

# CAMP AT THE J

Summer 2025  
Family Handbook

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## Welcome to Camp at the J!

Thank you for choosing Camp at the J for your child's summer experience! You have given your child the gift of camp; a place for campers to develop skills, make new friends, build self-confidence, and participate in activities that promote Jewish values.

We are committed to creating valuable experiences and a community that supports what your children are learning at home. Safety and supervision are essential components of our program. We carefully select our staff members from a vigorously screened group and train them extensively.

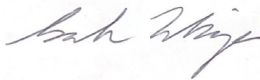
This handbook has been designed to answer your questions, to promote communication between our staff and your family, and to assist you in understanding our policies and procedures. By subscribing to the rules of Camp at the J and remaining familiar with this information, we can work together to help your child have the best camp experience possible. This handbook also contains important information regarding Camp at the J, an American Camp Association (ACA) accredited camp.

We hope to meet and exceed the expectations of you and your family. Camp at the J strives to provide a safe, fun and educational camp experience. Should you find yourself with further questions about camp, please contact us. We're here all year, and love to talk to people about Camp at the J!

Sincerely,



Jake Preston  
Camp Director  
513.722.7245  
jpreston@mayersonjcc.org



Swess Wessinger  
Assistant Camp Director  
513.644.0703  
swessinger@mayersonjcc.org



**MAYERSON JCC**  
*of Cincinnati*

## Contact Information

### Camp Office:

513.722.7249

daycamp@mayersonjcc.org

### Camp Director: Jake Preston

513.722.7245

jpreston@mayersonjcc.org

### Assistant Camp Director: Swess Wessinger

513.644.0703

swessinger@myasersonjcc.org

### Address:

Mayerson JCC: Attn. Camp at the J

8485 Ridge Road

Cincinnati, OH 45236

### Camp Hours:

9:00am - 3:30pm

*\*Extended care options available for an additional cost*

## Communication Policy

The majority of regular communication from camp will be via email. This includes reminders, updates, photos, and weekly newsletters with a recap of the week's activities, information about the upcoming week, and other community events.

**Please save daycamp@mayersonjcc.org in your address book to ensure you receive our email.**

## Camp Units & Ages

**PIONEERS** GRADE K

**TRAILBLAZERS** GRADES 1 - 2

**RAIDERS** GRADES 3 - 5

**QUEST** GRADES 6 - 8

## Camp Team

Our committed Camp Team meets year round to plan the best possible summer experience for our campers. Many of our staff members were campers too, and are truly passionate about camp. Each staff member was chosen for their leadership skills, safety consciousness, responsibility, and caring attitude toward children. All staff members are carefully background screened, receive specialized training, and key staff are CPR and First Aid certified. Additionally, staff are required to participate in a weeklong staff orientation and training where they acquire valuable knowledge and skills.



**JAKE PRESTON**  
CAMP DIRECTOR

Jake grew up in the camp world and has been working in the industry for more than 20 years. He spent much of that time directing and overseeing youth programs, such as adventure travel, outdoor education, and, of course, summer camp. Having moved back to his hometown of Cincinnati in 2024, Jake is excited to join the community and experience his first full summer at Camp at the J. Camp changed Jake's life for the best, and he's eager to help create the same opportunities and atmosphere for our campers at Camp at the J.



**SWESS WESSINGER**  
ASSISTANT CAMP DIRECTOR

Swess has worked for the JCC for nine years and they are excited to return for their seventh summer with Camp at the J. They hope to build a positive, fun and safe environment for the campers, as well as unforgettable experiences!

## Tipping Policy

In keeping with the policy of the Mayerson JCC, Camp at the J staff may not accept cash gratuities. If you want to say "thanks for a job well done," we encourage you to make a contribution to Camp. Contact Rick Lefton, Director of Development, at 513.722.7233 or [rlefton@mayersonjcc.org](mailto:rlefton@mayersonjcc.org) for more information.

## Inclusion Policy

Our camp-wide inclusion philosophy extends to all participants with the goal that campers of all abilities have the opportunity to participate, socialize, and grow. We work to ensure every camper can fully participate in programming by providing reasonable accommodations. Camp families requiring accommodations should reach out to camp leadership to ensure timely planning and accommodation coordination.

