



CAMP ROBIN HOOD

Camp Policy Handbook

For over 75 summers, our camp has been providing the most professional, inclusive, memorable, and spirited day camp experience in the GTA. Camp has always been a family affair and for almost 65 years of our camp's history, our family has proudly been its owners and directors.

The decision to choose a day camp you can trust is not one to be entered into lightly. Thanks for choosing us. Please allow us to explain some of the philosophical and policy positions that we are committed to so that you and your entire family can have the *"best summer ever."*

The Difference Between Camp Robin Hood And School

Camp Robin Hood prioritizes camper participation and enjoyment through a commitment to promoting social learning and fostering positive group dynamics. A camp experience is unique for kids and occurs at such an important developmental time in their lives.

Both school and camp provide kids structure, individual skill development and an opportunity for personal growth. They are similar in some ways, but camp is unique. While school may be perceived as a more structured environment, Camp Robin Hood provides campers the consistency and predictability of school while at the same time allowing for enhanced socialization and self-discovery in an outdoor, fun-filled environment. Our setting provides a valuable and necessary experience for kids to learn and grow. Our campers discover who they are and what they can do as individuals, as we have always seen each camper's time at camp as a time to learn and develop "life-long" skills. A day at camp is an experience of constant personal interaction. Our staff are hired and trained to address and reinforce age-appropriate camper behaviour, to support and encourage taking healthy risks and to foster resilience in the face of adversity. Through a variety of group-based activities as well as spirited theme days, campers participate in ways that allow them to cheer, dress-up and engage in all that camp has to offer. Our goal is to have each Camp Robin Hood camper end their summer experience with us a little more confident in their own abilities.

You will notice in our literature that our response to camper issues and conflicts has similarities to school and also reflects an approach that values teaching, learning and growth. We strongly feel this approach supports campers as they navigate and build positive life lasting relationships at Camp Robin Hood.

We work with campers to identify the signs of when they need support. Our staff are trained to provide assistance with problem solving and help campers discover when they can manage things on their own. We encourage them to ask themselves questions like:

- Am I safe physically or emotionally?
- Do I see a friend or fellow camper in an uncomfortable situation?

These reflective questions will assist campers in navigating the personal growth opportunities at camp while utilizing our staff to assist as needed.

The Importance of Healthy Risk

At Camp Robin Hood, we view healthy risk-taking at camp as highly beneficial as it encourages campers to step out of their comfort zones, try new activities, and develop valuable skills such as problem-solving, resilience, and confidence. These experiences teach them to assess and manage risks responsibly, preparing them for challenges they may encounter in life. Additionally, taking healthy risks fosters creativity, builds independence, and promotes personal growth by expanding their horizons and pushing their boundaries in a supportive and controlled environment.

What the Experts are Saying About Healthy Risk Taking

We always seek out the advice and insight of other professionals who also work with kids and youth to help guide our camp practices and policies. Here are a few of our favourite recent examples:

- The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS), in an article earlier this year stated; "Risky play helps build physical and mental health and resilience among children and youth and can help prevent or manage conditions like obesity, anxiety and behavioural issues.
- "In his newly released book "The Anxious Generation", Social Psychologist Dr. Jonathan Haidt outlines the detrimental role that smartphones and social media have played in child development and uses his platform to promote the value of the camp experience and the importance of a play-based childhood. This is further emphasized in the article "Why Kids Need Summer Camp" by our camp colleague Steve Baskin. It's a good read for parents who send their kids to day or overnight camp.

We are very proud that our outdoor environment and program structure embraces and promotes the values of supervised, outdoor play and the positive role it can make in a child's physical, mental, and social development.

Resolving Camper Conflicts at Camp:

As you have read, Camp Robin Hood values camper growth, reflection and development. It is one of our core beliefs. Part of this is working through conflict with other campers at camp. As with any social situation, disagreements and conflict can and will occur. We strive to teach our campers the skills to work through these situations in a respectful manner by demonstrating the following:

- Showing empathy for others.
- Expressing how they are feeling (e.g. "I did not like that, it made me sad.").
- Validating the feelings of others who we have hurt (e.g. "It makes sense you feel this way").
- Owning our actions and apologizing.

Promoting A Safe And Respectful Camp Community

At Camp Robin Hood, we are committed to creating and promoting a safe and respectful environment for both campers and staff. We aim to accomplish this by partnering and engaging with campers, staff and families to establish clear boundaries as it relates to expectations for our camp community.

Our staff strive to help campers develop the following pro-social behaviours (i.e. behaviours and actions that benefit others, such as co-operation, sharing, helping and caring):

- Recognizing the responsibility they have for themselves and others around them.
- Making good choices.
- Handling challenges with resilience.
- Understanding the consequences of their actions.
- Respecting oneself and others while celebrating and embracing our differences.

