

Coronavirus Disease 2019

Considerations for Youth and Summer Camps

Updated May 19, 2020

As some communities in the United States begin to convene youth camps, CDC offers the following considerations for ways in which camp administrators can help protect campers, staff, and communities, and slow the spread of COVID-19. Camp administrators can determine, in collaboration with [state and local health officials](#), whether and how to implement these considerations, making adjustments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community. These considerations are meant to supplement—**not replace**—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which camps must comply.

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind

The more people a camper or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in youth camp settings as follows:

- **Lowest Risk:** Small groups of campers stay together all day, each day. Campers remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects. Outdoor activities are prioritized. All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county, community).
- **More Risk:** Campers mix between groups but remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects. Outdoor activities are prioritized. All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
- **Even More Risk:** Campers mix between groups and do not remain spaced apart. All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
- **Highest Risk:** Campers mix between groups and do not remain spaced apart. All campers are **not** from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as [handwashing](#), [staying home when sick](#)) and environmental [cleaning and disinfection](#) are important principles that are covered in this document. Fortunately, there are a number of actions youth camp administrators can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during camp sessions and activities.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**
 - Educate staff, campers, and their families about when they should [stay home](#) and when they can return to camp.
 - Actively encourage employees and campers who are sick or have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.
 - [Employees and campers should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Employees who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
 - CDC's criteria can help inform when employees should return to work:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)

- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Teach and reinforce [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among campers and staff.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
 - Encourage staff and campers to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older campers who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- **Cloth Face Coverings**
 - Teach and reinforce the use of [cloth face coverings](#). Face coverings may be challenging for campers (especially younger campers) to wear in all-day settings such as camp. Face coverings should be worn by staff and campers (particularly older campers) as feasible, and are **most** essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Information should be provided to staff and campers on [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
 - Note: Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:
 - Babies or children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without help

[Cloth face coverings](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have [symptoms](#). Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators, or other medical personal protective equipment.

- **Adequate Supplies**
 - Support [healthy hygiene](#)  by providing supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older campers who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans.
- **Signs and Messages**
 - Post [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., camp entrances, dining areas, restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#)  and describe how to [stop the spread](#)  of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#)  .
 - Broadcast regular [announcements](#) on reducing the spread of COVID-19 on PA system
 - Include messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff and families (such as on camp websites, in emails, and through camp [social media accounts](#)).
 - Find free CDC print and digital resources on [CDC's communications resources](#) main page.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**
 - [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces (e.g., playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) within the camp facility and in any [shared transportation](#) vehicles at least daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objects (e.g., art supplies, nap mats, toys, games) should be limited when possible, or cleaned between use.
 - Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - If transport vehicles (e.g., buses) are used by the camp, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff (e.g., hand hygiene, cloth face coverings). To clean and disinfect school buses or other transport vehicles, see guidance for [bus transit](#).
 - Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaners and disinfectants](#)  , including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteria](#)  .
 - Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
 - Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. [Wash hands](#) after removing gloves.

- **Shared Objects**
 - Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to [clean, sanitize, or disinfect](#).
 - Keep each camper's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
 - Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assign art supplies or other equipment to a single camper), or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of campers at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.
- **Ventilation**
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to campers using the facility.
- **Water Systems**
 - To minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water, [take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, showers, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized, but encourage staff and campers to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains.
- **Modified Layouts**
 - Space seating at least 6 feet apart.
 - If nap times are scheduled, ensure that campers' naptime mats are assigned to individual children, are [sanitized](#) [☑](#) before and after use, and spaced out as much as possible, ideally at least 6 feet apart. Place campers head-to-toe to ensure distance between their faces.
 - Prioritize outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained as much as possible.
 - Create [social distance](#) between campers on school buses (e.g., seat children one child per row, skip rows) when possible.
- **Physical Barriers and Guides**
 - Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (g., reception desks).
 - Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and campers remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating "one way routes" in hallways).
- **Communal Spaces**
 - Close shared spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds with shared playground equipment, if possible; otherwise stagger use and [clean and disinfect](#) between use.
 - Follow [CDC's considerations for Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19](#).
- **Food Service**
 - Have campers bring their own meals as feasible, and eat in separate areas or with their smaller group, instead of in a communal dining hall or cafeteria. Ensure the [safety of children with food allergies](#) [🔴](#).
 - Use disposable food service items (utensils, dishes). If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should [wash their hands](#) after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
 - If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils and ensure the [safety of children with food allergies](#). [🔴](#)

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Protections for Staff and Campers who are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19**
 - Offer options for staff at [higher risk for severe illness](#) (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limit exposure risk (e.g., telework and modified job responsibilities).

