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Parent Handbook
YMCA CAMP CULLEN



YMCA CAMP CULLEN
460 Cullen Loop, Ste. A
Trinity, TX 75862
936-594-2274 • ymcacampcullen.org

WELCOME TO YMCA CAMP CULLEN

We know sending your child to camp is a big decision. We also know that you couldn't have made a better choice than YMCA Camp Cullen. Your child's growth and safety have been the camp's top priorities since 1974.

I am excited to be joining the YMCA Camp Cullen team, and look forward to leading the program into the future. We have incredible new additions to the program for the summer of 2015. We aim to give every child the ability to achieve more, and experience more, at their own pace and of their own choosing. This new program structure helps your child experience their favorite activities more frequently, while encouraging them to explore the sense of achievement from trying new activities and learning new skills.

In this Parent Handbook, we have tried to answer the questions often asked of our camp staff. Please use it as a reference guide in preparing for your child to attend YMCA Camp Cullen this summer. By familiarizing yourself with the various topics, it will make the transition easier for you as well as your child. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Our number is 936-594-2274.

Happy Camping,

Andrew "Mish" Hood
Executive Director

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YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Our new Specialty Tracks program allows campers free choice on any given day of five land activities, and the vast majority of water activities for the other half of their day. At each, there will be level achievements. Each child can progress through their activity Levels (1-4) at their own pace, and of their own choosing. Some levels will be quick and easy, and some will take years of dedication and commitment. Earning rewards in the Level system will require acquiring a broad range of skills at the same Level. Records will be kept of camper achievements from year-to-year so they can pick up right where they left off the previous year. Specialty Tracks are for campers who are passionate and focused on one activity. Tracks include Horsemanship, Watersports and High Adventure. If your camper would like guaranteed quality time and skill progression in these areas, please consider signing up for a Specialty Track.

For more information on YMCA Camp Cullen and Specialty Tracks, visit us online at ymcacampcullen.org.

PAPERWORK AND DEADLINES

Camp Fees Must Be Paid

Payment must be made in full, online, at the time of registration or by contacting our office. You may work with us to schedule a payment plan through credit and/or bank draft, but the full cost must be paid at least two weeks prior to the start of camp. Failure to complete payment will cancel the registration and advance another camper from the waiting list.

Information Needed

The following waivers can be found online at ymcacampcullen.org/summer-camp-forms and must be completed and sent to the camp office three weeks prior to your camper's session:

- Signed copy of your Camper's Registration Form
- General Facilities Waiver
- Challenge Course Waiver
- Equestrian (Horse) Waiver
- Shot Record (if not completed on registration form)

Please make sure that all online registration fields are complete.

FIRST-TIME CAMPERS

Going off to Camp Cullen is a thrilling adventure for campers and parents. We know you both may be a bit anxious about the camper leaving the comforts of home, adopting new routines of daily activities and meeting new friends. Here are some helpful tips for first-time campers:

- Send pre-addressed stamped envelopes with campers so they can send mail to family and friends.
- Send old clothes they recognize as their own. Avoid packing new ones they will not remember as their own.
- Do not send valuable clothing. Pack with campers and make a list of what they bring so that they know what they should bring home.
- Remember: label everything and pack light!
- Join us for a family fun day prior to camp. It is free, convenient and open to everyone.

CHECK-IN (For parents bringing their child to camp)

First-time camp parents are encouraged to bring their children to camp to meet the camp staff, tour the facilities and see your child get settled with new friends.

CHECK-IN is from 2-4 pm ON SUNDAY

CHECK-OUT (For parents picking up their child from camp)

If for some reason you need to pick up your child from camp early, please notify the camp office so we can have them ready upon your arrival and avoid any delay.

Closing ceremony is held at 10 am on closing day. Please plan to arrive and check out your child by 9:30 am, and if you can, attend the closing ceremony together. This ceremony includes awards the campers have earned during the week, a staff member testimonial, a brief glimpse into the camp spirit, and a welcoming and thank you from our Executive Director.

All parents must check out with the registrar and show proper identification before their campers will be released. If someone other than the parent is picking up the camper, please notify the camp office in writing. Please make sure you pick up your child's medication from the camp nurse and get your child's entire luggage (including laundry bags that may have not made it back into the suitcase).

