

PFA Tips

Summer Camps

It might be cold outside, but it's time to ask the question, "What will my child do this summer?" How about summer camp? The trick is finding a camp program that fits with your child's abilities, interests, and needed supports.

Here are some things to think about while exploring camps:

1. Does your child qualify for **Extended School Year (ESY) services**? ESY is offered to children who are likely to regress during the long summer break. ESY is no cost to the parents and eligibility will be determined by the Individual Education Program (IEP) team. If your child does qualify for ESY services, keep in mind that the program is time limited and will likely not include recreational activities.

2. Find a summer camp near you. Make a plan to **visit the camp**. Talk with the director about their philosophy and be up front about your child's needs and any accommodations your child requires.

3. **Look at the rooms and the fields** where the activities will take place. Is the space manageable for your child? If you have a child that elopes, do you see escape possibilities? Imagine the noise level. Will it be tolerable for your child? If not, can he or she use headphones? Is there a quiet room for your child to visit if necessary?

4. Is the camp **accredited**? Ask if the camp is accredited by the American Camp Association. At the very least, the camp

needs to be licensed in the state of Maryland as a youth camp.

5. What is the **camp counselor to child ratio**?

6. What **specialized training** do the staff have for working with individuals with autism? What **experience** do the camp directors and staff have with inclusion? What are their hiring requirements?

7. How do they handle **challenging behaviors or behavior disturbances**? If you have a behavior plan, will they implement it?

8. If your child attends a community inclusive camp, how will the typically developing children be **encouraged to include your child**?

9. Who will administer your child's **medications**? Is there a nurse onsite? If not, how often does the nurse visit? The Maryland Board of Nursing requires youth camps to have certified medication technicians onsite under the guidance of a Registered Nurse if medications are to be given. Also, ask the camp director or the camp nurse about access to first aid.

10. Does your child need **one-to-one**



supports? If so, does the camp provide inclusion aids? If not, will the camp allow you to send your own inclusion aid to be with your child?

11. Does your child have **allergies or food restrictions**? If so, how will the camp counselors monitor what your child eats? What about food brought in by other children? Does the camp provide meals? If so, do they provide meals your child can/will eat?

12. **Attend a camp fair** to visit multiple camp representatives at one time.

13. Ask friends, neighbors, school personnel, members of your local Support Group, or your child's doctor or other specialists for their **recommendations**.

14. Some camps offer **scholarships or tuition assistance**. Start applying now as grants and financial aid are limited. Search our provider database for additional Grants and Funding Sources.

Additional Resources

"Kamp A-Kom-Plish Offers Tips on Choosing the Right Summer Camp" by Jonathon Rondeau

<http://pathfindersforautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Rondeau-Tip-sheet-SummerCampSelection.pdf>

American Camp Association

<https://www.acacamps.org/about>

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