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FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# SHERMAN LAKE YMCA



## Integrated Education School Overnight Program Guidebook

Updated July 2023

# **Welcome to the Sherman Lake YMCA Integrated Education School Programs**

Greetings,

Welcome to Sherman Lake YMCA Camp! We invite you to review this Information Packet to help with any questions you may have about your child's experience with the Integrated Education School Programs at Sherman Lake YMCA. Inside you will find a packing list, our behavior policy and, most importantly, the health form you and your student need to fill out and return to your teacher.

We look forward to meeting your student(s) and supporting them in creating lasting memories they will remember for years to come. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 269-731-3022. Together, we build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities.

Sincerely,



[Karen Christopherson](#), Director of Character Advancement

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## **SHERMAN LAKE YMCA MISSION & PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

***The Sherman Lake YMCA Outdoor Center puts Honesty, Caring, Respect, and Responsibility into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.***

### **Program Philosophy**

At Sherman Lake YMCA Camp, campers experience the power of HCRR (Hick-er). The Y's four core values – Honesty, Caring, Respect, and Responsibility – are emphasized in each camp program with an additional focus on social-emotional learning skills such as building healthy relationships, empathy, emotion management, responsibility, and personal development. Through discovery of the great outdoors, skill development, and guidance in the importance of building healthy relationships, campers leave with a renewed sense of achievement, belonging, confidence, and courage to try new things.

### **Safety**

Safety is our #1 priority. Our camp staff are carefully screened during a character-based hiring process and are selected for their skills and concern for the well-being of children.

Professional program staff work directly with counselors to provide guidance and support. All staff are certified in first aid and CPR and have been screened through the highest standards of child safety practices, including background checks. Sherman Lake YMCA is accredited by the American Camp Association.



### **We hire Counselors who:**

- demonstrate honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility in their words and actions.
- are trained in the social-emotional learning core competencies of emotion management, responsibility, empathy, relationship building and personal development.
- help your child develop new friendships.
- help your child learn a new skill.
- help your child interact with kids who are different from themselves.
- help your child build their self-esteem and confidence.
- help your child build independence.
- give your child an opportunity to practice their decision-making skills

The Sherman Lake YMCA Outdoor Center is an inclusive organization that welcomes all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or disability.

## **BEFORE CAMP STARTS**

### **FORMS**

The following forms need to be completed and signed for every student who attends school programs at Sherman Lake YMCA, with no exceptions. Please contact your student's school for due dates and where to return the completed forms.

#### **CAMPER FORMS & DOCUMENTS:**

##### ☐ **Registration & Health Information Form**

This form needs to be completed and signed prior to your child's camp experience.

## PACKING FOR CAMP

### Your Cabin:

Campers sleep in cabins with 6 bunks and twin mattresses. You must provide your own bedding.



## OVERNIGHT CAMP PACKING LIST

**\*\*PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING\*\***

**What to wear** *(reminder that we will be playing outside - don't wear anything that can't get dirty!)*

- ☐ Comfortable clothes appropriate for the weather
- ☐ Close-Toed Shoes/Athletic Shoes (for all land-based activities)
- ☐ Sunscreen (apply at home in the morning, and campers will reapply during the day)
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Hat and/or Sunglasses

**What to bring for daily use** *(pack in backpack, labeled with their name!)*

- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Rain jacket or poncho

**What to bring for staying the night** *(pack in an overnight bag, labeled with their name!)*

- ☐ Sleeping bag or twin bedding
- ☐ Pillow
- ☐ Bath towel, washcloth
- ☐ Shower sandals
- ☐ Toiletry items (toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, shampoo, brush, lotion, etc.)
- ☐ Warm clothing - options for layering are best as the weather changes and we will be both outside and inside
- ☐ T-shirts, long sleeve T-shirt & sweatshirt
- ☐ Jacket (for cooler evenings)
- ☐ Swimsuit and swim towel
- ☐ Seasonal winter clothing (coat, boots, mittens/gloves, hat, wool socks, top and bottom base layers, snow pants & ChapStick)
- ☐ Optional items: notebook & pencils, disposable camera, book or deck of cards

### What NOT to Bring:

Do not bring any weapons (knives, guns), lighters, matches, fireworks, alcohol, tobacco products or illegal drugs. Being in possession of any of these items can result in the immediate removal of your child from camp. If it comes to the attention of the staff that a camper is in possession of any of these items, the camper may be asked to unpack their bag in front of a director.

