

Parent Information Guide



2026

Hello!

Welcome to another fantastic summer at Discovery Day Camp with Valpo Parks. Our dedicated staff is geared up for a summer filled with fun and excitement!

Please make sure to read through the following pages, as it provides essential information for the 2026 Discovery Day Camp programs.

At Discovery Day Camp, we are committed to fostering an **inclusive environment where every camper feels safe and welcome**. We strongly encourage both campers and parents to thoroughly review and understand the Discovery Day Camp Behavior Agreement outlined in this guidebook. Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding our summer camp programs, feel free to reach out to us directly. We eagerly anticipate providing your child with a secure and enjoyable summer!

Sincerely,

The Staff of DDC

QUICK REFERENCE TO OUR MOST FREQUENT QUESTIONS:

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OUR STAFF

It is our goal to answer all questions or concerns. You may contact us via phone number or email.

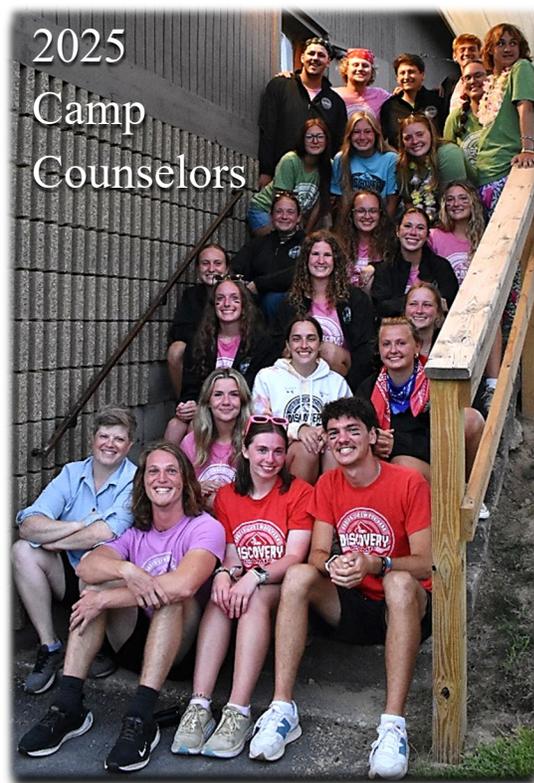
Enrichment Director:

Katie Ridinger: 219-462-5144 ext. 6314 kridinger@valpo.us

This is Katie's 5th summer overseeing DDC. Prior to Valpo parks, Katie was in camp administration for 7 years, and a camp counselor for 4 years. She also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine.

On-Site Camp Directors: Seasonal

Counselors: Our staff is primarily college students. All counselors are interviewed with reference and background checks. Everyone attends a weeklong orientation which includes CPR/AED/First Aid training, Child Development training, and Behavioral and Emotional Skills training. During orientation, all emergency procedures are taught, along with the daily operations of camp.



CAMP LOCATION

Rogers Lakewood Park: 5320 N Campbell Street, Valparaiso; Discovery Shelter

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY & LOCATION

In the event of inclement weather (continuous thunderstorms or heat index over 100 for an extended period of time), camp will move to *Flint Lake Elementary [back door]* (**Please use Explorer Drive to enter at the back of the school**). Please check our main valpoparks.org website for the alert center banner, our 2026 Discovery Day Camp Facebook Group, text messages (if enabled) or your email for important messages.

The decision to move camp must be made by 1pm daily to ensure transportation via Valparaiso School bus. This is a one-way trip.

Discovery Day Camp communicates with the National Weather Service, headquartered in Chicago, daily. For other concerns, including air quality, DDC communicates with the Porter County Health Department.



2026 SUMMER DAY CAMP SESSIONS

Below are the eight weeks in which DDC is in session and the themes for each week. If unforeseen circumstances change any of these activities, we will communicate that information as quickly as possible.

Please note that there will be **NO** camp during the week of June 29-July 3.