Stay-Overs

Campers staying multiple sessions are allowed to remain at camp between sessions for an additional fee of \$100. This must be arranged at time of enrollment or with the camp office. Please send two weeks of clothing for these campers.

BUS INFORMATION

Air-conditioned buses are used to transport campers to and from YMCA Camp Cullen at an additional fee of \$150. If you are not registered for bus transportation but would like to utilize the service, please register online at ymcacampcullen.org, or contact the camp office. YMCA staff will accompany campers on the bus. Signed enrollment forms and waivers must be turned in to camp prior to boarding the bus. One-way transportation is available for a fee of \$75. Transportation registration must be done a minimum of one week prior to the session.

Transportation is not provided for campers returning home due to illness, injury or discipline. Parents or guardians will be responsible for picking up their camper at YMCA Camp Cullen.

Bus Pick-Up and Drop-Off Locations:

WEEKLEY FAMILY YMCA
7101 Stella Link Blvd.
Houston, TX 77025
713-664-9622

LANGHAM CREEK FAMILY YMCA
16725 Longenbaugh Dr.
Houston, TX 77095
281-859-6143

Sunday: The bus will depart Weekley and Langham Creek at noon, or as soon as all the bus riders arrive.

Saturday: The bus will arrive at Weekley and Langham Creek between noon and 12:30 pm.

CABIN ASSIGNMENTS

Campers are assigned to cabins strictly according to age and gender before each camp session begins. Every cabin is air-conditioned and heated. We strive to keep the age span within a cabin to two years or less. There will be plenty of opportunities for friends/siblings to see each other throughout the day if they are assigned to different cabins.

SESSIONS

Session 1: June 14-20, *Aloha Summer*
Session 2: June 21-27, *Lights! Camera! Action!*
*Session 3: June 28-July 3, *Christmas in July*
Session 4: July 5-11, *Safari*
Session 5: July 12-18, *Super Heroes*
Session 6: July 19-25, *Wild, Wild West*
Session 7: July 26-August 1, *Under the Big Top*
Session 8: August 2-8, *Values Games*
*Shorter holiday session

SPECIALTY TRACKS

Specialty Tracks give campers the opportunity to have in-depth instruction and participation in the selected track for a greater portion of the day than other campers. You must be at least 10 years-old to register for a Specialty Track. Specialty Tracks are an additional charge and can be selected during registration dependent upon availability. Please be aware that most specialty tracks fill up prior to the start of summer.

SWIM TEST

All campers must take a daily swimming test to demonstrate their level of swimming ability, providing information to the lifeguards on duty throughout the week. Personal Flotation Devices are required for participation in any of our lakefront activities.

CAMP PHOTOS

Keep up with camp's activities online each day through our SmugMug account. The "camper photos" link on our webpage will take you to the account. We will post pictures of the day's activities along with updates to keep you informed. Please understand that we do our best to get photos of every camper online, but we are not always successful.

WEBSITE: ymcacampcullen.org

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/YMCACampCullen

TWITTER: twitter.com/ymcahouston

SMUGMUG: ymcahouston.smugmug.com/Camp-Cullen-Summer-2015

CAMP FOOD

If your child has any special dietary needs, please notify us upon enrollment and we will do our best to make accommodations. Water is our primary drink at camp, and we encourage all campers to drink plenty throughout the day. We are also able to accommodate most general food allergies. Please call if your child has special dietary restrictions or if you have any concerns.

SPECIAL DIETS

Please inform the camp upon enrollment and by phone of any special needs at least two weeks prior to arrival.

MEDICATIONS

All prescription medication brought into camp must be accompanied by written orders signed by a physician that include the camper's name, dosage and medication times.

All medications, including over-the-counter (vitamins, creams, lotions, etc.), must be turned in and dispensed by the camp. Medications must remain in the original bottle to be dispensed by camp staff.

Camp Cullen stocks most over-the-counter medications needed at camp, so it is not necessary that your child brings these items. If there are any over-the-counter medications that you do not want your child to take, please specify these on the Health Form.

Please give all prescription and over-the-counter medications directly to the health station upon arrival at camp. When using bus drop-off, check in medications with camp staff. Please make sure your camper's name is on all items. It is recommended that all campers stay on regular daily medication during their time at camp. It is our policy for the infirmary to keep camper's inhaler during camp unless instructed differently by the doctor. The infirmary is always open, so inhalers can be obtained at a moment's notice.

