



## Helpful Tips in Selecting a Camp

Choosing a camp for your child may feel like an overwhelming experience, and it's often challenging to determine how mindful the camp staff is about health and safety. Here are some points to help as you evaluate the right camp for your child. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, and applicants seeking a scholarship from Jewish Family Service of the Desert (JFS) are not at all obligated to take any steps noted.

**Consider your child's personality and interests.** Camps come in all shapes and sizes, and there are many possibilities. What type of setting is your child most comfortable in? Large groups or small?

**Day camp vs. overnight camp.** Think about your child's comfort level with being away from home before deciding whether an overnight camp would be a good fit. Talk together so you can be aware of your child's concerns.

**Get referrals.** Ask other parents about their child's camp experiences. While this may provide some background information, there's no better way to find a perfect fit than checking camps out in person with your child.

**Ask about the staff.** Is the staff made up of young adults or teens, as well as adults? What are their roles? What is the child-to-staff ratio? If applicable, it is also important to ask about whether the staff has any prior experience working with children with special needs and/or whether they are willing to accommodate your child.

**Ask how healthcare is delivered at camp.** Many camps have camp nurses, but no physicians. Ask how the camp deals with minor illnesses and injuries. How are staff trained to handle these situations? Know who is caring for your children, and what training those staff members have received.

**What are the swimming requirements?** Camps with a water component will likely require your child to take a swim test or have certain swim experience needed to attend. Ask what type of supervision happens around any water experiences. Are there lifeguards?

**Ask about sunblock.** Most camps have kids outside all day. Camps should have a protocol for how often they have children reapply sunscreen, and if camp staff offer help in this area for younger campers.

**What does the camp require prior to attendance?** Most camps require children to be vaccinated according to the recommended childhood immunization schedule; however, you can ask if it's not published. Many camps also require a sports physical.

## What to Do Before You Go

**Plan ahead for doctor visits and forms.** Make sure your child has a camp, sports or annual physical before heading to camp. Many camps require this before entry. If you have an upcoming visit with your healthcare provider, come to your appointment with your child's camp-specific form.

**Talk to the camp directors about any special health care needs.** If your child has a condition that requires special support, have a special emergency action plan. Keep the camp informed in the same way you keep your child's school informed. Make sure a plan is in place before camp starts.

**Do not make any medication changes before camp.** Parents are often tempted to take "drug holidays" during or before camp. Camp is not a good place to find out that medication changes are not going well.

**Fill out and turn in any additional camp paperwork.** Camps likely have individual policies regarding discipline and behavior, as well as procedures for drop off and pick up that you will need to read and sign. You will also need to prepare your emergency contact sheet.