	Field Trip (Tuesdays) *wear camp shirt*	All Camp (Thursdays)
<i>Week 1: Messy Science</i> June 1-5	Bubbles	Spaceship Building
<i>Week 2: Holiday</i> June 8-12	TBD	Birthday Party
<i>Week 3: Super Soaker</i> June 15-19	Hobart Community Pool*	Water War
<i>Week 4: World Cup</i> June 22-26	Memorial Opera House: Variety Show**	Soccer fest
<i>Week 5: Carnival</i> July 6-10	Inflatable Rock Wall	Carnival
<i>Week 6: Going Green</i> July 13-17	Washington Park Zoo*	Gold Rush
<i>Week 7: Game Shows</i> July 20-24	Magician	Color Wars
<i>Week 8: Superstar</i> July 27 – July 30	Break Dancing	N/A
* = Campers will be transported out of camp by First Student school buses. ** = by VCS Bus		

REGISTRATION

Ultra Camp Registration link: [Discovery Day Camp Online Registration](#)

Registration for camp is a weekly registration. Parents may choose to register their child for one week at a time or register for multiple weeks at one time. **Please note that attending any week of camp does not ensure your child's spot for additional weeks.** You will need to register for each week of camp your child plans to attend. All communication through Ultra Camp will go to the primary email address on your camper's account.

PAYMENT

When paying for camp through Ultra Camp, parents may choose to pay in full or set up a payment plan that must be paid off by May 25th, 2026.

REGISTRATION / MODIFICATION DEADLINES

The registration deadline for camp is 5:00 pm the Monday prior to your child starting a new week of camp. For example, registration for Week 2 should be completed by 5pm Monday of Week 1. A \$15 late fee will be added should there be open spots after registration for a week closes.

For AM/PM Care, modifications may be made until 5:00 pm the Thursday prior to the week needed. Please make modifications on Ultra Camp.



REFUND POLICY

All refunds must be requested through Ultra Camp 7 days prior to the registration deadline (see above). This means 2 weeks prior to the week of camp starting. The \$15 non-refundable deposit serves as the cancellation fee.

CAMPER GROUPS

Throughout the day there are times when campers are separated into their **Fall 2026** grade level (group activity), and times when the whole camp interacts (stations, all camps & field trips). See the daily camp schedule on page 6 for those times.

Discovery Day Camp Camper groups based on Fall 2026 Enrollment:

Voyagers	Kindergarten
Explorers	1 st Grade
Navigators	2 nd Grade
Pioneers	3 rd Grade
Trailblazers	4 th Grade
Jr. Rangers	5 th Grade
Rangers	6 th Grade
Counselor in Training (CIT)	7 th , 8 th & 9 th Grade

CAMPER FORMS

All Camp forms must be filled out digitally online through Ultra Camp. The forms include basic health history, permissions to use first aid on your camper, and any medications. Campers will not be allowed to attend camp with incomplete forms.

For your child's safety, these forms **must** be completed at least a week before the first day of camp your camper attends. Any medication needed during camp (ie: inhaler, EpiPen) **must have the medication tab completed on the Camper's health profile on Ultra Camp before it is dispensed.**

COUNSELORS IN TRAINING

The Counselors in Training (CIT) Leadership program was launched in 2023. This program is designed to teach older campers the basics of project management, leadership and child development. CITs will lead groups of younger campers in activities twice a week with the assistance of our CIT Director and other DDC counselors. This group will also participate in CIT only activities. CITs are still considered campers and participate in stations and other camp activities with their peers.





ROGERS LAKEWOOD GATE

In order to avoid paying a gate fee for drop off & pick up, please be sure you acquire a 2026 orange Discovery Day Camp gate pass. Passes can be picked up at Meet the Counselor for preregistered campers, or on the Monday of your camper's first week of camp. Families may use the same pass for additional weeks of camp. Please scan the back of the pass at the gate box to enter the park during drop off/pick up times. Passes do not work in the evening or on weekends. Please display this pass in the front windshield of your vehicle to alert camp staff that you are there for camp.

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP PROCEDURES

- At drop off, all parents will drive to the Discovery Camp Shelter and wait in the line of cars. At 8:45am, cars will pull up to the shelter, a director will check in your camper and a counselor will open the car door to allow the camper to exit the car.
- At pick up, parents who arrive early will be asked to wait outside of the red gate. Please keep the road to the Disc Golf building open and usable.
- At pick up, parents will show a valid ID to the directors at the gate to check their camper out and gain access to the parking lot.
- Drop-off and pick-up will occur every day at Discovery Day Camp Shelter from **8:45a.m. -9:15am for drop-off** and **pick-up begins at 3:00 p.m. and ends no later than 3:30 p.m.**
- If a day camper is not picked up by 3:30pm they are automatically charged \$15 for PM care and must pay before additional days may be attended.

