



## DISCOVERY DAY CAMP PARENT HANDBOOK

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## Welcome and Registration

### WELCOME

We're 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 should 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 happy to answer any questions you might have, please call us at 618-466-9930 or email [rpuskar@thenatureinstitute.org](mailto:rpuskar@thenatureinstitute.org).

### REGISTRATION

Everyone is required to preregister for each camp program on our website, [www.thenatureinstitute.org](http://www.thenatureinstitute.org). If you have any questions regarding registration, feel free to contact the camp director.

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 to see if they still want to attend the program. Generally, participants are taken off the wait list and added to the program on a first come basis.

## **PAYMENT**

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*. Cash, check, money order, and credit cards 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. There will be a \$35.00 charge for all NSF checks.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Nature Institute offers scholarships for residents of the Riverbend area who are unable to participate in camp programs due to economic hardship. Need is the primary criteria upon which scholarship applicants are considered. 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. Please contact The Nature Institute to request an application.

## **REFUNDS**

All camps have a **\$25.00 non-refundable deposit** on every session. Cancellations must be made at least one week 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 and issue full refunds to all registrants.

## **SPECIAL REQUESTS**

Discovery Day Camp is an opportunity for campers to learn, grow, make new friends and expand their comfort zones. Our counselors and administrative staff work diligently to ensure that every camper receives the support they need to have an amazing summer.

We allow each camper to request to be in the same group as only one (1) other camper; *however there is no guarantee they will be placed in the same group*. We will do our best to honor your request as long as the following guidelines are met:

- You know the full name of the camper you are requesting
- They are the same age as your child
- They also request to be placed with your child

It is our responsibility to provide a safe, fun, and welcoming environment for all campers. For this reason, campers may be separated into different groups if being together has a negative impact on other campers.

Please feel free to reach out to us about any concerns you may have. Thank you for your understanding.

## **NON-ACCEPTANCE/DISMISSAL**

A participant may not be accepted into the program if:

1. Parent/guardian or self-guardian participant fails to fully complete registration.
2. Payment is not made by two weeks before the start of the 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, if needed.
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 through 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. The Nature Institute will review and seek any clarification as needed to ensure the accommodation is met. Parents will not be allowed to leave children at the program until approval is granted and plans for the accommodation are in place.

## **MEDICATION**

Some participants may need to be given medication during the program. Please indicate the following when filling out the Health Form:

- Type of medication
- Time medication should be administered
- Specific instructions

Only prescription medications in original containers with the doctor's name and the dosage on the label will be accepted. 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.

## **General Camp Policies**

### **CHECK-IN PROCEDURE**

A parent/guardian is required to check-in their child on the first day of camp (Monday). If the child does not start the session on the first day, check-in is required on the first day of attendance. Children are allowed to check themselves in for the remaining days of that camp session.

### **PICK UP PROCEDURE**

Camp Staff will be happy to have your camper meet you at your car along the driveway at the front of the Lodge. For safety reasons, please stay in your vehicle and announce your camper's name. If possible, put your camper's car seat on the passenger side of car and our staff would be happy to help get campers strapped in. If you need to come into the Lodge, please park in the lower gravel parking lot. PLEASE DO NOT PARK IN THE CIRCLE! Thank you for your cooperation.

### **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, on our website, or by mail. 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.*

### **FOOD / MEALS**

The Nature Institute provides a snack for half-day camps. Snacks may be brought from home for all other camp sessions. Campers attending full-day camps need to bring a sack lunch and a water bottle

each day. No food sharing is permitted 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. Camp Director will ensure that all food activities are free of any nut or nut product.

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. Counselors will help campers recycle and compost any waste from their lunch. We encourage you to send you camper with a lunch with as little waste as possible. Please use reusable containers, labeled with child's name, as much as possible.

## **Safety**

### **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.

### **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.

### **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).

## **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.

## **COVID-19 Policy**

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, The Nature Institute (TNI) is following the guidelines below, based on CDC recommendations, for all youth programming this fall:

- ALL program participants will have temperature checked prior to the start of a program at TNI. If the temperature check is above 100.4 degrees he/she will not be allowed to participate. *If it is a drop off program, it is imperative the driver does not leave until the participant's temperature is taken.*
- All programming will take place outdoors.
- Social distancing guidelines of six feet are to be maintained at all times.
- All staff, program participants, and family members are required to have a mask with them at all times, and must be worn if asked by staff to wear it.
- Groups will be limited to a maximum of 10 participants per facilitator.
- Frequent hand washing is encouraged, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Restrooms at TNI are sanitized daily.
- In addition, use of hand sanitizer is emphasized, and will be available for use at all times.
- Staff will monitor participants by observing for COVID-19 symptoms. If need be, the following actions, listed below, will be taken.

