

**DISCOVERY DAY CAMP PROGRAM
PARENT HANDBOOK**



2213 S Levis Lane Godfrey, IL 618-466-9930 www.TheNatureInstitute.org

We are looking forward to an exciting program filled with opportunities for fun, learning, and growth. This manual applies to all The Nature Institute Discovery Day Camp programs and will enable you to become more familiar with our policies and procedures. Please read through this manual and keep it for your future reference. We will be very happy to answer any questions you may have. If you have any questions about the following day camps, please contact: Ramona Puskar 618-466-9930 or rpuskar@thenatureinstitute.org

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REGISTRATION

Everyone is required to pre-register for each camp program. Registration forms are available at www.thenatureinstitute.org. You can also register for programs by calling the Education Office at Talahi Lodge 618-466-9930

Every parent/guardian needs to make sure they have filled out the registration form. Please list another person staff can contact during camp hours in case of an emergency if the primary person cannot be reached. The registration form must be filled out completely. The forms (if paper) can then be dropped off or mailed to The Nature Institute Talahi Lodge 2213 S Levis Lane Godfrey, IL. 62035.

WAIT LIST

If the program is full, additional registrations will go on a wait list. If a space opens up in the program, participants on the wait list will be contacted. Participants are taken off the wait list and added to the program on a first come basis.

INFORMATION UPDATES

If at any time the participant or parent/guardian's telephone number, address or other pertinent information changes, please notify the camp director.

ENVIRONMENTAL/MEDICAL ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS & PROCEDURES

Special accommodations include conditions that require emergency medications. This can include but is not limited to Diabetes or severe allergies of which these conditions require insulin or an Epi-pen. The Nature Institute must be notified in advance of any conditions that can affect an individual and the proper medical protocols must be followed as explained in this handbook. If the request along with all needed documentation is not presented to The Nature Institute in a timely manner, participation within the program can be delayed or denied.

Submit a completed Health Form with the Parent/Guardian Authorizations box signed and Medications Taken filled out as well as a medical plan on physician letterhead from the current calendar year. The Nature Institute will review and seek any clarification as needed to ensure the accommodation is met. Timeliness of all the information is important to ensure participation. Any medical plan submitted the first day of the camp session will be reviewed immediately by staff to determine participation. Parents will not be allowed to leave children at the program until approval is granted and plans for the accommodation are in place.

NON-ACCEPTANCE/DISMISSAL

A participant may not be accepted into the program if:

1. Parent/guardian or self-guardian participant fails to return or fully complete the registration form.
2. Payment is not made by the start of the program session. Future registration will not be allowed until payment is made.
3. Behavior of the participant is harmful to self or others according to our behavior policy.
4. Parent/guardian fails to submit accommodation requirements.
5. Habitual tardiness is grounds for dismissal from the program. Pre-arranged pick up and drop off due to summer school or summer activities must be arranged in advance through Camp Director.

PAYMENT

1. The balance for each session is due **two weeks** before the session begins. If payment is not received by the time stated, your child will be dropped from the program. After the initial \$25 deposit, parents are able to make payments for their camper's balance as they see fit as long as they are in compliance with the deadline.
2. Cash, check, money order, Visa, and MasterCard are accepted for payment of all programs at The Nature Institute. If paying by check, please have your driver's license number on the check.
3. There will be a \$35.00 charge for all NSF checks. If checks are returned, payment will need to be in the form of cash or money order.
4. For residents of the Riverbend area who are unable to participate in camp programs due to economic hardship, the Nature Institute offers scholarships to reduce certain fees and charges. Scholarship applications are not guaranteed and are based on available funds and program registration. Please apply 3 to 4 weeks before the program's start date. Applications are available The Nature Institute and can be mailed upon request. Need is the primary criteria upon which scholarship

applicants are considered. Scholarships will not be granted for transportation and certain programs designated in program guide.