EXTENDED CARE

- Extended A.M. care is from **7 a.m – 8:30am.** **If extended AM campers do not arrive by 8:30am they must join the regular drop-off line.** The 8:30-8:45am window to ensure all staff are in place.
- Extended PM Care is from **3:30pm – 5pm.**
- There will be a \$10 late fee for all campers not picked up by 5:05pm daily. The fee will be added to the camper's account and must be paid before attending additional weeks. This fee is to ensure promptness, as our staff has additional responsibilities after campers leave. If the late pick up is the fault of DDC there will be no charge.

LATE DROP OFFS

- For the safety of all campers, **do not enter the camp after the red gate is closed.** Directors will come to the gate and assist. Please allow 15 min as Directors may be dealing with current camp situations.



EARLY PICK-UP

- Early pick at camp: 12:45-1:30pm
- We ask parents to use the designated early pick up time because this is when all campers will be at the main camp, rather than across Rogers Lakewood at another activity.
- During this specific pickup time, counselors will be placed at the red gate to check IDs and check out campers in a timely manner.
- Since camp is still running at this time, early pick-up must happen outside the red gate for the safety of all campers.

DAILY CAMP SCHEDULE	
7:00 am - 8:30 am	Extended AM Care (Sign up in advance)
8:45am - 9:15 am	Drop Off & Morning Stations
9:15 am - 12:00 pm	The entire camp gathers to go over rules & divide into groups. Group activities.
12:00 pm - 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 pm - 12:45 pm	Lunch Clean-up & Songs
12:45 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch Stations (Early pick up or late drop off available)
1:30 pm 2:45 pm	Group Activity
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Camp Clean up
3:00-3:30	Pick up
3:30-5:00 pm	Extended PM Care (Sign up in advance)

Group activities are when campers are divided by their 2026 grade level. Stations are where the entire camp may interact

OTHER INFORMATION

- Please drive with caution through Rogers Lakewood Park. There are many other patrons inside the park, so please be alert when driving.
- There may be a line at camp, so please be patient. We do our best to get your child back to you as quickly as possible.
- For any additional people allowed to pick up your child please update the camper's profile on Ultra Camp. Children **will not** be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian or authorized pick-up person.
- If a restraining order is in place, please provide a copy to the Enrichment Director.
 - While we will always attempt to follow parental wishes regarding non-pick-up by persons, we are not legally able to stop a parent from picking up their child unless there is a restraining order in place. Please provide us with any custody information so that we are aware of any problems that may arise. **ALL INFORMATION IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL!**

RESPECT

- Discovery Day Camp staff will always do their best to assist when possible. Sometimes directors are busy dealing with first aid, behavior situations or other issues. For this reason, we have created a designated early pick-up time so that we can have staff readily available to assist at that time. We ask for your extended patience when picking up or dropping off outside designated areas as it may take up to 15 minutes to locate your camper and return them to the main camp since the entirety of Rogers Lakewood is utilized.
- Please refrain from yelling, belittling, threatening, or using any abusive language to all camp directors or staff, especially in front of campers.



THE BASICS OF CAMP

WHAT TO BRING

We want our campers to be prepared for fun-filled days with us! Please send your camper each day with a backpack containing the following items:

- **Lunch**
 - Lunches will be stored in coolers under our shelter. Refrigeration is not provided for campers' lunches, so please plan accordingly. We recommend ice packs.
- **Full Water Bottle**
 - We have a water bottle refill station inside Derby Downs (building at camp), so please send campers with their own bottle to fill up throughout the day. We also put out watercoolers of cold water daily at the main shelter for easy refill.
- **Weather Appropriate Clothing**
 - Summer in Indiana can be unpredictable. In order to be prepared, we recommend having a hat to keep the sun off their face and a light jacket/sweatshirt in case it gets chilly.
 - Please be aware of the weather predictions for each day and plan accordingly. Unless there is thunder and lightning or a major downpour by 1pm, we will likely be outside most of the day. Rain jackets are another good idea to bring on days where pop-up showers are predicted.
- **Sunscreen & Bug Spray**
 - Due to the large number of campers, we are not able to provide either of these items to campers. We encourage sunscreen application before arriving at camp and ask that campers apply their own sunscreen at camp. Staff can assist if help is needed.

