

▶ YMCA
Day Camp
Fundamentals

**A guide for YMCA
Day Camp Directors,
Volunteers, and Staff**

YMCA of the USA

The successor to the “YMCA Day Camp Manual 2nd Edition”

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Foreword

The premier organization for accrediting and supporting camps is the American Camp Association, which is why YMCA of the USA encourages all YMCA Day Camps to use the ACA standards for accreditation when planning and reviewing each year's program. To further the synergy between the ACA and YMCAs, we have adopted the ACA publication *Day Camp From Day One: A Hands-On Guide For Day Camp Administrators* as the textbook for the YMCA Day Camp Director certification course.

So where does this *YMCA Day Camp Fundamentals* handbook fit in? Just as your summer day camp has significant differences from your year-round child care program, we hope that there are also significant differences between a generic day camp and one run by your YMCA. This handbook is designed to highlight information that may be unique to your YMCA, helping you create the best day camp possible. Please feel free to download and print your own copy from www.ymcaexchange.org, and use it not only as a resource for YMCA Day Camp Director certification, but also every year for your camp preparations and staff training.



Recommended Reading Material

Here are our recommendations for the minimum preparation to be a YMCA Day Camp director:

- *Day Camp From Day One: A Hands-On Guide For Day Camp Administrators* by Connie Coutellier, available from the YMCA Program Store (800-747-0089) or the ACA Bookstore at www.acabookstore.org.
- The camping section on YMCAexchange (www.ymcaexchange.org), especially:
 - “‘POWER Hiring’ Camp Staff,”
 - “Outdoor Adventure Programs for Teens and Adults” if you have high-adventure activities,
 - “YMCA Day Camp Fundamentals” (this text), and
 - The “Day and Resident Camp” and “Marketing, HR and Office” primary information areas.
- The YMCA Services Corporation Web site (www.yservicescorp.com). Click on “Publications” and choose “Publications you can download” for trainings and sample policies for day camp, aquatics, and risk management.
- *Accreditation Standards for Camp Programs and Services*, available from the ACA bookstore.
- *Training Terrific Staff* by Michael Brandwein, available from the YMCA Program Store or the ACA bookstore (portions of this manual are used in the Day Camp Director Training).
- *Learning Leadership* by Michael Brandwein, available from the YMCA Program Store or the ACA bookstore. (Published by YMCA of the USA, it is *the* manual for camp Leader-in-Training (LIT) or Counselor-in-Training (CIT) programs, and for staff development in general).



Part 1: The Foundation

Since its start in the early 20th century, YMCA Day Camp has offered children a successful and positive developmental experience. Through day camping, youth build character and self-esteem—learning how to be good leaders and thoughtful supporters. In addition, campers have the opportunity to enjoy a nurturing outdoor environment where they develop an appreciation of nature, themselves, and others. Today, YMCA Day Camp is more vital than ever, with an increased emphasis on safety and a renewed emphasis on values and social skills.

The History of YMCA Day Camp

While the YMCA was taking boys on overnight trips as early as 1867, the first known YMCA Day Camp didn't begin until 1922, at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. While no single YMCA person is credited with the invention of day camping, the YMCA movement contributed greatly to the concept, with a dedicated staff that consolidated the results of many experiments, and developed practices to provide a degree of uniformity among camps.

Day camping was initially looked upon as an alternative to resident camping, allowing children whose parents did not want to send them away overnight to still reap the benefits of a camp environment. In fact, in the 1950s, some day camps began to sponsor wilderness trips, outings, and tours as comprehensive as those offered by resident camps.

By the 1980s, an increasing number of homes with two working adults made day camping more than a discretionary experience for some. As one day camp director said, "Seventy-five percent of the parents who enrolled children in our camp last summer needed full-day care." To accommodate such families, many Ys added extra hours at the beginning and end of the day for child care. This extended-day option met an important and growing national need and was well received by working parents. In 1983, a North Carolina mother wrote, "[YMCA Day Camp] started for us as a baby-sitting service while I worked, but it quickly became much more...[it] was a growing experience not only because of the many activities, but because of the healthy, positive attitudes of everyone involved."

This one mother's comment likely sums up the way many parents feel when they discover what YMCA Day Camp can do for their children.

In the early 1980s, multipurpose day camping gave youth more choices and

Did you know...

- At last count, youth day camping is the Y's number one program, with more than 1,700 YMCAs offering day camping at 2,000 day camps.
- Day camping for teens is the fastest-growing YMCA program.

started to attract a wider range of campers. Sports and specialty camps, for instance, kept children coming to day camp into their teen years. Teens were given opportunities to become Counselors-in-Training (CITs). And day camps began to offer half- and full-day programs for children as young as age 3. To accommodate these changes, counselors were trained accordingly, and programs were adjusted to fit the developmental needs of different age groups.

YMCA Day Camps continued to evolve, and by the 1990s, programs became more specialized, especially for older campers. Additions such as language and math enrichment, computers, journalism, and photography offered focused learning, and camps placed an increased emphasis on outdoor environmental education. Collaboration was fostered between other community groups and YMCA Day Camp programs, and a more effective use of the CIT program helped teens prepare for the work force. In addition, flexibility in day selection allowed parents to bring their children to camp two or three days a week, paying accordingly.

Today, there is a renewed emphasis on traditional outdoor camp activities, with day camps increasingly resembling resident camps—offering programs like archery, canoeing, climbing, hiking, and arts and crafts. Additional importance has been placed on collaborations with other community organizations like zoos, art centers, golf courses, and dive shops, so that camps can offer high-quality enrichment instruction.

Though YMCA Day Camps have changed throughout the years, one thing remains constant. From the beginning, they have had the same distinctive emphasis as all YMCA programs: to be tools to help achieve the Christian purpose of the movement. Our activities do not simply keep campers occupied—every experience

is used to help children grow in their knowledge and understanding of Christian values. It is this significant purpose that stands behind everything the staff and campers do.



YMCA Day Camp Objectives

As with any YMCA program, the purpose of YMCA Day Camp is to help members—in this case, preschoolers to teens—grow spiritually, mentally, and physically. By providing challenging activities in both small and large group settings, YMCA Day Camps give young people an experience that can last a lifetime. This experience is grounded in a set of seven objectives that characterize all Y programs, and help people:

- **Grow personally**
- **Learn values**
- **Improve personal and family relationships**
- **Appreciate diversity**
- **Become better leaders and supporters**
- **Develop specific skills and assets**
- **Have fun**

Let's elaborate on these objectives and how your YMCA helps youth achieve them through day camping.

Grow personally—Youth who are involved in YMCA Day Camp gain a greater sense of self-confidence and an appreciation of their own self-worth, learning to treat themselves and others with respect. High self-esteem helps children build strong, healthy relationships and encourages them to overcome life obstacles to reach their full potential.

Learn values—YMCA Day Camp helps children of all faiths develop moral values and ethical behavior consistent with Christian principles. YMCAs promote the four core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility as essential for character development. Through day camp, youth learn to define and demonstrate these values in everything they say and do.

Improve personal and family relationships—YMCAs support families of all kinds by giving children a safe place to grow into responsible members of their families and communities. During day camp, youth learn to care for, and communicate and cooperate with, others.

Appreciate diversity—Diversity can be seen in terms of religion, race, age, income, abilities, and lifestyle. YMCA Day Camps teach youth to respect and celebrate these differences, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and able to contribute to their community. Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, beliefs, and competencies as assets to the YMCA. By practicing inclusion, Ys not only address societal trends and remain relevant to their communities but also remain true to the YMCA mission, goals, and values.

Become better leaders and supporters—For youth to emerge as better leaders, they practice doing what leaders do—through work projects around camp, daily camp responsibilities, and community service. By participating in service-learning projects, such as making toys for low-income families, campers grow as responsible members of their families and communities and become better community leaders and supporters. Children develop leadership skills by planning and executing ideas that help others, and they benefit most if there are three parts to the endeavor: identification of learning objectives; a meaningful project; and reflection before, during, and after the project.

Develop specific skills and assets—Diverse activities help campers acquire new knowledge and discover ways to grow in spirit, mind, and body. YMCA Day Camps help youth succeed in their daily lives through programs that build self-reliance, practical skills, and good values. This might mean learning to swim, building a fire, getting along with others, using a computer or speaking a foreign language.

Have fun—Life is enjoyable. Fun and humor are essential qualities of day camping and contribute to youth feeling good about themselves and others. Our success in reaching the other six objectives often depends on our ability to incorporate fun and friendships to make these new lessons “stick.”

Character Development

Parents and other caring adults have the immense responsibility of teaching their children the values they feel are important. YMCA Day Camps provide priceless help by providing an environment, role models, and activities that are conducive to character development. The four core character development values that the YMCA strives to teach are:

- **Caring**—To demonstrate a sincere concern for others, for their needs and well-being
- **Honesty**—To tell the truth; to demonstrate reliability and trustworthiness through actions that are in keeping with your stated positions and beliefs
- **Respect**—To treat others as you would have them treat you; to value the worth of every person, including yourself
- **Responsibility**—To do what is right; to be accountable for your promises and your actions

Your YMCA may have adopted this list, added a fifth (“Faith” is common), or utilized the “Six Pillars of Character” from the Character Counts Coalition. While camps may use different terms, the objective remains the same: through deliberate programming, use unique resources to help children grow in spirit, mind, and body.

During the first day of camp, let children know that character development will be part of their experience—that learning about values will be as important as learning camping skills. You should also be prepared to talk to parents informally about this portion of your program, so when a parent asks you which values you will be discussing and how, you are comfortable and ready with an explanation.

Training Staff to Teach Character Development

Teaching character development is an ongoing part of the camp staff’s work—through the activities they plan, how they communicate with campers, and by the behavior they model. Two ways to get staff ready to teach character development are making training a part of orientation, and intentionally incorporating character development activities into the daily plans of your day camp.

A useful resource in training staff on character development is the video *The Role of the YMCA Front-Line Staff Members in Character Development* (available from the YMCA Program Store). This 75-minute workshop is designed for use by supervisors of front-line staff as part of orientation and training. The package includes a training design, masters for handouts, and a video, and explores six things each staff member can do during the day to encourage campers to believe in—and act upon—the Y’s four core values:

1. I can TEACH them what it means to be caring, honest, respectful, and responsible.
2. I can consistently MODEL the values with my attitudes and behavior so they can see the values in action.
3. I can CELEBRATE the values, holding them up as the right things to believe in and act upon.
4. I can provide opportunities for them to PRACTICE, EXPERIENCE, and FEEL the values.
5. I can witness them choosing attitudes and behaviors consistent with the core values and PRAISE and REINFORCE their choices, mentioning the specific behaviors and values.
6. When they make choices inconsistent with the core values, I can CONFRONT them on their inappropriate choices in a caring and respectful way.

Leading Character Development Activities

Character development activities should be incorporated into day camp programs to challenge campers to accept and demonstrate positive values. These character development activities should:

- Be age appropriate
- Account for varied personal backgrounds and differing views on values
- Attempt to challenge both attitudes and actions
- Focus on long-term results
- Be planned
- Be positive
- Be inclusive
- Be significant, not trivial or corny
- Be fun

Each day, plan activities around the four character development values. Be sure to look through your activity plans for ideas on how you can highlight and demonstrate the core values throughout the day.

The Values Beads Program

Each of the four core character development values has an assigned color: red for caring (like the heart), blue for honesty (true blue), gold or yellow for respect (the golden rule), and green for responsibility (like the earth). One way to focus on values is by rewarding campers with different colored beads for carrying out their values.

Be caring: red bead

Be honest: blue bead

Be respectful: yellow bead

Be responsible: green bead

Other colored beads can be added for additional values, such as:

Be healthy: pink bead

Be your best: gold bead

Have faith: white bead

At the beginning of camp, give each child a necklace string and a packet of values activities to complete. When a child completes one of the activities, a counselor or parent must sign off on it. The counselor then awards the appropriate bead, which is strung on the necklace string.



Mission and Purpose in Your Camp

Thanks to the YMCA of Greater Charlotte, North Carolina, for sharing their Christian Emphasis resources.

The YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

Everything that happens at camp is driven by the YMCA mission of building healthy and strong people in the context of timeless Christian principles. Ensuring that the YMCA mission is evident in your outcomes takes planning. As a director, you will want to take time prior to the beginning of the summer to brainstorm with your key staff about new programs. Some of the items and initiatives used in the past may have worked and you will choose to include them. Here are some foundational items that any camp could implement:

- Ensure that your board is committed to the camp as an expression of the YMCA mission.
- Have the mission visible on all promotional material (brochures, Web site, registration forms, etc.).
- Utilize YMCA Character Development resources.
- Include an “educational” time in staff trainings to teach staff the mission and its meaning.

Once this foundation has been laid, you can take an overview of the entire summer program and plan for specific events to occur week by week. Utilizing the planning sheets, directors should brainstorm ideas that could be incorporated in the program. Some items to consider might include the following:

- Teach the campers a singing grace before lunch each day.
- Include Bible verses or other inspirational quotes in weekly newsletters.
- Include a Bible verse on the staff shirt (the back of every member T-shirt for the Houston YMCA includes, “Work hard, Play hard, Pray hard!”).
- Use international staff and volunteers, and fly flags from their home countries.
- Include “meditation” time in the program schedule.
- Say a prayer to close Opening or Closing Assembly time.
- Have a local religious leader visit once a week and deliver a “thought for the day.”
- Take prayer requests from staff or campers.
- Have Bibles or other inspirational texts available to staff to use for small group time.
- Make sure your activities don’t isolate campers of any religious beliefs.

Additionally, you have access to many Y-USA trainings and resources at www.ymcaexchange.org. YMCA Christian Leadership Conferences take place at more than a dozen locations each year. The annual “John 17:21 Conference” provides an opportunity to learn from other YMCAs that incorporate Christian emphasis into their work. Finally, the Character Development program was specifically designed to help you give a structure to teaching Christian principles at any age.



Part 2: The Campers

The center of YMCA Day Camps is the campers. Counselors and staff should know what to expect from children at various age levels and select activities that are age-appropriate. Staff members also need to understand how to prevent behavior problems from occurring or, if problems do arise, how to deal with them in a positive, respectful manner. In addition, as YMCA Day Camps welcome children with special needs into their programs, day camp staff must learn how to work with these campers and understand how the program can be altered to accommodate them

Characteristics of Children by Age Level

Developmental Snapshot of 5- and 6-Year-Olds

Most children this age love stories. They enjoy shared reading experiences, will read (if they can) or pretend to read to other kids, and may create and role-play unique stories. They especially like humorous books or factual ones that tell them about the world.

Five- and 6-year-olds have a fairly short attention span, are more interested in process than product, and often have little concern for rules of the game. Their ideas of right and wrong are tied mostly to rewards and punishments: whatever's rewarded is "good," while what's punished is "bad." They can understand the concepts of honesty, respect, responsibility, and caring, but only at a very concrete, experiential level.

Kids this age are ready to make some of their own decisions and help plan and manage their own time. They enjoy helping, achieving, and being praised for these things. They are becoming more adept at interacting with peers but still depend on adults to meet their emotional needs. They may not yet be able to understand others' perspectives. On the other hand, they may show increasing sensitivity to nature, small animals, plants, and so on. They get excited about doing things on their own, but if projects get overwhelming or don't succeed, they may feel guilty or inferior.

Five- and 6-year-olds are very energetic and need plenty of active play. They especially like climbing and balancing and sometimes try things beyond their capabilities. Physical skill and self-esteem growth are closely related.