Supervision at Camp Robin Hood

The care and safety of your child is our highest priority. As such, and in conjunction with the standards of the [Ontario Camps Association](#), of which we are a proud accredited member, we provide camper-to-staff ratios that are consistent with best practices in the camp industry.

Each team of “cabin leaders” are trained and responsible for being with their cabin group all day long and participate alongside them during their scheduled activities. While we are committed to having “an eye” on our campers all of the time, there are brief moments in the day when kids could be on their own. Examples of this may include:

- retrieving their lunch from their cabin,
- getting an item out of their backpack
- going to the washroom on their own or with a cabin mate when the cabin and staff are nearby.

For us, fostering age-appropriate opportunities to develop independence and responsibility are goals of the Camp Robin Hood experience. Our staff are trained on when and how to provide these moments. We have found that campers at Robin Hood adapt very quickly to our surroundings and benefit from these well-placed moments of independence that promote confidence and responsibility.

Staff are also trained how to age-appropriately assist their campers with changing, sunscreen application and washroom visits.

Behaviour Expectations at Camp Robin Hood

Campers and staff are expected to behave in a manner which ensures their own safety and the safety of other campers and staff. Staff will be responsible to communicate behavioural expectations, encourage appropriate behaviours and to use group management techniques to create an environment which prevents unacceptable behaviours from occurring. Our goal is to provide a caring, respectful, and supportive environment for every camper and staff.

Camp Robin Hood is a learning environment, focused on providing every person the opportunity to do better. We are fortunate to have camp and educational professionals (i.e. elementary school administrators on staff) that use their expertise to determine age and camp appropriate consequences and responses when an incident arises.

Our staff will make every effort to work with campers and their families to encourage positive, pro-social behaviour. Continued unsafe or disruptive behaviour by campers may result in suspension or removal from camp. In the event of a camper removal from our program, whether initiated by the Camp Owners/Directors or Parents/Caregivers, Camp Robin Hood is not obliged to provide a pro-rated refund.

Examples Of Camper Behaviour That Are Deemed Unacceptable at Camp:

- Aggression, cruelty or violence towards self or others (i.e. biting, pushing in the pool).
- Persistent teasing or bullying.
- Repeated disrespect and/or profanity (i.e. reoccurring offensive or rude language even after staff have addressed it).
- Bigotry or hatred towards individuals or groups.
- Fleeing, hiding, or refusing to follow the directions of staff.
- Destruction/vandalism of camp property or others' personal belongings.
- Hurtful or inappropriate internet, phone, or social media use (before, during or after camp).
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- On-going disruptive behaviour, where behaviour management techniques and strategies have not worked.

It is essential that parents/caregiver's partner with our team to promote positive and pro-social behaviour. Because you know your child best, we encourage you to share any additional information that would assist us in best supporting your child in our setting. This two-way communication is essential **prior to the start of camp** to ensure our team has time to plan for your child coming to camp.

We ask that you help us in maintaining a positive, safe, and enjoyable environment by communicating clearly with your child that there will be consequences for hurtful, harmful, unacceptable, or unsafe behaviours. In addition, your support of our decisions on managing and/or consequenceing undesired behaviour is an integral part of our important partnership.

Our Approach to Managing Undesired Behaviours

Holding campers accountable for their actions is something that Camp Robin Hood takes very seriously. Our staff are trained to clearly communicate to campers' expectations of acceptable camp behaviours and will consistently encourage and promote appropriate behaviour. Our staff will use age-appropriate group management techniques and strategies to help prevent unacceptable behaviours from happening. Whether it is an issue of inappropriate language, an incident that is physical or behaviour that involves exclusion of fellow campers, we always attempt to incorporate a progressive approach to redirecting undesired behaviour in a supportive and developmentally appropriate manner. We believe camp is about reflection and growth for our campers.

Steps taken when campers do not follow the behaviour guidelines (AKA progressive discipline):

- Staff members will redirect the camper to a more appropriate behaviour.
- The camper will be reminded of the behaviour guidelines either by their cabin leader and/or Unit Head.
- If the behaviour persists, the Division Head will discuss the problem with a parent/caregiver.
- If the problem persists to the point where a member of our Director Team is involved, the Director may make a phone call to the parent/caregiver with the camper to discuss the situation. In this situation, the Director will determine next steps, which may include:
 - A return to the group with specific behaviour plan further outlined.
 - A suspension from camp with the parent/caregiver coming to camp to pick up their child.
 - An expulsion from camp with the parent/caregiver coming to camp to pick up their child.

- If a camper's behaviour at any time threatens the immediate safety of themselves, other campers, or staff, the parent/caregiver will be notified and the child will be prohibited from participating in programs, effective immediately (i.e. suspension or expulsion). The parent/caregiver would then be expected to pick up their child from camp as soon as possible.

Please Note: Every situation will take into consideration the campers needs and any additional factors that help us determine appropriate next steps.