Appropriate camp attire includes clothing made for activity and closed-toed shoes. We will be doing a lot of activities that involve movement, so clothing should be comfortable and loose enough to allow for a high level of movement. Closed-toed shoes help reduce the risk of injury to the feet and toes and allow for more participation in camp activities. Please avoid sending your child in open-toed shoes, as these increase the risk of injury.

Please label all belongings with your camper's name.

This aids in returning the items to the proper owners in the event an item is lost.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

Our camp staff have planned full days of exciting games and activities, and we have a lot of equipment for campers to use. For this reason, we ask that items from home are left at home and not brought to camp.

These items include:

- Toys and equipment from home
- Trading cards of any kind
- Electronic devices *(like cell phones, other handheld devices, airpods, etc.)*
- **If your child has a cell phone and you would like them to have it at camp in case of emergencies, please instruct them to keep it in their bag during the day. Otherwise, it will be held in the director's office until the end of the day.**
- Valuables
- Weapons of any kind *(includes knives of any kind)*
- Bringing weapons of any kind to camp will result in confiscation of the item and sent home for the day. Depending on the severity of the weapon this could result in a removal from camp.



Campers who bring items from home will receive a warning for their first offense. They will be asked to put the items away in their bag and not to bring them out again. If the items are seen again, they will be held in the camp office for the day and returned to parents during pick-up. Discovery Day Camp will not be held responsible for lost/stolen items at camp.

THE ABC'S OF CAMP: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ABSENCES

No refunds will be given for missed days or vacations. Make-up days or refunds cannot be made for campers who are absent from camp.

ACCIDENTS

The staff of the Valparaiso Parks Discovery Camps programs do their best to create a safe, and playful environment for your child each day. Sometimes there will be the occasional minor accident – a cut finger, a scrape on the knee or elbow, in which case we will administer simple first aid. We will not contact you when it occurs but will inform you at the time of pick up. In cases where the injury/incident needs more attention, we will immediately contact you or your emergency contact (if you are unavailable) and your child may need to be immediately picked up. If necessary, an ambulance may also be called for serious accidents. In the event an ambulance is called, you will be notified immediately, and a Camp Director will accompany your child to the hospital. This is required for your child's safety as well as the safety of other campers. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

ALLERGIES

It is your responsibility to let us know on the health profile in Ultra Camp if your child has any allergies along with your child's possible reaction should he/she come in contact with the allergen. Camp staff will be aware of the allergy and will do our best to ensure your child does not come into contact with the allergen.

BEHAVIOR

For the safety of all children in the camp program, certain behaviors exhibited by children will not be tolerated. The Camp Directors are responsible for interpreting the children's behavior and the Valpo Parks Department does reserve the right to dismiss a child from the camp program for inappropriate behavior. **Please see our behavior policy in detail at the end of this document.**

For instance, the following behaviors may result in suspension or dismissal from the camp.

1. Continued/constant hitting, kicking or punching campers or camp staff
2. Constant use of foul, inappropriate or intimidating language.
3. Threats to campers or camp staff

BULLYING AND TEASING

Bullying is when one or more people exclude, tease, taunt, gossip, hit, kick, or put down another person with the intent to hurt another. This type of behavior is unacceptable and will result in loss of privileges, including attending camp, depending on severity. Directors will communicate with parents of all parties via phone or at pick up (depending upon time of incident). Staff will do everything in our power to create a safe, bully-free environment. If your camper feels they are being bullied, please have them speak with their counselors; we can't manage a problem we don't know about. We will address the situation in an appropriate and timely manner.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Per Indiana State Law, all staff are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect and must report any suspicions to the Indiana Department of Child Services. All staff receive training on this topic.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Sensitive information about campers may be shared with camp staff, including presence of disability, medical conditions, family history, and behaviors. Our staff are expected to maintain confidentiality of all information shared with them. Information shared with staff about a camper will only be discussed with the camper, the camper's family, and other staff members in private away from other campers. Information will be shared with staff on the basis of need.

FIELD TRIPS

Every Tuesday there is a field trip activity (see page 3). Three of these field trips are out of camp. On these days, campers **MUST** wear their Discovery Day Camp 2026 shirt (given to new campers on their first day at camp).