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Activity and Behavioral Suggestions for Working With 5- and 6-Year-Olds

--Provide opportunities for reading, dramatic play, and writing (with pencils and erasers and/or chalk and chalkboards). When appropriate, act as "scribe," recording the words children use to explain their drawings.

--In multi-age groups, encourage older children to read to younger ones and vice versa. (Younger children who aren't yet reading can use the words they've heard or memorized and/or describe the pictures they see.)

--Label the room. Use writing with pictures to label interest centers, shelves, boxes, etc. Use several languages to celebrate diversity, especially if different languages are spoken within the group. Ask kids to teach peers words from their home languages.

--Offer nature activities, with discussions about why things happen, etc.

--Provide a wide variety of open-ended materials for creativity, such as blocks, wood, clay, and other art media.

--Give plenty of chances to run, jump, dance, and play in both organized and impromptu formats; let kids climb safely on age-appropriate equipment.

--Help refine fine motor skills by making scissors, crayons, puzzles, blocks, pencils, etc., accessible for group play and individual work.

--Introduce responsibilities for class/group pets, plants, etc.

--Offer a science center with simple experiments, observations, and books.

--Model caring and respect through your words and actions; help children begin to understand others' feelings and perspectives. Help them with conflict resolution.

--Take advantage of this age group's industrious nature by having them act as teacher's helper, or complete cooking or other projects. These brief efforts allow for immediate positive feedback. Encourage initiative, and be gentle if things get out of hand. Celebrate successes.

Characteristics of Children by Age Level

Developmental Snapshot of 7- and 8-Year-Olds

Kids this age still learn best in concrete terms. They prefer to participate rather than just watch, and they love field trips. Their memory is increasing, and they are talkative and curious: They'll question, comment, and speculate on all they see. They like to talk about the past, history, and far-off places.

Seven- and eight-year-olds are working hard on self-concept: their idea of themselves in terms of physical, social, and emotional characteristics. They are gaining some self-control, frustration tolerance, problem-solving abilities, and the concept of consequences. They enjoy planning and contributing to the daily operations of a program and are starting to want some decision-making opportunities, in keeping with what they learn other children have.

This age group grasps right and wrong, starts caring more about social norms, and begins understanding people's intentions, not just their actions. They are more influenced by peers, especially same-sex "best friends." They may be self-critical. They play fairly well with others but also enjoy some solitary activity.

Physically, they are still very active and will tire from long periods of sitting. They enjoy team sports and embrace fair play. They like games that require fine motor skills and quick reaction times.

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Activity/Behavioral Suggestions for Working with 7- and 8-Year-Olds

--Introduce service-learning activities in the community, and help kids keep abreast of current events. Provide advance information and research opportunities for these and other projects.

--Outline the time available for tasks so children can learn to budget their time.

--Facilitate group discussions, where kids can practice problem solving and listening to others' points of view. This might include role-playing to test consequences and solutions. Involve the kids in creating rules for the program/group. Resist the temptation to try to solve conflicts for them, but help them listen to each other and reach a mutually agreeable solution.

--You can give multipart instructions and expect successful follow-through, but waiting time should be limited so that all children can participate successfully.

--Offer science activities. Introduce these (and other activities) using props to increase understanding. Give kids chances to practice individually before moving into groups or teams.

--Establish a zero-tolerance policy for negative comments and put-downs.

--Help kids lead and show responsibility by mentoring others, signing in and out of the program, setting up before and cleaning up after activities, and giving them a variety of chores.

--Provide different activities that move from solitary to paired to team and that vary skill requirements to include endurance, agility, concentration, coordination, and movement. These should be cooperative, inclusive activities that focus on fair play and fun rather than winning.

--Offer options that require quick reaction time and hand-eye coordination, such as baseball, table tennis, computer games, soccer, and handball.

--Offer dramatic activities, including puppetry, mime, role-playing, and improvisation, inviting children to lead.

Characteristics of Children by Age Level

Developmental Snapshot of 9- and 10-Year-Olds

Kids this age are growing into skilled planners, debaters, speakers, and listeners. They're refining their sense of right and wrong and continuing to conform to social expectations. They are eager, enthusiastic, and anxious to win. At the same time, they may be experiencing some doubt and sensitivity about themselves. Peer influence is strong at this age—kids want to be like their peers. They also learn about individuality through their peers and become more skilled at evaluating their own ideas. They are developing perseverance, but interests may still fade quickly.

Physically, they use tremendous amounts of energy and are often hungry. They may pay little attention to other body needs, except when hurt or tired. They have well-developed hand-eye coordination and enjoy building skills in this area. Girls at this stage tend to be 12 to 15 months ahead of boys in their development. By 10, both genders may be quite fidgety or squirmy, and physical changes can cause outbursts, fighting, and tears.

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Activity/Behavioral Suggestions for Working With 9- and 10-Year-Olds

- Help kids create group/program rules.
- Provide plenty of time for discussions, brainstorming, and “debriefing” experiences, focusing on cause and effect rather than on the people involved (for example, in a conflict). Talk about the “weight” of such things as compliments and put-downs.
- Give group challenges, initiatives, or projects. Help set clear ground rules to ensure creative ideas aren't shot down. Help groups plan/map/diagram projects in advance and evaluate, as a group, their work after it's completed. Praise small victories and build up slowly to larger or more complex goals.
- Expose kids to different art forms and give them a forum to react. Stories set in different time periods are great for promoting creativity.
- Provide creative opportunities to examine all sides of an issue.
- Play fun games with spelling, such as Scrabble®, Boggle®, crosswords, and Wheel of Fortune®.
- Make sure kids eat and drink enough and use sunscreen. Be prepared to serve larger snacks for this age group, with seconds available.
- Be aware that kids may be unsure of what is happening to them physically. Offer support and explain that different and changing growth rates are natural.
- Introduce fine-motor games and activities such as sewing, beading, lanyards, weaving, and model building.
- Help kids explore the environment in creative ways.
- Channel competitive energy into activities that require the group to “win” without an individual or another group “losing.” Make sure everyone can succeed, regardless of physical stage.
- Encourage conflict resolution skills: active listening, questioning to clarify meaning and intention, etc.

Characteristics of Children by Age Level

Developmental Snapshot 11- and 12-Year-Olds

Eleven- and 12-year-olds start showing specialized skills in their areas of interest. They also begin to relate their present interests to their future. They are thinking more abstractly and can consider possibilities without actually having lived them, but they may still be tied to concrete thought in some areas. They start questioning formerly accepted rules and beliefs. They can also be authoritarian, dogmatic, and egocentric. It's typical at this age to be wrapped up in one's own experiences, appearance, and behavior.

Physically, this is the most rapid growth phase since infancy. Eleven and 12-year-olds may alternate between boundless spurts of energy and periods of dreamy lethargy. They may need help to understand that the dramatic changes they're experiencing are normal. These changes make them vulnerable to low self-esteem, moodiness, and intense emotions. Heavily influenced by peers, they are working hard at this age to develop and perfect their sense of self or identity. They crave independence and want to escape "little kid" constraints. However, they need and enjoy relationships with caring adults, even if they don't always communicate this well. They may be shy about volunteering their ideas, waiting instead for adults to solicit these.

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Activity/Behavioral Suggestions for 11- and 12-Year-Olds

--Encourage kids to try lots of experiences in their areas of skill and interest.

--Provide chances for both active play and quiet rest, along with time to just "hang" with their friends.

--Provide diverse, positive role models as kids explore their identities and contemplate their future. Role models help them visualize their own success. Engage them in frequent conversations about their future.

--Encourage discussion of group/program rules. Allow youths to question and reformulate roles, when appropriate. Give firm, consistent guidance, while understanding that their rule challenging is not an indictment of your authority but, instead, a necessary developmental step.

--Give meaningful roles in program operations that enable practice in goal setting, planning, and evaluation.

--Engage kids in dialogue to expand abstract thinking (group discussions, one-on-one conversations, journal writing, etc.) and help them understand the "gray" areas in life.

--Listen carefully when a young person talks with you. Give loving guidance or ask clarifying questions to lead them to self-discovery. Use "I messages" and reflective language. Reinforce their self-expression. Act on their ideas whenever you can.

--Give older kids their own space to manipulate and decorate. Adapt rules to meet their increasing needs for independence and responsibility.

Managing Behavior

A certain amount of behavior management is necessary in any camp to keep children organized and give them clear boundaries for behavior. However, this should be done in as positive a manner as possible—campers should always feel that staff care about them, even if their behavior needs to change. Use positive discipline to involve campers in developing and committing to a solution for behavior problems. If a problem becomes chronic, it may help to have someone observe the camper to find the cause triggering the behavior. If inappropriate behavior persists, it may be necessary to report incidents and consult with the camper's parents.

Preventing Behavior Problems

One of the best ways to prevent behavior problems is for staff to form and maintain good relationships with the children. This means they must trust campers' abilities, encouraging them to try again when they fail, and be trustworthy themselves—following through on whatever they promise. Staff should communicate clearly, using age-appropriate language, and listen to what children are saying without preconceived notions.

At the beginning of a camp session, children and staff should come to an agreement on a simple set of rules to follow in camp, as well as consequences for not following them. Campers should be expected to follow the rules, and be held accountable by staff if they do not. When discussing

behavior with campers, staff should use the Y core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility as tools.

For activities, staff should involve campers in planning their experiences, and should make sure children know what is planned for the day. When switching from one activity to another, they should always alert the children just before the change, then get the children's attention and give short, simple directions for the next activity. Of course, if something unexpected pops up that turns out to be more interesting than what was planned, the smart counselor goes along with it!

Using Group Management Tools

A good way to get campers to behave appropriately is to consistently use group management tools. Staff should follow these rules of thumb to keep the group organized and directed:

Provide structure—Set up space so it matches the needs and energy level of the planned activities. Use the same group format consistently.

Stay grounded—Always start an activity from a point of orderliness. Help campers calm down with quiet time or deep breaths.

Give children clear expectations—Let campers know which behaviors are acceptable and which are not in different situations. Warn campers before you change activities, which may change what behavior you will expect.

Provide cues—Give campers gentle but firm reminders of rules. Notice when someone is not “on task.”

Reinforce positive behavior—Praise campers when they act positively and appropriately.

Ignore negative behavior—When it won’t create a dangerous situation, ignore campers who are seeking attention by acting negatively.

Isolate or relocate misbehaving campers—Move campers who are being disruptive to a different area, away from the group.

Help campers understand what behavior is appropriate—When campers behave inappropriately, ask them why they misbehaved, then talk about appropriate ways to express feelings of anger, boredom or sadness.

Touch campers in an appropriate manner—A gentle touch can go a long way to calm a disruptive camper.

Build Rituals—Develop rituals such as chants, games, questions or movements that campers perform regularly and predictably. You may wish to plan a specific ritual to use when the group gets out of hand.

Use individual or group problem-solving—If a dispute arises, bring together a few individuals or the entire group and follow these steps:

1. Listen to one person at a time. All must agree to be silent when another is talking.
2. When everyone has spoken, see if someone can state the problem and where the disagreement lies.

3. When the problem seems clear to everyone, brainstorm possible solutions.

4. Discuss the outcomes for each solution and choose one.

5. Have the involved individuals agree to follow the solution. You may wish to use a written or verbal contract.

Provide developmentally appropriate activities that challenge campers—

Based on the age and development of your campers, try to choose activities that appeal to their interests. Give children an opportunity to provide input, and offer choices when you can.

Offer small-group activities—

Sometimes participation in a small group is better for developing individual campers’ interests and providing them with more attention.

Use peer pressure to help you—Once you have created a healthy group climate, let campers remind each other of the rules and keep each other in line.

Foster leadership—Let the natural leaders of the group emerge. This way, campers who are demanding attention or pulling the group to follow them can become positive leaders.

Give rewards—Follow less desirable activities like group meetings with more popular activities like a game or snack. Let well-behaved campers earn the right to do something special.

Transform the situation—When everything seems to be falling apart, or a child is stuck in a negative groove, turn it around. Play with the dynamic or turn it into a game or contest.

Redirect children who act inappropriately—Suggest other ways misbehaving campers can act to get what they need.

Chart difficult behavior—When a child’s behavior is difficult to alter, develop a behavior modification system in which the child earns a check mark for performing specified behavior each day. Reward the child for earning a set amount of check marks with a toy, activity, or special privilege.

Help campers save face—Create opportunities for children to correct a wrong, change a behavior, and take responsibility for themselves.

Use natural consequences—If a group or individual is disruptive, irresponsible or disrespectful, let natural consequences follow. For instance, bad behavior during an activity may mean that desirable materials or equipment will not be available next time.

Another behavior management tool sometimes suggested for group use is time out—removing a child from an activity to sit alone for a certain period of time before being allowed back into the activity. Typically, time out is not an ideal form of behavior management, as it does not give the child an opportunity to learn more desirable behavior. However, it can be used in extreme situations, such as when a camper is out of control or openly defiant, or when a staff member needs to cool down, after trying everything else without result.

After a reasonable time out period has elapsed, both the camper and staff should review the current situation. The staff member should ask the camper

to visualize how he or she could have behaved appropriately, rather than dwelling on what was done wrong. If the camper is not able to change their behavior, the staff member may choose to apply a consequence fitting the incident.

Using Positive Discipline

Children sometimes behave inappropriately because they can’t or don’t know how to meet their needs. YMCA Day Camp staff should use positive discipline with such children. Positive discipline does not rely on arbitrary rules and decisions, but on staff members working together with the child to identify the problem and find a solution. This places limits on a child’s behavior in a way that doesn’t take away their self-esteem—and hopefully helps them understand self-discipline.

One method of positive discipline is problem-solving, a five-step process that can be used under most circumstances:

1. Ask campers to describe their inappropriate behavior.

Children have to know what behavior needs to be changed before they can change it. Help them by asking questions like, “Can you describe to me what you did?” If they begin to talk about another’s actions, gently steer them back to discussing their own behavior. If they don’t want to describe their behavior, say something to the effect of, “I’m not trying to get you in trouble. I want to help you solve the problem, and I need to understand what happened.” If that doesn’t work, you might ask if they will listen to what you or someone else observed.

2. Help campers determine whether their behavior is desirable.

No one will make a change in behavior unless he or she decides that it needs to be changed. Help campers see the problem with their behavior by asking, “Is this behavior helping you, me, or others?” If they insist that it is, ask them further about how the behavior is helping. For campers who won’t acknowledge that their behavior is causing problems, describe the difficulties it is creating or how it is violating YMCA rules. If you already have a good relationship with the camper, this usually persuades them to admit that the behavior needs to change.

3. Once campers recognize a need for change in behavior, help them develop a plan to make it happen.

Let campers decide how to change by asking a question like, “What do you think you can do so you won’t (inappropriate behavior) again?” Though they may not be used to making such decisions, you shouldn’t accept a vague, “I won’t do it again.” Instead, encourage them to come up with creative and specific plans.

4. Make sure that both of you understand the plan, and get a commitment from the camper to see it through.

State a summary of what you believe the camper’s plan is so that you both are sure what the child is supposed to do to change the inappropriate behavior. You may want to put the plan into writing, depending on the situation.

5. Follow up, and if the plan doesn’t work, reassess it together.

Be positive about a camper’s ability to execute their plan, and praise them for

doing so. Check with the camper periodically, and if the plan isn’t working, stay supportive and start the process over again. If you sense that a camper is not committed to change, or if their behavior is dangerous or disruptive, you may have to mention what the consequences will be if they continue with the same behavior. However, weigh consequences against the welfare of the camper. Often, kicking a child out of camp may solve the problem, but it would be better for them to stay and perform a service project to make amends for the inappropriate behavior.