REFUNDS

All camps have a **\$25.00 non-refundable** deposit on every session. Cancellations must be made at least two weeks (14 days) prior to the start of the program in order to receive a refund, minus the **\$25.00 non-refundable** deposit. In cases where the minimum number of registrants is not received for a program, The Nature Institute will cancel the program.

CHECK-IN PROCEDURE

A parent/guardian is required to check-in their child on the 1st day of each session. Day Camp consists of 7-8 weekly sessions each beginning on Monday. If the child does not start the session on the first day, check-in is required on the first day they do attend. Children are allowed to check themselves in for the remaining days of that camp session provided that the parent/guardian has filled out the waiver/form of who will be picking up and dropping off their child each day, included in the Camp Packet and turned it in to the camp director.

LATE PICK-UP

In order to be fair to our participants and staff, The Nature Institute has enacted a late pick-up policy. ***Each time a participant is not picked by designated ending time, a \$5.00 fee will be charged per ½ hour late.*** Registration for other programs will not be accepted until all outstanding late fees are paid. The late fee is due within three days. Payments can be made in person at the camp site or by mail to The Nature Institute. Failure to pay late pick-up fees could result in your child's suspension from camp. *Note: The Nature Institute shall make every reasonable effort to contact persons authorized by you to pick up your child.*

MEDICATION

Some participants may need to be given medication during the program. In order for The Nature Institute to be able to dispense medication, these guidelines must be followed:

1. Parent/guardian must sign the Health Form with the Parent/Guardian Authorizations box signed and Medications Taken filled out specifying:
 - a. Type of medication
 - b. Time medication should be administered
 - c. Specific instructions
2. Only prescription medications in original containers with the doctor's name and the dosage on the label will be accepted.
3. Send the designated amount that will be dispensed by staff. A log will be kept of the medication as it is dispensed. The Nature Institute Education Director will secure all medicine.

If participant is self-medicating, staff must be notified of this so they are aware in case of an emergency.

CLOTHING

All participants should dress appropriately for the weather and the activities scheduled for their program. All campers should wear closed toe shoes while at camp. Campers are expected to wear appropriate swim wear. Swimsuits allowed include swim trunks for boys and one piece suits for girls. Campers will be required to wear a t-shirt over their swimsuit or with trunks (reduce risk of sunburn and for safety reasons). Please bring an extra set of clothes each day in case of accidents that may occur during the course of each program. If specific clothing or equipment is needed for the program, the listed participant/guardian will be notified.

Campers must bring a swim suit/clothes to get wet in, towel, water shoes (close toed) and sun block every day.

***This year we will be requiring campers to carry their "water shoes" to the water activity, change into them on site and then change back into dry shoes before walking the trails to next destination. At camp we will have a bin for each camp group where wet shoes can be kept all week so that campers do not need to bring wet shoes home every day. We hope this will make things easier on you as parents.**

PERSONAL NEED ITEMS

Any additional personal need items should be labeled and provided daily when necessary (bug spray, money, sunblock, sanitary pads, special needs items, etc.). Parents should sign and return the sunscreen and insect repellent waiver.

FOOD / MEALS

The Nature Institute provides a morning snack for half day camps. Snacks may be brought from home for all other camp sessions. Campers attending all day camps should bring a sack lunch (Mon-Friday) and water bottle on each day of camp.

**All camp sessions include a Friday Family program and cookies for campers and their family members.*

Nut Free Camp – In order to keep camp safe and enjoyable for all the campers, The Nature Institute is creating and enforcing a **Nut Free Camp**. You may ask: “What does that mean to me”? For the camp season **NO CAMPER** is allowed to have any food items that contain directly or indirectly peanuts, peanut product or other tree nuts. This means there is no food sharing at lunch or snack time. If there is bringing in of food items to share with the camp, for example – cupcakes for a birthday celebration please inform Camp Director. At certain times, especially after lunch and snack, all campers will be expected to wash their hands before going back to camp activities. Camp Director will ensure that all food activities are free of any nut or nut product.

