



# Parent and Camper Handbook

Here is your guide to all things CAMP!  
If you have any questions, feel free to  
contact us. We are happy to help!



**Dakotas-Minnesota Area**  
United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries

## WELCOME!

We are so glad you are planning on joining us at camp this summer! Whether you are coming to one of our North Dakota, South Dakota, or Minnesota locations, or one of our off-site events, you are in for the time of your life! Our caring staff is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the most special part of our summer—YOU! If you have been to a Dakotas-Minnesota Area United Methodist Camp event before, you know the great time that is in store! If you have not been to camp before...get ready for a wonderful, fun, faith shaping, one-of-a-kind experience!

Dakotas-Minnesota Area United Methodist Camps are proud to offer events for all age levels and all stages of faith journeys. From a single night to six-night adventures, and from pre-kindergarten to adult and family events—every program is designed to help campers experience Christ, Creation, and Community in new and powerful ways! Dakotas-Minnesota Area United Methodist Camps provide an unforgettable summer experience where campers can discover new adventures and explore exciting activities—all within a safe, Christ-centered environment.

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# DAKOTAS CAMPS

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## Central Camping Office

Keith Shew, Area Director of Camp and Retreat Ministries  
Stacey Edwards, Area Camp and Retreat Coordinator  
Mary Hovden, Area Camp and Retreat Accountant  
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## Dakotas

info@dakcamps.org  
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## Minnesota

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# MINNESOTA CAMPS

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# THINGS TO KNOW AS YOU PREPARE FOR CAMP!

## Photo Permission

Photos and videos taken at camp may be used by the Dakotas or Minnesota Conferences for camp promotions. **If you would rather not** have photos of you or your child used for this purpose, please indicate that on the Public Relations Release located at the bottom of the Release of Liability Waiver.

## Transportation

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing transportation to and from camp.

**The camping office cannot coordinate or arrange rides for campers.**

See your camp welcome letter for information related to event dates, arrival & departure times, and directions to camp.

Some camps include off-site activities that require transportation in camp vehicles. Before leaving camp, staff will review all safety rules and procedures with your camper.

## Communication with Camp Leadership

In the event of a family emergency or crisis, please contact the camp using the emergency number listed on your camp welcome letter or by using the contact information listed on page two of this handbook. During camp sessions, our camp staff can be reached by phone 24/7.

If you have questions, concerns, or wish to pass along important information, please contact your campsite directors, central office staff, or the Area Director of Camp and Retreat Ministry.



## Money for Camp Store

The cost of meals, snacks, and special activities are included in your registration fee. If your camper would like a few extra treats or souvenirs, they are welcome to bring money for the camp store. Popular snacks include ice cream, candy, and chips, as well as fun items like T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and stuffed animals—great reminders of their time at camp!

You can add money to your camper's store account through the online registration system (at least three days before camp begins) or bring cash to check-in. The camp store is open daily, as well as during check-in and check-out. Any unused funds will be returned at the end of the session. **Early Bird Camp Store Credit must be used during camp and is non-transferable or redeemable for cash.**

## Inclusion of Campers with Disabilities at Camp

Circle of Friends (in the Dakotas) and Christian Friendship Camps (in Minnesota) are specifically designed for individuals with developmental special needs. Campers enjoy time with friends while participating in all the fun activities camp has to offer!

If you require help with personal care, please bring a personal care attendant with you to camp—at no additional cost. If you are able, you may contribute toward the camp's cost for this person. Please notify the camping office in advance if you plan to bring an assistant. Personal care attendants must register for camp.

We are committed to the full inclusion of children, youth, and adults with disabilities across all our camps. While off-site and wilderness-based camps may present additional challenges, we work with families on a case-by-case basis to make appropriate arrangements. All program staff at our conference campsites receive training on disability awareness and inclusive practices.

At our Minnesota camps, an integration specialist is available—at no extra cost—to support campers with disabilities based on a mutual needs assessment. Please contact your site director to explore integration support and plan ahead for the best possible camp experience.



# PACKING FOR CAMP

## What to Bring

- o Signed health & waiver forms, if not completed online
- o Medications needed during camp (in original Rx packaging)
- o Clothing for each day (warm, cool, and rainy days too!)
- o Pajamas
- o Jacket or sweatshirt & rain gear
- o Bath towel & washcloth
- o Soap, shampoo, toothbrush, & toothpaste
- o Swimsuit, beach towel, sandals, or water shoes
- o Bible, notebook, & pencil
- o Sunscreen & insect repellent
- o Tennis shoes
- o Flashlight
- o Sleeping bag (or bedding) & pillow
- o Water Bottle
- o Money for the camp store (\$25 is usually enough)

## What NOT to Bring

- o Pets (If dogs are brought to camp on check-in or pick-up day, they must be on a leash and under the owner's control)
- o Sports equipment or electronics (Some specialty camps will allow specific sports equipment or electronics—check your camp's welcome letter)
- o Fireworks or lighters
- o Extra food, snacks, or soda
- o Alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs
- o Weapons of any kind
- o Vehicles—campers under 18 (Campers and volunteers under the age of 18 who drive themselves to/from camp must turn in vehicle keys to camp staff when they arrive at the site)
- o Cell phones (If campers bring a cell phone, they will need to leave it with a camp staff member during check-in)

## Camp is Unplugged!

Camp offers a rare and valuable chance for kids to step away from screens and connect in meaningful ways. Without the distractions of technology, campers are free to build friendships, grow life skills, and fully engage with one another and God's creation.



