

# NEW FAMILY HANDBOOK



URJ  
CAMP  
GEORGE



2023

**We are so excited for the summer ahead. Here is some information that will help you prepare for your child(ren)'s arrival at camp:**

### Welcome & Intro

- Thank you for choosing Camp George – we know you have made the right choice but also know that you have high hopes and expectations for your child's experience
- By sending your child to Camp you are offering them a unique experience. Camp is a powerful environment where kids get to "grow up"
- There will be challenges faced when dealing with things that are new, group living, etc.
- Camp shows them (and you) that they are able to manage their emotions, tolerate individual differences, discover new things, resolve issues – all on their own (with our support)
- Camp helps us raise children who are resilient – children need time to reflect, time to explore, unstructured playtime, limited performance pressure...all of this is supported in the camp environment

### Getting to Camp

- Toronto buses depart from Kimel Education Centre in Richmond Hill, ON
- Information regarding specific drop off times for specific units/age groups can be found in your Camp In Touch account.
- There will be 2-3 staff on every bus – staff will help make the bus experience a positive first camp experience
- Introduce yourself to staff so they can help connect your child with another camper for the ride
- Luggage truck – luggage drop off is scheduled for Thursday June 29 at Temple Sinai 5-8 pm for first session campers and Wednesday July 26 5-8 pm at Temple Sinai for second session campers. An additional luggage truck will be on hand on departure day. Staff will be on hand to assist.
- Luggage tags – luggage tags will be given to you upon arrival at the luggage drop off on June 29<sup>th</sup>/July 26<sup>th</sup> at Temple Sinai. You will complete them with your child(ren)'s name and Unit.
- Please no food on bus (water ok), remember we are a nut sensitive camp
- It's great to bring a backpack on the bus
- Help us by getting campers on the bus – no parents allowed on the bus
- If you are driving to camp, plan to arrive around 3:00 pm and staff will direct you and help with camper luggage
- Lice and illness– please check your child(ren) at least ONE WEEK before coming to camp, they will be checked when they arrive at camp. We suggest visiting somewhere like Nit Wits who will charge just a nominal fee for doing a thorough check. Campers who are found with lice and need to be treated at camp may be subject to a treatment fee.

### The First 24 hours

- Buses will arrive at camp between 3:45 and 4:15 pm

- Buses are greeted by staff and the campers are directed to their unit area
- Once all campers have arrived, each cabin group moves to a quiet location (outside of the cabin) for their first cabin meeting, getting to know one another, and to discuss where campers would like to sleep, etc.
- Staff move luggage to camper cabins
- Move into cabins, staff help to organize campers, each camper given bed and shelves
- Dinner
- Opening Ceremony/Unit Program/Cabin Program
- Bedtime Snack
- Medications, etc. –do not pack in camper’s bags, all medication should be ordered prior to camp through MedNow
- All staff are in cabins on the first night to help campers adjust
- Swim evaluation on the second day of camp – campers will roll into the water with clothes on and with PFD, one length swimming clothed, four boxes, treading water. If campers are not successful at the first attempt they can try again as many times as they want. Our staff will support them through the evaluation process.
- We keep the kids busy to lessen chances of homesickness
- New campers in Grades 2-5 will receive an opening night phone call from the camp letting you know how your child is doing

#### Greetings from our Medical Team

- Camp is staffed by one physician and two nurses always
- Our Health Centre ensures the health and safety of our campers
- Pill call runs four times a day (before each meal and before bedtime)
- No medications (other than EpiPen’s and asthma puffers) may be kept in camper cabins
- The Health Centre is stocked with over the counter medications
- We MUST have a campers completed medical form in order for a camper to get on the bus on opening day

#### Packing for Camp

- Refer to our packing list for what to bring – packing list is based on a 3.5 week stay at camp
- Remember not to bring: expensive items, tablets, food, cell phones
- Please refer to our memo on electronics which can be found on the parent section of the website
- Items that are not allowed in camp will be taken away and returned at the end of the session
- Ipods, mp3 players, (music only, no internet access) are okay for use in cabins only and on the bus to Camp
- Letters/postcards/stamps – pre-stamp and address letters for younger children
- US campers will be given stamps to write home
- No trunks/shelves – just 2 duffle bags
- Do not send cases of water, please pack 2 reusable water bottles
- 2 sets of sheets

- No FOOD – food policy, remember we are kosher and nut sensitive
- Remember a hat, water bottle, sunscreen, closed toed shoes
- Shabbat Dress – casual but clean!

#### A Day at Camp

- We run a five-period day – swim, informal jewish education, specialty activities
- Chugim (sign up choice period) for Kochavim and Barak
- Wake up at 7:30
- Bedtime between 9:00 – 10:30
- Staff Nighttime supervision – one staff remains in the cabin from the time the kids go to bed every night
- Tripping program – Point Adventure (evening cookout) for Nitzotzot, Island Adventure (one night overnight) for Lehavot, day hike and overnight for Kochavim, multiday canoe trip options for Barak campers

#### 7/10 Day and 14/17 Day Extensions and Departures

- With parent approval, all campers will have the option of extending
- You will hear from us about a week before the session ends to ask if you are interested in an extension and THEN we will speak with your child
- If a camper chooses to stay, you will be charged the balance of one full session
- Campers will not need more clothes, as they will have access to our laundry service
- Nitz 7 Day ends on July 9<sup>th</sup> – please pick up from camp between 10 and 11 am
- Nitz/Leh 14 day ends on July 16<sup>th</sup> – please pick up from camp during Visitor's Day.
- Nitz 10 Day ends on August 6<sup>th</sup> – please pick up from camp between 10 and 11am.
- Nitz/Leh 17 Day ends on August 13<sup>th</sup> – please pick up from camp during Visitor's Day.

