

## ***Planning Ahead for 4-H Camp***

You and your child are on a journey together. Going away to an overnight camp is one part of this journey. 4-H camp is an opportunity for your child to recognize his or her strengths, become more confident, make new friends, develop new social skills, be creative and more. How can you help your child and yourself prepare for 4-H camp? Here are some tips!

### **Emotional Health**

- Talk ahead of time about the camp experience. Discuss what to pack, how money will be spent and what to do in specific situations. Keep in mind your child's maturity. Talk about concerns and difficult feelings. Discussing potentially anxious situations before hand will give your child the confidence to succeed and reduce fear of new situations.

**To Do:** Role play some specific situations with your child like how to keep up with money and what to do if he or she doesn't like anything offered at dinner.

- Feeling homesick is natural. Those butterflies in your child's stomach can be calmed if you discuss your separation ahead of time. Acknowledge your child's feelings but encourage your child not to give up when they feel overwhelmed or lonely.
- Allowing the child to call home will not be the first action to be taken by our staff and volunteers. Our first measure is to make sure your child has a buddy and is so involved in camp activities that he/she forgets about being homesick. The 4-H staff will do everything possible to help your child remain at camp.
- Please do not ask your child to call home, as this sometimes does more harm than good. Just remember the "no news is good news," and depend on our staff to contact you if necessary. Phones are not readily available to campers.

**Do say:** "I think you can go to 4-H camp and have a good time. You may have some feelings of being lonely or sad but I think you are ready to go away for the whole week." Communicate that you have confidence in your child and that you are both ready for this separation.

**Don't say:** "I'll miss you so much I won't be able to sleep at night. Come home to me soon. I'll just be lost without you." Your child may interpret your anxiety about camp as guilt or your child may take responsibility for your feelings. Is what you're saying or doing serving your own needs or the needs of your child? Remember you are the parent, the grown up. Put your child's emotional needs before your own.

- How 4-H'ers can successfully deal with nervous or sad emotions while at camp:
  1. Participate in group activities.
  2. Spend time with friends and counselors
  3. Think positively.
  4. Write a letter home.

**To Do:** Send a letter to your child at camp so they will feel in touch with you. Make sure you mail it the week before camp so it will arrive on time.

**To Do:** Pack a favorite stuffed animal or picture so they'll have a reminder of home.

- Please encourage your child to shower (swimming does not count as bathing), use deodorant, change clothing daily, and to go to bed and to sleep at scheduled times. Otherwise, he/she will not feel like participating in daytime activities – they will not be allowed to take naps during the day, and are expected to be present for all activities.

## Meals

- Tuesday through Thursday, 3 meals per day, served cafeteria-style. Snacks will be available from the canteen during free time and breaks.
- Water will be readily available to 4-H'ers at all times.

**To Do:** Talk with your child about the importance of eating meals and not overdoing it on junk food. Not eating meals or eating too much junk food can lead to illness. Also, discuss the importance of drinking enough WATER during the week . . . camp will be hot and dehydration can be a concern.

## Housing

- Campers stay in air-conditioned cottages that have 2 bedrooms for children. Each bedroom has a bath and multiple toilets, sinks and showers. Children sleep on bunk beds (10 per room; roll-aways available; each child has a bed, although some children - especially girls - will choose to sleep together). Cottages also have a counselor's room—where 4-H Certified Overnight Chaperones stay—which has its own bath. Cottages also have a living room area.
- Campers are expected to clean the cottage each morning, including making beds, putting away clothing, sweeping, some mopping, carrying out trash, and even decorating the living room or front porch in hopes of winning the Thunderbird Award which is given to the cleanest cottage. (The “true” purpose of daily cottage clean up is to have 4-H'ers put all of their belongings back in their suitcases in hopes that this will help eliminate the phrase, “Someone stole my. . . .”)

**To Do:** Talk with your child about keeping up with their belongings. Emphasize how important it is to not accuse someone of “stealing.” This can have a negative impact on that child's camp experience. If something should be misplaced, tell them to see the adult in their cabin.

**To Do:** Show them how to make a bed and use a broom. This will keep them from feeling inferior in front of other 4-H'ers who already know how to do these things

## Discipline

- Each of you have received, completed and signed a 4-H Code of Conduct. It is your responsibility to be sure that your child understands the rules by which he or she will conduct themselves during the week of camp. Failure to adhere to the rules will result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- Extension policy states that no corporal/physical punishment is allowed. We will do everything we can to correct minor misbehavior by using such methods as sitting beside a misbehaving child during class time or having the child walk beside an adult if he/she is annoying another child on the way to the cafeteria. No child will be disciplined by methods such as sleeping on the floor without a mattress or running laps or spanking. Supervising adults are to treat your child the way they would want their own child to be treated.
- Please check your child's luggage for items such as shaving cream and other items that can cause them to get into “trouble.” We have outlined these items in your camp letter.
- The 4-H Code of Conduct will be reviewed on the bus before we depart for camp. You and your child have already signed the 4-H Code of Conduct and should understand the behaviors expected and the consequences if not followed.
- 4-H'ers who do not abide by the 4-H Code of Conduct will be sent home. Parents will be responsible for picking their child up . . . no refund will be given in this instance.