Staff members need to be aware that they hold a lot of power over campers, and sometimes the children’s awareness of their own powerlessness can anger them. To avoid creating conflicts over power, staff should never make arbitrary decisions, even though they may be bombarded with requests. In addition, staff members should never use their power to coerce, criticize, or punish participants. We want to promote campers’ self-esteem, not tear it down. See *YMCA Behavior Management: ROLL-Play* (page 51) for an entertaining training exercise that will help your staff practice handling negative behavior during camp activities.

Here are three valuable concepts: First, you get more of the behavior that you reward. Make a big deal about minor bad behavior, and you may even get more of it. Rewarding kids with positive comments for appropriate behavior will cause all campers to repeat it. Our most valuable tool is “catching kids being good.”

Second, kids are still growing emotionally and we need to be patient.

They will make lots of mistakes; that's how they learn. We shouldn't get angry with them because they're trying new things and not always getting it right.

And third, we shouldn't confuse that patience with tolerating or ignoring bad behavior. There are some actions that cannot be ignored, even once. These include picking on each other, put-downs, and crude language. We need to react to every single incident so that children never get the idea that put-downs or swearing are appropriate. Mixed messages from adults in this area, such as laughing at sarcastic put-downs on TV or tolerating a child's sarcastic comment about another camper because it's "funny," tells campers that they'll be rewarded if they "get it right."

Campers look up to counselors, so our role-modeling and approval carry powerful weight.

So that parents and children understand the importance of appropriate behavior at camp, page 42 contains a set of written behavioral guidelines that clearly state what is and is not acceptable behavior, along with an explanation of management procedures should a child act inappropriately. Parents should review these guidelines with their child, then sign and return to their child's counselor.

Special Needs

With more enlightened attitudes toward children with special needs, along with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), it is likely that you will see more and more children with special needs in your day camp. The YMCA policy is one of inclusion, not exclusion – of participation, not

segregation—of children with disabilities. However, we are entitled to, and must, evaluate whether the cost of accommodation may be an "undue burden." Likewise, because YMCAs are not providers of one-on-one care, we must further evaluate whether the proposed accommodation would "fundamentally alter" the nature of the group program we offer.

Your staff will need to learn about the specific needs of each child with a disability, as well as the accommodations necessary for them to participate in your camp. The camp director should meet with the parents of any child with special needs to discuss how to make the day camp experience enjoyable, developmental, and safe for the child. Discussion should cover the following:

- Understanding the child's special need(s)
- Understanding how the child's condition impacts their behavior, ability to participate in activities, and interaction with others
- Learning about any limitations to activity
- Learning about any medication needs and determining how medicines should be administered
- Learning about any medical situation that might arise and how the child might react, and then coming to agreement on treatment

A written release should then be developed. Like all forms, it should be reviewed and approved by your legal counsel to make sure it meets all local, state, and federal laws.



Part 3: The Staff

Supervision: Helping Staff Members Grow

Your staff will function best if they are involved in planning and decision-making and are encouraged to think for themselves. Help staff members grow by delegating tasks to them. While staff members should be held responsible for their work on the task, it is your job to guide and monitor their performance. Whenever you assign a new task, do the following:

- Tell staff why this task must be accomplished.
- Explain what you want as a final result.
- Give staff the necessary authority to take action, and set a deadline.
- Have staff repeat back to you the task and the completion date, to confirm that you both have the same understanding.

- Set up controls or times to check on the person to make sure that no serious mistakes occur as the task is performed.

Another way to promote personal growth is for you and your staff to write out at least five measurable goals, two of which are personal, at the beginning of camp. Everyone can then share their goals so you can help each other reach them. Take time during one of the staff meetings halfway through the summer to self-evaluate those goals; then look at them again at the end of the season.

While there are many ways to help your staff be their best, perhaps the most important thing you can do for them is to present yourself as a good role model. Adhere to high personal and professional standards, and discuss those standards with your staff so they know your expectations.

Communicating and Problem-Solving

It's your job to keep your staff aware of what's going on. When you make decisions, be sure you inform staff and explain how you made the decisions. Establish two-way communication with your staff, and make it easy for them to talk with you about their concerns by doing the following:

- Give your full attention when they speak.
- Express interest in what they say, and repeat key ideas to ensure you properly understand them.
- Ask open-ended questions to find out what they think and how they feel.
- At the end of the discussion, summarize what you think are their main concerns.
- Consider their position, and respond constructively.

When camp problems arise (and they will!), work together with your staff to find solutions. Follow these steps to resolve problems:

- Look at the problem as a solvable one. Don't blame it on parents' or campers' personalities. Try to define the real causes so you don't just treat the symptoms.
- Brainstorm as many solutions as possible. Don't ignore or judge anyone's contribution.
- Examine the positive and negative aspects of each suggested solution, and then agree as a group on which one to try.
- Talk about how to put the solution into action, and agree to discuss it again later to make sure it is working and not causing other problems.
- Put the solution and action steps in writing, especially when dealing with safety or child behavior action plans.

Keeping Staff Morale High

Part of your job as a supervisor is building team spirit and fostering good morale. The more pleasant the work environment is, and the more rewards staff members get from doing a good job, the happier they will be.

Ideas for keeping staff motivated:

- Have staff fill out the "Pump Me Up" form (page 53).
- Reward good work...tell them when they performed well.
- Surprise staff with T-shirts, visors, etc.
- Hold social activities like pizza and ice cream parties.
- Listen to their frustrations and offer understanding.
- Send them personal thank-you notes.
- Create a staff board, with quotes, jokes, a thought for the day, devotions, etc.

Positive Reinforcement Items (PRIs)

Week one: **"Pay Day" candy bar handed out with paycheck**

Week two: **Individual item from the "Pump Me Up" form**

Week three: **Smiley face bouncing ball**

Week four: **Freezie pops or other cold treats**

Week five: **Bubbles**

Week six: **Individual item from the "Pump Me Up" form**

Week seven: **Dinner at the staff meeting**

Week eight: **Appreciation note to staff**

Week nine: **Flying disks**

Week ten: **Individual item from the "Pump Me Up" form**

Bringing Cultural Diversity to Your Staff and Camp

By serving people of all ages, races, faiths, and abilities, YMCAs probably have the most varied membership of any organization. But as our society continues to become even more diverse and large segments of the public become increasingly intolerant, it is more important than ever for YMCA Day Camps to effectively prepare young people for the future, helping them appreciate, respect, and understand other cultures. Here are some things to consider when bringing diversity to your camp:

- YMCA Day Camps need to create an atmosphere of respect for diversity when serving campers, and when hiring and training staff. Staff who are bilingual are great assets.
- YMCA Day Camps should research the demographics and diversity of their service area.
- Traditions at some day camps, such as games and songs based on Native American folklore, will need to be re-examined to make sure they are authentic and respectful.
- Camp staff will need to learn how to promote YMCA Day Camp to diverse groups.

International Staff for Day Camps

The YMCA International Camp Counselor Program (ICCP) is operated by the YMCA of Greater New York on behalf of Ys across the world. ICCP helps day camp directors find and hire qualified international staff to add a global dimension to their camp program. Candidates are men and women age 20 and over who have:

- Experience working, living, and playing with groups of children

- Specialized skills, such as tennis or swimming
- A good work ethic and ability to work long hours with children
- Philosophies of youth leadership
- Good English skills
- Good health
- Some camping or camp-related skills
- Police background checks from their home country

ICCP participants have helped internationalize the camp program in the past by teaching African drumming, organizing a Scandinavian midsummer's day celebration, teaching songs and dances from around the world, providing positive role models for ethnic camper populations, leading Model UN programs, and contributing in countless other innovative ways.

All ICCP Day Camp participants receive a small stipend and stay with either host families or in other arrangements made by the camp. While camps pay a program fee to ICCP and transportation from the arrival orientation to the host site, ICCP arranges for health and accident insurance, international flight subsidies and J-1 Camp Counselor exchange visas. In many cases, the cost of including an ICCP participant on your day camp staff is about the same or less than what a camp would pay to fill the position with an American counselor.

Hiring international staff at YMCA Day Camps is a clear expression of our worldwide mission. Not only does it enhance your YMCA's image in the community, it adds a unique dimension to your camp program that is educational, stimulating, and fun. Being exposed to diversity has a positive impact on kids and staff by providing role models from other countries and helping them celebrate cultural differences.

YMCA-ICCP
5 West 63rd Street
New York, NY 10023
Phone: 212-727-8800
Toll Free: 888-477-9622
www.ymcaiccp.org

Five Fundamentals of POWER Hiring

POWER Hiring is a step-by-step system for “making every hire count.” It will improve the hiring process for camp counselors by implementing “best hiring practices.”

Performance profiles: If you want to hire an excellent camp counselor, first define excellent performance. This is the first and most important principle of POWER Hiring. Through a series of interviews and focus groups, we have created a performance profile for the Camp Counselor position available on www.ymcaexchange.org. It describes superior performance for a great Camp Counselor. Customize it to match your specific camp. The whole purpose of the interview is to discover if a candidate is capable of delivering the results described in the profile.

Objective evaluation: The best candidates will provide clear evidence of their performance in four areas: They possess the talent and self-motivation to do the job. They have the ability to motivate and work with others. They demonstrate that “past performance is the best predictor of future performance” through their specific examples related to the Performance Profile. And they demonstrate that they can solve problems and adapt to new situations. For the YMCA Camp Counselor position, tools are provided to objectively assess the candidates using a phone screen, the Custom Interview Guide, and objective assessment tools for reference checking.

Wide-ranging sourcing: The best candidates accept jobs based on what they’ll *learn, do, and become*. They want to work for someone who will help them grow and teach them new skills and abilities. If your advertising and your conversations with candidates don’t include those three things, you will never be able to attract the best. Top candidates always have other options, so it is up to you to give them all of the information they need. Remember that the best candidates are evaluating you and your camp in every interview.

Emotional control: For all positions, but especially the camp counselor position, performance, personality, character, and fit are all critical factors for success. But you must measure performance first. The clearest definition of performance objectives and the best questions won’t work, unless you control your emotions. This is the #1 cause of hiring mistakes! Here’s just one tip that will make a world of difference: *Wait 30 minutes into the interview before making any judgment about the candidate’s fit for the position!*

1. Force yourself to remain objective. Once you decide on the candidate’s competency, the assessment process stops.
2. Listen four times more than you talk. It’s better to ask questions. Interviewing is a fact-finding exercise, not a social conversation.

Recruiting right: Getting the candidate to say yes is a critical part of the hiring process.

Here’s how to recruit a candidate effectively:

1. Test their interest by saying something like this at the end of the interview: “I’m seeing a number of other candidates, but I am very impressed with your background. What are your thoughts about this position?” If the candidate needs to think about it, you know that you need to work harder to find out what his or her real objections are.
2. Don’t Delay. A delay in making the decision could cost you a good camp counselor. Keep it moving – your preferred candidate may receive an offer while you struggle through the decision-making process. If you delay making an offer to an above-average candidate in January hoping you’ll be able to find an outstanding candidate in March, you may just end up hiring a below-average candidate in May—or an unsatisfactory candidate on June 1st!

Be sure to read the complete online POWER Hiring training in the camping section of YMCAexchange. www.ymcaexchange.org.



Part 4: The Program

Special Days at Day Camp

Not all days at camp will be identical, and that is just as it should be. For instance, the first day of camp will call for variations in the typical camp day, as will the days and evenings devoted to theme-related activities or family programs. On some days, rain will cause the usual outdoor activities to be altered or replaced, and on others, the reason will be field trips to new and exciting places or special guests who visit camp to give special presentations.

The First Day

Perhaps the most significant of the special days is the first day at camp. Programming for the first day in each session can be similar—although, as some campers may be returning, the activities should not be identical. (Take advantage of the presence of continuing campers by asking them to help with the orientation of the new group.) Begin the first day with activities that help campers feel at home. As they reach the campsite, move them to a central location where they can be entertained with songs, skits, and cheers until everyone has arrived.

After a brief welcome by the administrative staff and an introduction of counselors and other staff members, assign campers to small groups. Each counselor

can then begin a camp orientation period with their small group. Counselors should first double-check their group for attendance, then lead the campers on an orientation hike around the campsite, pointing out various activity areas and explaining what will take place there during the camp days. Counselors can use this tour of the camp to enthusiastically encourage campers' interest in what they see, and to put campers at ease about matters such as swimming, lunch, and emergency procedures. Special attention should be given to the location of the bathrooms and any other special facilities for hygiene and safety. This is also a good time to review basic camp rules and explain the cooperation needed to make the camp community work well.

The small group setting is especially important on the first day of camp because it is where counselors and campers get to know each other best. Some activities are especially conducive to this process—the best being icebreaker activities that allow campers to introduce themselves and share their interests, giving the group a chance to listen and ask questions. This is an important opportunity for campers and counselors to learn each other's names so everyone feels more at home. For campers who miss the first day, have a similar follow-up orientation.

Special Events

Special Events are focused activities that carry out the theme for each day. Often these events are regarded as the most exciting part of camp when campers think back on their experience—making them important both for the fun and variety they offer, as well as the memories they create.

Counselors are the key to getting campers excited about special events. One way to generate enthusiasm is to announce the upcoming event well ahead of time, and then referring to it as it approaches. For example, on the day before “Halloween” is celebrated during a theme week devoted to holidays, a counselor disguised as a witch might appear just before the campers go home, shrieking out a message that tomorrow is costume day. (Keep parents informed of each week’s theme and activities, especially if campers need to bring special materials or clothes.) All counselors need to participate in the events enthusiastically in order to motivate campers to get involved.

Visual messages about upcoming special events are also effective in building anticipation, and can give parents who visit the camp a taste of the fun activities their children will be enjoying. Posters or a chalkboard that lists “coming attractions” are good advertising devices, and music and costumes can be used to present “previews” for events. For example, if a day is devoted to Paul Bunyan, having a counselor dressed like Paul Bunyan at the opening ceremonies gets campers ready to enjoy the logrolling contest planned for later in the day.

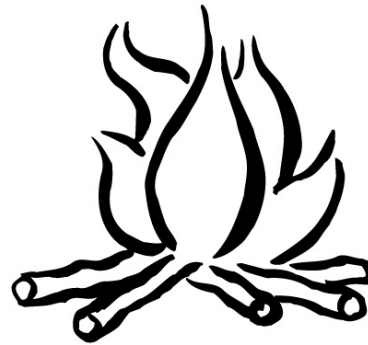
Family Night

Because enhancing family relationships is an important part of YMCA programs, Family Night should be an integral part of any day camp session. Family Night generally occurs at least once during each day camp session, usually near the end. It is a chance for loved ones to visit the campsite and see campers perform some of the skills they have developed during camp. Keep in

mind that “family” covers a variety of groupings, including single-parent and blended families, and grandparents who are raising children. Be sensitive to the needs of nontraditional family groups.

Family Nights should be planned with several objectives in mind:

- Staff and parents can get to know each other so they can better understand the impact of home and camp on the children.
- Parents can learn about their child’s daily activities at camp as staff members present an overview of the typical day and the camp program in general.
- Campers can present entertaining programs that display the new skills and accomplishments they have gained during the camp session.
- All participants can share and affirm the goals and objectives of the camp and the YMCA concerning the strengthening of families.



