

Tips on Finding a Summer Youth Camp for your Child Consider your camp choices now!

The Essex Health Department reminds the public that now is the time to begin thinking about choosing a summer youth camp for the child or children in your life.

"January is not too early to begin your research into finding the right camp for the children in your household" said DPH Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H. "Match a camp to your child's personality, temperament and interests. There are a host of specialty camps as well as general camps that give a 'taste' of a variety of outdoor experiences. And don't forget to involve your child in the camp choosing process."

In Connecticut, the DPH licenses most day and overnight your camps. DPH also inspects these camps yearly to ensure they are in compliance with state standards including:

- A DPH-approved director who is responsible for the health, comfort and safety of both campers and staff at all times;
- A licensed physician on-call at all times;
- Records of staff and camper immunization and physical examinations;

Parents and guardians can visit the web site to start their camp search, followed by a late winter visit to the camp or camps they are most interested in having their children attend. When visiting, parents/guardians should feel comfortable asking camp directors and staff about these standards, as well as asking:

- How much experience does the camp director possess? How experienced is the staff?
- Are background checks performed on staff?
- What percentage of children and staff return to the camp each year?
- What is a typical camper's day like? What happens on a rainy day?
- What is the camp's philosophy on treating homesickness?
- How much does it cost?

In addition, the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that youth camps make reasonable accommodations so that children with special needs may attend. That makes it possible for the special needs child to attend virtually any day or overnight youth camp. On the other hand, more and more camps are specializing in delivering services to special needs children. To make the right choice for you and your child, consider:

- What do I want my child to get out of summer camp?
- If physical accessibility is an issue, what is the camp layout? Are there ramps?
- What special diet accommodations can be made?
- What kind of training and background does the staff have in working with kids with special needs?
- What is the camp procedure if your child develops a complication due to a medical problem?
- Is the camp staff trained to administer medication and monitor children with diabetes?

For more information on this topic, visit the DPH

Website: http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Youth_camps/youthcamps.htm