

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAMP

Choosing the right camp from among the number and variety of camps available can be overwhelming. Parents need to begin by talking with their child and together creating a list of requirements and expectations.

Consider:

- The child's interests and the activities he hopes to experience at camp
- The desired characteristics of the camp site.
- The distance from home that is acceptable to the child and his family
- The length of stay.
- The child's physical, medical, dietary and emotional needs.
- Whether the child is willing to go alone or prefers to go with a friend
- Whether a single sex or co-ed camp is preferred
- Whether a secular or religiously-based camp is preferred
- The limitations of the family's budget. Provincial Camping Associations provide information on available financial assistance.

Parents often ask at what age a child should begin overnight camp; however, considering readiness is more significant than age.

- ✓ Can the child make his own bed and look after his own belongings?
- ✓ Has the child spent a night away from home at a friend's or grandparents' house?
- ✓ Is the child asking to go to camp?
- ✓ Has the child attended day camp? Day camp is an introduction to some aspects of the overnight camp experience – meeting new friends, being cared for by a counsellor and participating in camp activities with other children

## PROVINCIAL CONTACTS

With these guidelines in mind, families can go to a provincial camping association's website and explore the many possibilities that meet their criteria. Family and friends with camp experience may also offer suggestions. Some locations offer camp fairs where a number of camps display their programs.

### **Canadian Camping Association**

Website: [www.ccamping.org](http://www.ccamping.org)

Email: [info@ccamping.org](mailto:info@ccamping.org)

### **British Columbia**

Website: [www.bccamping.org](http://www.bccamping.org)

Email: [president@bccamping.org](mailto:president@bccamping.org)

### **Alberta**

Website: [www.albertacamping.com](http://www.albertacamping.com)  
Email: [info@albertacamping.com](mailto:info@albertacamping.com)

### **Saskatchewan**

Website: [www.saskcamping.ca](http://www.saskcamping.ca)  
Email: [info@saskcamping.ca](mailto:info@saskcamping.ca)

### **Manitoba**

Website: [www.mbcamping.ca](http://www.mbcamping.ca)  
Email: [info@mbcamping.ca](mailto:info@mbcamping.ca)

### **Ontario**

Website: [www.ontariocamps.ca](http://www.ontariocamps.ca)  
Email: [info@ontariocamps.ca](mailto:info@ontariocamps.ca)

### **Quebec**

Website: [www.camps.qc.ca](http://www.camps.qc.ca)  
Email: [info@camps.qc.ca](mailto:info@camps.qc.ca)

### **New Brunswick**

Website: [www.nbcamping.ca](http://www.nbcamping.ca)  
Email: [president@nbcamping.com](mailto:president@nbcamping.com)

### **Nova Scotia**

Website: [www.campingns.ca](http://www.campingns.ca)  
Email: [info@campingns.ca](mailto:info@campingns.ca)

### **Newfoundland/Labrador**

Phone: (709) 686-2363/ (709) 686-9648

Throughout the selection process, the potential camper should participate by first visiting websites then browsing printed material or a DVD provided by the camp on request. The more the child is involved in the decision, the greater the chance of a successful outcome.

After reducing the field to a few possibilities, the family should compile a list of questions and speak to the director.

No question is too direct where a child's safety and well-being is the top priority.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Is the camp **accredited** by its provincial camping association?
- Who is the director? What are his/her qualifications and experience?
- What is the camp's mission statement or philosophy? What can a child expect to gain from the experience?
- What written and practiced policies ensure camper safety?
- Who is directly responsible for a camper at all times?
- Who are the counsellors? How old are they? What are their qualifications? What training do they receive?
- What is the percentage return of staff?
- What is the camper to counsellor ratio?
- What is the percentage of returning campers?
- Who are the campers? Are they local or international? Do they attend public or private school?
- Does the camp have a religious affiliation? Is there religious instruction?
- What are the medical resources?
- What is a typical daily menu? Are special diets accommodated?
- What is a typical daily schedule? Are activities recreational or instructional?
- How much program choice do campers have?
- How much free time do campers have?
- Is there an additional cost for some activities?
- Is transportation provided to the camp site?
- Is there an opportunity to visit the site?
- Does the camp provide contact information on current families who are willing to speak to potential parents?

Time spent choosing a camp suitable for a child's interests, expectations and needs is well spent. A good choice could result in the first of many happy, rewarding summer experiences at camp!