## Questions and Concerns

While it is against Camp at the J policy to give out personal cell phone numbers or email addresses of our camp staff to guardians and campers, guardians are welcome to call or email the camp office any time at [daycamp@mayersonjcc.org](mailto:daycamp@mayersonjcc.org) or 513.722.7249. Should you have questions or concerns, please leave a message for the Camp Director or your child's Unit Head with our Camp Office, and someone will get back with you as soon as possible. See page 4 for additional contact phone numbers.

## American Camp Association (ACA)

Camp at the J is accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA). ACA accreditation requires camp excellence in safety, programming, staff training and education. Camp at the J exceeds the 300+ standards and guidelines established in policies, procedures, and practices on an annual basis, and participates in the re-accreditation process every five years.



## Camp at the J Mission Statement

Camp at the J offers a fun, active and safe summertime experience providing opportunities for children and young adults in the Jewish and broader communities to build friendships, learn valuable skills, participate in physical activity, and enhance their self-esteem. Our welcoming and inclusive environment values the dignity and worth of each individual, and we work to foster positive relationships and build greater understanding among campers.

### CAMP AT THE J STRIVES TO:

- Offer constructive, meaningful, and fun developmental growth opportunities to campers and staff.
- Develop positive individual habits, attitudes, knowledge, and skills to enable the campers to function more effectively as individuals and as part of a community.
- Increase all campers' awareness and appreciation of Jewish culture, traditions, and values.
- Create a mentally, physically, and emotionally safe environment for all participants.

## Registration/Application

Registration closes May 16, 2025, and spaces are limited. The JCC reserves the right to deny or limit service due to non-payment or prior outstanding financial obligations to the JCC. Once the capacity is reached, registrations will be denied unless space becomes available.

## Financial Policies

No refunds or adjustments will be made after May 16, 2025. All deposits made to camp are applied to the final tuition balance and are non-refundable.

All camp balances must be paid in full prior to the start of the camper's session, unless other arrangements have been approved by the Camp Director in writing.

Please contact [daycamp@mayersonjcc.org](mailto:daycamp@mayersonjcc.org) for billing information and questions.

## Financial Assistance

Mayerson JCC offers financial aid funding, and we encourage families to apply as early as possible for consideration. Please contact Ariel Gamm at [agamm@mayersonjcc.org](mailto:agamm@mayersonjcc.org) for more information.

**Membership Info:** A child under the age of 13 is considered a member only when they are part of a family membership. Teens 13 and older are considered members when they have a student membership or are part of a family membership. For more membership information please contact our Director of Membership, Ariel Gamm at [agamm@mayersonjcc.org](mailto:agamm@mayersonjcc.org).

## Sample Daily Schedule

While each bunk has its own schedule, the following is an example of a typical day for a Trailblazer camper. A pre-Shabbat (Sabbath) celebration occurs every Friday afternoon starting at 2pm.

9:00 - 9:15am.....	Car Line
9:15 - 9:30am.....	Flagpole
9:30 - 10:15am .....	Team Games
10:30 - 11:15am .....	Arts & Crafts
11:30am - 12:15pm .....	Swim Time
12:15 - 1pm.....	Lunch
1:15 - 2pm.....	Nature
2:15 - 3pm.....	Bunk Time
3:15 - 3:30pm .....	All-Camp Gathering
3:30 - 3:50pm .....	Car Line

## Arrival and Dismissal

Your child may leave only with those authorized on their enrollment form and no exceptions will be made. Upon registration, guardians will complete the authorized pickup form identifying any adults approved to pick up said guardian's child. All adults will be required to present identification when attempting to pick up a

camper, and only those on the authorization form will be permitted to do so.