We will not accept late campers or allow any early pick-ups when we are out of camp.

HEALTH CARE POLICIES

The camp staff has the authority to refuse any child who shows signs of illness. In such cases, the camp staff's judgment is final. It is the parent's responsibility to verify their child's daily health is adequate for their participation in the program before bringing them to camp.

- **Temperature of 100 degrees:** A child who is ill or had a persistent illness may not be at camp with a fever even if controlled by medicine, as they are still contagious to other children. If your child develops a fever at camp, we will call home and ask for someone to pick them up asap.
- **Vomiting:** A child who vomits will be sent home immediately.
- **Strep Throat:** If a physician diagnoses Strep Throat, a child needs to be on an antibiotic for 24 hours before re-admittance to camp is allowed.
- **Diarrhea:** A child who experiences diarrhea more than twice in a day will be sent home.
- **Chicken Pox:** A child must remain home until **all** blisters have dried and formed scabs. This usually is 7-10 days after the pox began.
- **Ring Worm:** A child may be re-admitted after 24 hours of beginning treatment.
- **Pink Eye:** A child with pink eye or conjunctivitis will be sent home with a parent or guardian. If a physician diagnoses pink eye, the child will need to have 3 doses of drops for re-admittance.
- **Head Lice:** A child must remain at home until the first treatment is completed with no further active lice or nits seen.
- A doctor's note will be required for re-admittance after the following illnesses: *Strep Throat, Ring Worm, or Pink Eye, and all others deemed necessary by Enrichment Director.*
- **COVID-19**
 - Keep your child home from camp if they test positive for COVID-19
 - Practice good healthy habits, including frequent handwashing and covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.

If your child comes down with a communicable disease (chicken pox, head lice, etc.), please contact the Camp Director immediately for the health and safety of others. The child may not return to the program until the communicable disease is clear or past the contagious stage. The Camp Director will notify the parents of the other participants.

Please make sure you have a plan in place for when your child gets sick while at camp. If you are not able to leave work yourself, you need to have a plan that includes a responsible person who will be available to care for your child. Please notify the staff as soon as possible that the pick-up arrangements have changed. This is for the well-being and comfort of your child as well as all the other children.



LOST AND FOUND

Labeling items that come to camp is the best way to make sure they are returned. If your child is missing anything, please check the lost and found table at pick up. Any unclaimed and unmarked items will be removed at the end of the week. We will seek to return all labeled items found.

LUNCH

You must send a packed lunch with your child every day. If you do not provide lunch for your child, you will be called and asked to bring one. There is no refrigeration available – lunches are packed in coolers outside the shelter area; we suggest packing an ice pack etc. for your child's lunch. They will be able to refill their water bottles at the drinking fountains throughout the day. This is why it is very important that you send your child to camp with a refillable water bottle. They will be engaging in high levels of activity throughout the day.

MEDICATION

If your child requires medication during the time they are in our care, please notify the Camp Director. Before medication may be given to the Camp Director, the Health History and Medication forms must be completed by the first day of camp. Both prescription and non-prescription medicines must be in their original container and clearly marked with your child's first and last name and specific dosage directions. Pharmacists are usually willing to provide you with the amount of medicine needed for childcare in a separate "original" container. If these guidelines are not followed, medicine will not be allowed. These medicines will be kept in a secure place where the Camp Director may access it when the need arises. A staff member will verbally assist the child with taking their medication.

If your camper has additional medication to take, or a change in medication, please make the changes on Ultra Camp and communicate this with our camp directors. For the safety of our campers, we do not stock oral medications. All medication must be listed in their health profile and provided.

OBSCENITY

Obscene, profane, or vulgar language that is written, oral, or expressed by symbols will not be tolerated. Being respectful of campers and staff is expected. A violation of this policy will result in loss of privileges and the camp director will call home. Depending on the severity the camper may be sent home for the day.



