Sending Your Child With Special Needs to Camp - Part 1

You've decided to send your child with special needs to camp this summer. But that's just the first step — you can choose a camp designed just for kids with special needs or a mainstream camp where your child will be with kids without special needs. Once that's decided, what can you do to get ready?

Preparing Your Child — and Yourself

If you haven't visited the camp, get as much information about it as possible, including a description of the layout and a video, if the camp has one, and go over these with your child.

Tell your child that you'll be checking in regularly with the camp staff and stress that he or she can always let them know if his or her needs aren't being met. Offer reassurance that you and the camp staff will take every precaution to make sure that all kids stay safe.

Talk about the benefits of attending camp and what some of your child's goals might be, such as to try a new sport, make new friends, or just enjoy a break from doctors' appointments and therapy sessions.

When kids are intimidated by the thought of attending a residential camp or an inclusionary camp, parents might consider starting them in a day camp or a sports team for kids with special needs. This can give them the skills and confidence they need to feel comfortable about going to a residential camp.

Start with regular sports activities and day camp. Then use a special-needs camp to get them used to being away before sending them to an inclusionary camp.

Another option to consider is sending a child to camp with a friend or a sibling. If kids attend an inclusionary or mainstream camp, the buddy doesn't have to have a special need. Going with a friend can reduce stress for both parents and kids, since kids with special needs and their camp buddies will be looking out for each other.

Sharing Information With Camp Staff

Some parents are reluctant to share too much information with camp staff for fear it will have negative repercussions for their child (for example, they may wonder if the camp will still take their child or if they're setting their child up for failure). But good camps will want and need to know as much as possible — the more information they have, the better.

Consult with your child's doctor and other specialists, such as a physical therapist, to make sure you give the camp director and staff all necessary information, and ask the camp staff if they have everything they need from you.

You can help educate the staff by spending time with them and answering and asking questions before you drop off your child. This can be critical. For example, if your child will be attending a mainstream camp, you'll want to make sure that everything is accessible for your child and that the staff understands your child's needs.

Many camps have paperwork you can fill out to share information about things like dietary and medical needs. And regardless of whether your child is going to a day or residential camp, you should give the staff a list of emergency phone numbers and email addresses, and make sure they know how to reach you at all times during your child's camp stay.

If your child takes any medication, include the phone number of your doctor in case the prescription is lost and needs to be refilled by camp staff. Check whether the camp infirmary stocks your child's medication, too. If it doesn't, send extra medicine in case of an emergency.

What to Pack

Try to limit the special equipment your child brings, especially if it's expensive or breakable. Kids going to a mainstream camp are likely to want to be like all the other kids, so do what you can to accommodate that desire. And mark or label everything with your child's name to make it easier to keep track of belongings — that goes for everything from crutches to a retainer case.
Sending Your Child With Special Needs to Camp - Part 2

If the camp hasn't sent you one, you should call ahead for a list of recommended items. Every camp has different requirements.

You also have the option to provide any support staff your child needs. If your child needs a therapist, you can have that person come in on a predetermined basis to provide care. Or maybe your child needs more intensive, round-the-clock care — ask the camp director what you can do to accommodate these special needs.

Remember, however, that you may want to let your child have a vacation from therapy or other treatments. Before you decide to postpone any treatments, though, consult with your doctor.

Dealing With Anxiety and Homesickness

Many camps don't allow direct contact between parent and child while the camp is in session — they do this to help the campers stay focused on their activities. This can be scary for parents of kids with special needs, which is why it's important that you figure out, ahead of time, how you'll get information about your child's status. Will the camp call you with updates or can you occasionally call or email the supervisor and camp staff?

Like any parent of a camper, though, parents of kids with special needs can write letters to remind their kids that they're loved and missed, and that they can't wait to hear all about their campers' many experiences.

And just like any other child, your kid probably won't want you to cramp his or her style while away at camp. The best thing you can do is respect your camper's need for freedom and independence while enjoying a safe camp environment.

Reviewed by: Steven J. Bachrach, MD
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PEATC Workshops and Events - March 2014

Saturday, March 1, 2014 - “15th Annual Transition Fair”, 12:00 pm – 3:30 pm, sponsored by sponsored by The Prince William / Manassas / Manassas Park Transition Council, location at the Edward L. Kelly Leadership Center, 14715 Bristow Road, Manassas, VA 20112-3945. PEATC will be an exhibitor at this event. To register for the fair, call 703.791.8354 (voice) or 703.791.8847 (TDD), or email holinkdl@pwcs.edu.

Saturday, March 1, 2014 - FCPS 9th Annual Special Education Conference from 8:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. at Woodson High School, 9525 Main Street, Fairfax, VA 22031. For more information, call 703-204-3941 / http://www.fcps.edu/dss/conference/2014/flier/ConferenceFlyer.pdf

Saturday, March 15, 2014 - The Down Syndrome Association of Roanoke (DSAR)’s "Keys to The Future Conference", Sheraton Roanoke Hotel & Conference Center, 2801 Hersherberger Road, Roanoke, VA 24017. PEATC will present "How to Talk So Schools Will Listen (and Listen So Schools Will Talk)" and provide a resource display. Please contact The Down Syndrome Association of Roanoke (DSAR) http://www.dsar.org/ to register.

Wednesday, March 19, 2014 – IN SPANISH ONLY, "Understanding Special Education", 7:00 pm -8:20 pm, Bull Run Regional Library, 8051 Ashton Avenue, Manassas, VA 20109-2892. To register, call PEATC at 703-923-0010 or email partners@peatc.org.