**The regular camp day is 9:00am - 3:30pm.**

**For the safety of all campers, Camp at the J has a strict drop-off and pick-up policy.**

**For campers who participate in Car Line and are dropped off at 9:00am and/or picked up at 3:30pm:**

- Drop-off begins at 9:00am in the back parking lot. Please do not arrive before 8:50am. If your child will arrive after 9:15am, please call the Camp Office at 513.722.7249, and Camp Staff will come pick them up from your car.
- Pick-up begins at 3:30pm in the back parking lot. Cars can begin lining up at 3:20pm.
- Do not leave your vehicle. Camp staff will direct you where to go and assist your camper(s) in and out of your vehicle.
- Do not attempt to exit the Car Line out of turn.
- Please have your photo ID ready and present at pick-up.
- Afternoon carline is expected to last 15-20 minutes. We appreciate your patience as we carefully assist campers to their cars in a safe manner.

## Late Arrivals and Early Pick-Ups

Please provide advance notice directly by phone call to the Camp office, written note, or email to: [daycamp@mayersonjcc.org](mailto:daycamp@mayersonjcc.org).

**If your child will arrive after 9:15am or leave before 3:30pm**, please call the Camp Office at 513.722.7249 before you arrive, and Camp Staff will come pick them up or drop them off to your car. You may be assessed a charge if your child is not enrolled in Before or After Crew but has been dropped off early or picked up late.

## Late Pickup Policy

In the event a camper is not picked up during check out, they will be sent to after-crew care at 3:45pm and the family account will be charged a flat \$25 fee. The camp or after-crew team will phone the camper's guardian to inform them that carline has ended, and that the camper has been taken to after-crew. After-crew policy requires that an individual authorized to pick up the camper park in the back parking lot, come to the camp office, and present their ID upon check-out. Any family whose camper stays after 6pm may be subject to an additional fee, as determined by the after-crew leadership.

## What to Wear

For your child's safety, socks and sneakers (closed toe and closed heel) are required footwear. The majority of camp injuries occur due to inadequate footwear. In order to keep campers safe, guardians will be asked to drop off close-toed shoes if a camper arrives without them.

Sandals, Crocs, or flip flops may be packed for swimming or water activities only. Your child should come dressed each day in comfortable clothing that can get dirty. **Please label all clothing and personal belongings with your camper's first and last name.** The lost and found is in the Camp Office and available to look through during pick-up and drop-off.

## What to Pack

Each day, your camper should bring the following items to camp in a backpack.

**All items must be clearly labeled with camper's first and last name:**

- Swimsuit and towel
- Lunch with utensils
- Refillable water bottle with a carabiner (campers are required to bring a refillable water bottle and will have frequent opportunities to refill)
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Shoes that can be worn to the pool (flip flops or crocs) are optional
- Plastic bag in which to put wet swimsuits or towels
- Snack

## What Not to Pack

- Money (except for field trips)
- Animals/Pets
- Jewelry or other expensive items
- Cell phones and all electronics
- Toys, trading items, and personal sports equipment
- Weapons
- Alcohol and drugs

## Valuables and Personal Items

We discourage your camper from bringing any valuables or items outside of what was specifically listed above. Staff members are not responsible for the care of their camper's personal items. If campers bring inappropriate items, the item will be turned in to the Camp Director or Unit Head and the camper's guardian will be notified. The item will be returned to the guardian or authorized pick-up person of the camper at dismissal or in other cases turned over to local law enforcement authorities. Other than certified therapy pets approved by the Camp Director, pets are not allowed at Camp.

## Water and Hydration Stations

Part of what makes summer camp so much fun is getting to spend lots of time outdoors! However, active campers plus high temperatures can equal dehydration, heat exhaustion, and other illnesses. That's why one of our top priorities at Camp at the J is to keep campers hydrated at all times. **All campers are required to bring a refillable water bottle with them each day. Please put your camper's name on their water bottle.** We have several Hydration Stations set up around camp that enable campers to refill their water bottles with fresh, cold water whenever necessary.

## Lunch and Food at Camp

### Packed Lunches

All campers must bring a lunch each day. Campers may eat ONLY what is in their own lunch. All lunches brought from home are stored in an air-conditioned area but are not refrigerated. Please send all required utensils and **do not send any food that must be heated or cooked.** We do not have access to a microwave. The camper's first and last name should be clearly marked on the outside of the lunchbox or bag. We encourage campers to use their personal water bottles as a drink. Packed lunches do not need to be kosher.

**Note: Campers are not permitted to make purchases from the J Cafe or vending machines.**

### Snacks

Feel free to pack a snack every day, if you feel your child may need one.