Rainy Days

Rainy days can mean revised schedules and relocation of activities. With adequate preparation, adventurous events and activities can be inserted into the camp day, seeing campers and staff through a challenging time! Seasoned day camp directors recommend planning at least four days’ worth of rainy day activities for each two-week session. If the camp is in an area with an especially hot climate, rainy day

ideas may also be appropriate when it is too hot for the usual camp activities.

The recreational needs of campers do not change with the weather—campers still need activity and physical exercise, mental stimulation, and outlets for creativity. Keep in mind that bad weather at day camp calls for special emphasis on good humor, a happy atmosphere, and laughter. Some indoor and outdoor ideas for fun “bad weather” activities are listed below.

Indoor Activities

Keep a box of equipment and supplies on hand for use only on rainy days, and decorate it to add an air of mystery and surprise. The contents should be appropriate to indoor activities and could include:

- Table games not used at other times
- Pencils and paper for quizzes and games
- Crayons, watercolors, and other art supplies
- Nature flash cards
- Balloons for games
- Rhythm band instruments
- Soap bubble pipes
- Table tennis balls, playing cards, and marbles
- Paper plates, soda straws, and other craft supplies
- Shelf paper, newsprint, and aluminum foil
- Clothespins, toothpicks, and pipe cleaners

In addition to a special box of supplies, a collection of costumes could be designated for use only on rainy days. If you have adequate space, you might also consider acquiring some indoor versions of outdoor sports equipment. Nerf and Wiffle balls can be used indoors in simulations of outdoor games. Some games are even designed for indoor use, including rubber darts, shuffleboard, hopscotch, and jump rope. Some popular indoor activities are:

- Indoor Olympics or track meets
- Scavenger hunts
- Carnivals
- Talent shows
- Mock TV shows

- Animal imitations and indoor zoos
- Puppet shows
- Arts and crafts
- Storytelling and singing
- Production of a camp newspaper
- Folk dance

If you’d rather spend your time indoors but off-site, some indoor field trip destinations may not require advance reservations. If you have transportation available, call local museums, roller rinks, movies, and planetariums for a fun adventure on a rainy day.



Outdoor Activities

As long as there is no lightning in the area, outdoor activities in the rain are permissible—and in some case may even be more fun! Water play, such as sailing model boats in a puddle or swimming in the rain, offers a twist on a familiar activity. And practicing camping skills in bad weather requires campers to concentrate more—starting a fire and cooking take extra care and planning, and finding shelter becomes increasingly important. Wet weather also allows campers to compare the environment on a rainy day to normal weather conditions—wind direction and clouds change, and wildlife act differently. Have campers pay attention to things that may seem different from what they see, feel, hear, and smell on a dry day. A rainy day may also be a chance for children to witness soil erosion and make plans to prevent it.

Thingamajig / Curiosity Science / Invention Convention

From creating an edible, working volcano and constructing a tiny city out of sticks and stones, to dismantling an old toaster from the junkyard, becoming a scientist, inventor or architect for the summer is a blast for campers. Little do they know that while they are knee-deep in dirt, goop, and grime, they are actually learning about scientific principles, recycling, and the arts. In program sessions like “Grossology,” campers experiment with materials like slime and silly putty, to learn about chemical changes, properties, and reactions. Campers take apart appliances and assemble their own inventions from junkyard finds in “Junkyard Inventions,” and they learn about simple machines and architectural concepts as they construct communities in “Amazing Architects.” Whether campers are learning about sound vibrations or discovering the magical properties of silly putty, the key to Curiosity Science is incorporating recyclable materials. Each session uses common household appliances and other ordinary, reusable supplies, which keeps operating costs down while teaching children the importance of being resourceful and protecting the environment.

Field Trips

While field trips are exciting, they should also relate to overall camp activities and particular themes. Since field trips usually take up all or most of a camp day, they should be planned carefully and announced in advance to campers and parents. The following are some guidelines for planning field trips:

- Build the cost of field trips into the camp budget when possible. Parents

can become irritated by unplanned costs.

- Give adequate notice to the appropriate authorities at the field trip destination.
- Make sure that the field trip offers campers something truly new.
- Limit trips to those requiring no more than 30 minutes of transportation time each way.
- Plan the trip to ensure it is organized and safe. Keep a trip itinerary with a designated staff member on the vehicle and back at camp.
- Have a complete roster of all staff and campers on the field trip, and do a head count often. (Keep a roster at the camp office as well, in case of an emergency.) Every camper should be within sight of a counselor at all times.
- Consider having campers wear badges that identify the group name and YMCA phone number, as well as any special medical information like food allergies.
- Have at least two counselors for any group up to ten campers, plus one counselor for each additional eight campers. If the group is co-ed, counselors should be as well. If junior counselors are used, they must be at least two years older than the campers and be supervised at all times.
- Make sure campers and staff know how and where to obtain assistance in case of emergency. The senior staff member should carry originals of all health forms for each camper on the trip in case emergency treatment becomes necessary. Each head counselor should travel with a first-aid fanny pack and carry a cell phone.
- Review child abuse prevention procedures with staff.
- If the trip destination includes a pool or body of water, make sure lifeguards are on duty in the necessary ratio for the size of your group, or bring the appropriate number of YMCA lifeguards with you.

Possible field trip destinations are unlimited. The following are just a few ideas:

- Businesses and factories: bakeries, pet stores, TV and radio stations, newspaper plants
- Transportation facilities: ferries, train stations, airports, shipping docks
- Public agencies: city halls, court houses, humane societies, post offices, fire stations, police departments, libraries, fish and wildlife services
- Nature and ecology facilities: farms, bird sanctuaries, dams, wildlife refuges, fossil beds, recycling centers, state parks, outdoor education centers, weather stations
- Recreation and education facilities: museums, historic sites, art galleries, colleges and universities, planetariums, skating rinks, horseback riding academies, zoos

Of course, a cheaper alternative to field trips is to bring information to the campers through a series of guest speakers. Some people you might ask to speak to the children are:

- A fisherman
- Someone from 4-H
- A high school biology teacher
- An amateur astronomer
- A farmer
- An Audubon Club or Sierra Club member
- Someone from the humane society or local zoo
- A veterinarian
- A local sports figure

Theme Days

One of the most effective ways to keep day camp fun and interesting, even for returning campers, is to use a theme for each week's activities. Themes unite campers and staff into one community and are limited only by your imagination. From "The Fifties," with hula hoops and sock hops, to "Pirate Week," with a treasure hunt, rowboat regatta, and pirate dress-up, themes generate fun and variety.

An especially useful aspect of themes is that they allow you to incorporate activities appropriate to campers across a wide range of ages and skill levels. For instance, in a circus theme, younger campers can plan and present circus acts at their own skill level that are just as important to the whole show as acts contributed by older children. And even the more sophisticated and complex acts developed by older campers need the support of hardworking "crews" of younger children who can make posters and paint scenery.



A Typical Day

A successful program includes daily schedules that provide structure for the campers. Several different components, including small group time, activity periods, and all-camp activities, help create balance so that there is a good mix between low- and high-energy activities, small and large group assemblies, and quiet and not-so-quiet time. A good schedule can keep campers interested, enthused, and energized while providing plenty of opportunity for them to focus on the four core character values. Here's an example of a typical day's schedule:

- 8:30 a.m.–8:45 a.m.** Opening Ceremonies. The entire camp assembles for flag raising, brief devotional time, and announcements.
- 8:45 a.m.–9:00 a.m.** Small Group Time 1. Each group meets with its counselor for a brief discussion of the theme and/or core value for the day. Campers drop off personal belongings.
- 9:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m.** Activity Period 1. Each small group works on various activities like arts & crafts, nature study, games, aquatics, and skills development. Some small groups may be involved in activities related to character development or group planning sessions for all-camp activities.
- 10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.** Activity Period 2. (Same as Period 1) Each small group moves to a new activity.
- 11:00 a.m.– Noon** All-Camp Activity 1. The total camp engages in one activity, such as an open swim or major sport. This is a time when a particular themed activity should be carried out.
- Noon–1:00 p.m.** Lunch. The groups sit together during lunch. Songs and stories for the entire camp bring everyone together and keep campers occupied. (During this time, counselors rotate so they each get a half-hour away from campers to eat their lunches.)
- 1:00 p.m.–2:15 p.m.** Activity Period 3 or Individual Choice Activities. Each camper can join a group at the activity station of their choice.
- 2:15 p.m.–3:30 p.m.** All-Camp Activity 2. (Same as All-Camp Activity 1.)
- 3:30 p.m.–3:50 p.m.** Small Group Time 2. Each group meets again to reflect on the events of the day and talk about how the day's character value was shown. This is a time for shared learning and feelings, as well as for winding down. In camps that give out character value beads, counselors hand out the appropriately colored beads to campers who exemplified those values during the day.
- 3:50 p.m.–4:00 p.m.** Closing. The groups come together to hear the staff make positive comments on the day just passed and to hear about plans for the day to come.

Getting Started

Now that you have read about what goes into a YMCA Day Camp program, it's your chance to create your own plan. Take a look at our sample weekly schedule, then fill in a blank schedule (Part 6: Samples "to go") with your own thoughts and ideas on how to provide your campers with a memorable experience that will reinforce the goals, values, and principles of the YMCA. Good luck, and have fun!

Extended Day

Most day camp days run from 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., but almost all camps also offer child care before and after regular camp hours for the convenience of working parents. YMCAs that provide such care need to decide whether it will be supervised by camp counselors or additional child care staff, especially since counselors will be tired by the end of the day. It is not a good idea to hire staff to work early-morning child care plus half the camp day, then another set of staff to work the second half of the camp day through after-camp care, as this arrangement doesn't give children the staff continuity they need. Other issues to consider when you set up your extended-day child care are the following:

- **Pricing**—Will you charge separately for the extra time or include it in the cost of day camp?
- **Location**—Will the care be done at camp or a different location? If at a different location, what transportation will be necessary?

- **Activities**—How can you plan activities that will not be disrupted as children leave at different times?
- **Communication with parents**—If a separate staff is used during extended hours, how will they get messages to parents of day campers in the case of accidents or behavior problems?
- **Security**—How can you ensure the safety of campers as they are dropped off in the morning and picked up at night? What sign-in and sign-out procedures will be necessary?

Because children are in a structured program most of the day, the child care portion of day camp tends to be loosely structured with a lot of free choices. Coloring and drawing, doing puzzles, playing board games, watching movies, reading, and resting are typical activities. Figure 4.1 shows some characteristics of staff, campers, and parents during extended day child care and some suggestions for how they might be treated.

EXTENDED DAY CONSIDERATIONS

During Pre-Camp Care

Staff may be...	Campers may be...	Parents may be...
Tired/sleepy	Energetic	Uneasy
Hungry	Impatient	Rushed
Cranky	Curious	Frazzled
Anxious	Competitive	Feeling guilty
Disoriented	Angry	Critical
Not motivated	Nervous	Demanding
Not yet moving comfortably	Shy	Apologetic
Eager to talk with each other	Feeling left out	Relieved
	Feeling too old for camp	Feeling separated from children
	Feeling separated from parents	
Staff need...	Campers need...	Parents need...
Direction	To be welcomed individually	Daily communication
Planned activities	To be asked to be included	Easy sign-in procedures
Easy-to-lead activities	Simple instructions or rules	Clearly identified staff
To arrive early to prepare	A choice between quiet or active activities	To observe teamwork and supervision
	No lose/all win activities	

During Post-Camp Care

Staff may be...	Campers may be...	Parents may be...
Tired	Wound up	Rushed
Hot, dirty, and smelly	Hot and smelly	Tired
Ready to go home	Bored	Stressed
Ready for adult conversation	Unwilling to play	Uninterested
Hungry and thirsty	Hungry and thirsty	Curious
Out of patience	Unwilling to share	Demanding
Frazzled	Exhausted	Looking for new friends
Not motivated	Lethargic and whiney	
Staff need...	Campers need...	Parents need...
A change of pace	A change of pace	Daily communication
Preplanned activities	Simple instructions or rules	Easy sign-out procedures
Easy-to-lead activities	No lose/all win activities	Time with counselors
Time with parents	A choice between quiet or active activities	To observe good supervision
Adequate staff coverage	Food and drink	Flexibility of pick-up time
Food and drink	Individual time with a counselor	

Note: Lists and sample forms in this manual are provided for general information purposes and are not intended to substitute for legal advice on specific issues.



Part 5: The Camp Office

Your registration procedure, the forms you use, the processes you create to handle the paperwork... these are the last place where you need to spend your time “getting creative.” With 2,000 YMCA Day Camps in this country, you should be using your telephone and e-mail to find forms and procedures with proven track records.

Start with the last person who held your job. Track them down and find out what worked best and what they would change. Interview your front desk staff about what worked best and their advice for improving service.

YMCAexchange (www.ymcaexchange.org) has dozens of procedures and sample forms that you can modify for your own use.

The book *Day Camp from Day One*, published by the American Camp Association, includes a CD-ROM with 40 customizable forms and procedures illustrated in the book.

The American Camp Association offers a variety of solutions through their online bookstore, including standard forms for health history and health exams, nurse’s log, and dozens of sample forms and procedures helpful in meeting ACA camp accreditation.

No matter how you gather your forms, policies, and parent guides, have your YMCA’s human resources administrator and legal advisor review your final adaptations BEFORE you use them. Also have several “sample” parents review them for ease of use. A little extra time up front will save hours of problems later.

KEEPING PARENTS INFORMED

Methods:

- Parent's handbook/information packet
- Camp Web site parent information pages and FAQs
- Web site daily photo updates and "camp newspaper"
- Parent phone calls by staff
- Greeting parents at drop-off and pick-up
- Session newsletter
- Flyers for special days
- Family activity nights

Information to give parents *before* camp starts:

- Staff profiles, backgrounds, or résumés, including photos of staff (in their nice, crisp, new camp T-shirts, also "wearing" unstressed, start-of-summer smiles!!)
- Philosophy of the camp, and the YMCA mission
- Typical activities
- Specific rules, guidelines the campers must follow
- Camping attire requested or required
- Special events: field trips, overnights, family nights, etc.
- Discipline procedures
- Drop-off and pick-up procedures
- First aid and emergency procedures
- Summer schedule (sessions, themes, days off-July 4?)
- What to bring: lunches, swimsuit, towel (reminder to label everything)
- What NOT TO BRING: toys, valuables, money, CD players, guns, video games, knives
- Directions to camp or bus pick-up locations (if transportation is provided)
- Specific parents-policy information, e.g., fee payments, cancellation policy, refund policy, Rainy Day/Smog/High Heat Index or other - inclement weather procedures
- Who to contact at the YMCA

Information to give to parents *during* camp:

- Special activities during session: field trips, family nights
- How their camper is doing
- Updates on staff
- Any problems that occur (e.g., head lice)
- Any changes in facility, scheduling, procedures
- News about camp activities and how special events went
- Take-home activities (like recipes for special projects)

Note: Lists and sample forms in this manual are provided for general information purposes and are not intended to substitute for legal advice on specific issues.



Part 6: Samples "to go"

The following are samples of activities, worksheets, policies, and forms from YMCA day camps from across the country. The same advice applies here as to anything else you create or borrow for your YMCA: Have your human resources administrator and legal advisor review them before you implement new documents, and practice activities on your peers and other volunteers before you try them on your staff and members!

Do you have samples that you would like to share with others? Send them to us! Go to YMCAexchange (www.ymcaexchange.org), and visit the camping section.

Sample Invocation

The Wise Man and the Cricket

One day a wise man left his home to visit a city person with whom he had become friends. Being in a city, with its noises and its crowds, was a new experience for the wise man, and he was fascinated by it.