PARENT CONTACT

If your child is homesick, or has any other problem you should know about, we will call to notify you of the situation, and what we are doing to remedy it. Our counselors are very well trained to deal with these types of issues, and can usually head them off before they become a problem. If issues persist, you will be made aware of the situation, and kept up-to-date as it is resolved.

HOMESICKNESS

Temporary homesickness is a normal reaction, particularly for new campers. Our staff make a concerted effort to help campers overcome homesickness by helping them learn to accept the natural feeling of missing family and friends. If there continues to be a problem with a camper struggling with homesickness, parents will be contacted by a professional staff member. The professional staff and parents will work together as a team to come up with the best solution for the camper. Homesickness is not a condition for refunds.

In the time leading up to camp, as well as throughout the week, it is a good practice to use positive wording to prevent homesickness. Example: instead of "We will miss you" use "We'll be thinking of you," or "We are excited that you will have so much fun."

ILLNESS

It has always been the policy of Camp Cullen not to keep campers with symptoms lasting more than 24 hours in our camp infirmary. Therefore, we ask parents of campers who are ill for more than 24 hours to care for their child at home and to see the family doctor. Transportation is not provided for campers returning home due to illness. If your child is scheduled to come to camp and becomes ill, please do not bring them to camp. Call the camp office as soon as possible in order for us to schedule another session for you. It is also our policy to refund pro-rated camp fees to any child who becomes sick and returns home for care.

INJURY

It is our policy to contact parents to inform them of any injury that is more than a minor cut or scrape.

BEDWETTING

If you know that your camper may wet the bed, please indicate it on the specified form and notify your camper's counselor at check-in. Our staff are trained to deal with bedwetting discreetly, and we will work with your child one-on-one. Campers should be instructed to ask their counselors for help, and every effort will be made to prevent accidents. Please send a plastic sheet and protective apparel with your camper if this may be a problem.

SPECIAL EMOTIONAL/PHYSICAL NEEDS

Special emotional or physical needs should be brought to the attention of the Camp. A meeting with camp staff is required prior to enrollment. Please call Camp Cullen if you have questions regarding children with special needs. Camp enrollment may be dependent upon the training capacity of camp staff.

EMERGENCIES

Emergency calls to campers should be made by calling the Camp Cullen office at 936-594-2274.

Our medical staff will treat routine scrapes, cuts and minor illnesses. In the case of serious illness or accident involving your child, the staff will contact you directly. In the event you cannot be reached, we will try to reach your listed emergency contact. Your signed authorization on the Registration Form allows us to secure prompt treatment.

INSURANCE

Parents or guardians must include their personal health insurance information. This information will only be used to facilitate outside medical treatment, if required. In the event of serious illness or accident, the parents will be notified immediately. Parents or guardians are responsible for charges incurred for outside medical treatment of their child, if treatment is required while in attendance at camp. Services rendered by the camp medical staff are administered at no additional charge.

CHANGING/CANCELING SESSIONS

Should it be necessary for you to change or cancel your child's session, you must contact Camp Cullen at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the session. The \$100 registration deposit fee is non-refundable for cancellations.

REFUNDS

The registration deposit fee is not refundable under any circumstances. Cancellations less than two weeks before the session start date will receive no refund. Fees for programs will be refunded only when campers are unable to complete that program due to medical problems. Refunds after a camper has already arrived at camp will be made on a pro-rated basis for the remaining portions of the session, minus any transportation costs. (If the camper has received a scholarship or discount, this will apply to the last days of the camp session.) Homesickness or disruptive behavior which results in the child leaving camp are not conditions for refunds.

DISCOUNTS

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available on a limited basis. Inquire at your local YMCA for details, or call the Camp Cullen office at 936-594-2274.

Those who wish to contribute to our scholarship fund may do so by contacting Camp Cullen directly.

Multiple Child Discount

A \$50 multiple child discount will be applied against the balance due for each additional child, in the same family registered for Camp Cullen. Please contact the camp office for more information.