#### Our Staff

- 140 program staff at camp
- Our staff are selected first and foremost for their ability to nurture
- Youngest counselors are 17 – mid 20's
- Each cabin has 2-4 counselors PLUS specialists
- Each cabin has a counselor at least 18 years old in cabin and most have at least a 19 year old
- Each staff is supervised by someone older and experienced
- Unit Heads –  
Eve Haras, Nitzotzot (Grades 2/3)  
Aislinn Gannon, Lehavot (Grades 4/5)  
Zach Armel, Kochavim (Grades 6/7)  
, Barak (Grades 8/9)  
Jack Borins, (CIT)
- Michelle Fremont (First Session) and Sharlene Weitzman (Second Session) working along with Kerry Rose and Marly Bromstein– Community Care Directors, help support campers with varying special needs and provide professional support to our staff who are working with campers.

- Mature and experienced returning health care staff (1 Dr. and 2 nurses at all times)
- Admin Staff Team –
  - Jeff Rose, Director
  - Lauren Grundland, Associate Director
  - Matthew Jadd, Assistant Director
  - Marly Bromstein, Development and Community Engagement Associate/Community Care Coordinator
  - Sheri Askey, Camp Office Manager
  - Arielle Branitsky, Dean of Jewish Living

### Communication

- Write, write, write
- Emergency number on camp machine at all times
- All parents can email (through your own CampInTouch account) where you can use Camp Stamps to have your campers respond
- Families outside Ontario – we will scan and email your child’s hand written letters
- Packages – NO FOOD, send magazines, small games
- If camper writes home about missing items, call us and we’ll get it to them
- Call camp anytime and your call will be returned by Unit Head within 24 hours – if not sooner
- Check website for updates including summer Blog, URJ Camp George Facebook group, Companion photos daily, twitter, and Instagram
- Infirmary will call you separately if any medical issues arise
- Call us if you have a concern
- Letters home 2x/week, please let us know if you are not receiving letters
- You will receive frequent email updates from the camp along with an opening day email letting you know your camper’s cabin number

### Preparing for Camp

- Before camp work with your child on: showering, making bed, organizing clothes, being with others 24/7, falling asleep, swimming in a lake, mosquitoes and spiders!
- Getting ready is both physical and emotional
- Speak with your child about concerns, anxieties, worries
- Try and imagine what they might be going through
- Your camper might be thinking “will I be taken care of”, “will I miss home?”
- Be encouraging and positive
- Talk about their anxieties – showering in communal space, being homesick, etc.
- Don’t promise that they can call home or that you will come and get them – you only set them up for disappointment, we want to build their resiliency
- Discuss with your child that ever camper is part of a group and as a parent you expect them to cooperate and help out
- Assure them there are people at camp to help them – counselors, Unit Heads, Directors
- Make sure they know that clean up is part of camp – everyone pitches in

- Assure them that they will get to try many things, some which they will like and be good at and some that they won't. Your expectation is that they will try!
- Send encouraging mail and be positive – don't tell them about bad things going on at home (call the camp if there is something serious), tell them how proud you are of them for taking this "grown up" step
- Send kids a letter to camp a week before camp so they will get it when they arrive (even if you don't have the cabin number...we will get the letters to them)
- Call the camp if you have a concern and speak with a Camp Director

### Homesickness

- Homesickness is normal, and we have strategies for supporting campers
- Staff are trained in how to handle homesickness – strategies for coping, group dynamics, building strong cabin bonds
- Our staff are first and foremost selected for their positions because of their ability to nurture
- We are on the lookout for homesick or lonely children – we are discrete
- This can happen even with older kids
- Prep your child if you know this may occur, talk about strategies to get them through (write a letter home, listen to music, deep breathing, etc.), talk about how proud you are of them for doing this on their own, about growing up and facing new challenges
- We work on keeping campers busy
- Staff are very positive and help campers through difficult times
- The best people to help them through are their counselors and Unit Heads
- If it's serious we will be in touch with you
- Sometimes Directors or faculty will be involved
- Unfortunately, parent contact generally regresses a situation
- Best thing is for you to work with us as partners finding strategies that will work best with your child
- Knowing your child is having a hard time adjusting can be stressful on you because you want the best for your child and can't be right there to help – let them know ahead of time that you love them and that you are confident in their ability to cope – instill a sense of confidence in them!
- Remind yourself that camp is a process and we need time to work with your child – growing takes time.
- Trust us to help your child (with your suggestions of course!)

### Why we love camp

- Camp is an amazing learning opportunity for our children to develop independence and self-esteem, social relations, and take risks
- Camp is a place for campers to develop their own Jewish identity
- Camp is an open and inclusive environment where everyone is important
- Camp is a wonderful place for campers to try new things, take risks, be successful, connect with others – play and have fun!

- Our program is broad enough to allow campers to try healthy risk taking at a level they are comfortable with
- Our staff are here to help facilitate all of this
- We want to work together with you – the more information you can give us about your camper, the better
- You have taken your time to carefully choose our camp so we know you have developed a trust with us to take good care of your child – we take that trust seriously
- We are there for YOU – if you have a concern, contact us

Please refer to our Family Handbook which can be found in your CampInTouch account. The Camp office moves on June 21<sup>st</sup> – after that time feel free to reach us at Camp. Please contact us at any time with questions or concerns that you may have.



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