# PAYING FOR CAMP

## Registration Payments

Registration payments are due in full two weeks before the start of camp. You can pay through your online dashboard, by calling the central camping office with a credit card, or by mailing a check to the central camping office.

## Church Discount Codes

Some churches cover a portion of the registration fee for their campers. To receive this discount, please contact your church directly for the code. During online registration, you will be prompted to enter the code.

If you have trouble applying the code or receive an error message, contact the central camping office by phone or by email, and we can apply the code for you.

## Camperships (Financial Assistance)

At Dakotas-Minnesota Area United Methodist Camps, we believe every child should have the opportunity to attend camp—no one will be turned away due to financial need.

Limited need-based camperships are available to help cover the cost of one conference camping event per year per camper. Before applying, please check with your local church to see if they can assist with a portion of the registration fee. Our expectation is that support will come from a combination of sources—your church, personal contributions, other support, and conference campership funds.

You can apply for camperships directly through the camp website under the camp & events drop-down menu. For questions or help with the process, contact the central camping office.

## Cancellation/Refund Policy

If the camping office needs to cancel a camp, you will be notified and receive a full refund.

If a camper needs to cancel, contact the central camping office as soon as possible.

**All camper cancellations must be received in writing** at [info@dakcamps.org](mailto:info@dakcamps.org) or



[camps@campminnesota.org](mailto:camps@campminnesota.org). Please call the central camping office at 855-622-1973 with any questions.

If cancellation is received:

- More than 21 days before the start of camp, a full refund will be given.
- Between 15-20 days prior to the start of camp, a full refund minus a \$50 processing fee will be given.
- Between 8-14 days prior to the start of camp, a full refund minus a \$100 processing fee will be given.
- Less than 7 days prior to the start of camp, no refund will be issued.
- A no call/no show to camp will result in forfeit of all payments and a notation in the camper's account.

In the event of a last-minute illness or family emergency, contact the campsite as soon as possible. Full refunds will be given in the event of a documented illness or family emergency. **In all cases, a refund will be issued only if requested.**



# V.I.P'S (VERY IMPORTANT POLICIES)

## Camper Send Home Policy

**Our top priority is the health, safety, and well-being of every camper. You will be contacted if any of the following situations arise:**

- Your child is exposed to a communicable disease.
- Your child requires outside medical attention (e.g., transportation to a hospital or clinic).
- Your child is involved in a disciplinary issue that jeopardizes the safety or well-being of others.

In situations where it is determined that a camper needs to go home for medical or behavioral reasons, camp staff will consult with the site director and, when possible, communicate directly with a parent or guardian. The final decision to send a camper home will be made by the site director or the Area Director of Camp and Retreat Ministries.

If a camper is being sent home, parents or guardians will be contacted to arrange a pick-up time. The camper will be informed at least one hour before departure. The Area Director of Camp and Retreat Ministries will also be notified of any early departures due to medical or disciplinary reasons.

## No Cell Phone Policy

One of the special things about camp is the chance for campers to **unplug** and be fully present—building friendships, enjoying nature, and growing in their faith without screen time.

To support this experience, cell phones are not allowed for youth campers. If a camper brings a phone, camp staff will hold it safely and return it at the end of the session.

## Calling Home Policy

We have found that campers have the best experience when they can focus on camp and not on missing home. Calling home can increase homesickness and make the transition harder. Campers are allowed to use the camp phones for emergencies.

If you have questions, concerns or need to contact your camper, please feel free to contact the campsite, by phone or email, at any time, 24 hours a day. Our staff is happy to assist you and will deliver your message to your camper as soon as possible.

**You are invited to send mail or email to be delivered to your camper!** See your camp welcome letter for details.





# DEALING WITH PESKY CRITTERS

**Camp is full of outdoor adventure—and that includes a few unwelcome visitors like bugs and ticks. Here's what you should know:**

**Insect Bites & Ticks:** Mosquitos, flies, and other biting critters are abundant in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. For this reason, we suggest that you send non-aerosol insect repellent with your camper to camp.

**Lyme Disease:** Deer ticks, which can carry Lyme disease, are present in our region. While our staff take precautions to reduce tick exposure, it's important for parents/guardians to check their camper for ticks and monitor for symptoms once they return home. For more information, visit [www.allianceforcamphealth.org/tick-education-prevention](http://www.allianceforcamphealth.org/tick-education-prevention) or your state's Department of Health website.