Thursday, March 20, 2014 - "5th Annual Education Symposium - Engaging Families and Students”, Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico / Quantico Base Commander and the School Liaison Program, Quantico, VA. PEATC will attend as an exhibitor.

Saturday, March 22, 2014 - "How to Talk So Schools Will Listen (and Listen So Schools Will Talk)” Workshop AND Family Fair, Time: 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Location: Caroline Middle School, 13325 Devils 3 Jump Road, Milford, VA 22514; Sponsored by: Caroline County PRC/SEAC-FFPC. To register or for more information, please contact: Susan Gayle at sgayle@ccps.us or 804-633-7083.

Monday, March 24, 2014 - SAVE THE DATE!! PEATC presents Dr. Tashna Felix, Professional Psychological Services in a Webinar on a TBD Mental Health Topic. More details, including how to register, to follow shortly.

Tuesday, March 25, 2014 – PEATC Cafecito — Guest Speaker: Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, 7pm-8:30pm, Location: PEATC Office, 100 N. Washington Street, Suite 234, Falls Church, VA 22046. To register, contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or ancalle@peatc.org.
We're "March"-ing towards Summer and Special Needs Summer Camps

Camps for Children with Special Needs
Updated May 2013 | Updated by Kyrie Dragoo, NICHCY
ARTICLE SOURCE: http://nichcy.org/publications/camps

Enjoy NICHCY’s quick links to camps and summer opportunities. Some of the listings below identify camps available to all children, while some are especially for children who have disabilities. It is also very likely that your community has summer camps or recreational opportunities available that you won’t find listed here.

To find what’s available in your community, consult local sources of information such as your child’s teachers, parks and/or recreation departments, area private schools, religious organizations, other community groups, parent centers, and fellow parents.

Camps for Those with Special Needs

Be sure to check out the National Center on Physical Activity & Disability ‘s Fun & Leisure section on camp resources, available at: http://www.ncpad.org/fun/fact_sheet.php?sheet=88&view=all

And now let’s look at camps that are described as supporting children with specific types of disabilities. The list is alphabetized according to the disabilities mentioned.

Amputees and Those with Limb Differences
http://www.amputee-coalition.org/fact_sheets/Kidscamps.html

Asperger Syndrome and Other Developmental Disabilities
http://www.aspires-relationships.com/links_camps.htm

Cancer
http://www.ped-onc.org/cfissues/camps.html

Deaf or Hard of Hearing
http://www.gallaudet.edu/x17375.xml

Diabetes
www.childrenwithdiabetes.com/camps

Diabetes
http://www.diabetescamps.org/

Easter Seals Directory of Day and Residential Camps
http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_directory_camprec

Hemiplegia and Stroke (CHASA)
http://www.chasa.org/disability-sports/summer-camps/

Special Needs in the Metro New York Area

Special Needs Camps

Special Needs Camps
http://www.campresource.com/summer-camps/special-needs-camps.cfm

Special Needs Camps
http://www.choicecamps.com/special-needs-summer-camps/

Really now, why don’t they have summer camp for grown-ups?! In which of the above would YOU enjoy spending a long summer day?

Well, guess what? There’s actually a site identifying grown-up camps—it’s tagline is “Why should kids have all the fun?”

Use the link below to connect with “fantasy camps, recreational adventures, volunteer & enrichment vacations for the adult traveler!”
http://www.grownupcamps.com
Summer is the best time to provide your child with snacks that promote energy and good healthy eating practices and to make sure they get the exercise and rest they need. Here are a few tips for your child’s summer health.

Make sure your child is getting daily exercise. Encourage your child to stay active. Have them walk, run, swim, play sports, jump rope, ride bikes, or go skating daily. Check out LetsMove.gov for more information.

Make sure your child eats healthy (http://www.cdc.gov/bam/nutrition/index.html). Give your child healthy snacks. Prepare snack bags of vegetables such as carrots, celery, or cucumbers and/or fruit such as apples, pears, or berries.

Make sure your child is drinking lots of water. Water is excellent to keep your child hydrated (http://www.cdc.gov/bam/safety/cool.html).

Make sure your child goes to bed on time every night. Schedule a bedtime and keep to it. This will ensure your child is getting adequate amounts of sleep (http://healthfinder.gov/News/Article.aspx?id=671014). Sufficient amounts of sleep promote healthy physical and mental development.

We hope these tips help you keep your child happy and healthy this summer!


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LATINO CORNER

Campamentos de verano 2014

Este enlace a la página de recursos para padres de FCPS Fairfax County Public Schools cuenta con numerosos campamentos clasificados por diferentes discapacidades.

Si pulsa sobre el nombre la discapacidad abrirá otra página donde cada campamento tiene una breve explicación. Una vez que seleccione el campamento que le interesa la información estará solamente en inglés.

La lista incluye campamentos en el área metropolitana de Washington DC y también en todo Virginia.

http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/resources/additional/summer_camps/

No se olvide también de consultar la lista de PEATC que se encuentra junto a este boletín electrónico.

Summer Camps 2014

The following link from FCPS Fairfax County Public Schools has a number different camps tailored to your child’s needs.

Click on the disability title and you will find a list of camps with a brief description of the program and a link to their website or email contact.

The list includes camps in the Washington metropolitan area as well as the rest of Virginia:

http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/resources/additional/summer_camps/

Don’t forget to check our list of camps found with this e-newsletter.