### Nut Policy

Camp at the J is a "nut aware" camp. We avoid items that contain nuts, or that may contain nut products. Campers with severe nut allergies will have a designated place to sit during lunch, the "nut-free zone."

## Special Events and Field Trips

Campers get to enjoy several special events throughout the summer that may include programs like the popular Fire Truck Day, Maccabi (healthy sports and arts competition), Cool Critters, and more.

Starting in Bunk 8, campers begin to go on field trips every other week to places like water parks, Main Event, and the Cincinnati Zoo. Guardians will be notified of the destinations in advance and are encouraged to chat with their child the week of to prepare them. Additionally, please note that Camp at the J allows campers to bring money on field trips. Camp staff are not responsible for any personal camper property, including money.

## Swimming

On their first Monday at camp, each camper is administered a swim assessment by our lifeguards. Lifeguards determine if the camper is a green band or a red band based on swimming ability. Campers may attempt a swim assessment on Mondays in an effort to graduate from red band to green band.

All red band campers will receive swim lessons Monday - Thursday at no additional cost to families. Following



the day's lesson, red band campers will wear life jackets, remain in the shallow end, and join the rest of their bunk for free swim.

Campers swim most days in our Outdoor Pool, weather permitting. Our youngest campers (5-year-olds) swim first thing in the morning and are encouraged to wear their swimsuits to camp.

## Swimming Assessment Procedures

- The child is required to start in the shallow end of the indoor Lap pool, swim to within 5 ft. of the other end of the lane then stop, tread water for 20 seconds, and continue swimming to the end of the pool.
- The child may not stop and hold the pool wall at any time.
- They must show they have enough endurance to swim without difficulty.

### Red Band

Skills sufficient for  
leisure pool only

- May swim in the shallow end of pool
- Staff must be in the water within arm's reach at all times
- Life jacket must be Coast Guard approved

### Green Band

Skills sufficient for  
all areas of the pool,  
can swim independently

- May swim the entire length of the pool
- Staff member must remain in water and have close supervision
- May swim without a staff member

## Birthdays

Birthdays are special and we love to celebrate them at camp! If your child's birthday falls during camp, Camp at the J will provide popsicles for all the children in your camper's bunk at no charge, upon advance request.

## Camp Evaluation

Families will receive an electronic evaluation form at the conclusion of the summer. Your feedback enables us to modify and improve Camp at the J programs. Also, feel free to share your camper's summer experience, **both during and after the summer**, directly with the Camp Director.

## Camp at the J Advocate Program

One accommodation we provide is the Camp at the J Advocate program. This unique program is free of additional cost to families and provides individualized support for campers at a 1:1 or 1:2 ratio depending on camper's support needs.

The Advocate Program is a great fit for campers who have an IEP or 504 plan at school, but those are not requirements. Campers in the Advocate Program should be able to complete self-care tasks such as toileting and changing independently, they should be able to communicate with staff via their preferred method (AAC, ASL, and other alternate communication methods are welcomed), and should be able to safely remain with the group programming.

Campers in the Advocate Program will participate in the full program with their same-aged peers with the additional support of an Advocate Counselor. Advocate Counselors receive specialized training to ensure they can provide targeted support and accommodations to campers throughout the day. Additionally, families will work with camp staff in the months leading up to camp to develop an Individual Recreation Plan (IRP) for each

camper to ensure safety and success during the summer.

Families should expect to collaborate regularly with our Advocate Coordinator and will receive weekly updates throughout the summer. This may look like informal conversations, phone and/or email outreach, and adjusting IRPs as needed. We work with families throughout the summer to provide fun experiences and safe outcomes for all participants within the framework of the Camp at the J Behavior Policy.

## Medication

### Medication Policy

All medications are kept in a locked area under the supervision of the Camp Director and Supervisor Staff. This complies with American Camp Association standards and State Department of Health guidelines. **Please do not put any medications in your camper's lunch or backpack.**

Upon the written request of a camper's guardian and with written and signed orders from a physician, routine personal medications are administered only by a member of the supervisor team. Before the start of the summer, all guardians will be contacted directly by a member of the camp supervisor team to review and confirm the steps required for their child's medication administration.

