

Being A Parent Chaperone

Who supervises the students? Each school sends teachers of the students, whose role is to oversee the entire program. The school also selects parents to chaperone students. These chaperones are screened by the school, trained, and are then responsible for supervising students during programs during the day, and in lodging at night. Two chaperones are in each cabin. YMCA staff members teach classes, and facilitate the overall program.

How do I sign up to be a chaperone? Check with your child's teacher, who can give you instructions regarding the procedures. The YMCA recommends background checks for all parent volunteers. The YMCA also recommends that parents plan to stay for the entire program.

Please fill out the required paper work, available at the school office and return to your student's teacher. If chosen, you will be notified by your student's teacher, and an additional informational chaperone meeting will be held.

Will a chaperone always be with their own child? Chaperones will be assigned a cabin group to supervise. Our policy is that no males may be in girls' cabins, and whenever possible, only males may be in male cabins. School faculty will make the decisions as to which cabin groups parents are assigned. Chaperones will also be assigned to a class group during the day. School faculty may choose to make lodging and daytime class group assignments as they deem appropriate. There are break times and meals times, where everyone may visit with each other.

Parent chaperones should be able to stay for the entire program. Chaperones assure student safety and good behavior, assist in meeting their needs, and oversee students in sleeping quarters, during classes, meals, and in between activities. It's a demanding job, but the benefits are fantastic!

What are the duties of a chaperone? Chaperones supervise children during classes, meals and clean-up, evening activities, break times, and overnight in cabins. Chaperones will not normally be responsible for leading activities or teaching, their role during programs is to maintain safety and order. Class teachers might ask for some help in classes, such as assisting with equipment, keeping students involved, etc. This responsibility is not to be taken lightly, keeping in mind student safety and the goals of the program!

How many chaperones may come for the program? The cabins have six bunk beds (for 12 students) and 2 single beds, for 2 adult chaperones (14 beds). Therefore the ideal number is 2 chaperones for every 12 students (or, 1:6). The school faculty will determine the appropriate number as they see fit; if more or less than this ratio is appropriate for your school.

Will there be opportunities for recreation? The program is designed to be both educational and fun, and to keep students occupied and interacting all the time. Recreation activities include archery, canoeing, group games, and break times. Many short breaks are planned throughout the program. Students do not swim in the lake. Recreation equipment such as playground balls and basketballs are provided.

Secrets to Chaperone success: Get to know the children (their names, their personalities), and set a good example for them. Help folks be on time. Remind them to take responsibility for cleaning and other duties. No raids, no scary stories, no damaging of property, no hurting others' feelings. Keep tabs on everyone (12 is a lot of kids!).

What about sleeping in the cabins? They will be tired. The excitement of camp, the running and walking around, and all of the activity is usually more than they are used to. A good method is to settle the students down step by step. First make sure everyone is comfortable (they have their clothes, supplies, etc.). Everyone stay inside the cabin. Everyone get your bed clothes on, and finish in the bathroom. Everyone get in bed. Okay, lights out. No more flashlights. Whisper only. Silence, good night! They will invariably wake themselves up – but an alarm is a good idea.

What about safety? Safety is our first concern, and we want to be completely prepared for any weather. As long as students can be happy and safe outside, the program will include outdoor activities. The “Bring along” list includes: a water bottle, sun block, a hat, and rain gear. All YMCA staff members are trained to monitor and recognize severe weather, and participate in drills to react to extreme weather. Camp utilizes two-way radios, internet weather radar, NOAA weather alert radios, and a Public Address system to monitor weather conditions. All buildings are heated and air conditioned, and serve as severe weather shelters. Medical care is always near.

Extreme heat: Students will be encouraged to drink plenty of water. We will serve hot weather-appropriate meals. We will keep activity level appropriate, and stay indoors or in shade as needed.

High winds and rain storms: Staff members constantly monitor weather conditions. Two-way radios keep all leaders in communication. Activities are modified or stopped according to weather conditions. Cabins and program areas serve as severe weather shelters.