YMCA Member Rate

YMCA of Greater Houston facility members receive a reduced rate. This rate only applies if you or your family are facility members of a YMCA. This rate is \$100 less than our camp fee.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE PROCEDURES

Self-management skills and positive social interactions among children and adults are encouraged and maximize everyone's enjoyment of camp. Programs use positive guidance methods including reminders, distraction, logical consequences and redirection. Self-management skills are taught according to the following guidelines:

- Consistent rules are clearly stated. Campers are expected to work and play within known limits.
- Behavior expected of campers is age-appropriate and based on development level.
- An atmosphere of trust is established in order for campers to know that they will not be hurt nor be allowed to hurt others.
- Staff members strive to help campers become acquainted with themselves and their feelings. This will help them learn to cope with their feelings and control them responsibly.

Camper safety is the most important concern of the program; therefore, campers whose behavior is dangerous or repeatedly disruptive will be discussed with the camper's parent and will result in loss of privileges or activities, suspension or termination from the program.

CONDUCT POLICIES

The following conduct policies apply directly to each individual camper and will be used in determining the camper's eligibility to continue as a participant in the camp program. Infractions are documented in an incident/discipline report. Please make certain that both you and your child are completely familiar with these policies.

A camper may be suspended or released from camp, without refund, for the following behavior while participating in the program or while being transported:

- Leaving the YMCA campsite without permission, or going into unauthorized areas
- Using foul language, fighting, being rude or discourteous to staff and other campers
- Defacing Y property or field facilities or any property visited
- Engaging in fighting, intentionally injuring another camper, or bullying
- Bringing or using any illegal substances and/or weapons
- Public displays of affection
- Stealing or defacing another camper's property
- Refusing to remain with the group while at camp and during outings
- Refusing to follow check-in and -out procedures or refusing to follow basic rules of safety
- Refusing to participate in daily camp activities
- Not remaining seated at all times while being transported
- Not keeping his/her seat belt fastened while being transported
- Having any body part out of the window, defacing the vehicle and/or being rude and discourteous to the driver or to other drivers on the road while being transported

Disciplinary procedure

First incident: Parent notified by phone and/or in writing

Second incident: Disciplinary write-up

Third incident: The action taken at this point is at the discretion of the Camp Director after appropriate consultation with the parent.

Range of discipline: Removal from camp activities to removal from camp. Parents are responsible for picking up any child that has been expelled from a session.

PROPERTY/EQUIPMENT DAMAGE

Parents are financially responsible for intentional damage to equipment and facilities caused by their camper.

MAIL

It is a great idea to bring mail with you when you drop your campers off to avoid any delays with the post office. Please write the camper's name, session # and the date that you would like the mail delivered to your camper. If not, please allow five business days for mail to reach camp. We recommend writing to your child at least once before camp begins to make sure it arrives for the first day. This will guarantee that your camper will receive at least one letter from home while they are at camp. Please address mail this way:

Camper's Name
Session # Cabin Name
YMCA CAMP CULLEN
460 Cullen Loop, Ste. A
Trinity, TX 75862

Campers will be encouraged to write one letter home each week. Mail can be slow, so some mail may be received after the camper is home.

CAMPERS LOVE HEARING FROM HOME

Whether it is your child's first or tenth summer at camp, mail-call is an important part of every camper's day. Here are some hints to make corresponding with your child more enjoyable.

- Leave letters for your camper to receive throughout the week with the registrar on opening day.
- Send photos of family, friends or pets.
- Have other family members write a letter or send messages.
- Send care packages without food (to avoid any health issues).

- Non-food items like magazines, stickers, books, costumes, and items related to our camp theme are encouraged.
- Talk about how glad you are that they have the opportunity to go to camp and how much you will enjoy talking about the fun things they were able to do when they return home.

LOST AND FOUND

We will make every effort to return lost and found items while your camper is at camp. Please mark all items with your child's name in a permanent marker or laundry label for easy identification. Please check the lost and found display before you leave to make sure your camper has not left anything behind.

Items found after your child's camp session will be placed in our office and may be claimed by description. Please be especially thorough on check-out day to make sure that bags are not left. If you discover something is missing upon your return home, please call as soon as possible. We will do everything that we can to make arrangements for the item(s) to be returned to you promptly. Arrangements can be made to pick up the item(s) at Camp Cullen. After September 1, all remaining items will be donated to Goodwill. Undergarments and socks that are left at camp will be thrown away.

Camp Cullen is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged articles.

PARENTS' EVALUATION

We appreciate your comments and feedback about our program and staff. Staff members are evaluated several times throughout the summer and your comments mean a lot to them. If you felt a staff person did an exceptional job, please let us know so that they are recognized for a job well done. If you see or hear of a problem with any part of our program or staff, please contact the Camp Cullen office immediately so corrections can be made.

