

A Special Note Regarding Personal Information About Your Child

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You will notice that on our health form and again in our application we ask you for certain specific, personal information about your child. In some cases it may be about allergies, medications or medical conditions, and in other cases it may be about your child's hobbies, interests and temperament. We ask for this information *for one reason only—to make sure we are prepared for your child in every way so he/she has the smoothest transition to camp possible.*

Some parents are reluctant to share certain information with us because of a concern about confidentiality or stigmatizing their child. After all, camp can be a “fresh start,” and some parents worry that by disclosing personal information, it may bias us against their child or lead us to misinterpret the information and refuse to accept their child. In some cases parents have told us their child has sworn them to secrecy because they are too embarrassed and don't want anyone to know about things like bed wetting, a tic disorder, ADD, an IEP (individualized educational plan) they are on at school or a history of trauma or abuse. We understand and respect that concern. Having said that, let us tell you why we think it is better to share that concern with us.

Our Partnership and Our Promise

When you entrust your child to our care, we are sure you do it with one thing uppermost in your mind—that your son or daughter have the safest, happiest experience with us possible. We have the same goal. We want you to think of us as your partner in your child's well-being. We can keep our end of the partnership *only if we have the information to prepare our medical staff or leadership team to ensure your child is well cared for and free to have the best summer of their life!* There have been times when, because we *didn't know* about a particular child's needs, we could not respond to their behavior properly and they were unable to remain at camp. The better prepared we are before camp the better we can help your child be successful once they are here.

Once you share information with us, our promise is to share it *only with the people who will have direct contact with your child.* This may be our medical staff, the Head Counselor and perhaps your child's cabin or group counselor. If you have any special concerns about confidentiality, please let us know so we can sort them out together. If your child is worried about privacy, reassure them that other campers will not know and only the adults who can help them will know. It would be a shame if decisions about confidential information were based on your child's fears. It is the adults who need to make these decisions based on what will be best for the child.

Stimulant Medication and IEPs

An increasing number of children are on medication for ADD/ADHD (Concerta, Ritalin, Dexedrine, Adderall, Strattera), depression or other psychological condition. These medications allow a child to take advantage of all that a school environment has to

offer. Camp is no different in this regard, but many prescribing physicians are not familiar with camp and may take a child off medication without knowing the full implications. *If your child is on a psychotropic medication and you are planning to or have made a change in that medication any time up to six weeks before camp, please discuss it with us.* While we would never make a decision without your doctor's input, we believe working together and planning ahead will ensure that your child will make a more successful transition to camp. Many times children at camp need their usual dosage or more, given that stimulants, for example, are often metabolized more quickly in warm weather or active children. Likewise, if your child is on an IEP, let us know so we can decide together whether having some kind of behavioral plan here at camp would benefit your child.

Remember, working together is the best chance we have of helping your child have a safe, happy, memorable time with us. Call us if you would like to discuss anything in greater detail or if you would feel more comfortable talking to us rather than putting it on paper.

Bob Ditter is a child and family therapist from Boston, Mass, who works extensively with people who work with children. He visits summer camps throughout the United States helping them be the best place possible for children.

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