What about medication and health care? Safety is our highest priority at camp. School personnel are responsible for medication oversight and student health care. Chaperones can help students remember to take their medications. All YMCA staff members have first aid, AED and CPR training. The camp staff members conduct regular drills to plan for safe handling of any situation. Staff members carry first aid kits, and first aid kits are located in key places throughout camp. The camp also maintains AED’s, oxygen, and backboards. There is a well equipped, modern infirmary on site. The building is air conditioned and heated, and includes first aid equipment, computers, phones, examination rooms, and resting areas. Many schools send a nurse to help with medication administration. Each student will need an up-to-date medical form, to be kept on hand with the school personnel. All student medication will be kept in the infirmary, locked (except such “keep with you” medications such as asthma medicine or epinephrine pens), and should be in the original prescription container, with clear instructions. Persons with diabetes may want to bring snacks along. Feel free to send along “just-in-case” medications, just leave clear instructions on the medical form. Should your child need special medical care, we will contact parents.

Important points:

- This is an educational program, an extension of the school.
- SAFETY of your child and everyone at camp is top priority.
- Students are under constant adult supervision.
- The camp staff is trained in first aid and CPR, plus, quick access to 911 services is available.
- The school (not camp) is responsible for distributing medications to students.
- Students do not swim in the lake. Life jackets are mandatory for all boaters.
- Classes/activities are curriculum based and cover all subject areas.
- The cabins are heated, air conditioned, and restrooms and showers are inside each cabin.
- Camp can accommodate most special dietary requirements with advance notification.
- Every participant must have a completed medical information sheet.

Enjoy, and **THANK YOU** for being part of a
great program!

We appreciate your help and good work!

Handy Activities for Cabin Chaperones

Here are some tips and activities to help your cabin group get along and to get know each other, and have more fun!

1. **Cabin Rules:** Assemble everyone together. Go over any rules you have been given. Allow children to add rules they would like to have, this lets them take responsibility for their behavior. Post the rules on the cabin bulletin board.
2. **Cabin Cheer:** Make a cabin "yell," and encourage them to chant it while walking around camp. If it gets overdone, make a new one. Try adding motions, or verses. Keep it positive.
3. **Name Games:** Not every student is guaranteed to know all the names of his or her classmates. Encourage the use of names in normal conversation. *Remember at least one thing about each person (likes soccer, reads Harry Potter, has a famous uncle, wears yellow shoes, etc.). *Throw a ball or a balled sock around the group in a circle; ask each person to say their name and one thing they want to be known for when they catch it. *Have everyone repeat each person's name loud, like a cheer, three times.
4. **Scavenger Hunt:** ___Every kid finds three pieces of litter. ___Find three different good smells in nature. ___Look for signs of insects on the grass. ___Find three different kinds of seeds. ___Find non human footprints. ___Find an example of wasted resources. ___Find three different birds, learn their names. ___
5. **Education Center:** Look at the posters on the walls. Check out the displays cases. Try to identify items you see on the posters and displays outside in nature. Follow the Phenology (tracking signs of the seasons) exhibit. Try the sun dial out front. Check the temperature and wind gauge (there's one inside on a display case, and another outside across the road).
6. **Stunts:** Play, "Follow the Leader" while walking somewhere. How high on a wall can the group (safely) touch? Can you make a human pyramid? Who can impersonate a famous person? Who can curl their tongue? Who has attached earlobes?
7. **Thumb Wrestling:** Have a little cabin contest in thumb wrestling. Never done that? See if the students can show you how it's done!
8. **Blind counting:** Everyone sits quietly in a circle. The group is challenged to count to 15 with the following rules: Only one person speaks at a time. You may not speak immediately after your neighbor does. Each person may only say one number at a time. How fast can you go?
9. **Exercises:** Keep them fun and safe. Try some stretches. Make up new, crazy ones!