The wise man and the city person were walking down the street when suddenly the wise man touched his friend's shoulder and said quietly, "Stop! Do you hear what I hear?"

His city friend paused, listened, smiled, and said, "All I hear is the tooting of car horns, the noise of the buses, and the voices of people. Just the regular sounds of the city. What is it that you hear?"

The wise man replied, "I hear a cricket chirping somewhere nearby."

Again the city person listened, but he shook his head. "You must be mistaken," he said. "I hear no cricket. And even if there were crickets nearby, the chirping would be drowned out by all other noises."

The wise man would not be persuaded. After a moment he motioned to his friend, and, walking a few steps along the sidewalk, they came to a vine growing on the outside of one of the buildings. He pushed the leaves aside, and there, to the amazement of the city person, a tiny cricket was revealed, chirping its loudest. Now that he saw the cricket and was close to it, the city person could hear its call. As they proceeded on their way, he said to his wise friend, "Of course, you heard the cricket because your hearing is much better than mine. All wise men can hear better than city folks."

The wise man smiled, shook his head, and replied, "No, that is not true. The wise person's hearing is no better than that of a city person. Watch, I'll prove it."

He reached into his pocket and found a 50-cent piece, which he tossed on the sidewalk. It clinked against the cement and people from several yards around them stopped, turned, and looked. Finally, one of them picked up the piece, pocketed it, and went on his way.

"You see," said the wise man, "the noise made by the half-dollar was no louder than that made by the cricket, yet many city people heard the noise the money made, stopped, and paid attention to it, although they paid no heed to the noise made by the cricket."

"The reason is not a difference in our hearing. It is a difference in what we have learned to listen for, a difference in the things we turn our attention toward."

This friend is very special, for he has taught me a lesson, which has greatly influenced my life, and I wanted to share it with you.

Isaiah 55:12

"For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace;

the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth in singing,

and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

YMCA DAY CAMP: BACK-HOME ACTION PLAN

Name: _____

Date: _____

PROGRAM (goals, activities, structure, schedules)

FISCAL MANAGEMENT (budget, enrollment tracking, expense control)

HUMAN RESOURCES (employees/volunteer/staff supervision, development, personnel issues)

FACILITIES (management, contracts, use plans)

COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENT RELATIONS (promotion, communication plans, regulatory issues, public policy advocacy)

VOLUNTEER & FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT (committee involvement, donor development, alumni development)

PROGRAMS on PURPOSE Worksheet

YMCA

PROGRAM _____

YMCA OBJECTIVE	CAMPERS	STAFF/VOLUNTEERS
Grow personally		
Teach values		
Improve personal & family relationships		
Appreciate diversity		
Become a better leader & supporter		
Develop specific skills		
Have fun		
Respond to demographic trends & social issues		
Develop cross- cutting programs		
Collaborate internally & externally		

40 Developmental Assets

After surveying nearly 500,000 young people in towns and cities of all sizes across America, the Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

	CATEGORY	ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
EXTERNAL ASSETS	Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support-Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication-Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s). 3. Other adult relationships-Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. Caring neighborhood-Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring school climate-School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 6. Parent involvement in schooling-Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
	Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth-Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth as resources-Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to others-Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety-Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
	Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 12. School boundaries -School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries - Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. 14. Adult role models-Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer influence-Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High expectations-Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
	Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities-Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. Youth programs-Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. Religious community-Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. Time at home-Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.
	Commitment to Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Achievement motivation-Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. School engagement-Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. Homework-Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. Bonding to school-Young person cares about her or his school. 25. Reading for pleasure-Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
INTERNAL ASSETS	Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Caring-Young person places high value on helping other people. 27. Equality and social justice-Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. Integrity-Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 29. Honesty-Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." 30. Responsibility -Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. Restraint-Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
	Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Planning and decision-making-Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. Interpersonal competence-Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. Cultural competence-Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. Resistance skills -Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. Peaceful conflict resolution-Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.
	Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Personal power-Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." 38. Self-esteem-Young person reports having high self-esteem. 39. Sense of purpose-Young person reports that, "my life has a purpose." 40. Positive view of personal future-Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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Behavior Management Guidelines

It is the YMCA's goal to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all day camp participants. Children who attend the program are expected to follow the behavior guidelines based on the four core values and to interact appropriately in a group setting.

Behavior Guidelines:

- We will **care** for ourselves and for those around us.
- **Honesty** will be the basis for all relationships and interactions.
- People are **responsible** for their actions.
- We **respect** each other and the environment.

When a camper does not follow the behavior guidelines, we will take the following steps:

1. Staff will redirect the camper to more appropriate behavior.
2. The camper will be reminded of the behavior guidelines and day camp rules, and a discussion will take place.
3. If the behavior persists, a parent will be notified of the problem.
4. The staff will document the situation. This written documentation will include what the behavior problem is, what provoked the problem, and the corrective action taken.
5. Staff will schedule a conference with the parent so they can determine the appropriate action to take.
6. Staff will schedule a progress check or a follow-up conference.
7. If the problem still persists, staff will schedule a conference that includes the parent, camper, staff, and program director. The program director will have all documentation and the notes from the previous conferences for review. If subsequent conferences have to be scheduled, a counselor may also be present.
8. If a child's behavior at any time threatens the immediate safety of that child, other children or staff, the parent may be notified and expected to pick up the child immediately.
9. If a problem persists and a child continues to disrupt the day camp program, the YMCA reserves the right to suspend the child from the program. Expulsion from the program will be considered in extreme situations.

The following behaviors are not acceptable and may result in the immediate suspension of a camper for the remainder of the current day and the next day:

- Endangering the health and safety of children and/or staff, members, and volunteers
- Stealing or damaging YMCA or personal property
- Leaving the day camp program without permission
- Continuing to disrupt the program
- Refusing to follow the behavior guidelines or day camp rules
- Using profanity, vulgarity, or obscenity frequently
- Acting in a lewd manner

If any of these behaviors persists, staff may suspend the camper a second time before expulsion. Immediate expulsion may occur if a camper is in possession of and/or using tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, firecrackers, firearms, or explosives.

PARENT SIGNATURE REQUIRED:

I have reviewed with my child the Behavior Management Guidelines. I understand and agree to all of the terms presented in this document.

Parent's signature

Date

Camper's signature

Bilingualism-Biculturalism: Learning from Canada and Mexico

As more and more YMCA day camps welcome children who speak languages other than, or in addition to, English in their homes, it is important for day camp leaders to learn to be as sensitive and as protective as possible in providing staff who understand and can speak other languages. *As important as is understanding and speaking another language, is to understand and communicate the understanding through words, actions, and camp programs of the culture of the children and staff who speak another predominant language.* Therefore, the sensitivities needed are both in bilingualism...and in biculturalism.

Of significance to our understanding of issues in which to train ourselves as camp leaders—and in turn, our staff—is the long-standing experience of our colleagues in both YMCA Canada YMCA Mexico.

When asked in an interview whether there were particular training sessions in bilingual sensitivity for staff of the four Canadian Tim Horton camps, Keith Publicover, CEO of the Tim Horton Children's Foundation/La Fondation Tim Horton Pour Les Enfants, stated that there were no particular sessions as such because they have lived with a bilingual nation for many years. But he went on to share important ways in which they were continuing to learn and continually working toward more effective bilingual camping and an accompanying bicultural sensitivity.

Examples:

All four of the Tim Horton camps, from Nova Scotia westward to Quebec, Ontario and Alberta, host campers chosen for full-scholarships. The campers are flown back and forth so that each camp represents campers from all the provinces and communities where Tim Horton Stores (a large nationwide chain) are located. There are French- and English-speaking children and staff in every camp. Cultures are represented from both languages as well as other factors like geography/urban/rural/other ethnic families and languages that have come to make Canada their home...just like in the United States. *At each resident camp location, local children come in for day camping sessions, often intermixing with resident campers.*

“Language is something you can learn, but culture is something you grow up with.” Therefore, the camps are constantly searching for French- and English-speaking staff who know the opposite language, but who are also versed in understanding what it is to be a Francophile or an Anglophile...someone who not only understands the opposite language but who can relate to the opposite culture—a more difficult task.

Since the Tim Horton stores were merged with the Wendy's restaurant chain in the United States, there are now 125 stores in Michigan, Ohio, New York, West Virginia, and Kentucky (with the first Tim Horton Camp in the United States. due to open in 2000).

Twenty Detroit inner-city children were welcomed into Canada in the summer of 1998. Canadians had a hard time understanding both the English language and the culture brought to them by these inner-city campers and had to work very hard to make the first experiment work.

But the foundation is committed to making the concept of cross-culturalism work; in 1999 it hosted 100 campers into Canada from the five states mentioned above, in preparation for intermingling Canadian youth in their Kentucky camp in 2000. U.S. and Canadian youth will be flown to opposite sides of our common border every year.

Literature about the camps is sent to all camper families at the end of every season as part of the foundation's beautiful, full-color "yearbook," which is published in both English and French.

Signs and bulletin boards in all camps are in both languages. On bulletin boards, staff are encouraged to make the messages in each language colorful and decorative, moving beyond the "official look" of everything printed in two languages. Information boards are always decorated in both a French and English manner. Formerly, songbooks used in camps were only from English language/culture sources, translated into French. Now they also use French songbooks, with French songs, sung

with French cultural nuances and translated into English. At flag-raising time, Canadian and U.S. national anthems are sung in both French and English. Cabin groups are composed of French and English campers. Every year, counselors try to find new ways to reflect both English and French culture in their activities and not just do things the "English way" and translate them into the French language for predominantly French-speaking campers. During activities, with simultaneous language translation, counselors are taught not to just speak everything in one language, then the next, but to use skits and fun ways to make bilingualism come alive.

What resources from Mexico (or other countries represented in your YMCA service area) can you use in your day camps to model the learning and practices of your neighbors to the south and to the north? How will doing this help you attract staff and campers more representative of the diversity reflected in your Y's community and membership?

To attract and serve families from diverse communities, you'll have to develop a trusted reputation *in* that community. Like anything else in the YMCA, success depends on building personal relationships. Fortunately, that's where the biggest rewards come from, too.

Training Tips

We Remember ...

_____ % of what we **read**

_____ % of what we **hear**

_____ % of what we **see**

_____ % of what we **see & hear**

_____ % of what we **say**

_____ % of what we **say & do !**

TOP TEN Deadly Sins of a Training

10. Coming on as a _____-it-_____.
9. Not checking the _____ early.
8. Not enough time for _____.
7. Not covering the _____ promised.
6. Appearing _____.
5. Ending _____.
4. Using _____ unprofessionally.
3. Not involving _____.
2. Starting _____.
1. Not sharing your _____ for the topic.

The right answers? There are LOTS of them!

(But actual test results say: 10% read, 20% hear, 30% see, 50% see & hear, 70% say, 90% say & do)

**The goal of staff (or any)
YMCA training:**

To change your participants

A _____
and

B _____.

**How do you know they've
learned it?**

When they can say it
back to you in their

O _____ W_____.

COMPONENTS of DAY CAMP TRAINING FOR COUNSELORS & OTHER STAFF

1. Get Acquainted/Team Building Activities

(new games, icebreakers)

TIME	CONTENT	METHOD	MATERIALS

2. Orientation and Training

(Mission, program objectives, history of local program/Y, unique characteristics of Y camp, introduction of key Y staff, camp structure)

TIME	CONTENT	METHOD	MATERIALS

3. Camp Activities & Schedule

(Specific project & activity ideas, including field trips, tips on leading activities, walk-through of typical schedule)

TIME	CONTENT	METHOD	MATERIALS

4. Working with Children

(Developmental characteristics, attention-getters, organizing them for games, behavior issues, positive discipline, special issues such as ADD/ADHD, etc.)

TIME	CONTENT	METHOD	MATERIALS

5. Communicating with Parents

(Parenting phone calls, camp newsletter, Family Nights, dealing with complaints & concerns, informing parents of injury/illness & behavior issues)

TIME	CONTENT	METHOD	MATERIALS

6. Administrative Issues

(Job descriptions; personnel policy [absence, being late, signing in and out, use of lockers, appropriate dress, use of foul language, smoking, personal phone calls during work]; payroll procedures/forms; crisis management plan; safety and risk management; purchasing supplies; day camp standards; expectations of performance; etc.)

TIME	CONTENT	METHOD	MATERIALS

TRAINING TERRIFIC STAFF

Please consider this: We would never just train staff to drive camp buses or vans safely without also giving them maps of where they're supposed to be driving. Without these routes they are likely to get lost and also lose their children. Similarly, if we don't identify and communicate specific goals during orientation, our ability to accomplish our mission at camp is likely to be lost as well.

The File Card Check

How well does our staff know why we're here? Suppose we had staff do what I call *The File Card Check*. Here's how it would work:

At the end of orientation, just before the children arrived, we would give to every staff person a file card and ask them to write on the card the goals of our camp.

If we did do this, what do we think would happen?

Would staff be able to write the goals down with confidence?

Would they get right down to work and pound them out quickly?

Would they do a lot of staring at the blank card and then study the ceiling?

Would they wish they had a clearer view of the card of the person seated next to them?

*Would they remember and understand all of the goals?
Would they leave some of them out?*

Would they demonstrate a positive, professional attitude about being asked to write the goals down?

Would they know why they are being asked?

Would they look like they were treating this as a normal and useful way to check to be sure they knew and understood what they were supposed to do?

Would they groan?

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*Would they look like they were smelling
rotting cheese?*

*Would they all identify the same goals?
We don't mean that everyone would
use exactly the same words.*

*We mean that if we collected all of
the cards and read them, would the
substance of what all the cards said
Be essentially the same?*

Ideally, we want the answer to all of the numbered questions above to be “yes.” If we think the answer to any one of them could be, “I don’t think so” or “I’m not sure,” then we can view that result in a positive way. We can accept it as a challenge to be sure we are identifying and presenting our goals to staff in the most effective ways.

“Getting to Yes” in the File Card Check

So how can we most effectively get staff to remember and make a serious commitment to our camp goals?

There are three specific steps that will help us meet this challenge:

Step 1: Make sure that *we* have a clear and specific understanding of what we’re trying to accomplish at camp and use these goals to plan our training.

Step 2: Get staff more actively involved in the shaping of goals so they will have more invested in getting them accomplished.

Step 3: Communicate the goals with greater passion and creativity.

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Behavior Management: "ROLL"-PLAY

"Roll"-Playing is a good way to practice and discuss the concepts on YMCA Day Camp Fundamentals, pages 18-21, during staff training: Write out short scenarios of potentially negative interactions at typical camp activities (examples below). Cut them into strips, roll them up, and insert them into a hole poked into hard dinner rolls.

With the group, say, "Let's do some Roll-Playing." Everyone will groan, until you bring out the Rolls! Toss the rolls around the room until you say, "Stop!" Those holding the rolls break them open and act out the scene with those folks around them (*Role-play!*) Have the group discuss the outcome and which of the "Group Management Tools" could be used.

"Brainstorm with your group about what a counselor's goals should be in this situation and what techniques, phrases, etc., you might use. Anyone in your group (including you) can be the counselor. Use as many actors as necessary to depict the scenario outlined for your group. Run through the action like it was a little drama, showing what leads up to the counselor's involvement, and then how the counselor deals with it. You can "tag-team" it, too, and have additional "counselors" ready to go up and take over if the first "counselor" runs into a momentary blank.

"When your presentation is done, your group should be prepared to identify what they saw as the inappropriate behavior, what they visualized as the end result they were looking to accomplish, and what principles they were using to try and get there.

