



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 info@thenatureinstitute.org.

REGISTRATION

Everyone is required to preregister for each camp program on our website, www.thenatureinstitute.org. If you have any questions regarding registration, feel free to contact the Main Office at 618-466-9930.

If the program is full, additional registrations will go on a wait list. If a space opens up in the program, participants on the waitlist will be contacted to see if they still want to attend the program. Participants are taken off the waitlist 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. 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. The application deadline is March 1st. 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 two weeks 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.

Refunds will not be given to campers who have been removed from camp due to behavior.

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 group as your child (PreK, K/1, 2/3 or 4/5).
- 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.

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 take daily medications. Please indicate the following when filling out the Health Form:

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

Some participants may need to be given medication during the camp day. These campers must have a Medication Authorization Form on file. 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. Emergency medications will be collected by summer camp staff and must accompany the camper to all activities. The Nature Institute's Camp Director will secure all non-emergency medicine to be stored in a locked container. Medication authorization forms must be filled out even if the participant is self-medicating in the case of an emergency. Medication Authorization forms can be completed at drop-off, or prior to the program by contacting the Camp Director.

General Camp Policies

CAMPER GOALS

Camp is an extraordinary place to be in the summer! TNI Discovery Day Camp strives to:

- Provide age-appropriate and fun activities to get kids outside.
- Provide opportunities for campers to develop interpersonal relationships and social skills.
- Encourage campers to develop independence and problem-solving skills.
- Foster an awareness and appreciation of the natural world through preservation, restoration, and education.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Campers must meet age requirements in order to attend camp. TNI Discovery Day Camp serves ages 4 - 14. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.

Transportation is not provided by camp. All campers must be able to arrive at camp through their own means of transportation.

DISCOVERY DAY CAMP RIGHTS

1. I have the right to be treated with kindness at camp.
 - This means no one will laugh at me, tease me, or insult me.
2. I have the right to be myself at camp.
 - This means no one will treat me unfairly because of my physical appearance or identity.
3. I have a right to feel safe at camp.
 - This means no one will threaten me, bully me, push me, or destroy my property.
4. I have a right to be heard at camp.
 - This means no one will yell or shout at me and my opinions will be considered in any plans we make.
5. I have the right to learn about myself at camp.
 - This means I will be free to express my feelings and opinions without being interrupted or criticized.

CAMP RULES

We adhere to the following rules for campers, following the mnemonic BATHS (since that's what they'll need when they get home!):

- **B**e respectful.
- **A**sk questions.
- **T**ake a buddy.
- **H**ave fun.
- **M**ake **S**afe choices.

CHECK-IN PROCEDURE

A parent/guardian is required to park and walk up to camp 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. The parent/guardian on Monday will receive a car sign with their child's name on it for pick up. Check in begins at 8:20 am, 10 minutes prior to the camp start time.

Tuesday through Friday, parents/guardians will drop their children off adjacent to the Lodge or the Shed, depending which group their child is in. A staff member will greet campers at their car and help them find their group. Please do not send your child out of the vehicle without proper staff supervision. This is a busy area during drop off and pick up, so please keep an eye out for campers and other vehicles! PLEASE DO NOT PARK IN THE CIRCLE!

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 place your car sign in the front window. **Staff are not permitted to assist with buckling campers into car seats.** Please pull forward into the parking lot if you need additional time to buckle your child in. If you need to come into the Lodge, please park in the lower gravel parking lot. PLEASE DO NOT PARK IN THE CIRCLE! Pick up starts at 2:50 pm, 10 minutes prior to camp end time.

Staff reserve the right to check photo identification of the pick-up person. Campers may only be released to those listed on their authorized pick up list. 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 after the first 10 minutes, and an additional \$1/minute following.* 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, over the phone, 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.*

CAMPER ABSENCE

If your child will not be attending camp for the day, please call the Main Office at 618-466-9930. Directors will reach out by phone anytime there is an unexplained absence.

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 that does not

require heating and a water bottle each day. No food sharing is permitted at lunch or snack time. If families are bringing in food items to share with the camp, for example – cupcakes for a birthday celebration – please inform the Camp Director. The Camp Director will ensure all snacks for sharing are nut - free.

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 your camper a lunch with as little waste as possible. Please use reusable containers, labeled with the 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. All camp 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.).

All injuries will receive basic care such as stopping blood flow, immobilizing sprains and breaks, and cleaning the injured area. Families with religious or personal concerns can request no further first aid if desired. Prior arrangements must be made with the Camp Director.

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 POLICIES

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

- Most programming will take place outdoors, as allowed by weather conditions.
- Social distancing guidelines of six feet are to be maintained as frequently as possible.
- Masks are optional.
- Frequent handwashing is encouraged, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use of hand sanitizer is emphasized and available 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 participants 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. Participants cannot return to TNI programs until deemed safe and there is no virus risk. If a participant was positive for COVID-19, our policies will follow the CDC's recommendations, which can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.h>

[tml](#).