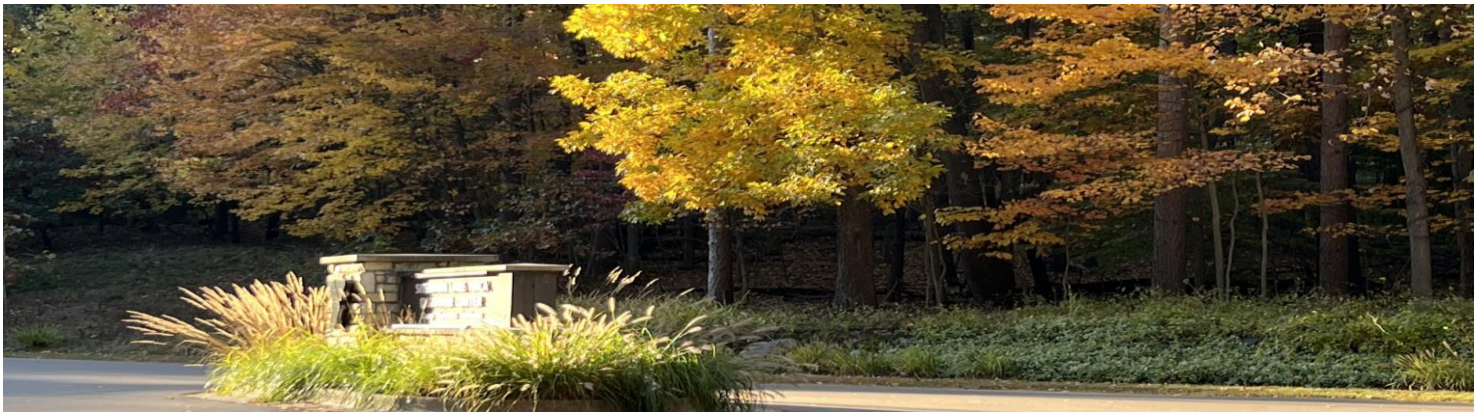
### What NOT to Bring (continued):

While we do understand a parent's concern about the safety and well-being of their child, campers are ***not allowed to bring their cell phone, or anything with internet capability, unless medically necessary.*** Rest assured, if your child needs to talk to you, we will get them to a phone and they will call you. Any phones or electronics such as smart watches, iPods, tablets, curling irons, or video games that are brought to camp will be held by a school representative or the Camp Director and returned at the end of their camp stay. We also ask that you do not bring any personal, specialized sports or camping equipment. Thank you for your understanding!

### MEDICATIONS

- All medications, including vitamins, inhalers and non-prescription medications will be collected and distributed by a designated school representative. Do not pack these items in your camper's backpack for camp.
- All medications must be in their original pharmacy containers.

### LIFE AT CAMP



### SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

In collaboration with each school, we will design programs and activities that are the best fit for their students. Here is a basic overview of a typical day within our Integrated Education Program:

8:00am	Breakfast
9:00am	W.O.W. Time - Words of Wisdom (Character and Leadership Story with Camp Songs)
10:00am	Activity I
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Activity II
3:00pm	Grounding Time (Small group mindfulness/grounding activity)
3:15pm	Activity III
5:30pm	Dinner
7:00pm	Evening Program I
8:00pm	Evening Program II
9:00pm	Showers, Journals & End of Day Debrief
10:00pm	Lights Out





## **MEALS**

Campers will eat their meals in the Great Hall of Kellogg Hall, with the occasional picnic around Camp. Meals will be a mix of buffet and family style. Every meal offers a variety of options. We are well versed in food related allergies, special dietary needs and our 'picky eaters'. We will ensure that everyone gets something to eat. Please make note in your camper's health history form and contact us ahead of time if you have any specific needs you would like to discuss with our Director of Character Development and/or Kitchen staff.