"There will be many different ways to approach a situation. Our **intentions** and the practice we get are two of the things we should try hardest to get out of the exercise. It can be hard for people to "perform" in front of each other in this way, but seeing others deal with real-life situations, and practicing it ourselves, is the only way we can truly prepare ourselves."

SAMPLE ROLL-PLAYS:

[Campers, ages 12 to 15]

Two teenage campers are walking together, hand in hand, away from the athletic field during a group activity time, and are heading toward Chapel Island. You are a counselor. What might you do?

[Campers, ages 6 to 10]

Your campers are preparing for swimming by getting into their swimsuits. From around the corner you hear, "Get your filthy hands off my stuff, you idiot!" You head into the changing room just as a wrestling match breaks out between two campers. What might you do?

[Campers of any age]

In tennis class, one of the older campers has a habit of ridiculing the poorer players, especially when they are serving. He's doing it now, to the server of his doubles opponents. What might you do?

[Girls, ages 9 to 12]

You have a group of girls who have selected one girl to be their scapegoat. They talk about her behind her back, exclude her from conversations, put down her suggestions, and obviously avoid sitting next to her at lunch and at flagpole. You've just walked in on them making fun of her hair. She's yelling back at them, with tears in her eyes. What might you do?

[Campers of any age]

You find out at lunch that one of your campers didn't show up for swim lessons that morning. He is here at lunch, and the nurse says he didn't go to see her. What might you do?

[Campers of any age]

A staff member from your group is habitually late to flagpole. He spends a good deal of time talking with other staff, and doesn't go into the locker room until the kids are out the door and on their way. He's always saying, "You go ahead, I'll be right there," or "I'll only be a minute." You've found out that while you were at the nurse with an injured camper, your group was disciplined by the camp director for being "unruly." What might you do?

[Campers of any age]

You're playing kickball and one of your campers refuses to play. She'll take a position in the field (but not chase any balls), but she outright refuses to have a turn "up" at kicking. What might you do?

[Boys, ages 10 to 14]

You're at the waterfront and a camper you don't know is using some graphic sex talk to describe a teenage girl camper who is playing volleyball. He's talking with a group of mixed-aged boy campers he's sitting on the sand with. What might you do?

[Campers of any age]

You have a camper that shows his displeasure with every activity you propose with very negative body language. Sometimes it's just a sigh and a roll of the eyes, other times he comes right out and says, "Jeez, how stupid." He never makes suggestions, has no energy, but often participates when activities really get going. You're picking a sports activity at rest hour to do this afternoon and he's pulling his usual stuff. What might you do?

[Campers, ages 8 to 10]

You have a "tattle tale" in your group of young campers who comes running to tell you every little thing that any other camper does that she doesn't like. She's just come running to you to say, "Sarah didn't throw her lunch bag away!" What might you do?

[Campers, ages 8 to 12]

It's Thursday free swim time and you see a camper sitting by herself on a picnic table. Two of your campers come running to you and say, "Betsy's crying. She's homesick and wants to go home." (Betsy will be very quiet and respond to questions mostly with shrugs and, "I don't know." She'll eventually say she misses her mother and doesn't want to sleep at camp tonight for the overnight.) What might you do?

IDEAS for STAFF APPRECIATION

PUMP ME UP THIS SUMMER!!!!!!!!!!!!

Name: _____

My favorite color is:

My favorite place to eat breakfast is:

My favorite place to eat lunch is:

My favorite place to eat dinner is:

I have a pet _____. Its name is:

If I have an extra 50 cents, I buy:

If I have an extra 1 dollar, I buy:

If I have an extra 5 dollars, I buy:

If I have an extra 10 dollars, I buy:

My favorite snack food is:

My favorite ice cream is:

My favorite performer is:

I am most motivated by:

Contributed by Laurel M. Zitney, YMCA of Greater Charlotte

Foreword from the YMCA CIT/LIT Manual, *LEARNING LEADERSHIP*

Teaching Leadership to Teens: Opportunity and Obligation

We are entering a time when there will be more teens living in America than at any other moment in our history. This will create our biggest opportunity to date to affect the future of these young people, our communities, and our world.

Much has been written about the window of opportunity for adults to raise good kids. Some people claim that the first six years of a child's life are when we have the biggest impact on formulating character, and if we haven't made our mark by the time a child reaches adolescence, then it's too late. But we in camping know that this is not the case. We know that the teen years are a prime time for character development, and that adolescence marks the transition point when parents relinquish more of their influence to outside sources. Wise parents take an active part in seeking out great role models and challenging experiences for their teens.

That's where our obligation as camp administrators comes in. So many parents of our campers have come to depend on summer camp as a place where their child can experience increasing independence each year in safe programs that are guided by terrific young staff members. But too often we let these parents down by not providing enough program opportunities once their campers become teens. We owe it to these parents who have been so loyal to us over the years to continue mentoring their children in this most critical stage.

There's also an extra benefit to maintaining the interest of teens in camp. Our leadership training programs can be a terrific source of future staff members who come prepared for their summer camp counseling jobs with not just a week of orientation, but with years of knowledge of our camp's procedures, traditions, and culture.

We can provide terrific experiences for teens at camp. We can offer high adventure trips and include activities like backpacking, kayaking, canoeing, bicycling, sailing, rock climbing, and horseback riding. These are a great fit with teens' interests and can teach respect for self and others. But we can do even more. Many young people have a heartfelt desire to stay connected to the summer camp they have come to love, but they yearn to do it in a way that allows them to accept the challenges of more adult-like responsibilities and demonstrate their increasing abilities to make a difference in the lives of others. These young people can learn to lead. Our camps can provide this opportunity. Our society depends on it.

Our teen programs should be evaluated primarily on the impact they have on the young people they serve. The real beauty of what Michael Brandwein teaches us in these chapters is that successful work with teens depends less on the particular activities or schedules we use and much more on the quality of our teaching. That's why this book focuses so strongly on helping us to be better teachers of leadership and on how we can help young people become more responsible for their own learning through a process of guided discovery. Michael emphasizes the importance of not just teaching skills, but of teaching young people how to continue teaching themselves long after they've left our programs.

In this way, we make an impact that lasts a lifetime. And the impact of their leadership will be felt worldwide.

Gary Forster
National Camping Specialist
YMCA of the USA

(Learning Leadership is available from the YMCA Program Store.)

YMCA LOYALTY CIRCLE

Community

Program Participant

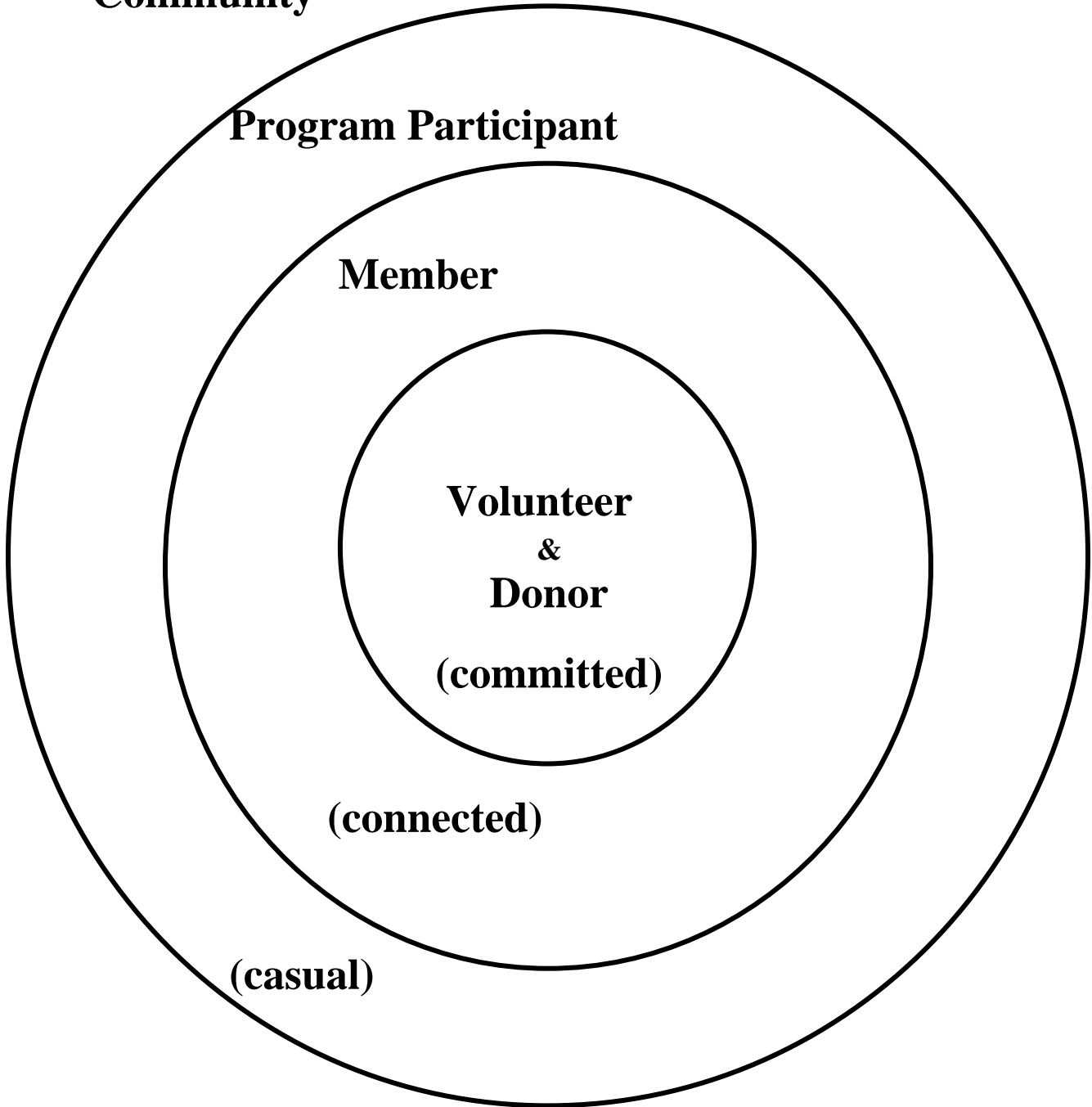
Member

**Volunteer
&
Donor**

(committed)

(connected)

(casual)



Program Budget Planning Form

Program: _____ **Department:** _____ **Director:** _____

Year: _____ **Session:** _____ **Days:** _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

Instructor: _____ **Budget prepared by:** _____

Fees: Full fee member: _____ **Program member:** _____ **Non-member:** _____

INCOME

# of campers	Fee
_____ FF members X \$ _____	= \$ _____
_____ Program members X \$ _____	= \$ _____
_____ Non-members X \$ _____	= \$ _____
Grants:	\$ _____
_____ Sponsored scholarships: X \$ _____	= \$ _____
Total income:	\$ _____

EXPENSE

Direct expenses

Salary/instructor _____ X _____ hrs. X \$ _____	= \$ _____
PT/instructor _____ X _____ hrs. X \$ _____	= \$ _____
Taxes: FICA _____ X .0765	= \$ _____
Unemployment _____ X _____	= \$ _____
(varies by state and experience, based on first \$8,000)	= \$ _____
(varies by state and association plan)	
Benefits: Worker's compensation	= \$ _____
Health	= \$ _____
Retirement (wages X .07 or 1.2)	= \$ _____
Supplies	= \$ _____
Equipment	= \$ _____
Rental/occupancy	= \$ _____
Transportation	= \$ _____
Other (_____)	= \$ _____
Miscellaneous	= \$ _____

Indirect expenses

Printing	= \$ _____
Promotion	= \$ _____
Telephone	= \$ _____
Insurance	= \$ _____
Administrative overhead (% of income or expense)	= \$ _____
Other (_____)	= \$ _____
Miscellaneous	= \$ _____

Total expense **\$ _____**

Day Camp Preparation Checklist

By Judy Martin, Director of YMCA Camp Ockanickon's Lake Stockwell Day Camp

September	Due date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize records; keep all attendance records and health records			
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize insurance report			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff reference letters			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff evaluations in personnel file			
<input type="checkbox"/> End-of-summer evaluations done by staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate camp site for risk management			
<input type="checkbox"/> Close up camp site			
<input type="checkbox"/> Do final inventory review			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mail reg. cards and brochure to last year's campers			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info, e-mail staff, CIT, and LIT (KIT)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update parents pack			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pay attention to final checks and bonuses			
<input type="checkbox"/> Move all paperwork to central location			
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm staff training dates with group services for next summer			
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact key staff for annual support campaign phone-a-thons			
<input type="checkbox"/> Organize all summer info by session			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update camper list to prepare for campaign – problems/incidents			

October	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Budget finalized			
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment trend			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set fee structure			
<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing plan finalized			
<input type="checkbox"/> Program needs for next year			
<input type="checkbox"/> Review staffing needs			
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation report to appropriate committee			
<input type="checkbox"/> Debrief with other departments			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sit down with registrar for computer input questions			
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare holiday cards for staff and campers			
<input type="checkbox"/> Get quote for next summer birthday cards			
<input type="checkbox"/> Give executive summary report to board of directors/committee			

November	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Set first staff meeting with returning staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> Turkey Bowl			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff training/certifications update, recert			
<input type="checkbox"/> Holiday mailing to participants prepared/price/labels/staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pick-up cards copied and cut			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update any forms used over last summer			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update job descriptions			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan summer themes with staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Have college staff recruit new staff (invite to fun events)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact colleges for postings in co-op department			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up volunteers for Open Houses			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

December	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Holiday Appreciation dinner			
<input type="checkbox"/> Holiday cards to all staff, last 2 years			
<input type="checkbox"/> Holiday mailing to participants mailed out			
<input type="checkbox"/> Begin new staff recruitment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Send out hiring packets			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up college visitations			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up job fairs			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

January	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set leadership staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> First Pride Weekend – staff training/work projects			
<input type="checkbox"/> Start putting beads together			
<input type="checkbox"/> Review camp standards (ACA, NJ, YMCA)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Start summer contracts			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Send out hiring packet (W4, I9, contract, etc.)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Check status of job postings in co-op office			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up CIT/LIT interviews			
<input type="checkbox"/> Winter newsletter			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

February	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Pride Weekend			
<input type="checkbox"/> First Open House			
<input type="checkbox"/> CIT interviews for summer			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff interviews			
<input type="checkbox"/> School presentations at School's Out			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Find nurse for summer camp			
<input type="checkbox"/> Check dates for Spring Break with returners – recruit meeting			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

March	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Flyers out to schools			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Secure transportation, if necessary			
<input type="checkbox"/> Order arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd Pride Weekend			
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd Open House			
<input type="checkbox"/> First-aid training for local staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact Dr. Kemp and get letter of agreement for summer			
<input type="checkbox"/> Book any outside contracts for staff training			
<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit college staff for work in May/June in S/O and Group Services			
<input type="checkbox"/> Spring Break get-togethers with returners and recruits			
<input type="checkbox"/> Order staff shirts			
<input type="checkbox"/> Order staff gifts for end of summer			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

April	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Order sports and games supplies (discount)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Program staff meeting in person			
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 th Pride Weekend			
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd Open House			
<input type="checkbox"/> CPR training for local staff			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Make staged examples for all arts and crafts projects			
<input type="checkbox"/> Order first-aid supplies for summer – use inventory			
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents letter for sessions			
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact alumni about presenting to summer staff training			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