Waste Free Lunch – *We are also encouraging all campers to participate in a waste free lunch initiative. Our goal as an organization is to produce as little waste as possible, so this year counselors will be helping campers recycle and compost any waste from their lunch. We encourage you to send you camper with a lunch with as little plastic waste as possible. Use reusable containers as much as possible.*

SAFETY

Personnel at all levels are directed to make safety a matter of continuing and mutual concern, equal in importance with all other operational considerations. Each staff member is to ensure that work is done in a safe manner, inspections are conducted on a regular basis, hazards are confronted, and accidents are investigated. Designated staff members are trained in general first aid and certified in CPR. An onsite AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) is available.

ACCIDENTS

If a participant has an accident serious enough to require professional medical attention, The Nature Institute staff will contact the parent(s) or guardian(s). If the parent(s) or guardian(s) cannot be reached, the designated emergency resources listed on the registration form/health form will be called. If it is necessary for the participant to go to the hospital, the parent(s) may transport the participant, or an ambulance will be called at parent/guardian expense. In very severe circumstances, 911 will be called and parent(s) or guardian(s) notified after the 911 call. If staff is unable to reach any adult responsible for the participant or if time is critical, an ambulance will be called and the participant will be taken to the hospital. A staff member will accompany the participant to the hospital. The Nature Institute staff will continue to try contacting the parent(s) or guardian(s).

INJURY AND FIRST AID

Should an injury occur at a program site:

1. Depending on the severity (abrasions, cuts, etc.) first aid will be provided by staff. This must be completed before the participant can return to the program.
2. If the injury is severe, paramedics will be immediately notified and staff will take the necessary precautions and address the medical situations as needed.
3. If blood is visible on any part of the participant’s clothing, that part of the clothing must be removed and replaced with clean clothing. A participant will not be allowed to return to the program with blood on his/her clothes. You will be asked to bring clean clothes or pick them up. Staff will take extra precautions to minimize the spread of germs. Proper hand-washing techniques will be used when dealing with any bodily fluid (saliva, mucus membranes, urine, etc.).

**** Families may make prior arrangements with Camp Director if First Aid procedures should not be conducted due to religious beliefs.*

PARTICIPANT ILLNESS

Do not send your participant to his/her program if he/she is sick or has been exposed to a communicable disease. If a participant becomes ill, staff will use their best judgment and attempt to isolate the participant from the rest of the participants. Attempts to notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be made by The Nature Institute staff. If parent(s) or guardian(s) are unreachable, the emergency resources listed on the registration form will be called. Participants will be sent home for, but not limited to, the following:

- Chickenpox
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Head lice and scabies
- Hepatitis A virus
- Mouth sores with inability to control saliva
- Mumps
- Ringworm
- Skin rash
- Sore throat due to strep (streptococcal pharyngitis)
- Tuberculosis
- Vomiting
- Whooping cough (pertussis)

The Nature Institute follows the recommendations and guidelines of the Public Health Department. Kids that are sent home for an illness may be asked to supply a doctor's note or a medical release form on official letterhead before returning to camp.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN

Programs may be cancelled due to inclement weather or unusable facilities. Staff will contact participants in advance whenever possible. If the program gets cancelled after it has begun, the parent or guardian will be contacted to inform them where to pick up the participant.

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER GUIDELINES

If lightning is seen or thunder is heard, outdoor activities shall be suspended for 10 minutes. Employees and participants are required to seek shelter. All activities will stay suspended until 10 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder.

TORNADO AND SEVERE THUNDERSTORM PLAN

The site disaster plan will be followed. The Nature Institute plan for tornados is as follows: staff and campers will return to Lodge or Main Office if nearby on the property, and go to the lowest part of the building until storm passes. If staff and campers are in the woods during such storms, the staff are directed to find the lowest/deepest ravine or depression and lie flat and covering head.