- Offer options for campers at [higher risk for severe illness](#) that limit exposure risk (e.g., virtual learning opportunities).
- For staff and campers: Limit camp attendance to staff and campers who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.
- Put in place policies that protect the privacy of people at [higher risk for severe illness](#) regarding underlying medical conditions.
- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting)**
 - Keep campers together in small groups with dedicated staff and make sure they remain with the same group throughout the day, every day.
 - Limit mixing between groups if possible.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
 - Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and with other campers' guardians as much as possible.
 - When possible, use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing (maintaining distance of approximately 6 feet) between employees and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.
- **Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips**
 - Avoid group events, gatherings, or meetings where social distancing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained. Limit group size to the extent possible.
 - Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
 - Avoid activities and events such as field trips and special performances.
 - Pursue options to convene sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that minimize transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities.
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Designate a staff person (e.g., camp nurse or healthcare provider) to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All camp staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- **Communication Systems**
 - Put systems in place for:
 - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff and families self-report to the camp administrators if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#) (e.g., see “[Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts](#)” in the [Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below](#)) [🔗](#) and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.
 - Notifying staff and families of camp closures and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).
- **Leave (Time Off) Policies**
 - Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable employees to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off, and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
 - Develop policies for return-to-camp after COVID-19 illness. CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation and quarantine](#) can inform these policies.
- **Back-Up Staffing Plan**

- Monitor absenteeism of campers and staff, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
- **Staff Training**
 - Train staff on all safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during training.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or [symptom checking](#)) of staff and campers (if feasible) safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
 - Camp administrators may use examples of screening methods in CDC's supplemental [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) as a guide for screening campers and CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) for screening staff.
- **Sharing Facilities**
- Encourage any organizations that share or use the camp facilities to also follow these considerations. and limit shared use, if feasible.
 - Support Coping and Resilience
 - Encourage employees and campers to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
 - Promote employees and campers eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
 - Encourage employees and campers to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
 - Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text [TalkWithUs](#) to 66746

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Sick staff members or campers should not return to camp until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
 - Make sure that staff and families know that they (staff) or their children (families) should not come to camp, and that they should notify camp officials (e.g., the designated COVID-19 point of contact) if they (staff) or their child (families) become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
 - Immediately separate staff and campers with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at camp. Individuals who are sick should go home and or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for yourself or others](#) who are sick.
 - Work with camp administrators, nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive but does not have symptoms. If the camp has a nurse or other healthcare provider, they should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people. See: [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#).
 - Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.
- **Clean and Disinfect**
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct](#) use and storage of [cleaning](#)  and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.

- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**
 - In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, camp administrators should notifying [local health officials](#), staff, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) [🔗](#) .
 - Advise those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home, [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

Special Considerations for Overnight Camps

In addition to the considerations listed above, sleep away camps may also consider:

- Limit camp attendance to staff and campers who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county).
- Align mats or beds so that campers and staff sleep head-to-toe at least 6 feet apart.
- Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks and between beds, especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart.
- Monitor and enforce [social distancing](#) and [healthy hygiene](#) behaviors throughout the day and night.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) bathrooms regularly (e.g., in the morning and evening, after times of heavy use) using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) [🔗](#) .
- Encourage staff and campers to avoid placing toothbrushes or toiletries directly on counter surfaces.
- Work with camp administrators, nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like [symptoms](#). If the camp has a nurse or other healthcare provider, they should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people. See: [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#).
- Staff and campers with [symptoms](#) (fever, cough, or runny nose) at camp should immediately be separated and sent home and referred to their healthcare provider. Families of sick campers may follow [CDC Guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
- Staff and campers who have had [close contact](#) with a person who has [symptoms](#) should be separated and sent home as well, and follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#). If symptoms develop, families should follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick to their home or to a healthcare facility in an emergency.
- Take steps to ensure any external community organizations that share the camp facilities follow these considerations.

Other Resources

[Latest COVID-19 Information](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

[Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[Guidance for Schools and Childcare Centers](#)

[Guidance for Park Administrators](#)

[Shared and Congregate Housing](#)

[COVID-19 Prevention](#)

[Handwashing Information](#)

[Face Coverings](#)

[Social Distancing](#)

[COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Persons at Higher Risk](#)

[Managing Stress and Coping](#)

[HIPAA and COVID-19](#) 

[CDC Communication Resources](#)

[Community Mitigation](#)