## **BIRTHDAYS AT CAMP**

Many of our campers will celebrate their birthdays while at Camp. On a camper's birthday we will celebrate with them! They will be recognized at either lunch or dinner with a Sherman Laker Birthday song and a special dessert. A birthday reminder to your camper's teacher prior to Camp is greatly appreciated.

## **INCLUSION & BELONGING AT CAMP**

Here at Sherman Lake YMCA, we work with parents/guardians, teachers and school administration to help ensure 'SUCCESS FOR EVERY CHILD'. We recognize that what success looks like for each camper may be different and we strive to be proactive in developing resources and strategies that work best for your camper.

We have an extensive training program for our staff, centered around inclusion and working with campers of all needs. Make sure to fill out all required forms as early as you can. Our staff team goes through all the camper forms, and will follow up with you prior to Camp if necessary for clarification and questions, to determine the best way to serve your camper. Please contact the Director of Character Advancement prior to your session to discuss further.

We have partnered with [Kulture City](#), an organization that creates sensory accessibility and inclusion for those with invisible disabilities. With this partnership, we are able to offer sensory bags for campers in various spaces and programs at Camp. These bags include various fidget items and headphones for loud areas. We also have a "social story" on their website that allows campers to learn more about our Camp programs and prepare for their time at Camp!

## **BEHAVIOR RESPONSE POLICY**

Upon arrival, each Camper is placed in a group and given the task of helping to develop their living community. Sherman Lake YMCA Camp works hard to create an environment for everyone to succeed within the boundaries of safety and our four principles of Honesty, Caring, Respect and Responsibility. When that boundary is broken, it is essential to provide some form of understanding and consequence.

Our counselors follow these procedures:

### **1. Planning and Preventative**

- Counselors establish clear boundaries and work with campers to establish behavior expectations through the group's community commitment.
- Campers agree to boundaries and are aware of positive behavior expectations.
- Counselors and staff continually communicate and encourage camper behavior within boundaries. The focus will be on positive behavior of the group.

### **2. Understanding and Refocus**

- If issues arise, the counselors look at the camper's behavior first, or behavior of those involved.
  - Were the boundaries clear? How did the actions relate to HCRR? Did my actions escalate or encourage negative response?
- Camper looks at their behavior.
  - Can the campers identify boundaries in their own words? Can they understand how others were affected by their actions?

### **3. Action and Consequences**

- If there is an issue that cannot be resolved by the camper or the counselor, appropriate action is taken. The safety of all campers and staff is central to the HCRR philosophy. Sherman Lake YMCA will work within a restorative practices framework when resolving conflicts. Actions involved will include:
  - Verbal warning and positive redirection.
  - Parents will be notified by the camp director and the camper will be given a final warning.
  - If the issue is so serious that it cannot be resolved to ensure the safety of the campers and staff, the camper will be removed from camp. *A parent/guardian is responsible for picking the camper up. There will be no refund for a camper who leaves camp due to a behavior issue.*

### **Behaviors that may result in dismissal:**

Sherman Lake YMCA Camp strives to be a place where all feel welcome and safe, both physically and emotionally. When a camper chooses to ostracize others, ridicule another camper, or use inappropriate language they will be warned one time and a camp director will contact the camper's parents. The camper will also talk to their parents. If these behaviors continue, the camper may be removed from camp.

We reserve the right to immediately dismiss campers for behaviors that we find to endanger themselves or others at Camp, either physically or emotionally. Some examples of these behaviors may include malicious acts, violence, aggression, hate speech or physical or verbal threats of a weapon. Questions or concerns about your child's behavior should be directed to a director.

## **A NOTE ON MISSING HOME**

While missing home is a natural feeling and leads to incredible developmental growth for children, it can be tough knowing your child might have some feelings of sadness while here. Sherman Lake YMCA Camp staff are here to help. Our staff are well trained to identify and help campers that are missing home. Rest assured that a director will call you to discuss ways to best support your individual camper if they are struggling.

As a parent, there are some things that you can do to help prepare your camper. We believe the American Camp Association's article 'Homesickness Dos and Don'ts for Parents Preparing for Camp' provides the most helpful advice. Here are some highlights:

Prior to Camp:

- **Talk positively about the camp experience.** Let your child know they are going to have an amazing time at camp; making new friends, while trying exciting new activities.
- **Provide opportunities for your child to practice being away from you.** Sleepovers with friends/family can be a great stepping stone towards a longer sleep away experience.
- **Visit the camp.** Call for a private tour so your child can become familiar with the camp facility and some of its staff.
- **Avoid negative talk about the camp experience.** Avoid saying things like "we will miss you so much," "I don't know what I'll do without you" or "I'll be counting down the days until you return." Comments like these will cause your camper to feel guilty if they are enjoying their time at camp knowing that you are at home missing them.
- **Do NOT offer a pick-up clause.** Please don't send your child to camp with the phrase "give it a try and if you don't like it, I'll come and pick you up". If you make a pick-up clause with your child, you will inevitably be faced with the decision to either pick the child up and rob them of a valuable growing experience or break your promise and damage your credibility with your child. Neither of these outcomes are positive and both can be avoided by refraining from offering a pick-up clause.

During Camp:

- **Write positive letters with encouragement.** Let your child know you are proud of them for trying new activities and making new friends.
- **Remember that homesickness is normal.** Everyone experiences homesickness to different degrees. If we call you to share that your child is homesick, it does not mean that you must come to the rescue. We invite you to work with the staff and provide information that may help your child to overcome the challenges they are facing.



## **HEALTH CARE AT CAMP**

The health and safety of our campers is our number one priority. We adhere to standards and recommendations from the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and the American Camp Association (ACA).

Our staff is trained and certified in First Aid and CPR and many are also certified as Lifeguards.

### **Prior to Your Arrival:**

If your child is not feeling well on the first day of camp, please keep them home an extra day and bring them to camp when they no longer exhibit signs of illness. Campers should be fever and vomit free without the aid of medication for at least 24 hours prior to arriving at camp. If you have any questions, please contact your school's representative to institute a plan to safeguard the health of all campers and staff.

Prior to camp, your school will facilitate a head check for each child so that there is adequate time to have treatment applied so campers are lice free for overnight camp.

Sherman Lake YMCA Camp does not carry insurance on campers, you must accept responsibility for medical/surgical treatment charges which may be incurred on your child's behalf and provide us with your insurance information.

### **During Camp:**

Upon arrival and throughout the campers' stay, counselors and staff watch for signs of fatigue, dehydration, improper eating, etc. that may indicate illness. Each morning, campers will have a routine health check, including a daily temperature reading and overall wellness. If a camper expresses a health concern, they will be directed to the school representative. Parents will be notified immediately if a child has a fever in excess of 100 degrees, has been vomiting, or has evidence of lice. The parent will be asked to pick up the child immediately in any of these instances.

Should a child have symptoms consistent with a **communicable disease**, they will be isolated from other campers until the parent picks up the child. In the case of a camper having a known communicable disease, parents of all campers from that group will be notified. Please notify us if a communicable disease occurs shortly after returning home from camp.

In the event of an **injury** that requires medical attention, the parent will be notified immediately. Arrangements will be made to meet the parent at the hospital, or for the parent to pick up the child, depending upon the severity of the injury. Please be assured that we will always contact parents when there is concern about a camper's health and/or when a situation is not progressing as expected.

# COMMUNICATION AT CAMP

## CONTACTING CAMP

Camp office hours are Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm and the phone number is: (269) 731-3030. In case of an emergency, please call Karen at (269) 731-3022.

## CONNECT WITH CAMP COUNSELORS

We maintain a “no-outside contact” policy for staff and campers. This ensures the safety of the campers and staff outside of Sherman Lake YMCA programs, and teaches the youth about appropriate relationships with adults. This policy includes social media, letters, and more. We have instructed our counselors not to share their contact information or to ‘friend’ or follow campers or parents of campers on social media.

If your camper would like to connect with a counselor, we ask this be done in an open forum. Campers and parents may send their communications by email ([camp@ymcasl.org](mailto:camp@ymcasl.org)) or mail. We will be happy to forward the message to the counselor, who will respond from the camp address. We do this to ensure the safety and privacy of our campers and staff.

If you are aware of a violation of this no-outside contact policy, please notify the Director of Character Advancement, Karen Christopherson ([karenc@ymcasl.org](mailto:karenc@ymcasl.org)). We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

## CAMP LEADERSHIP



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