TEMPERATURE GUIDELINES

In the event of extreme heat, programs will be restructured appropriately to protect campers from temperature conditions.

FIRE PLAN

1. All persons will be led from the facilities according to the site fire plan.
2. All groups will meet at a secure location a safe distance away from the building and attendance will be taken.
3. The fire department will be called.
4. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be called.

SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act mandates any Nature Institute staff having reasonable cause to believe that a child, known to them in their professional capacity, might be abused or neglected, shall immediately report the matter to their supervisor and the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS).

BEHAVIOR CODE OF CONDUCT

All participants are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times while participating in or attending any program or activity sponsored by The Nature Institute. This includes participation in programs that may or may not require an admission fee, such as, concerts or attending special events. The following guidelines are designed to provide safe and enjoyable activities for all participants.

Participants and Parent/Guardian shall:

1. Show respect to all participants, spectators, and staff. Will also show respect for program rules and equipment.
2. Take direction from The Nature Institute staff.
3. Refrain from using abusive or foul language.
4. Refrain from causing bodily harm to self, other participants, spectators, or The Nature Institute staff.
5. Refrain from damaging equipment, supplies, and facilities.

Guidelines are utilized consistently by staff for recommendations on proper discipline to poor conduct. All camp participants are provided a Discovery Day Camp Policy and Rules in the camp packet. The policy and rules should be read to campers and parents should sign and return the **PARENT/GUARDIAN'S AGREEMENT TO POLICY ON BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT** to camp director. If there is need for an ADA accommodation please call Camp Director.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *Do I need to check my child in to camp? Can my child walk to camp?*

Parents/guardians are required to check their child in on the first day of a camp session. Each session is one week long Monday-Friday. If your child does not start camp on the first day of session you will need to check him/her in on the first day that they attend. Children are allowed to check themselves in for the remaining days of that camp session provided that the parent/guardian has filled out the waiver/form included in the Camp Packet and turned it in to the camp director.

2. *My child has a serious environmental allergy and carries an "epipen." What do I need to do?*

Please refer to the Environmental/Medical Accommodation Requirements & Procedures" section of this handbook. Self-administered actions need advance notice, a signed waiver and non-expired medication. Actions that require staff to administer require the above as well as a medical plan submitted in advance for approval.

3. *Our family is going on vacation and my child will miss a few days of camp. Do I get a refund for the days that I will miss?*

No. Sessions are paid in full and refunds will not be issued for vacation, child illness, etc. Refunds will only be offered if you cancel your registration 5 days in advance or The Nature Institute cancels the session. There is a \$25 non-refundable deposit if registration is canceled. If a child participates any days of a session you will be charged the entire week amount. No shows are still charged.

4. *What happens if the weather is bad?*

Poor weather conditions may adjust curriculum and lesson plans, but will not cancel camp sessions. Changes to activities or locations will be shared with parents/guardians as soon as possible. If the weather is severe, proper Discovery Day Camp procedures will be followed.

5. *I haven't paid my balance for day camp. Will my child still be allowed to participate?*

No. Balances for camp sessions must be paid two weeks in advance. Failure to pay a balance will keep a child from participating and could result in a drop from the session no longer securing enrollment. (Note - you will still owe the full amount) Registration can be canceled up to 5 days before camp session begins.

6. *How do I cancel my child's camp registration?*

You must cancel your child's registration properly using the three options below.

1. In writing to your child's camp director
2. In person with the staff at The Nature Institute, Talahi Lodge.
3. Over the phone with the staff at Main Office 618-466-9930.

7. *I work across town and it is possible that I will be a few minutes late to pick up my child. Is that a problem?*

We ask that parents/guardians do everything possible to remain punctual on pick-up of their child. **In the case that you are late The Nature Institute will charge a late fee of \$5.00 over ½ hour late.** Late Fee balances must be paid in full before future registration or participation. Habitual tardiness is grounds for dismissal from the program.