Should a camper be suspended from camp for any duration, the following will occur:

- When the camper returns to camp, they will be driven to camp by their parent/caregiver and have a meeting with their Division Head and/or the camp Director to discuss the next steps for them at camp and what must take place for them to be properly integrated back into the cabin group.
- The camper may return where appropriate accommodations or supports can be implemented, in collaboration with the parent/caregiver, camper and staff.
- There may be a circumstance where we have agreed to accept a child with full knowledge of their behavioural issues and have attempted to take all the necessary steps of making the experience successful but find that we are unable to do so. For the good of this child and/or the community, the child may have to leave.
- Parents/caregivers will be notified as soon as possible of any dangerous behaviours and will result in the camper being immediately picked up and withdrawn from camp.

Please note: While we will make every effort to work towards a positive experience for every camper, we may determine Camp Robin Hood's setting, pace of the day, level of individual attention and resource support etc. are not meeting the appropriate needs of the camper. It should also be noted that our staff are unable to utilize physical restraint or intervention as a method of behaviour management.

Anti-Bullying Commitment

Bullying, in all of its forms, can occur in any social environment. Camp Robin Hood is ready to respond to issues of verbal or physical intimidation, "put-downs" (of any kind) or any situation that creates discomfort for a camper or staff member. Our supervisors, 'Senior Staff', (consisting of several educators), along with members of our Leadership Team, will be directly involved in approaching these issues. Camp will engage in meaningful dialogue at camp with campers and by implementing developmentally-age-appropriate measures when this undesired behaviour occurs. Supportive reinforcement of behaviour expectations at home will aid in achieving an effective resolution.

Inclusion at Camp Robin Hood

Campers with Additional Needs

Camp Robin Hood was the first day camp to fully include children with additional needs; an unheard-of concept back in our early years. It came from a natural desire to care for every child, and it has been truly gratifying to see staff and campers of all abilities embrace each other's differences. Under the direction of Camp Owner/Director Sari Grossinger, we are proud to be recognized internationally as leaders in the field of inclusion. As a pediatric Occupational Therapist, Sari and her team of professionals, work with families throughout the year to ensure a successful summer for all.

Camp Robin Hood is not a traditional therapeutic environment therefore the inclusion of campers with identified additional needs requires important discussions between our camp director, parents, teachers, and other professionals as necessary. Our goal is to always provide a positive camp experience for all our campers. We recognize that we cannot meet every child's needs but do our best to determine and work towards a safe and successful experience for campers and their families.

Gender Inclusion

We are committed to providing a safe and inclusive place for all members of our camp community. Our longstanding guideline has been to allow campers to be placed in a cabin of the gender with which they most closely identify (our cabins are divided into male and female-identifying groups). For staff, this conversation happens during the hiring process, and for campers, it happens during enrolment. We validate and normalize their choice, and the camper or staff member is under no obligation to share information about their gender identity.

Keeping Campers Safe

Personal Safety

Our promise is to make every reasonable effort to provide a safe and nurturing environment for everyone in our setting. We have an established Health and Safety Committee that continuously addresses potential hazards as well as an experienced Health Centre (known as 'Robin-Aid') that is staffed with at least 3 Registered Nurses each session to respond to camper and staff needs. Our maintenance team conducts regular checks around our facility to maintain a clean and suitable environment for all to use. Our Senior Staff (camp supervisors) are all equipped with communication devices (i.e. walkie talkies) that provide constant contact within our team should a situation that requires immediate attention develops. As challenges present themselves, all those involved will be supported by the appropriate members of our Leadership Team.

Camp is situated on private property with no opportunities to engage with the public. We have signage at all our camp entrances as well as sign-in/sign-out protocols that all visitors (including caregivers) must follow. All our staff are properly trained to recognize and respond to unauthorized people at camp.

Local law enforcement is aware of our operation during the summer and is committed to respond should a need arise. We also employ paid duty York Regional Police to assist us with our bus and car departure each day.

Discussing Current Events

Camp Robin Hood strives to provide increased awareness of universal values like kindness, respect and acceptance of others. Campers should leave Camp Robin Hood with the same general belief system they arrived with. All viewpoints that respect the humanity of others are welcome. Staff are trained/instructed not to engage in discussions related to politics, religion and/or current events and to use age-appropriate ways to divert conversations to more neutral topics. Our staff will guide campers towards bringing up those topics with trusted adult figures outside of camp.

Inclement Weather

While blue skies and comfortable temperatures are what we hope for each summer, we recognize that as an outdoor day camp, being prepared for all types of weather conditions is a necessary part of our camp preparations. Weather at camp each day can vary quite a bit from your neighbourhood, and we strive to communicate regularly about conditions at camp so you can prepare properly. Should rain, extreme heat or other weather events occur at camp, we have a plan to keep every member of our camp community safe and comfortable. Should inclement weather pose a significant threat to daily operations, we will communicate our plans with families (i.e. cancelling a day at camp or early departure).