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, or call us, 618-466-9930 with concerns or questions.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN

Programs may be canceled in the very rare event of hazardous weather conditions or unusable facilities. Staff will contact participants in advance whenever possible. If the program gets canceled 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 30 minutes. Employees and participants are required to seek shelter. All activities will stay suspended until 30 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 go to the Restrooms if nearby on the property until the 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).

FIELD TRIPS

Our Middle School campers may be invited to participate in field trips off site. These camps may require additional third-party waivers in order to participate. If waivers are not signed by the day of the field trip, the camper will not be permitted to attend.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Most camp groups will have a guest speaker on site once a week. These guest speakers may come from the Saint Louis Science Center, Bubble Bus, Treehouse Wildlife Centers, and others. All camp staff will remain with their groups any time a guest is present.

ARCHERY

Campers ages 8 and up may participate in archery programs. Archery requires an additional waiver in order to participate. Archery is overseen by a supervisor with archery certification. All staff receive training prior to the camp season.

WEAPONS

To ensure that The Nature Institute (TNI) maintains a camp safe and free of violence for all participants, the company prohibits the possession or use of dangerous weapons on TNI property. "Dangerous weapons" include firearms, explosives, knives, and other weapons that might be considered dangerous or that could cause harm.

TNI AMBASSADOR ANIMALS

On occasion, campers may be invited to meet our ambassador animals. TNI may own or take care of certain animals that are used for education purposes such as turtles or snakes. Any handling of these animals are for staff only and require training prior to handling or care.

TRANSPORTATION

TNI does not provide transportation to and from camp. Middle school camps may be transported during camp hours for field trips through transportation companies, such as by bus, that have been vetted prior to use. TNI does not provide drivers or allow camp staff to use personal vehicles to transport campers.

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 a need for accommodation, please contact the Camp Director.

Camp Rules will be discussed on the first day of camp. Behavior that will lead to immediate expulsion includes:

- Endangering the health and safety of other children and/or staff
- Excessive bullying, teasing, and making fun of campers and/or staff
- Fighting and physical violence
- Using profanity, vulgarity, or obscenity
- Stealing or damaging property
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs on TNI property

Discipline

To maintain a safe and cooperative setting, Discovery Day Camp has specific policies and limitations that govern our facilities, program staff, and the behavior of each child. Compliance with imposed limits and policies of the facility and program is expected. Should it become necessary to correct or resolve any dangerous or disruptive behavior, Day Camp staff will follow these steps:

1. Staff will attempt to redirect the child's behavior by presenting a positive choice.
2. If redirection is not effective and the behavior persists, staff will identify the problem and discuss it with the child. Staff will immediately stop any physical damage, such as hitting or kicking, or any emotional bullying, such as teasing or name calling.
3. Staff will assist the child in brainstorming possible solutions and help them choose a solution for the specific problem.
4. If the behavior continues, staff will notify the child that it's time to take a break. A Director will be notified to provide additional support. Following the break, staff will speak with the child to help them process the situation and what led to the break.
5. Staff will make every effort to check in with parents/guardians at pick up to discuss what happened, what action was taken by the staff, and discuss additional solutions to assist the camper in the future.
6. In the event that a child displays unsafe or inappropriate behavior, TNI reserves the right to dismiss the child from the program. Unsafe and inappropriate behavior may include bullying, sexual harassment, violence, endangering the safety of any other children and staff, any type of discrimination, destruction of property, theft, verbal abuse, and possession of any type of weapon.

Discovery Day camp staff uses a positive behavior reinforcement system to promote appropriate behavior. No form of physical discipline or spanking is allowed. We hope to minimize the need for disciplinary methods.

3 Strikes Policy

Our camp follows a 'Three Strikes' policy. Strikes are given out when camp rules are broken or behavioral issues are persisting. Strikes are cumulative and are kept throughout the week. For each strike, your child and their staff members will brainstorm solutions together to address the issue moving forward.

If your child is given 1 strike, staff will fill out a Strike Form to discuss with you at pickup. If your child is given a 2nd strike, staff will fill out a second Strike Form and you will receive a call from the Camp Director. If your child is given a 3rd strike, they will be automatically dismissed from camp and may not return for the rest of the camp week. Refunds will not be given in the case of dismissal from camp due to behavioral problems.

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:

- Sack lunch that does not require heating (full day campers).
- Personal snack if desired (a snack is provided by TNI for half day camps).
- Water shoes (old tennis shoes, close toed water shoes, close toed sandals, etc.). NO CROCS!
- Swimsuit and rash guard or t-shirt (swimsuits are optional).
- Change of clothes, including socks and underwear.
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- 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. Dirty clothing or shoes will be sent home at the end of each day.

Swimwear

Campers are expected to wear appropriate swimwear 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. Please, no crocs.

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.