Only a member of the supervisor team will administer medication with the written request of caregivers/guardians. All administration of medication is documented.

All medication must be in original prescription container or over-the-counter packaging with instructions written by caregiver/guardian. In cases where a question exists about medication(s), the Camp Office will contact the appropriate person (i.e., caregiver) by phone to clarify the issue. This conversation is documented.

Camp staff will not give medication that does not meet safety guidelines. Campers with prescribed inhalers and/or Epi-Pens will be allowed to carry their medication and, if administered, the camp staff will document the time and related details. When medication is refilled, a medication check-in form must be filled out and signed by parent/guardian and camp staff. **If your child is bringing medication, please meet with Camp Director the week of June 2 in order to train staff.**

### Medication Vacation

If your camper currently takes medication (other than an antibiotic) that your physician recommends a summer suspension from, please alert us of this change by contacting the Camp Director. Changes in medication can produce changes in health and behavior that can impact a child's camp experience. No one is better qualified to recognize and respond to these changes than caregivers. If your child's physician feels strongly about suspending a medication, please notify the Camp Office, prior to the start of Camp.

## Health and Safety

### Safety and Security

In the event of an emergency, the first priority of the staff is the safety and security of your children. We will be in touch with guardians as soon as possible through the Mayerson JCC's emergency text/voice message system. During an emergency situation, please do not attempt to contact camp staff and/or other families, and please refrain from posting on social media, as you may unwittingly disclose confidential information about our emergency procedures.

If a text message is sent from the Emergency Notification System, the number will appear as **76127**. This is a one-way communication only; replies to the text message will not be delivered.

If a recorded voice message is sent, it will come from: **1.866.419.5001**. If you miss a call from this number, you may call the number back to listen to the last recorded message.

### Sun and Heat

Please put an initial application of sunscreen on your child before they come to camp. Hats are encouraged. Refillable water bottles are required. As with all personal items, clearly mark your child's name on these items. Camp at the J staff will model sunscreen application but are not allowed to physically apply sunscreen to

any child. Campers are reminded every 1-2 hours and given time to drink water and re-apply sunscreen. We work closely with our Camp Nurse Consultant at the J and the American Academy of Dermatology to ensure campers are safe. In the event of extreme heat, we will move camp indoors.

### **Accident/Injury**

In the event of accident or injury, first aid will be administered on site, and an accident/incident report will be completed. Should the accident or injury require more than basic first aid, 911 will be called and your camper will be treated by professional EMTs or be taken to the nearest hospital. If this occurs, the caregiver or guardian will be contacted immediately. In the event that the caregiver or guardian cannot be reached by phone, the emergency contact will be notified and a camp staff member will ride to the hospital with the injured camper. The Mayerson JCC's Aquatics Department serves as the first responders until EMS arrives.

### **Absences/Illness**

The health and safety of your camper is the number one priority of our staff. For your child's safety and protection, please contact the camp at 513.722.7249 if they will be absent.

#### **Please do not send your child to camp if they are not feeling well, or you suspect illness.**

When children become ill at camp, a caregiver or emergency contact will be notified IMMEDIATELY to pick them up.

### **Returning to Camp after Illness/Lice**

In order to return to Camp after any illness, your camper must be free of symptoms such as, but not limited to, cold symptoms, fever, diarrhea, or vomiting for at least 24 hours. Campers returning after an episode of head lice must be free of lice and nits and will be checked by the Camp Staff and/or Medical Consultant before returning to the bunk. Camp at the J has the right to not accept the camper if they still display any symptoms. If your camper is well enough to come to camp, they are expected to participate in all camp activities unless a signed note is provided by a caregiver or physician.

If your camper requires care for injury or illness that occurred at camp, the Camp Office will ask for a copy of the report.

#### **What should you do if your child has head lice?**

Please do not be alarmed, as this is a common occurrence among school aged children, head lice are not a sign of unclean people or homes. If your child does have head lice, everyone in your family should be checked, and anyone with nits should be treated. We will not allow children to return to camp until zero signs of eggs or lice are present.