May	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> First Village Chief Meeting in person			
<input type="checkbox"/> Final update for staff training manual			
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize staff training schedule			
<input type="checkbox"/> Clean up pavilion			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Final time off requests in and schedule coordinated			
<input type="checkbox"/> Create "Assassin" plan for summer staff game/get prizes			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
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<input type="checkbox"/>			

June	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update Web info			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Ad staff training			
<input type="checkbox"/> General staff training			
<input type="checkbox"/> Take pictures for promotional pieces and staff contact			
<input type="checkbox"/> Take video for promotional pieces and staff contact			
<input type="checkbox"/> Review Camper Asset evaluations			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st Family Night			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff do birthday cards for campers/divide by month/give to office			
<input type="checkbox"/> Do staff birthday cards from you			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

July	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of intent for CITs			
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of intent for LITs			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-season staff performance evaluations			
<input type="checkbox"/> Review Camper Asset evaluations			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff do birthday cards for campers/divide by month/give to office			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Fun Shirt/payroll deduct			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update camper list to prepare for campaign – problems/incidents			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
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<input type="checkbox"/>			

August	Due Date	Who?	Done
<input type="checkbox"/> Review budget/review enrollment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of intent to staff wanted			
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect recyclable arts and crafts supplies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Review expenses for next year budget creation			
<input type="checkbox"/> End-of-summer evaluations			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff roster			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Fun Shirt – BBQ Night			
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff do birthday cards for campers/divide by month/give to office			
<input type="checkbox"/> Update camper list to prepare for campaign – problems/incidents			
<input type="checkbox"/> Exit interviews			
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm correct address, phone, and college address			
<input type="checkbox"/> Make personal notes for all staff			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

SAMPLE SEASON PLANNING FORM

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
#1 Fantasy	Paul Bunyan Day (log rolling relay using large stump or barrel; logger tug-o-war; tell tall tales)	I'd Like to Be (senses scavenger hunt for things in nature)	Backwards Day (run backwards relays; sing progressive songs backwards)	Circus Day (circus planning)	Circus Day (circus performing)
#2 Old West	Election of Camp Mayor (speeches; posters; election parade)	Watermelon Day (seed-spitting contest; greased watermelon in water contest)	Pony Express (Pony Express game in which teams race to finish a series of challenges)	Boomtown Day (build a fake town)	Gold Rush (skits; all camp hunt for "gold" {painted rocks})
#3 The Strange & Unknown	Future (life-sized puppet dressed as a figure from the future; discussion of future)	Wizard of Oz (wizard story and game)	Trip to Mars (game in which each team tries to capture flags from the other)	Dinosaur Day (dinosaur egg hunt)	
#4 International	African Safari (game where campers stalk & photograph "animal" counselors)	Create Your Country (imaginary nations with own flag, greetings, and traditions)	Olympics (games and competitions among "nations")	Same	
#5 Earth Friendly Week	Focus on Trees (county forester or botanist leads activity learning; discussion of wood and paper products)	Focus on Water (have hydrologist or county water commissioner as guest; learn about water pollutants)	Focus on Soil (county agriculture department staff speaks; learn about soil problems; see crops, eat raw fruit and veggies)	Focus on Sun and Air (weather forecaster visits; talk about effects of too much sun)	Recycle & Reuse Day (guest from municipal or private recycling agency; learn how trash becomes new products; learn about recycling projects)

continued

SAMPLE SEASON PLANNING FORM

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
#6 Seafarers	Shipwrecked (skit; game in which campers pretend to be shipwrecked)	Pirates' Day (create insignias and pirate names; treasure hunt)	Beach Day (trip to the beach)		
#7 Holidays	Birthday Day (camp birthday party)	Halloween (decorate trick-or-treat bags; do trick-or-treating in camp)	Fourth of July (Independence Day parade)	Major ethnic holiday (like Kwanzaa)	Christmas Celebration (decorate a tree; learn about customs from different lands)
#8 Real Life Heroes	Living with Disabilities (discussion with one or more disabled people)	Athletes' Day (have Fellowship of Christian athletes speaker)	Everyday Hero Day (local heroes who saved someone speak)	Local Sports Hero (visit from local sports hero who cares about youth)	Be My Own Hero Day (campers choose a person they would like to be like and share why; recognize everyone as a "hero")
#9 World Tour	Spain and Mexico (fiesta)	Germany (learning German greetings; Oktoberfest)	France (Bastille Day celebration)	World Service Carnival (carnival planning)	World Service Carnival (hold carnival)
#10 Let's Be Crazy	Crazy Relays (crazy relay activities)	Dinosaur Egg Hunt (search for a dinosaur egg {watermelon} using written clues and activity stations)	Peanuts Picnic (Sing song, "Found a Peanut"; play games with peanuts)		Sense It (trust walk)

(continued)

SAMPLE SEASON PLANNING FORM

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
#11 Summer Safari	Going on a Safari (make passports and “visit” countries; have a guest speaker who took a safari)	Arts and Crafts Jungle (create paper bag/plate puppets; act out story)	Lions & Tigers & Bears (scavenger hunt following paw prints)	Caring for Animals (Humane Society staff visit with animals)	Zoo Field Trip
#12 County Fair	County Fair (start planning fair for Friday; have samples to show campers)	Blue Ribbon Day (judge baking, flower arrangements, vegetables; eat food entries)	Wild Animal Show (camp staff bring in pets from home)	Fair Field Trip (visit local county fair)	Camp County Fair (test of skill booths, pony rides, contests, petting zoo, picnic)
#13 Olympics Sports Week	Character Values (talk about Olympic ideal, fair play; plan rest of week; choose countries for teams)	Opening Ceremony (stage parade of nations with flags and songs; hold archery event)	Swimming Events (swimming events; each group speaks about its country’s characteristics)	Equestrian or Track & Field Events	Final Parade (parade and awarding of medals to each team)
#14 Healthy Lifestyles	Healthy Lifestyle Basics (do fitness checks; talk about alcohol, drugs, and tobacco)	Olympics Festival (have day of sport events; relate to being fit)	Sports Tournaments	Service-Learning Project (project to help others become more fit)	Recognition & Awards Day (recognition of each camper; visit from local coach or athlete)
#15 Water World	Water Safety Demonstration (demonstration of different types of water craft use)	Water Songfest (sing in boats on water or swimming in pool)	Beach Party Day (dress up and party at real beach or make-believe one)	Aquarium Field Trip (learn about underwater life and our responsibilities for it)	Water Carnival (water games and activities)

(continued)

SAMPLE WEEKLY PLANNING FORM

Theme: Fantasy (Week: 1)

Group: 9- to 11-year-olds

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Objectives addressed						
Theme	Paul Bunyan Day	“I’d Like to Be”...Day	Backwards Day	Circus Day	Circus Day	GP	CV	IR	AD	LS	DS	FN
Opening	“Paul Bunyan” welcomes campers to his day	Counselor “Favorite Characters” welcome	Reverse all group numbers for the day	Welcome by clowns	Meet the ringmaster							X
Small Group Time 1	Activity on the value of trees Divide into groups for orientation hike Choose names	Choose Fantasy names for groups Values: Name tag If I could be something in nature, I would be...	Share, “If I could live last year over, I would...”	Talk about campers’ circus experiences and where circus animals come from and live	Talk about “good times” of past week	X	X	X				X
Activity Period 1	Aquatics (beginners) Make group flag Plan “logger game”	Aquatics (beg.) Design own name tags; Song: “Do Your Ears Hang Low?” Prepare for scavenger hunt	Aquatics (int.) Explore woods, walking and singing backwards Craft: Peanut Shell Items	Aquatics (adv.) Brainstorm ideas for circus acts Craft: Painted Rock Circus	Aquatics (int.) Make props for circus acts Polish acts					X	X	X
Activity Period 2	Aquatics (int.) Make group flag Prepare “tall tales” presentation	Aquatics (int.) Nature hike—tree identification Craft: God’s Eyes	Aquatics (adv.) Craft: Charcoal Sketch Game: Standoff	Aquatics (beg.) Decide on and begin to prepare acts Story: “The Elephant’s Child”	Aquatics (adv.) Paint clown faces Get ready for performance					X	X	X
All-Camp Activity 1	Songs Tall tale presentation Logger games	Parade of characters Songs	Counselor skit Backward singing	Parachute games	Set up circus area Decorate					X		X

(continued)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Objectives addressed						
Theme	Paul Bunyan Day	“I’d Like to Be”...Day	Backwards Day	Circus Day	Circus Day	GP	CV	IR	AD	LS	DS	FN
Lunch	Eat “logger stew”	Food Swap	Eat dessert first	Have popcorn	Hot dog day							X
Activity Period 3	Aquatics (adv.) Values: Interviews Nature study: Finding a friend in nature	Aquatics (adv.) Story: “The Quails” Game: Catch the Dragon’s Tail	Aquatics (beg.) Peanut stories and songs Values: Alike yet Different	Aquatics (int.) Nature study: A nature-wide game Practice circus acts	Circus performance and parade	X	X		X	X	X	X
All-Camp Activity 2	Logger games	Senses Scavenger Hunt	Backward relays	Face painting Create circus acts	Circus dress rehearsal					X		X
Small Group Time 2	Game: Red-handed Share thoughts on day just completed	Game: Smaug’s Jewels (<i>New Games Book</i>) Share thoughts on day: “I’m glad that...”	Make peanut-shell messages for family members	Values: Diversity – what makes you special?	Values: Trigger Stories (<i>The Book of Questions</i>)	X	X	X	X			X
Closing	Introduce, “I’d Like to Be...” and ask campers to come dressed as their favorite character Closing remarks by director	Introduce “Backwards Day” Remind campers to dress backward	Introduce “Circus Days”	Remind campers to tell parents about the Family night circus	Same as Thursday							

* Each X indicates the objective addressed by the activity

WEEKLY PLANNING FORM

Week #	Theme:	Group:	Participants:				Objectives addressed						
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	GP	CV	IR	AD	LS	DS	FN	
Opening													
Small Group Time 1													
Activity Period 1													
Activity Period 2													
All-Camp Activity 1													

(continued)

WEEKLY PLANNING FORM

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Objectives addressed							
						GP	CV	IR	AD	LS	DS	FN	
Lunch													
Activity Period 3													
All-Camp Activity 2													
Small Group Time 2													
Closing													

*Objectives:

GP= Grow personally

IR= Improve personal and family relationships

LS= Become better leaders and supporters

CV= Clarify values through character development

AD= Appreciate diversity

DS= Develop specific skills

FN= Have fun

*****INCLUDE: 3 typical days, 1 rainy/heat index day, 1 field trip/special event day, and 1 family night*****

Sample Character Development Activities

CARING

Partnership with Active Older Adults (7- to 8-year-olds)

What you'll need: No special supplies needed

- Invite active older adults to spend time with groups and participate in or lead activities such as crafts or field trips.
- Discuss with children beforehand what special needs the older adults might have and that they should be treated the same as any other volunteers—with respect and appreciation.

Pen Pals (8-year-olds and up)

What you'll need: Paper, pens, envelopes, stamps, pen pal contacts

- Help campers learn age-appropriate communication.
- For pen pal referrals, pair up with a known local organization, another YMCA nationally, or another country's Y program. (Contact the International Division at 800-782-9622.)

Dinner for Parents (5-year-olds and up)

What you'll need: Food, cooking utensils, serving dishes and silverware, napkins, decorations promoting a values theme

- Have children help make, serve, and clean up a group dinner for their parents and siblings.
- After dinner, have campers present a program based on previous camp activities, demonstrating the values they have learned.

Create a Playground (8- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: cardboard, stage flats (if available), paint, markers

- Have older campers create a new, or enhance an existing, playground for five- to seven-year-olds. (One idea may include painting cardboard or stage flats to create a colorful maze.)
- After creating the playground, have the older campers invite the younger campers to the playground, supervising them as they play.

Greeters (all ages)

What you'll need: No special supplies needed

- Have campers act as greeters for special YMCA events, welcoming members, parents, and other campers.

Intergenerational Communication Project (all ages)

What you'll need: Materials and equipment for art projects

- Contact an area retirement or nursing home and arrange for a time when your campers can come visit with residents and present small gifts they have made.
- Tell the children about the upcoming event, discussing the importance of taking responsibility for people in the community who can no longer care for themselves. Suggest some things that might make a nursing home resident's life happier and, if practical, let the children suggest their own ideas.
- Help the children relate this to the core value of caring. Let the lesson come to life, as campers actually care for someone who needs assistance.
- Plan art projects appropriate for the children's age level, making sure campers clearly sign their projects.
- For teens, set aside part of a day each week when campers prepare to read to an individual resident; rehearse a short concert of songs, series of skits or magic show; plan a party with snacks and decorations; or write a short devotional to include in the visit. Use your individual and collective imagination!

- Make sure children understand that the more they return to the nursing home, the more opportunity there is to build relationships. Discuss the expectancy they are creating in the residents, who will greatly look forward to seeing “their children” each week.
- If an older child or teen develops a relationship with a particular resident, facilitate individual visits or help them find other ways to volunteer on an ongoing basis.
- Introduce the concept of volunteerism, even to younger children, by having CITs speak to the younger children about their visits.

Friendship T-Shirt (all ages)

What you’ll need: Blank T-shirts, fabric paints, brushes

- Purchase one T-shirt per child, in the appropriate size for the recipient of the gift.
- Assemble fabric paints, brushes, and paint smocks for the children to wear while painting, and place newspaper on the floor around the work area.
- Help each child create a design with a pencil on a blank piece of paper, to be used as a sketch for the final T-shirt design.
- Explain to campers that the shirt can be for anyone they especially care for and respect.

Art Projects for Hospitalized Persons (all ages)

What you’ll need: Paint, crayons, paper, any available art supplies

- Have children design brightly-colored art, adding friendly and uplifting messages.
- Deliver the art to a children’s or veterans hospital, retirement home or AIDS hospice. If approved by parents and the appropriate facility administrator, the art could be presented by a delegation of campers.
- If campers participate in the presentation, they might consider bringing along the camp pet, as people in confined living arrangements enjoy visits from small, cuddly animals. Make sure to get administrative approval before bringing the pet.

HONESTY

Start Your Own Business (10- to 13-year-olds)

What you’ll need: Arts and crafts supplies, play money

- Tell campers that either individually or in small groups they will create a pretend business, manufacturing a “product” to sell to each other.
- Talk with campers about what a business is and how important the concept of honesty is, so that both the seller and buyer gain something through the transaction.
- Set aside time for planning and work with each individual or group to come up with a good product—something useable or edible, but nothing too difficult or time-consuming to create or sell.
- Set aside time for creating or manufacturing the product: a lemonade stand, a set of greeting cards, a simple game, etc.
- Identify when each product will be sold and help the participants get ready with a prepared sales pitch and selling plan. Distribute play money to allow others to purchase a product from the sellers.
- Evaluate the process at the end of all sales. Let campers count how much money has changed hands and see how everyone has profited.
- Mention again how honesty is a person’s most important attribute if he or she wants to stay in business.

Tall Tales (all ages)

What you’ll need: A comfortable place to sit and talk

- Sitting in a circle, have one camper tell a tall tale. After the tale, have the others point out the falsehoods in the story. The camper who told the tall tale then loses one functional ability, such as the ability to talk, write, or act out concepts.
- Continue around the circle, with each camper telling a tall tale and losing a functional ability. Keep going around the circle as long as children are attentive.

- Conclude the activity by explaining that you hurt yourself more than you hurt others when you tell a tall tale (never use the word “lie”).