We are available at any time to answer your questions or concerns. Please do not hesitate to call or stop by the camp office. At the end of the camp session, campers will receive an evaluation for their week.

Throughout the summer, parents will receive access to an online survey evaluating the experience with Camp Cullen. Please take the time to complete the survey so we can utilize your feedback. We appreciate your time and input.

CONTRIBUTIONS

No tipping of individual staff members is permitted, but your appreciation may be shown by selecting a project or fund to receive your tax-deductible support:

- Annual Campaign contributions provide the means for a boy or girl to attend camp who could otherwise not afford to.
- Building/Capital contributions provide new facilities and building for all to use.
- Endowments provide permanent sources of funds for programs, facilities and leadership while honoring someone.
- Program equipment, new or used, helps us expand our programs.

SUMMER STAFF

Camp Cullen employs more than 60 staff for the summer camp program. Staff members complete an application process that includes state and national screenings, criminal background checks and pre-employment drug tests prior to being hired at Camp Cullen. All staff will attend a two week staff training where they will be trained in topics like:

- CPR, first aid and emergency procedures
- Special activity certifications
- Positive discipline
- Child abuse prevention
- Safety and supervision policies
- Dealing with homesickness
- Age-appropriate activities
- Rainy day activities
- Transitional activities
- Diversity

WHAT TO BRING

Please send appropriate clothing with your child, taking into consideration the weather forecast and camp activities. We encourage you to send old clothing to camp, as your camper will be participating in rugged sports, climbing, hiking through the woods and horseback riding. Please review the list of things that you are sending to camp with your camper so they know what clothing and personal items are theirs. Luggage should be compact and easy to carry.

Girls must wear modest one-piece swimsuits or tankinis only. Bikini swimsuits are not allowed. All clothing that is low-cut, too revealing or displaying unacceptable imagery is forbidden. Shorts and t-shirts fit our activities best.

Clothing

A recommended packing list includes:

- 2 pairs of sneakers or athletic shoes (REQUIRED)
- Boots or closed-toe shoes with heel (required for horseback riding)
- 1 pair of jeans (required for horseback riding)
- 2 swimsuits (Girls-one piece or Tankini ONLY)
- 7-8 pairs of underwear
- 7-8 t-shirts or blouses
- 7-8 pairs of shorts
- 7-8 pairs of socks
- Raincoat or poncho
- Water shoes for the showers and aquatic activities

**Sandals must have a heel strap at aquatic activities (no flip-flops)

Bedding

- 1 sleeping bag or twin sheets & 1 light blanket
- 1 pillow
- Laundry bag (an old pillow case will work)
- 1 vinyl mattress cover for twin bed (optional)

Toiletries

- Soap and soap dish
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Brush or comb
- 1-2 beach towels
- Camera & film
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Washcloths
- Bath towels
- 1 flashlight with batteries
- Water bottle or canteen

Optional

- Insect repellent (non-aerosol)
- Sunscreen or sun block
- Paper, pen, envelope & stamps
- Costumes for Theme Night

Label any item possible with a name.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

Camp is a natural setting to retreat from technology and to get more in touch with people. Items that do not fit in this setting are:

- Radios
- Electronic games
- Cellular phones
- Gum, candy, snacks
- Firearms
- Matches
- Lighters
- Knives
- Tobacco products
- Valuable items
- Illegal drugs
- Fireworks

CAMP CULLEN DIRECTIONS

From Highway 59

Take Hwy 59 to Livingston. Exit at Hwy 190 in Livingston. At the traffic light make a left onto Hwy 190 west. Take 190 west to Onalaska, approximately 13 miles. Go to the third traffic light and make a right onto FM 356. Camp Cullen is 15 miles on the right. Pass through the entrance and follow signs to the lodge / dining hall.

From I-45

Take I-45 north to exit 113 (Huntsville/Crockett). This exit will turn into Hwy 19 north. Follow Hwy 19 for approximately 22 miles to Trinity. Go to the second traffic light and make a right onto Hwy 94 east. Go over the railroad tracks and turn right at the flashing yellow caution light onto FM 356. Camp Cullen is 5 miles on the left. Pass through the entrance and follow signs to the lodge / dining hall.