**Swimmer's Itch:** Swimmer's itch is a temporary, itchy skin rash caused by a parasite found in lakes and ponds. To help prevent it:

- Apply an oily sunscreen before entering the water
  - Rinse off right after leaving the water
  - Towel off immediately after swimming
- These simple steps can help minimize discomfort and let your camper focus on the fun!



# A NOTE ABOUT INSURANCE COVERAGE

Camp fees include secondary medical insurance, which serves as a supplement to your family's personal or primary coverage. This coverage is subject to the terms and conditions of the insurance policies held by the Dakotas and Minnesota Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church.



# TIPS FOR SENDING YOUR CHILD TO CAMP

Sending your child to camp is a huge milestone and a wonderful investment in their growth, confidence, and future. Although camp is certainly about having fun and making friends, it also helps children build independence and become part of a positive and supportive community. Here are some helpful hints for getting both new and returning campers emotionally prepared for camp.

## Talk Openly and Positively

Ask your camper if they have any questions about what camp will be like, and share your excitement with them. Focus on the FUN they will have rather than how much you will miss each other. Let them know that you have confidence in them—and remind them they're ready!

## Reassure Them That Home Will Be the Same

Campers are usually worried about the simple things, like their bedroom and favorite possessions, the family pet, and naturally, Mom and Dad. Reassure your child that everything at home will be just as they left it and that you'll be eager to hear all about their adventures when they return.

## Keep Goodbyes Short and Sweet

After check-in, say goodbye with a hug, a smile, and a confident, "I love you—I'm proud of you—have an amazing time!" Lingering or emotional goodbyes often make the transition harder. From years of experience, we know that a brief, positive sendoff sets the best tone for a successful camp start.

## Preventing Homesickness

It's completely normal for children to experience some homesickness, especially their first time away from home. Our counselors are trained to support them through those feelings, and most campers settle in quickly. You can help by being enthusiastic as you prepare together for camp. Enthusiasm is contagious!



Here are a few simple things you can do as you prepare for camp:

- Work together as a family to plan and pack for camp.
- Schedule a sleepover with a friend to practice being away from home.
- Consider arranging for a first-time camper to attend with a close friend, relative, or "buddy."
- Talk enthusiastically with your child about camp activities and experiences.
- Pack stationery and stamps so your child can write home.
- Let them know you will be sending letters. Plan to send your camper cheerful and positive messages via postal mail, email, or by dropping off letters at camp check in. See your camp welcome letter for more information.
- Reassure them it's okay to miss home, but that you believe they'll have a great time.
- Have your child bring a "comfort" item from home (stuffed toy, blanket, picture).
- Avoid suggesting your child can call home if he/she is upset. Do not say you will "rescue" your child if he or she does not like camp.
- Share positive camp experiences you had as a child.
- Check in on the fun through updates and pictures from camp social media posts.
- Feel free to contact the camp if you have concerns.



## DAKOTAS-MINNESOTA AREA UNITED METHODIST CAMPS

### Mission

Helping campers to experience Christ, Creation, and Community through camp and retreat ministries

### Core Values

We do this as we:

- Provide sacred places apart
- Nurture Christian faith and discipleship
- Teach creation care and appreciation
- Partner with United Methodist churches and agencies
- Extend Christian hospitality and community
- Develop principled spiritual leaders
- Inspire and equip lives for love and justice

### Outcomes

Disciples and leaders who hear and respond to God's call to:

- Share faith
- Love and accept everyone
- Serve others
- Trust God

### All are Welcome!

At Dakotas-Minnesota Area United Methodist Camps, everyone is welcome regardless of race, sex, color, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or disability. While campers will experience a Christian camp environment, they do not need to be active Christians, regular churchgoers, or hold any specific beliefs to attend.

Our camps are safe and inclusive spaces where people of all backgrounds—political, theological, or otherwise—are treated with respect. We embrace diversity and expect campers and staff to practice kindness, acceptance, and non-coercion in all interactions.

All expressions of self-identity are welcome and celebrated. We believe each person is uniquely created and deeply loved by God. Camp is a place where everyone is encouraged to be themselves and grow into the person God created them to be.

### What Campers Can Expect

At camp, every camper can expect:

- A physically and emotionally safe environment
- A place to have enormous fun while building lifelong skills
- A supportive, Christ-centered community that encourages growth in every way

### Way to Grow!

Camp helps young people grow in leadership, creativity, teamwork, faith, independence, confidence, and problem-solving.

Our goal is to create a camp experience that is imaginative, adventurous, and safe for every camper.

Dakotas-Minnesota Area United Methodist Camps are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for every camper. All our campsites are accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA), the nation's only accrediting body for camping programs. This mark of distinction signifies that our camps comply with the highest standards, of health, safety, and program quality. Learn more at [www.acacamps.org](http://www.acacamps.org).