timely manner, which may include suspension or removal.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The health profile will ask parents if they are ok with Valpo Parks taking their campers' photo at camp while they are participating in camp activities. These photos are shared weekly using SmugMug via Ultra Camp on a week-to-week basis. Parents will only be allowed to see the week(s) their camper is registered. Some photos are used for future marketing. If you choose to restrict photograph use, no photographs of your child will be used or posted on any materials or social media sites. Names are never provided with photographs of children.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Discovery Day Camp staff are strictly forbidden to harass other staff or campers through unwelcome conduct or communications of a sexual nature. In addition, campers are also strictly forbidden to harass other campers, or staff through unwelcome conduct or communication of a sexual nature. Our directors will promptly investigate all complaints, written or verbal, of sexual harassment at camp and take appropriate action to stop any harassment. Discovery Day Camp will remove any campers or staff who violate this policy. If a camper or staff is found to have intentionally spread rumors related to this policy, Discovery Day Camp will take appropriate action in a



SPECIFIC NEEDS

Please help us in preparing for a great summer so that your child will be successful! If your child has any specific needs, including but not limited to severe allergies, ADHD, ODD etc., contact the Enrichment Director prior to your child's first day of camp. Depending on the specific need, special arrangements may be needed to best serve the needs of your child. We want them to fully enjoy their summer camp experience. If your child has special accommodations or behavioral needs at school or in general, please reach out to our Enrichment Director to discuss if camp is a well-suited environment for the camper before you register.

COMMUNICATION

We will be using Ultra Camp for timely updates. We will use email for weekly communication and texting (in enabled) for urgent information. We will also use our Discovery Day Camp Facebook Page & 2026 Group, which will be available for registered campers and their authorized pickups. Search "Discovery Day Camp 2026" to find the group on Facebook. All questions **must** be answered to join the group.

SUPERVISION RATIOS

Your child's safety is a foremost priority of our camp staff. Therefore, we maintain these supervision ratios of counselors to campers for each age group and extended care:

Ages 5 : 1 to 6

Ages 6-8 : 1 to 8

Ages 9 – 14: 1 to 14

Extended Care:1 to 10

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!!

Discovery Day Camp seeks to provide all campers with a safe and memorable experience. Your questions and comments are always welcome! Additional information will be distributed to parents as the need arises. We at Valpo Parks look forward to another successful summer with your child.



DISCOVERY DAY CAMP - BEHAVIOR AGREEMENT

Parents: Please take a moment to review the following agreement with your camper. This agreement applies to behavior at Discovery Day Camp, on trips, and while on the bus.

It is expected that campers will abide by our 5-finger promise. This promise outlines 5 major tenants of behavior that should be demonstrated by all campers every day. The promise is further explained below.



Be Kind

- I promise to say positive words to my fellow campers and counselors.
- I promise to treat others as I would like to be treated.

Be Responsible:

- I promise to bring home all items that I bring to camp, including my lunch box, water bottle, and clothes.
- I promise to keep camp clean and free of trash, in the art room, shelter and all outside areas.
- I promise to ask for help when I cannot solve a problem on my own.

Be Respectful:

- I promise to respect my fellow campers and counselors with both my words and my actions.
- I promise to do no intentional harm to anyone or any piece of property or equipment.
- I promise to use camp appropriate language, free of profanity and cruelty.

Be Safe:

- I promise to remain with my respective group and counselors at all times. If I cannot see my counselors, I am not being safe.
- I promise to report unsafe or broken equipment to my counselors immediately when discovered.
- I promise to follow all directions given to me by my counselors during all activities at camp.

Have Fun:

- I promise to have a positive attitude while at camp!
- I promise to try new activities and meet new friends!

Discovery Day Camp operates on a three-strike policy for addressing serious behavioral infractions. The camp directors will implement and enforce the three-strike policy outlined below.

Strike 1

- A discussion between camper and directors about the incident will occur.
- The camper will lose the privilege of free time and an appropriate consequence will be expected. We will communicate this with the parents.

Strike 2

- A conference between the camper, directors, and parents will occur.
- A behavior plan will be created specifically to address the reoccurring behavior(s).
- The camper will lose multiple privileges depending on the behavior(s) and will be sent home for the day.

Strike 3

- Suspension from camp will be discussed. The directors will have the authority to determine the appropriate type and duration of suspension from camp.

****NOTE: The three-strike policy is not necessarily a linear progression. The directors reserve the right to skip steps depending on the severity of the behavior and the results of the behavior.***

Refunds are **not** given for any camper who is sent home/removed from the program for disciplinary reasons. As a parent, you will be responsible for picking-up your camper within one hour of the decision to suspend your child from camp. Depending on the behavior, your child may not be able to return to camp for the remainder of the summer.

