



Middleton Health Department Newsletter

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Our Mission

To improve public health by promoting an individual's well-being, preventing disease, and protecting an individual's health within the community.

Recreational Camps



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What is a recreational camp for children?

A recreational camp for children is a day or residential (overnight) sports, travel or wilderness program that offers recreational activities and instruction to campers. Such camps have five or more children and typically operate anytime between June 1 and September 30 and/or during school vacations. Please note that there are certain factors, such as length of time the camp is in session and type of entity operating a program, that influence whether a program is considered a recreational camp under applicable Massachusetts law. For further information on licensed recreational camps for children, contact the local board of health in the community where the camp is located.

Licensing

In Massachusetts all recreational camps for children must be inspected and licensed by the local board of health in the city or town where the camp is located. In order to be licensed, the camp must meet all regulatory standards established by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and any additional local requirements. However keep in mind that not all summer programs are licensed recreational camps. The regulations establish minimum health, safety, sanitary, and housing standards to protect the well-being of children who are in the care of recreational camps for children in Massachusetts.

To see if a camp is licensed, contact the local board of health department in the community where the program is located.



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Inspection of Camps

Local Health Department evaluates recreational camps as a part of an inspection. The primary purpose of the inspection is to ensure that the camp provides an appropriate environment to protect the health, safety, and well being of the campers. Inspectors look to see that the camp has, for example: safe structures and equipment; adequate sanitary facilities; sufficient supervision of the campers; appropriate plans in case of medical emergencies, natural, and other physical disasters; sufficient health care coverage; and injury and fire prevention plans.

All camps are required to provide copies of their operating plans and procedures. Such documents can be obtained by asking a camp representative.



Staff/Volunteer Qualifications

In Massachusetts the minimum qualifications of a camp counselor is at least four weeks experience in a supervisory role with children or four weeks experience with group camping. Counselors must also complete an orientation program before campers arrive at camp. Any counselor who supervises children in activities such as horseback riding, hiking, swimming, and other events must also have appropriate specialized training, certification, and experience in the activity. You may ask to see proof that a counselor is certified in a particular activity.

In addition all camp staff and volunteers are required to conduct a background check that includes obtaining and reviewing the applicant's previous work history and confirming three positive references. The camp must also obtain a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) history/juvenile record history from the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) to determine whether the applicant has a juvenile record or has committed a crime that would prevent the applicant from being with campers. The local health department/board will verify that CORI checks have been conducted during their annual licensing inspection. The operator of the camp must also obtain a Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) report from the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) for all prospective camp staff, including any volunteers.

Protection

To protect children at camps from mosquitoes and tick borne illnesses proper repellent techniques should be used.

- Insect repellent containing DEET should be applied to exposed skin only, and children are encouraged to cover their skin with clothes as much as possible. DEET products should not be applied near the eyes and mouth, applied over open cuts, wounds, or irritated skin, or applied on the hands of young children (the CDC recommends that adults apply repellents to young children).
- The use of DEET products that combine repellent with sunscreen are not recommended for use, as over application of DEET can occur if sunscreens need to be applied more frequently. It is generally recommended to apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent.



(Sources: Massachusetts Department of Public Health Website and photos-internet)