8. *Will my child be swimming? If so, will I need to send them with anything?*

No. Each camp has designated days that they will attend a program at the ponds or creeks. Most days we have Water Games in the afternoon. During hot temperatures, camp director may choose to add additional water time. Parents/guardians are required to

send appropriate items with their child each day including: swimsuit (or extra clothes to get wet in), sunscreen, towel, water shoes, etc. Failure to do so will prevent your child from participating. Campers will be able to wade but we have no swimming.

9. *My child is very sensitive to sun. Do I need to provide sunscreen?*

Yes. The children will be in the sun or at the ponds/creeks often and sunscreen is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. If your child's sensitivity is severe where adverse reactions occur, or medical attention is needed, you must request assistance in advance. Please be sure to sign the permission to apply sunscreen waiver found in your Camp Packet.

10. *What happens if my child is injured?*

Minor accidents will be treated by staff and parents/guardians will be notified at end-of-the-day pick up. There are designated first-aid/CPR responders in each group. If the accident is severe enough to require professional attention, 9-1-1 and the parents/guardians will be notified. If you cannot be reached the designated emergency resources will be notified. If it is severe enough to go to the hospital, parents/guardians can transport if available otherwise an ambulance will be called. All expenses are the direct responsibility of the parent/guardian.

11. *What should I do if my child is sick? Can they still attend camp?*

We ask that the parents/guardians do not send their child to camp if they are sick. Children with fevers, vomiting or diarrhea will not be admitted. In cases of illness, parents/guardians will be informed and arrangements made to have the child picked up from camp. Campers must be free of symptoms/on medication for treatment for 24 hours before they are eligible to return to camp.

**The Nature Institute Discovery Day Camp
POLICY ON BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

In order to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all participants, The Nature Institute has developed a set of expectations for all campers. All campers will be treated fairly based on individual aptitude. Behavior guidelines are as follows:

1. No camper will endanger him/herself or other participants or staff.
2. Campers will use respectful, appropriate language towards staff and other campers.
3. All participants will respect their leaders, camp rules, other campers and equipment.
4. All campers will keep their hands, feet, and objects to themselves.

Consequences for inappropriate behavior are:

1. **First Offense:** Camper will be removed from the group activity, receive a verbal warning that the exhibited behavior is inappropriate, receive reinforcement of appropriate behavior. Participant may or may not return to the group, dependent upon severity of offense. Parent/Guardian will be notified at pickup and asked to sign/view Three Strikes and You Are Out Rule form.
2. **Second Offense:** Camper will be removed from the group activity, receive a second verbal warning that the exhibited behavior is inappropriate, receive reinforcement of appropriate behavior. Participant may not return to the group, and will sit out for an appropriate period of time, dependent upon severity of offense. Parent/guardian will be notified at pickup that a second offense has occurred, reminded of the ramifications of a third offense, and asked to sign/view the Three Strikes and You Are Out Rule form.
3. **Third Offense:** The camper's parent/guardian will be called for immediate pickup, and the camper will be automatically dismissed without refund. Camper will no longer be eligible to participant in any Discovery Day Camp program in the future. When the camper is picked up, the Day Camp Director will meet with the parent/guardian, discuss the incident and consequence. The parent/guardian will be asked to sign the Three Strikes and You Are Out Rule form. A copy will be given to the parent/guardian and the form will be kept on file.

Please note: *In cases of inappropriate behavior deemed extreme by staff, campers may be suspended or dropped from the camp immediately, regardless of the number of previous offenses.*

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S AGREEMENT TO POLICY ON BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

I have read and fully understand The Nature Institute *Policy on Behavior Management* above, and I agree to the terms of the policies.

Name of Child attending (please print) _____

Name of Camp _____

Name of Parent or Guardian (please print) _____

X _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian Date