

Before the bus leaves, a Camp Laurel staff member will review safety guidelines with all passengers. Safety guidelines include:

- Everyone must remain seated while the bus is in motion.

- Every bus will contain a first aid kit.
- Unless absolutely necessary, no one should leave the bus until reaching the final destination.

Pick Up Procedure & Safety Rules

Return-from-Camp-day is almost as hectic as departure-to-Camp-day. We have, however, established the following procedures to make it easier for you.

We ask that you arrive at the Camp Laurel pick-up location on time (the time designated on your **Transportation Flyer**) to receive your child (we can not control traffic, so there may be delays). For updated arrival times or delays the day of pick up, call the Camp Laurel office at (323) 653-5005. The message will be updated every hour.

Once the bus arrives, the luggage will be unloaded. At the same time, for safety concerns, campers will be dismissed from the bus by family group and will be released to their parent or legal guardian. The child's name will then be crossed off the bus roster. It is imperative that you remain patient while we verify that every child in our care has been properly returned to his or her legal guardian.

Once your child has been released to your custody and care, you may pick up his or her belongings, including medications. It is your responsibility to pick-up meds. Once your child is checked-out you may leave.

Evaluations

Within two weeks of your child's return from Camp Laurel you will receive an evaluation form. It is extremely helpful to us for you to complete this and return it to the camp office. We are constantly trying to improve Camp Laurel to ensure your child's experience at Camp Laurel is the BEST!

Parent Orientation

We highly recommend that parents attend the Parent Orientation before we depart for Camp. The Parent Orientation is held at the Camp Laurel office (8489 W. Third Street, Los Angeles, CA 90048). It is a short meeting where you can ask questions about Camp Laurel, meet some of the camp staff, and share your excitement about your child coming to Camp.

Please see the enclosed Addendum for the date and time of the parent orientation scheduled for the next camp session.

How to Get More Involved

Camp Laurel is always in search of another kind heart. If you want to get more involved in your child's camping experience or the Camp Laurel family in general, there are a number of ways you can do it. We always need help with the following: distributing fliers, mass mailing of the newsletter, making posters, fundraising events, registration and check-in on departure day, and coordinating the transportation of all the children to and from camp. You can also help Camp Laurel by volunteering as a counselor, coach, or referee and by donating money to the Camp Laurel program.

Support from the community is growing every year and that support takes on many forms— from direct service to monetary and product donations. We want your help too! If you are willing to dedicate some time to Camp Laurel, we can certainly find a mutually beneficial way to use your knowledge and skills that will be rewarding for all of us.

For more information, please call the Camp Laurel office at 323-653-5005 and say, "I want to help!"

We hope the Parent's Guide to Camp Laurel helps you prepare for your child's experience at Camp Laurel.

Thank you!