



Getting Started

Determine the Needs of the Community

What do you know about the community around you? What are the needs of the parents and children in your community? What are the goals of your local church? These are the questions that you need to ask before proceeding with planning a day camp program in your church or community. Make sure you address these questions.

- How does the day camp fit into the overall mission of the local Seventh-day Adventist church? Discuss this with your pastor and church board.
- What are the needs of area residents? To discover this you can talk with the neighborhood children, take surveys, and check with community agencies. It is especially important that you obtain input from your own local church members and their children.
- What other organizations within the community are offering day camps? You need to find out if you're duplicating something that is already in place just around the corner from your church.
- Are there niches in summer programming that aren't being filled in your community? Examples of these could be art, music, gymnastics, basketball, and baseball camps.

CHOOSING A SITE

The site chosen for the day camp should be a safe environment. It must be a place that parents and caregivers are comfortable leaving their children. The camp sites should provide shelter, safety, and a place for recreation. Here are some things to consider when choosing a site.

SHELTER

Your chosen site should have available a shelter for all children and staff. There are a number of places in your community that could serve as an appropriate location.

- Churches
- Schools
- Campgrounds
- Farms
- Outdoor education centers
- Parks
- Community buildings
- Civic group buildings
- Conference centers
- Private property
- Undeveloped public lands (tents could be used to provide shelter)

SAFETY

The safety of this site must have high priority. The area should have easy access but not be near main streets or highways. All areas must be clearly visible and be clean and in good repair. A complete inspection should take place by qualified persons. Some factors should be considered include the following.

- Well-lit fire exits
- Proper lighting
- Easily-accessible doors
- Proper ventilation
- Signs or barriers for places where children could slip, trip, or fall
- Shelter in case of storms, rain, tornadoes, etc.
- Facility in good repair

RECREATION

The site must have an open area for games and recreation or at least have access to these types of areas. A large gymnasium would be ideal. A lake or a swimming pool nearby would add to your programming choices.

BATHROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

The American Camping Association gives the following bathroom facility recommendation.

Toilet facilities should have one seat for every 30 females, and one seat for every 50 males. There should be one wash basin or equivalent per 30 persons with a minimum of two basins for each toilet facility designed to serve more than five persons at the same time. Insure that you are meeting local and state codes concerning these facilities.

Determine Dates of Operation

Operating a day camp is not a last minute decision, it requires lots of advance planning. The dates of operation for a day camp should be set 9 to 10 months in advance or at least by early fall. Consider the following dates when planning.

- Ending and starting of school
- Holidays
- Vacation Bible School dates
- Availability of facilities
- Check operating dates of other area day camps

Church Board and Conference Youth Ministries Department Approval

After all options have been thoroughly researched, a proposal must be taken to the local church board and conference youth ministries department for approval. **Church board approval should be recorded in local church board meeting minutes.** The official board approved document should be presented with the request to your local conference youth ministries department. In most cases the local conference Youth Department would be the one to oversee your day camp operation.

Suggested Time Line for Starting a Day Camp

FEBRUARY

Arrange for necessary transportation

Begin the staff hiring process

Produce marketing material—brochures, fliers, posters, etc.

MARCH

Distribute marketing material to area churches, schools, and neighborhood centers

Review staff applications

Finalize the camp staff

Order supplies such as crafts, T-shirts, recreational equipment, etc.

APRIL

Mail applications to former and potential campers

Advertise

Schedule field trips

MAY

Set up camp banner or sign

Promote camp in local schools

Staff orientation includes representative from Adventist Risk Management or conference safety specialist

JUNE—JULY

Operate camp

AUGUST

File necessary report forms

Finish paper work

Take inventory of day camp supplies and store properly

SEPTEMBER—FEBRUARY

Begin planning another exciting day camp