

YMCA Camp Erdman
Environmental Education Program
Chaperone's Role and Guidelines Letter

Thank you for being a part of our Environmental Education experience! We welcome you to our team and hope that you will find your role as a chaperone enjoyable and rewarding. Please read this letter carefully before your trip. If you have any questions feel free to call Camp Erdman or speak to the lead teacher from your school.

Your Primary role as a chaperone is supervision. As a supervisor it is important that safety is always in the forefront of your mind and that you are available to the students in case any problems come up. You can also expand your role and make it more meaningful by getting as involved as possible with the students and the program. Supervision responsibilities for the various times of the day are outlined below.

Classes

The Camp Erdman staff will lead all the classes and activities, but a second adult must be present with each learning group. Please make sure you are there on time at the start of the class to join your group and stay with the group for the entire activity.

Your role during class:

- Encourage participation and enthusiasm by being a positive role model.
- Adhere to and help enforce all rules, guidelines, or safety measures set by the camp or instructors
- Assist with discipline as requested by the instructor. If one student is being disruptive, take him or her aside so the class may continue uninterrupted.
- Please refrain from smoking, using cell phones, or having personal conversations during class time.

Your role in between class:

- Please make sure you stay with your students during the 15 minute break in between classes. This is a time for them to get water and use the restroom.
- Make sure students get back to their school meeting spot on time.

Suggestions during class time:

- Allow the instructor of the group to be in charge. If you disagree with the instructor about something, speak to him or her privately or bring your concerns to the lead teacher or Program Director.
- Participate and get involved in the activity. Enjoy yourself, but keep in mind that the classes are designed to provide learning experiences for the students-try to not be overbearing or dominating during an activity. If you are unsure about when to participate, please communicate with the instructor.

Meals

Supervision during meals is very important to maintain a smooth and pleasant dining hall experience. The adults do not have to sit with the students, but should be actively involved in the student's actions. Meal times can be a learning experience for the students as well. Cooperation, responsibility, courtesy, food appreciation and resource recovery are all valuable lessons that are emphasized in the dining hall.

Guidelines to a pleasant meal:

- Please be on time to the meal. It is important to stay on schedule so the students do not have to cut out any activity time.
- Only the KP students are allowed to get up during the meal to retrieve more food or drinks.
- Make sure all students stay seated until the meal is completely over and the students who are not KP are dismissed.
- There should be at least 1 adult who will go with the dismissed students out of the dining hall to supervise them.
- Make sure that the KP students for each table stay to finish their duties.
- Encourage students to have little or no food waste left on their tables.

Free Time and School Time

The schedule at Camp Erdman is a busy one, but there are times throughout the day when the students can relax, recreate, and take showers. These times are before and after meals. **Camp Erdman staff do not supervise students during free time, this is the responsibility of the school.** Accidents are most likely to occur during unstructured time, so it is very important to make sure the students are supervised.

Please follow these guidelines:

- Free time is often seen as a chance for some adults to take a break away from the students. This is ok as long as the students have some adult coverage. This works best if all the adults communicate and take turns supervising.
- Free time is also a great time to get the students to take showers. Please make sure that there are adults supervising at the cabins as well.

Cabins

Supervision in the cabins is one of your most important roles. "Cabin-Time" can be a very significant and special time for students. Often their experiences in their cabin are remembered long beyond the academic experience.

Guidelines and Suggestions:

- Students are not allowed in the cabins without at least 1 adult present.
- As soon as possible after you move into your cabins, sit down with your students you will be staying with and discuss rules and guidelines for the cabin. Make sure they understand the reasoning behind the rules they must follow. Allow them to ask questions and encourage them to contribute their ideas. Living in a large group requires communication, cooperation and compromise.
- Do things together as a group; play a game, write poems or stories about their experiences at camp, or organize a formal sharing time each night.
- Help the students to feel comfortable and show them that you really care.

The job of a chaperone is a challenging one. It requires a great deal of effort and energy, but when you realize how much you have done for the students it will definitely seem worthwhile. After reading this letter, you may feel overwhelmed. Try to remember that you have lots of support. You are not the only chaperone and there are others who share responsibilities. Communicate with other chaperones and the lead teacher of the trip and build a team together. Work as a group to create the best possible Camp Erdman experience. Who knows, you may make new friends too!

Thanks for all your help and hard work!!!

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