

ACA Ohio Accreditation Information for Camps Participating in ODJFS Reimbursement Program

Purpose of the Accreditation Program

The main purpose of the ACA-accreditation program is to educate camp owners and directors in the administration of key aspects of camp operation, particularly those related to program quality and the health and safety of campers and staff. The standards establish guidelines for needed policies, procedures, and practices. The camp, then, is responsible for ongoing implementation of these policies.

The second purpose of ACA accreditation is to assist the public in selecting camps that meet industry-accepted and government-recognized standards. [ACA's Camp Database](#) provides the public with eleven separate ways to search for the ideal ACA-accredited camp.

Eligibility Guidelines

ACA's accreditation program is designed to serve camps and programs that conduct activities which:

- Utilize trained leadership.
- Include planned and organized group interaction that contributes to participant's personal growth, which may include skill development, as well as mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth.
- Provide a sustained experience with participants attending for an established period of time.
- Predominantly serves children 5 and up and/or adults.*
- Will often include the outdoors and the natural environment as a setting for activities that teach environmental stewardship and recreational skills.
- Have a commitment to health, safety, and risk management.

*It is important to note, ACA's accreditation program (1) is not designed to address some of the age-specific and youth development needs of those younger than 5 years of age, (2) is not intended to circumvent licensure required to operate a day care and/or preschool.

Steps to Becoming ACA Accredited

1. **Complete** an accreditation application and remitting required fees by **March 1**. Camp fees, paid annually, vary among ACA local offices and provide not only accreditation services but also benefits for the camps such as professional development for the staff, public awareness, and legislative monitoring. (Camps will receive a discounted copy of the *American Camp Association's Accreditation Process Guide*.)

2. **Complete** an Accreditation Process Workshop, offered by local ACA offices by **March 31**. This course explains the accreditation process and describes the requirements of the standards. Accreditation Process Workshops - <https://www.acacamps.org/staff-professionals/accreditation-standards/accreditation/standards-courses>

3. **Submit [Camp Information Form](#) by February 1.** This form must be completed by any camp requesting a visit.
4. **Review and evaluate** each area of camp operation according to the guidelines in the standards.
5. **Prepare** materials, secure and create written documentation required by the standards. (Policies and procedures, Standard Operating Procedures)
6. **Share** the written documentation as required in the [Written Documentation Review](#) by **May 1**. This process verifies compliance of written documentation prior to the on-site visit and before the start of camp. It is an educational process for directors and allows visitors more time during the onsite visit to observe camp operations and talk with campers and staff.
6. **Participate** in the standards compliance visit by a team of ACA-trained visitors who will spend a day observing the camp and working with the director in determining compliance with the standards. The visit must be scheduled and occur when the camp is in full operation. **If you are seeking to participate in the ODJFS Reimbursement Program, we recommend scheduling your visit during your first week of operation but again the visit must be schedule on a normal day of operation where your visitors will have an opportunity to see both your campers and staff in action, activities taking place, etc.**
7. **Sign** the Annual Statement of Compliance — the camp administrator’s pledge to operate ethically, legally, and in compliance with ACA standards. **Submit** annual camp fees.

What’s Next Following Your First Visit

- Score Form is mail immediately to the ACA, Inc. Administrative office.
- The score form is scored immediately and your local ACA Standards Manager is notified of the scores. This process could take up to two weeks from the time the score form is mailed.
- ACA Standards Manager will send Accreditation Status Notification Letter to the Primary Contact for the camp. If the camp successfully meets all requirements of our accreditation process, the letter will state that the camp will become ACA Accredited after local leadership approval beginning on November 1.
- It is the responsibility of the camp to notify ODJFS as to their ACA Accreditation Status. Typically, ODJFS will allow back billing from the time they receive accreditation status letter and flips their switch to begin accepting vouchers. ODJFS Contact is:

Kristen Burgess, Quality Assurance Administrator
Bureau of Child Care Licensing and Monitoring
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
(614) 752-0324
Kristen.Burgess@jfs.ohio.gov

- The American Camp Association Accreditation year is November 1 – October 31. Camps participating in the ODJFS Program Accreditation is recognized by the state of Ohio once successful Accreditation status Letter is submitted in your OCQLS portal.

It is also the responsibility of the camp to follow all state day camp rules and regulations. For more information about the revised [Day Camp Rules](#) and to learn more about becoming a [Registered Day Camp](#) with the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS)

Becoming ACA Accredited does take a lot of work however, Accreditation greatly helps to ensure the delivery of safe and quality programs for our youth and young adults. In regards to the ACA Accreditation process, you can find a significant amount of information about accreditation on our website at: [About ACA Accreditation](#)

Key pages to review from this link are:

- Watch our [Accreditation 101: An Introduction](#) video that highlights the overview process and requirements.
- [Tell Me More](#) – helpful information for prospective camps, parents, media (PDF - 1MB)
- [Is accreditation right for my program?](#) Are we eligible?
- [What areas of my operation](#) are covered?
- How long does accreditation last? An on-site visit occurs at least every five years (the first cycle is three years and after the second successful visit, it is 5 years). Accreditation is approved on an annual basis by the local leadership based on continued compliance as evidenced by a signed Annual Statement of Compliance and current fees.
- [The Standards at a Glance](#) – based on the **2019 Edition of the Standards** – this provides an overview of the ACA standards and give the reader an idea of the questions being asked in the accreditation process. Obviously, not all standards apply to your program and there is a “does not apply” option for those standards. Please pay particular attention to the Standards that are bold, red, and italicized in this document as they are mandatory and camps must comply with these standards, as applicable, to be accredited by the American Camp Association.
- [Accreditation Information & Forms](#) – Tons of helpful information, form, tools and resources available to you to aide in your preparation process.
- [Resources by Section of Standards](#) - ACA is committed to providing resources to assist in your accreditation visit planning and preparation. These resources include tip sheets, charts, standards-at-a-glance, links to relevant ACA web pages and other websites, and general resources, which may or may not be specific to a standard. These samples should be reviewed and revised as appropriate for your camp/program. **These resources require member login.**
- [Preparing For A Visit](#)
- [Top Ten Ways to Make Your First ACA Visit a Success](#)
- [Standards-related Books and Resources](#)
- [Camp-related Regulations in Your State](#)
- [My Accreditation Tool](#)
- [Accreditation Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Precamp Training Topics](#)
- [Dispelling Common Myths](#)