Please take these precautions:

1. Check your child's hair for eggs (also called nits).
2. If you suspect your child has head lice, ask your health care provider to diagnose the problem and recommend appropriate treatment.
3. Tell us if your child is diagnosed as having head lice.
4. If head lice is diagnosed, do not return your child to camp until they have been treated and all the nits have been removed.

**Please remember to provide the JCC with up-to-date phone numbers for guardians, authorized persons, and emergency contacts so you or another contact can be reached in case of an emergency. Changes must be submitted in writing.**

## **Camp at the J Behavior Policy**

### **Establishing Expectations**

All children and staff at Camp at the J are protected by and provided with a safe and secure environment. Age-appropriate rules and expectations are established for the Camp at the J campers and are based upon:

- Respect for the individual
- Respect for the environment
- Respect for others

It is important that children clearly understand behavioral boundaries. Rules are introduced at orientation and reinforced throughout the summer. We understand childhood is a process of learning to conform to rules and guidelines; we view our role as enabling children to gain these important social skills in a positive environment.

### **Redirection and Discipline**

When a child is disruptive, staff members will immediately remind them of the rules and expectations. Redirection, explanation, and constructive solutions are the first line of techniques used by the camp staff when a child requires behavioral correction. Some examples of this include:

- Taking a break from the group activity (while still in sight of counselors)
- Working through a disagreement with discussion and words
- Finding a different activity to participate in
- Providing a job for the camper within the activity/group
- Coaching a camper by praising them and reinforcing the positive ways they've contributed

### **Persistent Behavioral Problems**

Persistent disruptive behavior is rare at camp, but discipline may look like:

- The child is removed from the group for part of or all of the day
- The child's behavior will be (has been) recorded by all staff members involved
- A Camp Director and supervisor staff will meet with the camper to discuss the events, consequences, and expectations moving forward
- The Camp Director will phone the parents/guardians to discuss, or set up a time to discuss later in the day; there will be a written copy of the meeting
- In most cases, once the camper is ready and accepts the expectations, the camper will rejoin the bunk
- Generally camp utilizes a three-strike rule; however, the JCC reserves the right to suspend or terminate care at any time depending on safety considerations and the severity of issue(s)

Staff are expected to be fair and consistent with discipline and should not use demeaning language or raised voices. In addition to the Camp at the J policies, all state laws regarding child care are adhered to.

### **Termination of Enrollment from Camp at the J**

When the individual needs of the child cannot be served by the program or program policies are consistently being disregarded, Camp at the J may terminate a child's enrollment in the program. Such termination decisions will not be made without prior consultation with the child's caregivers/guardians and will be communicated to the caregivers/guardians. In most cases, the caregivers will be given a grace period of 3 days to make other care arrangements; however, Camp at the J reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment at any point in time if a situation is determined to be extremely detrimental to the child concerned or to the other children or staff in the program. Caregivers are financially responsible for tuition of expected time at Camp per the May 16, 2025 registration deadline.

### **Possible Reasons for Termination of Enrollment**

Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- The possibility of danger to the child or others in the group.
- The impact of the problematic behavior on the rest of the participants.
- The frequency of the problematic behavior.
- Availability of resources to address the problematic behavior.
- The willingness of the family members to work with the staff and/or to get outside help.

### **Additional, non-behavioral causes for possible termination may include:**

- Non-payment of tuition and fees.
- Non-compliance with Camp at the J policies and procedures.
- Habitual lateness in picking up the child.
- Failure to provide the required enrollment forms.

## **Camp at the J Babysitting Policy**

In an effort to maintain the professional status of our staff and prevent any potential conflict of interest, the care giving, instruction or engagement in any type of outside social or employment relationship between Camp at the J families and any Camp at the J employee is discouraged. However, should you hire or otherwise engage any Camp at the J employee for any reason or period of time, it must be outside the Mayerson JCC property and with the understanding that such arrangements and payment for services are solely between you and the Camp at the J staff member. These arrangements are not sanctioned by the Mayerson JCC and the Mayerson JCC is not liable or otherwise responsible in any way for the Camp at the J employee or any act, inaction, injury, damage, or result of such unsanctioned arrangement, engagement, activity, event, or service.