



## SUMMER 2020 EXPERIENCE

### Overview

In Summer 2020, only 60% of 5,600 U.S. day camps and 18% of 8,900 U.S. overnight camps were able to operate. These camps learned valuable lessons that can inform public health decision-making moving forward as we look toward the summer of 2021. While some camps experienced positive cases, few camps had extensive outbreaks that resulted in the closure of the camp session. Additional research is underway to identify best practices with reports expected in late 2020 and early 2021.

### Effective Practices

- **Pre-camp engagement/orientation for staff and campers:** Staff and campers need to be informed prior to camp on the use of face coverings, physical distancing, frequent handwashing, limited mixing between groups, and reduced frequency and size of large gatherings. They need to understand that the COVID-19 program starts as soon as they arrive and may include pre-arrival screening and good pre-camp behaviors.
- **Staff commitment to the COVID-19 program:** Camp leadership needs to rollout and maintain a diligent effort in the COVID-19 program, ensuring that staff and campers do not become complacent over time. Staff must commit to maintaining the COVID-19 program during their time with campers and include plans to build basic attitudes and habits of good behavior and a culture of compliance so that safety is a valued and key part of the camp operation. Staff who live in the community and report to camp for work need to be mindful about their experiences outside of camp.
- **Group/cohort strategy:** The use of a group/cohort strategy is essential for ensuring infection containment and prompt close contact identification. Adoption and sustained implementation of all nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) in the COVID-19 program provide a layered and resilient approach for preventing infection.
- **Engagement with local health officials:** Local health officials must be aware and knowledgeable of the camp's COVID-19 program and the key contacts. Local health representatives should be provided a tour of the camp before opening so that they can see the Health Center and isolation and quarantine quarters, meet with camp leadership and Health Center staff, and review the NPI and contingency plans. It is beneficial to discuss how camps will be prepared to make operational shifts based on a variety of community and on-camp conditions and performance indicators. These indicators will help camps and local health officials evaluate factors related to disease transmission in their region and at their camps as well as the effectiveness of the COVID-19 NPIs.
- **Prompt access to diagnostic testing:** Prompt access to diagnostic testing and rapid turnaround of results can limit the duration of isolation and uncertainty on whether symptoms can be tied to COVID-19.

- **Campers and staff from the local and distant communities:** Travel by staff from both local and distant communities did not pose issues with introduction of the virus to camps. Travel safety precaution information provided to all campers and staff was well received.
- **Access to medical testing for screening prior to and during camp:** Nearly all camps did not have access to pre-camp medical testing for screening staff and campers and operated successfully with identifying symptomatic individuals and limiting the spread within camp. In the few camps that were able to arrange for medical testing for viral RNA via molecular PCR tests and/or antigen tests, it provided important information in identifying a few individuals, staff and campers, who had positive results, indicating current viral infection. Medical testing provides information that can identify asymptomatic individuals to supplement the existing guidance provided by CDC and the Field Guide.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2021 CAMP SEASON

Camps are looking to 2021 and evaluating operational parameters for next summer. The Summer 2020 experience has enhanced the knowledge and guidance available to public health officials and camp professionals to assist in planning and implementing as safe as possible and engaging camp experiences in all day and resident camps. The following insights should be considered:

- The ACA Field Guide and CDC guidance provide a robust plan for operations and staffing considerations for all summer camps in the coming year. Camps should continue consistent implementation of multi-layered mitigations strategies that include the incorporation of cohorts, NPIs, and update of response and contingency plans.
- While most activity within most camp programs occurs outdoors, it is advisable to modify certain camp program elements that may result in moderate to high exposure risks including:
  - Mixing and crowding of large groups outside their defined cohorts without physical distancing or face coverings.
  - Indoor activities in buildings without enhanced ventilation and/or filtration via mechanical systems.
  - High-contact and high-droplet producing activities such as certain high contact sports and singing, yelling, and cheering without masks and physical distancing (indoors and outdoors).
- Potential restrictions/limitations on camp staff and campers leaving the premises and returning during camp sessions and restricting outside visitors to camp.

Valuable health protective information has been gained during the 2020 camp season from the scientific community and from public health and medical experts from around the world. With this collective knowledge and rapidly evolving new tools, such as affordable testing and possibly a COVID-19 vaccine, camps will have highly effective tools to operate programs designed to keep their campers and staff safe and healthy in 2021. ACA will continue to support camps as they navigate the pathway of implementing safe and engaging camp experiences during the time of COVID-19.

For additional information please visit American Camp Association at <https://www.acacamps.org/>