### Actions if Symptoms Arise:

If during the course of the program a participant is deemed to have, or mentions having, COVID-19 symptoms, the following steps will be taken:

1. Separate and isolate the participant from his/her group.

2. Staff will check the temperature of the participant.
3. Staff will contact the individual's Parent/Guardian, advise of the situation/concern, and ask that pickup of participant occur immediately.
4. Staff will follow up with the Parent/Guardian regarding the health of the participant, and take any additional steps if needed by TNI, to ensure public safety. These steps could include contacting Madison County Health Department if an individual is diagnosed with COVID-19.
5. Participant cannot return to TNI programs until deemed safe and there is no virus risk. If a participant was positive for COVID-19, the likely recommendation is for a 14-day quarantine period, before returning to TNI for additional programs.

**If anyone in your home does not feel well and is exhibiting symptoms of illness, please stay home and do not expose the public to germs. We appreciate your help in keeping everyone safe and healthy! Feel free to email us [info@thenatureinstitute.org](mailto:info@thenatureinstitute.org), or call us, 618-466-3900 with concerns or questions.**

#### **INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN**

Programs may be cancelled in the very rare event of hazardous weather conditions 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 the 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 direct participants to cover their heads.

#### **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 Management Policy**

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. All participants are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times while participating or attending any program or activity sponsored by The Nature Institute. The following guidelines are designed to provide safe and enjoyable activities for all participants. If there is need for an ADA accommodation, please call Camp Director.

Staff will allow campers to help with making the Camp Rules on the first day. Staff will give campers examples of unacceptable behavior that will not be tolerated at camp and could result in immediate expulsion such as:

- Endangering the health and safety of other children and/or staff
- Bullying, teasing, and making fun of campers and/or staff
- Fighting and physical violence
- Using profanity, vulgarity, or obscenity
- Stealing or damaging property

We will implore the following discipline procedures:

1. Staff will redirect the camper to more appropriate behavior
2. If inappropriate behavior continues, camper will be reminded of camp rules and behavior guidelines. The camper will be asked to decide on action steps to correct his/her behavior.
3. If a child's behavior still does not meet expectations and is affecting the experience of other campers, he/she will be given a short time-out period to reconsider his/her actions.
4. Campers who have had multiple instances of inappropriate behavior will conference with staff and parents by phone or at the end of camp day.
5. If inappropriate behavior continues, as a final action step, the camper may be dismissed from camp. (Please note – Camper fees are non-refundable if a camper is sent home for disciplinary reasons).

# Discovery Day Camp Checklist

In order to provide a unique and hands-on outdoor learning experience, we incorporate hikes through the woods, prairies, and creeks into the daily curriculum. Based on 40 years of camp experience, below are some tips to help make your child's experience at camp a safe and enjoyable one.

## What to Pack

Please send your camper to TNI everyday with a backpack containing the following:

- Full-Day Campers: Sack lunch
- Half-Day Campers: Personal snack if desired (a snack will be provided by TNI daily)
- Water Shoes (old tennis shoes, close toed water shoes, close toed sandals etc) NO CROCS! Water shoes may be stored at TNI for the duration of the camp week
- Swim suit and rash guard or t-shirt
- Change of clothes, including socks and underwear
- Sunscreen, insect repellent, and a hat for shade.
- Plastic bag for wet and dirty clothes
- Water bottle

Don't forget to label all belongings (including backpacks and water bottles) with your camper's name!

### Clothing

Please be sure to dress your camper in older clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. They will also need to wear comfortable, closed toed shoes that they can hike in.

### Swimwear

Campers are expected to wear appropriate swim wear for water activities. Swimsuits allowed include swim trunks for boys and one piece suits for girls. Both must be covered by a t-shirt to reduce risk of sunburn and for safety reasons.

### Shoes

Campers are required to have a separate pair of shoes for water activities. At camp we will provide bins where wet shoes can be kept all week so that campers do not need to bring wet shoes home every day. Please be sure to bring your camper's water shoes home at the end of the week.

### Personal Items and Cell Phones

We strongly encourage campers to only bring items listed above. All personal items that they do bring, including cell phones and toys from home, must be kept in the camper's backpack for the duration of the camp day. TNI Discovery Day Camp is not responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items.

For our medication policy, please refer to page 3.