

# **Camp of Champs**

## **Description of Camp Activities**

### **Meeting the Needs of Special Needs Youth**

#### **Dates & Tuition Rates: (Find on website)**

**[www.campofchampsmn.com](http://www.campofchampsmn.com)**

Camp of Champs focuses on providing training and curriculum to youth with special needs. The camp is accredited with the American Camp Association and the safety, education, and care of your child is our priority. Youth will learn life skills and social skills, have the opportunity to participate in a high and low ropes Challenge Course, play sports, swim, kayak, debrief daily lessons, and much more. All activities are hands-on and team based to allow for acquiring new skills and practicing them in practical situations. The curriculum is modified each year to meet youth's special needs and ages. The learning takes place in an outdoor classroom and is facilitated by teachers, social workers, and highly trained staff.

As a parent or professional, resources for children who have special needs can often be difficult to find. Camp of Champs provides opportunities where youth can develop meaningful relationships with others. Direct instruction of social skills occurs for approximately six hours each day. If you are looking for a place where your child will be surrounded by character development and life skills, then look no further.

Camp of Champs will provide youth a 4:1 youth to staff ratio. Through teamwork activities and discussions, youth will learn to network with others and develop a community where they grow.

Benefits that your child will acquire includes:

- Communication skills using nonverbal, verbal, and body language
- Self-advocacy skills & service learning
- Transition and independent living skills
- Physical activity and healthy choices & goal setting behaviors and strategies
- Friendship skills and lifelong connections
- Anger management skills
- Etiquette skills of manners and respect
- Teambuilding skills of cooperation and problem solving
- Trust with one another and in one's abilities
- Leadership skills of initiative, independence and responsibility

## **Other Health Disability: Camp of Champs**

(Example: Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Effects)

The directors of Camp of Champs have worked with students with a myriad of disabilities as lead teachers for a combination of 25 years. There are multiple diagnoses within this disability. The following are activities that focus on improving appropriate behaviors, boundaries, and life skills. The keys when addressing the needs of a youth with fetal alcohol syndrome, attention deficit, or hyper-activity focuses on providing activities that are hands-on, outdoor and recreation based, and movement oriented. Skills are reviewed for repetition and consistency. Direct instruction of social skills training is approximately 6 hours per camp day.

- 1) **Role Plays:** At multiple times throughout camp, staff will set up and act out role-plays that specifically focus on attention, focus, concentration, and respect. Visual cues are taught and reviewed for self-monitoring of behavior. These are shared with parents as well to integrate into other environments.
- 2) **Spider Web, TP Shuffle & Wild Woozy:** These two low elements provide an opportunity to problem solve as a team, understand pressure, and work cooperatively with others to focus and have the team conquer each task.
- 3) **Rules and Expectations:** These are established on the first day of camp. All counselors reinforce these rules and expectations daily. Youth are held accountable for their actions and social conferencing when behaviors occur for self-reflection and positive replacement behaviors to be taught. These behavior skills are shared with parents as youth transition to their home and community after camp.
- 4) **Goal Setting:** Youth will take 30-45 minutes (depending on age) to determine personal goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Journaling and discussion will be incorporated. These tasks include self-control, stamina, and organizing materials in the environment.
- 5) **Peer Pressure & Talent Web:** Youth will identify common pressures at school and in the community. They will role play how to handle pressures when facing impulsivity and cause and effect difficulties. Accountability will be reviewed, as well as identifying their strengths and how to use these daily.

## **Anxiety & Depression: Camp of Champs**

Due to the diverse backgrounds of many youth with special needs, anxiety and depression have a deep impact on many of their lives. Camp of Champs offers a structured environment that provides youth with several types of activities that will teach coping strategies as well as helping them to realize their battle against these feelings are not unique. This camp provides an environment with a high staff to youth ratio to practice skills, receive reinforcement and redirections, and allow for small group discussion. Direct instruction of social skills training is approximately 6 hours per camp day. The following activities are only a sample of what the staff at Camp of Champs will provide:

- 1) **Trust Fall:** This activity focuses on identifying the definition of trust, people youth can trust, and how to build or break trust with others. They will individually complete the fall with their team and discuss anxiety, fears, and strengths.
- 2) **Journaling & Self-Reflection:** Times are set up to create a journal, share an array of feelings, and select camp counselors to reflect with. These journals will teach youth to draw, write, compose poetry, or use music to positively express their anxiety and depression.
- 3) **Exercise & Nutrition:** Research has shown the necessity of exercise in order to battle depression. Camp of Champs camp engages in highly supervised activities as well as break-out sessions focusing on particular types and the importance of exercise as a life skill. Exercise helps gain confidence, allow the mind to release worries, achieve more social interaction, and cope with anxiety and depression in a positive way. Healthy food choices are also taught, as well as incorporating exercise into their daily life as a positive outlet and a way to meet other peers.
- 4) **Team Focused:** The vast majority of all activities completed at Camp of Champs are completed utilizing skills with other people. These learned skills help youth to adapt and achieve success which decreases the feelings of anxiety and depression. Cooperation, trust with others, and the need to communicate are necessary for the activities.
- 5) **High and Low Ropes Elements:** Youth will work together with their team to complete a combination of 8 low elements, problem solve, and communicate their ideas. They will experience pressure as they climb 35 feet in the air to overcome obstacles with five elements, work through fears, and realize that they cannot control all things in their environment.