Referee Game (10- to 12-year-olds)

What you'll need: Black and white referee's shirt, whistle, clipboard

- Let a camper referee a game, with the opportunity to make an honest mistake.
- Have a responsible staff member attend the entire game to lend support to the referee, help settle any disputes that may arise, and make the experience go smoothly for all involved.
- Point out how hard it is to see everything and always make a fair call, and explain that even officials make mistakes no matter how hard they try. Tell campers it's alright to make mistakes, as long as they admit to them, correct what's wrong, and try not to make the same mistake again.

RESPECT

Super Camper (all ages)

What you'll need: Colored or gold star stickers

- Explain to campers that stars will be given out each day for good behavior, helpful deeds to others, expressions of caring, or whatever behavior is especially appropriate to your specific program. Tell them if they receive a certain number of stars (give the number) they will become “Super Campers.”
- Award stars to campers as you see them exemplifying one of the stated values.
- At the end of the activity period, day or week, award the status of “Super Camper” to campers who have received the predetermined number of stars. Then talk in small groups about what it means to be recognized for your actions.
- Mention that even if campers are not proud of their past behavior, they can change that behavior and become recognized in the future by caring for others.

International Understanding (all ages)

What you'll need: Depends on your activity choice

- Reinforce the diversity objective to campers.
- Use a global map to locate all 130 countries where YMCAs are located. Contact the YMCA International Division for materials and ideas, and use other sources (encyclopedias, embassies, consulates, national travel offices) for information as well.
- Have a special International Theme Day or Week with ethnic food, costumes, games, and crafts. Invite members from your community with various national heritages to be guest speakers.
- Have a World Service Carnival, inviting parents and other community guests. Charge a small amount at each game booth, with proceeds going to a YMCA World Service project in a particular country.
- Have one or more International Camp Counselor Program (ICCP) counselors for the season (never more than 10 percent of total staff).

Family Tree Theme Week (7- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: A comfortable place to sit and talk

- Gather campers in small group circles.
- Say, “Today we will talk about respect for each other's heritage. Does anyone know what respect means?” Allow time for responses, then ask, “Who can tell me what heritage means?” After one child has defined the concept correctly, allow time for each camper to name his or her own heritage.
- Tell children that in a democracy (define democracy, if necessary) like the United States of America, everyone needs to understand and respect each other's heritage. Discuss ways campers can demonstrate respect for each other's heritage. Then ask for examples of how respect is not shown.
- On each remaining day of the week, have others share.
- On the last day of the week, summarize what the group has shared and have them discuss what they have learned about each other's heritage. If parents and guardians approve, you might ask each camper to bring in one article that exemplifies their family's heritage.

International Festival with Olympic Theme (all ages)

What you'll need: Flags, music, clothes, food, materials from the International Division, game equipment, prizes

- As an extension of Family Tree Theme Week, talk with children and leaders about what an International Olympic Festival might include. Pre-assign a country to each staff member.
- Let children choose which country they want to help represent and have them meet with the staff member they will work with.
- Use time each day to prepare for the festival. Each "country" should design and create a flag and some type of national costume for the Parade of Nations that will begin and end the festival.
- Consider inviting parents and grandparents, as well as adult members of the community who represent the countries being represented, to attend the festival and march in the Parade of Nations.
- Ask volunteers to prepare an array of representative foods for the occasion.
- Award prizes in a way that everyone feels like a winner.
- Have a closing ceremony that celebrates diversity, as well as the core values each group showed while planning the event and representing their chosen country. Campers might talk about what it felt like to represent an ethnic group or heritage other than their own.

RESPONSIBILITY

Start a Camp Museum (7- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Any artifacts found within the camp, craft supplies

- Have participants accumulate nonliving samples of leaves, rocks, and anything else in the camp that has an interesting history. (Staff and campers should use their imaginations!)
- Using colored paper and bright crayons or markers, make signs telling stories about the samples.

- Either set up the museum in a permanent place or make it mobile to allow campers to take it to local retirement homes or community centers.
- Charge a modest admission fee (or ask for a contribution) to raise money for a community project.

Creating Games (8- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Any equipment or props you feel will be useful

- Have campers design and produce games for 5- to 7-year-old campers, giving them the following tips as guidance:
 - Be sure the game chosen is appropriate for 5- to 7-year-olds.
 - Choose games that are interactive, but not too wild.
 - Offer three or four different games within half an hour, rather than one long game.
 - Choose games that will help participants feel good about themselves, have fun, and not feel left out because of lack of skill.
- If any child has a special need, game organizers should give his or her team extra assistance.
- *Sample game:* Hold a relay race in which three similar articles of oversized clothing are put on at the end of a 50-yard run. Campers are divided into two or more lines of four or five children, with staff members helping the 8- to 13-year-old game leaders divide the teams evenly between fast and slow runners. At the start of the race, the first child in each line runs to the pile of clothing and puts on the three items. When a judge (staff member) says they have all three items on, the child quickly takes them off, leaves them in a pile, and runs back to the end of the line. The next child runs to the pile of clothing, and so on, until each child in line has had the chance to participate. The first line to finish is the winner.

Conservation Service Project (11- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Plants for erosion control, wood for steps, tools

- Plan a project of planting or creating steps for erosion control within the camp area. If the camp is on YMCA-owned land, work with the property manager. If not, find the appropriate person to work with. Make sure your particular projects are welcome and that anything not completed by the campers in the allotted time will be finished by others.
- Use responsible staff or properly recruited and trained volunteers as project leaders. Plan the event, set learning objectives with campers, assemble all tools and materials, and set the date for the service project work.
- Arrange with the community newspaper or YMCA newsletter staff to take pictures and write a story about the project.
- Process the experience by asking campers questions like: What did you learn that could be applied next time? What other areas might benefit from community service projects?
- Allow time for meaningful group reflection. One idea is to have campers draw a picture of what the area would have looked like in three years without the intervention of the group.

Garden Project (all ages)

What you'll need: Space for planting, garden tools, seeds or plants

- Plant a garden, considering your camp's duration and choosing seeds or plants that will bloom and mature by the end of the program. While different campers can assume responsibility for different aspects of this ongoing project, each should learn what others did before them.
- Assign staff members who enjoy gardening to monitor this activity or have separate groups with their own leader(s) maintain a different part of the garden.
- Process as you go along, asking questions like: Why might one plant do better than another? How do growing seasons differ? What outside forces affected a particular type of plant? What could be done differently next time?

- Involve campers in suggesting ways they could be caring and responsible with the harvest. Perhaps they could give the produce to a group of low-income families or older adults.
- Consider having active older adults be volunteer leaders for this program.

Adopt-a-Pet (all ages)

What you'll need: A bird, domestic animal, or fish with cage, bowl, bedding, food, etc.

- Talk to campers about what it means to take care of a pet and discuss the obligation to provide it with a good home throughout its natural life cycle.
- Decide in advance who will loan their pet or, if newly purchased, who will adopt the pet at the end of the program.
- Plan for all the things the pet will need and decide together what responsibilities each daily caregiver will have. Draw numbers to decide who will care for the pet each program day.
- Bring the pet to camp, then teach children to stay back and give it space as it adapts to its new environment. Use this as a learning day for the campers, showing them the needs of the pet beyond housecleaning, feeding, watering, and care.
- Start the rotation of care duties and provide time each day for the scheduled caregiver to interact with the pet under staff supervision. At the end of the day, allow each caregiver to tell the group something they learned about the pet or something they think the pet would want to say about its needs and care if it could talk.
- Consider keeping a chart with each child's name and care day marked where they can check off required care aspects and write in one special comment about the pet.
- If program continuity is broken by weekends, arrange for someone to "adopt" the pet over the weekend, taking the items needed for its care with them.
- At the end of the program period, return the pet to its original owner or give it to the child who will keep and care for it permanently. Ask campers what they learned about the responsibility of caring for the pet and how their newfound knowledge applies to other pets they might currently or eventually have in their homes.

Camp Role Reversal (10- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Wide-mouth jar, sheet of paper, a marker or pen

- Allow campers to shadow and assist staff for the day, observing their responsibilities.
- Write the names of staff members who will participate on individual slips of paper and put them in a jar.
- Choose a number of campers equal to the number of participating staff. Have children draw a name from the jar and spend the day following the staff member they have chosen, assuming staff responsibilities whenever it is safe and appropriate.
- During lunch or a midday gathering of the entire camp community, discuss how the day is going from the campers' point of view. Ask them to tell the group one responsibility they learned was part of the staff job that they didn't realize before.
- At the end of the day, ask the participating campers about the responsibilities of the person whose job they shadowed and have them name the most valuable thing they learned. See if they can apply their answer to a responsibility their parent or guardian has that they might not have appreciated before. Ask them which of the tasks performed by family or community members they might take more responsibility for.

Trust/Blindfold Walk (5- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Blindfolds

- Have younger campers lead blindfolded older campers on a walk. Indoors, the walk can be through the rooms of a building and up and down stairs. Outdoors, the walk may go through fields and woods or around ponds.
- This activity helps the children who lead learn honesty and responsibility, and the children who are led learn trust and patience. Staff should monitor this activity as unobtrusively as possible.

MULTIPLE VALUES

Buddy System (all ages)

What you'll need: No special supplies needed

- Each day (or week, if a multi-week program) match every child with a different buddy for the day. Make pairings on a set basis, such as matching children of same genders, different social patterns, or compatible characteristics.
- Explain some ways buddies can watch out for, help, and share with each other.
- Provide planned time (snack, meal, crafts, reading, game times) for buddies to be together and, if appropriate, some flexible time when they can choose to do something together.
- Assign available staff to monitor each pair and intervene at appropriate times—whether to reinforce something positive one buddy did for the other or to help the campers work through a problem or disagreement.
- At the end of a set time, discuss what was learned. Ask questions like: What is something you had to give up for yourself in order to give something to your buddy? How did you feel when your buddy did something for you? How did you feel when you did something that your buddy appreciated or liked?

Recycling Project (all ages)

What you'll need: Trash bags and containers

- First, check to see how recycling collection centers in your community want to receive items acceptable for recycling. Provide labeled receptacles for such items as plastic, aluminum cans, glass, paper, cardboard, and any other recyclable items.
- When you begin the project, decide whether to start with a lesson in one large group or several smaller groups. If in smaller groups, write and print lesson plans and train appropriate leaders in what to say and how to follow through. In the lesson, talk about the questions like: Why do we recycle? What happens if we do not? What does

recycling tell us about respecting our planet? How do we deal with people we see littering?

- Introduce the concept of, “Think globally, act locally.” Aim your presentation at an appropriate level for your group of children.
- If lunches are brought and consumed on-site, have campers wash any containers to remove food waste, then place recyclable items into appropriate containers.
- If time will be spent picking up trash and collecting recyclable items in a defined area of your community, provide plastic bags. Think of individual and group safety needs and write a special risk management plan for this activity. Train the group and leaders in safety procedures before departure and at any subsequent time when an aspect of the safety plan needs reinforcement.
- Discuss an activity each time it is completed. For example, if children pick up trash, compare the amount collected to how much is generated by a city, a state, or our country. For on-site collection of recyclables, discuss at the end of each week how much was accumulated in a short time compared to how much is potentially collected in the greater community.
- Process the experience by asking campers what would have happened to the waste if they had not accepted this responsibility and how they can apply these lessons at home.
- If collected recyclables provide any profits, donate them to a needy family or a shelter for battered women and children. Let campers choose the group to which they donate the money.

Value Tree (5- to 8-year-olds)

What you’ll need: Butcher paper, construction paper, and contact paper

- Each time a child does an act that shows they care for and respect the environment, or have done something responsible to protect or improve it, the child makes a leaf with his or her name on it and places it on the “value tree.”
- When the tree is full of leaves, everyone wins.

Theme Dress Up Day (all ages)

What you’ll need: No special supplies needed

- Ask children to dress in one of the colors of the four core values: red for caring, blue for honesty, yellow for respect, and green for responsibility.
- At opening ceremonies, lunch time, and closing ceremonies each day, group the children by their value color. Staff and campers can then talk about each core value and share a way they lived their value for that day.

Values Careers (6- to 10-year-olds)

What you’ll need: Construction paper, crayons, glue, scissors

- Have each camper create a hat that relates to a career exemplifying one or more of the four core values: ideas could include a nurse’s cap (caring), a fireman’s hat (responsibility), or a camp director’s sunhat (all four values).
- Have children share with their groups what each hat stands for and why they chose it.

Group Logo (all ages)

What you’ll need: General arts & crafts supplies

- Have each small group design and create a logo for their group that incorporates all four values.
- Each child should have input and should make and wear a copy of their group’s logo.
- Have the groups share what their logo means with the other groups.

A Friend in Need (5- to 13-year-olds)

What you’ll need: No special supplies needed

- During the day, pair children up: one with and one without a special need. The child without the special need becomes the other child’s helper for the day. If a full day is too much, reverse the roles for the second half of the day—it’s as important for a special needs child to play the role of helper as it is for them to be helped.
- At the end of the day, have campers share what they learned.

Values Garden (9- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Top soil, seeds, fertilizer, water, planters

- Plant an outside garden or inside row of pots in a sunny window. Plant four rows of different plants that will produce flowers or vegetables in the colors of the four core values.
- Have campers tend to the plants, watching their growth.
- When the flowers bloom or the vegetables are ready to be harvested, have the campers take home a bouquet or sample the vegetables. Tell them that the four core values, represented by the plants they helped cultivate and harvest, will stay with them through their lives.

Group Kites (all ages)

What you'll need: Kites, bows in the four value colors

- Provide each group with a kite. As campers display one of the four core values, and are recognized by a group member or leader, they get to sign their name on an appropriately colored bow and attach it to the kite.
- If conditions are favorable, you may want to fly the kite as you tell the campers that openly practicing the four core values creates a colorful and uplifting experience for all.

Adopt-a-Spot (all ages)

What you'll need: Signage, trash collection bags, containers

- Have each group adopt a spot around the campsite and accept responsibility for maintaining the area. In indoor programs, the groups might adopt an area street or parking lot, periodically cleaning the area under careful supervision and following safety standards.

Swap Group Cleanup (all ages)

What you'll need: Anything typically used for cleanup

- Have groups swap play or group meeting spaces, cleaning up the other's area.
- When done, have groups leave a special message or poem written for the other groups—something creative and pleasant to show care and respect.

Storytelling (all ages)

What you'll need: Books

- Tell a story weekly, with discussion afterwards. Ask questions like: What was the moral of the story? How does that moral pertain to the people in the story? What happened to you this week that was similar? Did you learn anything from the story that could have helped you act differently?
- Create your own stories based on camp or real-life characters and situations. Raise pertinent questions and emphasize one or more of the four core values.

Family Role-play (8- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Nothing special, unless the program has costumes and props available

- Have groups of children act out family role-plays. Each group gets five minutes to create the situation before presenting it to other groups.
- Have campers demonstrate either one or all four of the core values within the role-play, depending on the ability of the members, whether they have leaders to help them, and their age and experience.

The Good Fisherman (7-years-old or younger)

What you'll need: Fishing poles, colored paper fish, backdrop for counselor to hide behind

- Let a child throw the line of a fishing pole over a backdrop where a counselor is hiding.
- Have the counselor attach a fish in one of the four core value colors.
- When the child reels in the fish, have him or her say the value it goes with and something about that value.

YMCA Values Hero (5- to 13-year-olds)

What you'll need: Polaroid camera, film, badges

- Recognize campers who demonstrate positive character-building traits. Take their picture and mark it with their name and the trait they demonstrated, and then post it on the values board. Present each child pictured with a badge that identifies the core value he or she exhibits.



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NOTES: