YMCA LEIF ERICSON DAY CAMP

TEPEETONKA YMCA

the YMCA

PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to camp!

2026

Welcome to our Camp Family!

We are so excited to welcome your family to another unforgettable summer filled with outdoor adventures, new friendships, and memories that will last a lifetime. Our staff cannot wait to share the joy of camp with your child. To help ensure your camper has the best experience possible, we ask that families take a moment to review this guide in detail to make the camp experience as successful as possible. Here are a few highlights:

Each day, campers should come prepared for outdoor fun. Because the weather and activities change quickly at camp, please dress your child in comfortable outdoor clothing and closed-toe athletic shoes. We strongly encourage families to label every item sent to camp so belongings can make their way back home. To protect the camp experience, we ask that personal electronics, toys, and valuables remain at home. Campers are here to explore, unplug, and connect. If a camper must carry a cell phone for special circumstances.

As campers grow older, their adventures grow with them! Some of our programs include field trips or overnights, and all health needs are supported by our trained staff. Most importantly, we believe in creating an environment of respect, inclusion, and accountability. Our community follows *The Golden Rule: Treat others the way you wish to be treated*. To help ensure a safe and positive experience for everyone, campers who engage in bullying, unsafe choices, possession of restricted items, or persistent disruptive behavior may be dismissed. Together, we can help every camper feel supported and valued.

Lastly, a friendly reminder that all program tuition must be paid in *CampInTouch* *by April 30, 2026,* and a selection of one of the following, Before & After Care or Bus Stops, needs to be arranged for camper transportation prior to season start.

Thank you for trusting us with your camper's summer adventure. We are honored to be a part of their growth, laughter, and outdoor discoveries. We can't wait for another incredible summer at the Sioux Falls Family YMCA Camp Leif Ericson — where every day brings something new to explore!

Mission

We build Strong Kids, Strong Families, and Strong Communities with a primary focus on youth activities and programs

Values

Caring ~ Honesty ~ Accountability ~ Inclusion ~ Respect

History of the Sioux Falls Family YMCA Camp Programs

Camp Tepeetonka began in 1920 at Christenson's Point on Lake Madison, where its name—meaning "Big Tent"—captured both the spirit of adventure and the growing community it served. A decade later, the camp moved to its iconic home on 55-acre Manhattan Island on Big Stone Lake, continuing to build traditions that shaped generations of campers. In 1966, a new chapter began with the establishment of Leif Ericson Day Camp in Sioux Falls, expanding opportunities for local youth to learn outdoor skills, build friendships, and discover nature close to home.

Growth continued as programs evolved to meet the needs of children at every age. The first Tepeetonka Camp Season took place at the Leif Ericson site in 1991, followed by the creation of Little Vikes Day Camp in 1992 for boys and girls ages 4 and 5. That same year, Camp Tepeetonka permanently relocated to Sioux Falls, uniting the programs under one location. In the years that followed, new adventures emerged, including Explorers Travel Camp for ages 11–14 in 1994 and the Leadership Camp for 14-year-olds in 2007, preparing young campers to grow as mentors and role models. In 2025, a new initiative broadened the camp's mission of inclusion and access with the launch of Give Kids the Woods, a day camp designed for children of all abilities and needs.

As the camps continue to evolve, one constant remains: our mission to build Strong Kids, Strong Families, and Strong Communities.

Little Vikes (Ages 4–5)

5 Sessions, 2-week duration, ½ day program concluding at 12pm - Capacity: 48 per session

Little Vikes is the perfect first step into camp. With a dedicated area just for them, our youngest campers explore traditional camp fun at their own pace. Activities are hands-on, short, and supported by highly attentive staff to promote confidence, curiosity, and social development. Campers enjoy nature walks, gardening, water play, music, simple sports, fishing, and creative arts. The focus of Little Vikes is early independence, social growth, and safe exploration, supported by age-appropriate activity rotations.

Camp Leif Ericson (Ages 6–9)

5 Sessions, 2-week duration - Capacity: 240 per session

Camp Leif Ericson invites campers into adventurous challenges, friendships, and personal growth. Small groups and consistent counselors help children feel known and supported as they discover what they can achieve. Depending on the session, activities may include archery, low-ropes, nature exploration, arts and crafts, group games, water play, and character development. Camp is divided into age groups (6–7 and 8–9) to provide appropriate challenge and progression as campers grow in ability and confidence

Camp Tepeetonka (Ages 10–13)

5 Sessions, 2-week duration, overnights

Capacity: 220 per session

Camp Tepeetonka focuses on teamwork, leadership, and meaningful friendships. Campers participate in unique traditions such as campfire reflections, overnights, scavenger hunts, water wars, and a special trip to Wild Water West. Through small-group challenges and facilitated initiatives, campers learn cooperation, problem-solving, and responsibility. Tepeetonka is divided into two progressive groups: Tepeetonka Alpha (ages 10–11) and Tepeetonka Grande (ages 12–13), offering new experiences as campers grow. Alpha includes one overnight stay on the 2nd Thursday of each session, and Grande includes two overnight stays on each Thursday of their session.

TLC: Tepeetonka Leadership Camp (Ages 14–15)

5 Sessions, 2-week duration - Capacity: 24 per session

TLC bridges the gap between being a camper and becoming a camp leader. Participants learn leadership, service, and teamwork while assisting counselors and helping lead activities. TLC campers still take part in classic camp experiences while gaining hands-on exposure to teaching, mentoring, and supporting younger campers. The program emphasizes leadership development, responsibility, and community engagement, preparing participants for future roles at camp or in other youth-serving settings. TLC includes two overnight stays on each Thursday of their session.

Venture Vikes (Ages 6–13)

1 Session, 1-week duration - Capacity: 60

Venture Vikes offers an action-packed week full of themed adventures, outdoor challenges, water activities, skits, and special events. This program emphasizes fun, creativity, and exploration within the camp community. Venture Vikes does not include an overnight or family night and is not counted toward camp attendance awards.

Rysdon Ranch Camp (Ages 9-13)

5 Sessions, 2-week duration – Capacity: 10 per session

Ranch Camp offers a horse-centered experience where riders of all skill levels can learn, grow, and build confidence. The Sioux Falls Family YMCA is proud to introduce a refreshment of our traditional ranch camp programming for Summer of 2026, welcoming new partnership with Hi-Road Ranch. Campers will experience hands-on education learning horsemanship skills at Hi-Road Ranch, in an expanded 2-week camp. Ranch Camp does not include an overnight or family night and is not counted toward camp attendance awards.

Each two-week session ends with a special Awards Ceremony, where campers are celebrated for their time at camp and their place in our growing camp community. During this memorable gathering, campers who have returned summer after summer receive unique keepsakes that represent their adventure, growth, and lasting connection to camp. These awards are cherished symbols of dedication and constant reminders of stories told, friendships made, and milestones earned during their time with our YMCA Camp Programs.

Before & After Camp Care

A care program that is available at Camp 7:30am-8:45am and 4:15-5:30pm for drop-off/pick-up in these time frames to better accommodate parent scheduling.

Transportation

Campers may ride the bus to and from camp for an additional fee. Stop locations and options are specific to each session and will be designated at registration close.

Drop-Off

All campers must be signed in by an adult and directly handed off to a YMCA staff member. The YMCA cannot supervise children who arrive before camp opens at 7:30am if enrolled in Before & After Care. Please do not leave the property until your camper is officially signed in. If you arrive after 8:40 AM, a parent/guardian must sign the camper in at the Camp Office with valid photo ID. If a late arrival is known in advance, please notify the Camp Office via email (camp@siouxfallsymca.org) at least 24 hours ahead with the camper's name, age, and drop-off time. All late check-ins take place at the Camp Office.

Pick-Up

Only authorized adults may pick up campers from camp and bus stops who were designated on your camper application. Photo ID may be requested at any time. Campers will not be released to anyone who is not listed for pick-up unless notice has been given to the Camp Office. Early pick-ups must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance by calling or emailing the Camp Office with the camper's name, age, pick-up time, and whether they will return that day. Requests made after 1:00 PM on the same day cannot be accommodated. All early check-outs occur through the Camp Office. Early check-outs are only available at the following times:

- 10:30 AM – Camp Office
- 12:00 PM – Camp Office
- 2:30 PM – Camp Office
- 4:05 PM – Big Top

Buses must safely depart before After Care pickups begin. The camp gate will remain closed until all buses have exited. Parking is very limited at 4:00 PM; please park in the far-left lot and keep bus lanes clear.

Campers must be enrolled in Bus Stops, or Before & After Care, not both. Check ins or outs, and other accommodations should be avoided if possible, to aid in consistent communication on a day-to-day basis.

Lunch

Families may purchase a camp-provided "hot" lunch during registration, or campers may bring their own lunch each day. Because camp is peanut-free, no lunches may contain peanuts. Meals may contain gluten, wheat, eggs, barley, and occasionally tree nuts, so campers with special dietary needs may need to bring their own meals if camp cannot safely accommodate them. Camp provides an afternoon snack for all campers as part of the registration fee.

Family Night

Families are invited to attend a special open-house evening once each session, where campers can proudly share their accomplishments, introduce new friends, and highlight their favorite parts of camp. This event takes place on the second Tuesday of each session from **4:30pm-6:30pm (June 9th, June 23rd, July 7th, July 21st, August 4th).**

Daily Schedule Overview (deviations possible for age group specifications)

7:30am-8:40am - Before Care & Bus Pick-Up's
8:45am-9:05am – Bus Arrivals
9:05am-9:35am – Launch Point
9:45am-10:25am – 1st Period Activity
10:35am-11:15am - 2nd Period Activity
11:25am-12:25pm – Lunch
12:35pm-1:15pm – 3rd Period Activity
1:25pm-2:05pm – 4th Period Activity
2:15pm-2:35pm – Snack
2:35pm-3:15pm – Campers Choice Activities
3:15pm-4:00pm – Depart Point
4:15pm-5:30pm – After Care & Bus Drop-Off's

Activities Overview (may be limited to specific age groups)

Fishing
Scavenger Hunts
Playgrounds
BB Range
Archery
Boating, Canoeing, or Kayaking
Simple Crafts
Blue Blocks
Waterpark/Inflatables
Field Games
Field Sports
Music
Skits
Table Games
Sandboxes
Nature Education
Nature Walks
Mini Farm
Gardening
Gaga Ball
Amazon Valley Exploration
Specialty Crafts
Ropes Courses
Hammocks
Sling-Shots
Outdoor Cooking
Biking
Wagon Rides

Additional age specific activities may be added and can differ year over year.

Field Trips (subject to change or expansion per session)

Wild Water West: Campers ages 10–15 spend a day at Wild Water West, which is included in the cost of camp. Younger campers follow a scheduled rotation with counselors for close supervision, while older campers enjoy limited freedom in small groups, with staff positioned throughout the park. All campers check in with their counselors at designated times. Campers may bring spending money, but access to concessions is not guaranteed.

Wall Lake: Campers ages 8-13 visit our partner Wall Lake waterfront property for outdoor cooking, games, boating, and supervised beach time. Younger campers (ages 8–9) ride in small, motorized boats with staff, while campers ages 10–13 paddle canoes or kayaks together.

Anytime campers are in, on, or near water they are required to wear life jackets and are always monitored by certified lifeguards and staff.

Overnights

Tepeetonka and TLC campers enjoy an overnight camping experience as a special part of their camp session. Campers are divided into three age groups, **10–11 (Alpha), 12–13 (Grande)**, **14-15 (TLC)** with each group staying at separate overnight locations designed with unique and age-appropriate features.

Campers ages **10–11 (Alpha) participate in one action-packed overnight on the second Thursday of the session**, while campers ages **12–15 (Grande & TLC) take part in two fun-filled overnights held on each Thursday of the session**. The day after each overnight begins with breakfast and continues with a normal day of camp activities. Both overnights are bursting with songs, skits, games, and special events, and the **second overnight features the unforgettable closing campfire and awards night**, celebrating campers' accomplishments and the spirit of the session.

All meals outside of lunch are provided at no additional cost, **if your camper has dietary restrictions or needs, we ask that you provide them both meals or notify our office prior to your camper's session of these needs.** Camp nurses distribute evening medications, which must be sent in the original labeled prescription container; non-essential over-the-counter medications should not be sent unless required for the camper's well-being.

If a camper is not able or ready to stay overnight, families must contact the camp office at least 24 hours in advance. Campers may either ride the bus home at the usual time or be picked up at scheduled evening pickup times. Participation is encouraged, and staff are committed to helping campers feel comfortable and enjoy this exciting camp tradition.

Designated Pick-up Times:
5:15pm
6:30pm
9:45pm

What to pack:

- Sleeping bag, pillow
- Weather appropriate clothing, including pajamas and a change for the following day
- Any other necessary toiletries (toothbrush, deodorant, etc)

Registration & Fees

Register, view accounts, and pay here with your CampInTouch Account: CampInTouch

Please Note: Your camper will not be able to attend Camp without full payment by April 30th, 2026. Payments must be made manually by guardians in your CampInTouch account linked above. Monitor your email for reminders. All Deposit amounts are non-refundable.

At the Sioux Falls Family YMCA, we are committed to making Camp Leif Ericson accessible to all families. To support this commitment, we offer a three-tiered pricing structure for our summer camp programs.

Tier 1 is a rate that reflects the full operating costs, aids in camp improvements, and helps supports families in need of lower tiered pricing. *Please select this tier if you are able and wish to help sustain camp for others.*
Tier 2 is a partially subsidized rate that covers base operating costs of camp, ensuring we are accessible to all.
Tier 3 is subsidized rate that does not fully cover operating cost, but keeps camp accessible for more families.

If these tiers still present a barrier for your family, additional financial assistance is available. Please follow this alternate link to apply: 2026 Camp Leif Ericson Financial Aid Application

Refund Policy

Refunds may be limited or unavailable once registration is completed and are determined on a case-by-case basis. Camp reserves the right to adjust schedules, modify activities, or cancel programs due to weather, safety issues, low enrollment, or other circumstances beyond our control. If camp must close or cancel for reasons outside of our control (including natural disasters, facility issues, or public health directives), refunds may not be issued; however, a credit may be offered for future use. **Refunds will not be issued for campers who are removed or expelled due to behavioral issues, including actions that jeopardize safety, violate camp rules, or disrupt the well-being of other participants.**

Sioux Falls Family YMCA Camp Leif Ericson Terms & Conditions

These Terms & Conditions govern participation in camp programs. By enrolling a child in camp, the parent/guardian ("Parent") agrees to the following:

1. Enrollment & Eligibility

- A completed registration form, signed waivers, and payment (or deposit) are required before enrollment completion
- The Parent certifies that all information provided about the child (medical needs, allergies, behavioral or physical concerns) is accurate and complete
- The camp reserves the right to refuse enrollment or remove a child if information is incomplete, inaccurate, or withheld

2. Health & Medical Care

- The Parent agrees to provide any necessary medications (e.g., asthma inhalers, epinephrine auto-injectors, allergy medications)
- In the event of illness, accident, or emergency, the camp may:
    - Administer basic first aid
    - Contact emergency medical services
    - Transport the child to a medical facility if needed
- The Parent authorizes emergency medical treatment and agrees to be financially responsible for medical costs
- Children exhibiting symptoms of contagious illness may be sent home or refused attendance for the safety of others

3. Behavioral Expectations

- Parents agree that their child will follow all safety rules, instructions from staff, and camper conduct guidelines
- Physical aggression, bullying, defiance, harassment, dangerous behavior, or repeated disruption may result in removal from camp without refund
- The camp reserves the right to determine when behavior is unsafe or inappropriate

4. Liability & Assumption of Risk

- Parents understand that camp activities (including outdoor play, sports, crafts, water activities, interaction with nature and animals) carry inherent risks
- Parents agree to assume all risks and sign required camp waivers prior to participation
- The camp is not responsible for accidental injury, allergic reactions, damage to personal belongings, or other incidents that may occur during participation, except where prohibited by law

5. Personal Belongings

- The camp is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen personal items (including clothing, electronics, toys, and other possessions)
- Children are discouraged from bringing valuables

6. Photography & Media

- Media releases are required, this does not mean your child's photos will be utilized, but allows the camp to provide fun albums of session photos to parents
- Unless consent is denied in writing, the camp may use photos/videos for educational or promotional purposes

7. Drop-Off, Pick-Up, & Late Fees

- Parents agree to follow designated drop-off and pick-up times and locations
- Only authorized adults may pick up a child; ID may be required
- Repeated late pick-ups may result in dismissal from the program

8. Refunds, Cancellation, & Camp Changes

- Refunds may be limited or unavailable after registration is completed and will be determined on a case-by-case basis

- The camp may adjust schedules, activities, or cancel programs due to weather, safety concerns, low enrollment, or circumstances beyond camp control
- If camp is forced to close for reasons beyond control (e.g., natural disaster, building issues, public health directives), refunds may not be issued but credits may be offered

9. Medication, Allergies, & Special Needs

- Parents must list all allergies, disabilities, or behavioral or medical conditions on registration forms
- Reasonable accommodation will be made when possible, but the camp is not medically specialized care and some conditions may not be able to be supported by camp staff
- Failure to disclose relevant conditions may result in removal from camp without refund

Camper Conduct

Campers are expected to follow the "Golden Rule" by treating others as they wish to be treated. To maintain a safe and positive camp environment, campers must respect staff and peers, remain with their assigned group, use appropriate language, and show care for the camp environment and its wildlife. Camp staff use a progressive approach to address inappropriate behavior, which may include verbal reminders, short removal from activities, loss of privileges, communication with parents or guardians, or removal from camp. Campers who compromise the safety or well-being of others, significantly disrupt the camp experience, or possess tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, or weapons will be dismissed from camp without refund.

Inclement Weather & Flood Evacuation Policy

To ensure the safety of all campers and staff, our camp follows a proactive evacuation protocol during inclement weather, particularly during heavy rainfall or conditions that may lead to flooding. Exercising an abundance of caution, we may choose to evacuate earlier than conditions appear to require.

Camp Leadership continuously monitors weather conditions using local emergency alerts, radar updates, and communication with community response services when needed. If forecasts indicate significant rainfall, rising water levels, or any severe weather conditions that could pose a risk, evacuation or relocation procedures will begin immediately, even if flooding has not yet occurred. If severe weather occurs while campers are on site, they will first be escorted to designated shelters for protection. If conditions suggest the possibility of flooding or other hazards, campers and staff will then be evacuated from camp using camp buses and transported to a designated off-site location where they will remain safely supervised.

Families will be notified as soon as an evacuation has been initiated and will receive instructions regarding camper pick-up if required. Because our evacuation method prioritizes caution, families should be prepared for the possibility of early pickup on days when severe weather is forecasted. Families are asked to monitor camp communication closely during these conditions, including email, text alerts, or any messaging services used by the camp. Prompt attention to camp messages helps ensure safe and timely reunification when changes to the normal camp schedule occur.

All evacuation decisions are made with the health and physical safety of campers and staff as our highest priority. We appreciate the understanding and cooperation of our camp families as we take proactive steps to ensure a safe and positive camp experience.

Other Emergency Situations

Camp Staff are trained to respond to a variety of emergency situations, including fire, severe weather, missing persons, or other unexpected safety concerns, and will coordinate with local emergency responders when needed. If an emergency occurs, parents and guardians will be contacted as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so and will receive instructions regarding camper reunification or pick-up if necessary. Our priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of all campers through timely response, clear communication, and coordinated action.

What Helps Campers Thrive at Camp

To help your camper enjoy every activity and stay prepared throughout the day, please review the guidelines below.

What to Wear: Campers should come dressed in comfortable outdoor clothing that can get dirty and is appropriate for the weather. Closed-toe athletic shoes are required every day for safety. Sandals, flip flops, Crocs, and other open-toe footwear are not permitted. Please label all clothing and personal belongings with your camper's first and last name.

What to Bring Each Day

Campers should bring:

- Backpack
- Reusable/refillable water bottle
- Bug spray
- Sunscreen
- Towel
- Swimsuit
- Lunch (if not receiving camp lunch)
- Daily necessities your camper may require for the weather or conditions

Little Vikes campers will only need swimsuits and towels on specific days. Staff will inform families in advance when these items are needed. Please ensure all items are clearly labeled.

What Not to Bring: To reduce distractions and avoid lost or damaged items, campers should not bring cell phones, electronic devices (such as iPods, gaming devices, or wireless speakers), or other valuable items. Camp staff may store these items for safekeeping if they are brought. Camp is not responsible for lost or damaged personal belongings. If a camper requires a phone due to special circumstances, please contact the Camp Office to discuss arrangements.

Lost & Found

To help belongings return to their owners, we ask that all camper items be clearly labeled with the camper's name. Camp staff check buses and camp areas daily for misplaced items, and any found belongings are set out for campers to claim. At the end of each session, remaining items will be kept outside the camp office for one week for families to review. After that time, unclaimed items will be donated or discarded. This process does not apply to medications or high-value items, which will be handled separately. Labeling personal items and reminding campers to bring home everything they brought is the best way to prevent items from ending up with lost and found.

Cell Phone Policy

Camp provides a place for campers to connect with others and enjoy time away from screens. If a phone must be brought to camp, it must remain stored in the camper's backpack throughout the day. If a camper feels the need to contact home, they will be directed to a staff member who can assist. Parents and guardians will be contacted by camp staff if a child is sick, injured, or needs to be picked up. If you are picking up your camper during the camp day, please contact the Camp Office before arriving.

Camp Store

We have an onsite camp store for your camper to purchase items from during their time. Login to your CampInTouch to add funds for your camper. Purchases can be made in cash, but we ask that you limit the amount of cash sent, because our camp is not responsible for lost or stolen cash. We urge you to discuss the importance of safe keeping of cash to your campers.

Camp Awards

- 1 Year & 2 Years: To be determined, may change
- **3 Years:** Junior Staff Shirt
- **4 Years:** Ole Horn
- **5 Years:** 5th Year Hat
- **6 Years:** Paddle
- **7 Years:** Tepee Rules T-Shirt
- **8 Years:** Plaque
- **9 Years:** Walking Stick
- **10 Years:** Embroidered Canvas

Years of attendance are counted only through two-week sessions; Little Vikes and one-week programs do not count toward award totals. Multiple session attendance in the same summer counts as one year of attendance. Families should notify camp staff immediately regarding any corrections to award records so adjustments can be made promptly. Awards can only be claimed for 7 days after each session.

Scan here to improve camp infrastructure.

Scan here to support camp scholarships!

Contact Information

Hours of Operation

7:30am-5:30pm

Phone: (605)336-2267

camp@siouxfallsymca.org

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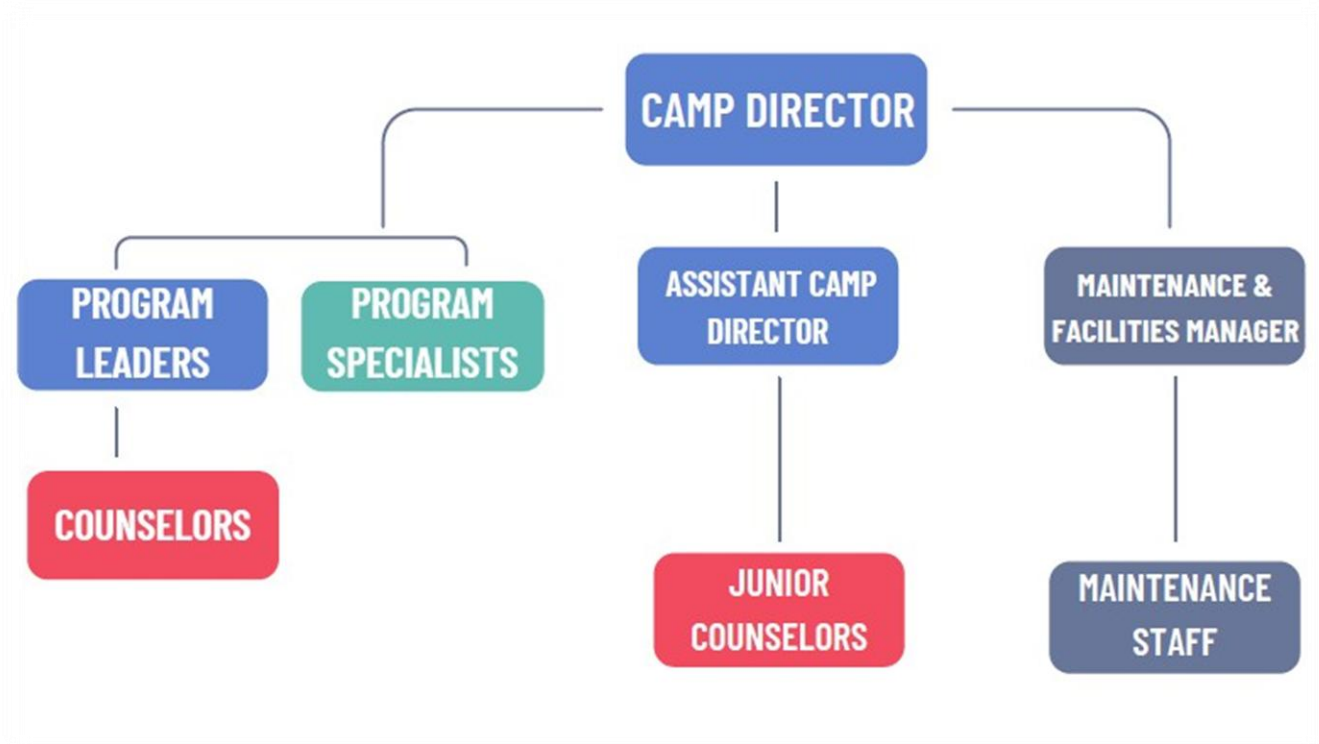
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