## **Reactive Attachment Disorder: Camp of Champs**

Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), which is also called "attachment disorder" affects many of the youth today. Children with attachment disorders struggle to forge emotional attachments to others, often because of serious disruptions in their early relationships. Programming that assists youth with this disability will be highly engaging, active and supervised. To reinforce skill development and to provide this highly supervised environment, Camp of Champs provides a youth to staff ratio of 4:1 or better. Direct instruction of social skills training is approximately 6 hours per camp day. Camp of Champs offers a variety of activities that begin to address these needs including:

- 1) **Role Plays**: Staff and youth work together to develop situations that reflect experiences that they may feel or go through. Youth will be asked to problem solve each role play and express how they would use coping skills and self-talk to work through the situations.
- 2) **Small group discussion**: In two sessions, staff from Camp of Champs will discuss boundaries with strangers and friends, family structure, acceptance, and allow youth the opportunity to share thoughts and feelings from their past. Visual cues including "bubble" or personal boundaries will be taught, modeled, and practiced.
- 1) **PC2=My power, my change, my choice**. Youth are taught to identify the elements that they have power and control over in their life, including identifying what elements they cannot control. This includes parents, teachers, siblings, etc. Youth are then taught about positive versus negative choices and consequences versus privileges. Role plays are used to model a change in behavior and this equation is used at all camp activities and discussions.
- 4) **Trust Relays**: This activity develops trust and support among youth, including similar activities that will be shared with the parents to incorporate at home and discuss as well. These relays will include the trust fall, Sherpa walk, Wind in the Willows, and building a stretcher carry.
- 5) **High and Low Ropes Elements**: Youth will work together with their team to complete a combination of 8 low elements, problem solve, and communicate their ideas. They will experience pressure as they climb 35 feet in the air to overcome obstacles with five elements, work through fears, and realize that they cannot control all things in their environment.

## **Learning Disabilities: Camp of Champs**

The directors of Camp of Champs have worked with students with special needs in public schools for a combination of 25 years. Older youth will learn about the IEP process and understanding their disability and services available throughout their school years. Youth will also learn transition and job skills. Ninety-five percent of the activities at Camp of Champs are hands-on, team building, and encourage group discussion. Youth will learn self-confidence, self-advocacy, and how to use coping skills to listen, comprehend, and repeat directions. Direct instruction of social skills training is approximately 6 hours per camp day. The following activities will be modified to be age appropriate. Camp of Champs offers a variety of activities that begin to address these needs including:

- 1) **IEP Talk & Transition Skills**: Older youth will learn what goals and objectives are, transition services, modifications, accommodations, and how to identify their levels of performance. The goal is to educate youth on their disabilities and help them advocate for their needs.
- 2) **Choices and Peer Pressure**: Time will be devoted to build self-esteem, self awareness, and self-advocacy. Youth will be able to develop a daily list of activities to care for themselves and identify how to access resources at home and in the community.
- 3) **Interviews & Life Skills**: Youth will learn to introduce themselves, communicate with youth and adults, and be able to answer questions and utilize etiquette skills in new environments.
- 4) **Goal Setting**: Youth will take 30-45 minutes (depending on age) to determine personal goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Journaling and discussion will be incorporated. These tasks include self-control, stamina, and organizing materials in the environment.
- 5) **High and Low Ropes Elements**: Youth will work together with their team to complete a combination of 8 low elements, problem solve, and communicate their ideas. They will experience pressure as they climb 35 feet in the air to overcome obstacles with five elements, work through fears, and realize that they cannot control all things in their environment.

## **Developmental/Cognitive Disability: Camp of Champs**

Areas that affect youth with developmental or cognitive disabilities are independent living skills, self-care, learning, self-direction, and receptive and expressive language skills. Sarah Coumbe-Guida has a special education license in developmental cognitive disabilities. Travis Guida is a work experience coordinator and works with youth for transition, life skills, and job skills both at school and in the community. At Camp of Champs, youth will be able to practice life skills, social skills, transition, and learn in an environment that is safe, accepting, and motivating. Direct instruction of social skills training is approximately 6 hours per camp day. Camp of Champs offers a variety of activities that begin to address these needs including:

- 1) **IEP Talk & Transition Skills:** Older youth will learn what goals and objectives are, transition services, modifications, accommodations, and how to identify their levels of performance. The goal is to educate youth on their disabilities and help them advocate for their needs.
- 2) **Service Learning:** Daily tasks of cabin clean up, organizing rooms and materials, daily schedule reviews, and preparation of meals and snacks is integrated into each day. These life skills and independent living skills are taught, modeled, and reinforced. Healthy food choices are also reviewed when planning for meals and serving others.
- 3) **Etiquette Skills and Role Plays:** Etiquette skills are taught including using table manners, interview skills, introductions, interacting with peers and adults, and much more. Role plays are completed by staff for youth to observe, identify skills, and then practice these skills in the controlled environment. Youth then identify places that they can use these skills at home, in the community, and in the school settings. The etiquette skills are reinforced throughout camp and youth verbally identify them and then practice with peers and staff.
- 4) **C4 Challenge:** Youth will work with other peers and staff to cross obstacles, identify strengths and fears, and use teamwork to accomplish tasks.
- 5) **Low Ropes Elements:** Youth will work together with their team to complete a combination of 8 low elements, problem solve, and communicate their ideas. These include the Log Shuffle, Spider Web, Islands, and Meuse.

## **Autism/Asperger's Syndrome: Camp of Champs**

Youth with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome are not able to consistently identify social cues, read body language, or initiate or maintain conversations with peers or adults. Many youth do not respond well to changes in routine and often lack empathy for the feelings of others. At Camp of Champs, youth will be able to work directly on social skills and curriculum to meet their needs for about 6 hours per camp day. The positive benefit is that as these youth learn new social skills, they are able to apply them to other settings at camp when working with youth and counselors. These skills are reinforced and modeled during all activities. The following are examples of activities to assist youth with these needs:

- 1) **Etiquette Skills and Role Plays:** Etiquette skills are taught including using table manners, interview skills, introductions, interacting with peers and adults, and much more. Role plays are completed by staff for youth to observe, identify skills, and then practice these skills in the controlled environment. Youth then identify places that they can use these skills at home, in the community, and in the school settings. The etiquette skills are reinforced throughout camp and youth verbally identify them and then practice with peers and staff.
- 2) **Low Ropes Elements:** Youth will work together with their team to complete a combination of 8 low elements, problem solve, and communicate their ideas. The Wild Woozy, Trust Fall, All Aboard, and Spider Web will be used to teach trust with others, self-confidence, social skills, reading body language during activities, and problem solving.
- 3) **Helium Stick:** Youth will work together to accomplish the task of lowering the helium stick, while respecting boundaries and working together on communication skills.
- 4) **Conversation Builders:** Youth ask specific questions to one another during meal times. They are encouraged to use eye contact, ask questions, and reply to questions asked of them. They learn to initiate friendships with others.
- 5) **Communication Skills:** Youth will learn how to read the body language of others, identify feelings associated with body language, and respond to the feelings of others during small group discussions and team activities. They will learn to look to their peers to identify the social cues used in each setting and this will be verbally taught when each activity transitions for additional practice.

## **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Camp of Champs**

Youth will learn to identify thoughts about the world and themselves that are making them feel afraid or upset. Youth will learn to replace these thoughts with more accurate and less distressing thoughts, using individual and team activities. Youth also learn ways to cope with feelings such as anger, guilt, and fear. Direct instruction of social skills training is approximately 6 hours per camp day. Activities that address this individual need include:

- 1) **One-on-one and large group discussions:** In structured discussions, staff will speak in general terms about defining fear, loss, and rejection. They will give youth the opportunity to discuss their own feelings and personal experiences. These opportunities include journaling, group discussions, and small group time with children with similar feelings. This can help youth cope with their symptoms, memories, and other components of their life. Youth will also learn valuable coping strategies. These discussions will also help Identify what triggers stressful memories and other symptoms.
- 2) **High and Low Ropes Elements:** Youth will work together with their team to complete a combination of 8 low elements, problem solve, and communicate their ideas. They will experience pressure as they climb 35 feet in the air to overcome obstacles with five elements, work through fears, and realize that they cannot control all things in their environment.
- 3) **Role Plays:** Staff will act out various situations through skits of fear, rejection, trauma, and loss youth will see and experience others that feel the way many of them feel. Youth will be asked to problem solve each role play and express how they would use coping skills and self-talk to work through the situations.
- 4) **Canoe Trip:** This experience will allow youth to be placed into stressful situations that are highly supervised. Youth will begin to heal wounds and trauma they have experienced. Self-talk and verbal replacement will be used to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts as they paddle down a river and back up using teamwork, a combination of kayaks and canoes, and paddles that force them to work together. Youth will need to switch places and boats in the shallow part of the river. These events cause some stress and staff talk through these experiences to allow youth to problem solve, use their coping skills, and debrief on the experience and allow for personal growth.