



The 2022 AAR Questions and Sample Camp Responses

The Annual Accreditation Report (AAR) is an educational tool and annual touchpoint that supports ACA's shift from a *focus only on the site-visit* to one *on continuous compliance* with the standards and ongoing quality improvement throughout the entire accreditation cycle. In every non-visit year, accredited camps must submit the **Annual Accreditation Report** to maintain accredited status; failure to submit the report will result in accreditation removal. Camps in a visit year do not submit an Annual Accreditation Report.

How to Use This Tool:

The AAR focuses on the intent of several standards and does not specifically reference the standard numbers. Remember, the AAR is not intended to be a site-visit with yes/no scoring. Rather, the AAR is an educational tool for the camp that emphasizes ongoing improvement throughout the accreditation cycle.

The responses you provide should be in a narrative format (not a cut and paste of policy) that explains your understanding and practices used in your camp and one *that addresses all aspects of each question*. It is suggested camps follow these steps:

Here are 5 tips for leading you to success when working on your Annual Accreditation Report:

1. Carefully and thoroughly read the question to understand what is asked. Think about your camp and what the question is asking. For example, if the question is about medication administration with rental groups - be sure the response specifically addresses how this is managed with rental or user groups and is not about the camp general medication administration policy.
2. Some questions may not apply to your program. Perhaps your camp never serves rental groups. If a question does not apply to your camp, explain **WHY**, and provide as much context as possible.
3. Different from a visit, your narrative responses are not "scored." The reviewer will provide feedback that will help you identify potential blind spots, expand your knowledge, or shine a light on the quality of your approach to the question. The better your narrative, the more meaningful feedback a reviewer can provide you.
4. We encourage you to actively engage with the process to get the most out of it. When crafting question responses, provide detailed descriptions while paying close attention to **ALL** the question parts. Questions may include multiple parts, and your answer must reflect information for ALL the parts. Each question needs a narrative response that is more than "yes, we do this" or "no, we don't do this."
5. Start working on the AAR early. Please do not wait until the last week of January or February 1st; this will significantly help us get your completed AAR assigned to a trained reviewer and provide timely feedback that can aid in your summer planning. The report should take 1 to 2 hours to complete. Remember, submit your AAR by February 1st or your camp's accreditation will be removed – don't take the risk!

Below are sample responses, which can be a valuable tool to use and review before getting started. It will help you better understand what a response could look like and help spark your thinking about how the question applies to your unique camp program. Again, these are examples of what your reviewer will be expecting to see – please make sure that your responses are relevant to your camp operation and policies and procedures.

Sample Camp Responses:

- 1. Additional Modes:** As you complete this Annual Accreditation Report, please consider the changes in the modes that you will be operating at camp in 2022. The modes (Day Camps, Resident Camps, Short-term Camps and Camps Serving Rentals) and impact the way in which you respond to the standards. Please list the modes that you intend to operate in 2022.
 - **Day camps:** *Sessions are operated and staffed by the camp. The camper goes home to a parent or guardian each night, except for an occasional overnight.*
 - **Resident camps:** *Sessions vary in length. The program is operated and staffed by the camp, and the supervision of individual campers is a camp responsibility. Campers stay overnight, and camp is responsible for campers 24 hours a day. Trip-and-travel camp programs are resident-camp programs, last three nights or more, and often do not have a base location. Trip-and-travel program activities lthe environments encountered as the group moves from location to location. Such programs run as an extension of resident camps or may be an exclusive trip-and-travel camp, specializing in only trip, travel, or tour programs.*
 - **Camps serving rental groups:** *This type of camp operation involves other camps, groups, or programs that rent or lease the camp's facilities, and perhaps some services, to operate their own camping programs or retreats. The rental group may even be from within the camp's parent organization. Examples of rental groups in this category include most troop and club campouts, youth weekend retreats, outdoor education run by other groups, or specialty programs that operate sessions at the camp's facility. The camp may supply some staff and services, such as lifeguards or food service, but the primary responsibility for camper supervision and general programming is with the rental group. The programs may be short or long sessions. The group utilizing the camp facilities and maintaining the responsibility for programming is called the rental group.*
 - **Short-term resident programs run by the camp:** *Sessions are generally three nights or fewer, are run and staffed primarily by the camp, and include weekend retreats, short environmental programs, skill-training weekends, parent-child programs, and so on. The camp staff for these programs is sometimes supplemented by adults from a participating group.*

NOTE: If you have noted changes in modes, site, leadership or owner, during the last season, please contact the ACA staff member with whom you work!

Q1. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

We are a Resident Camp and Camp serving rental groups.

- 2. Annual Compliance Process:** All accredited camps are required to have a legal representative of the camp sign the ACA Statement of Compliance every year, even in visit years. This includes the confirmation that the camp is meeting all applicable mandatory and other standards that apply to the camp and programs. Please provide the name and position of the staff member that is primarily responsible for making sure the camp is complying with the standards.

Q2. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

Bryanna Henson, Program Director

OR

Dasani Elliot, Executive Director

- 3. Annual Compliance Process, cont.:** Please describe the camp's annual process for reviewing, updating as necessary, and documenting that the camp is in compliance with all standards applicable to the camp.

Q3. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

In cooperation with the camp director and programs coordinator, as the executive, I make sure to update the standards book with any new or revised standards as well as bring this information to the attention of the staff so we can implement the new standard appropriately. If we have changes within our organization, I make sure that we are still in compliance with standards, and that the updated written documentation (if applicable) is created.

OR

It's an ongoing process. Each fall, we review all the documents in our staff manuals for all programs. There is a master list posted in the office and, as sections are reviewed, an administrative staff initials and dates when it was completed. All documents are required to have the date of the revision at the end of the document (ex: Rev. 9/20). Additionally, we use this as a training opportunity. Staff who are not as familiar with certain areas of camp review the document to see if it makes sense to them. The Assistant Director (AD) is responsible for keeping staff on track for the review.

OR

Camp Director (myself) and Assistant Camp Director provide year-round leadership for the organization and are directly responsible for the maintenance of our ACA accreditation. I (the Camp Director) maintain my familiarity with the process and the standards as an ACA visitor. I attend visitor trainings. We are hiring a new assistant director this year and that person will attend an Accreditation Process Workshop. By having a member of the team who is a visitor and a member who attends the training from the camp perspective, we have a combined familiarity with the standards, the accreditation process, and the ways in which our practices meet them that upholds the integrity of the standards as they apply to our camp program.

4. Sexual Harassment Describe how your program provides training relating to sexual harassment for staff prior to them assuming their job responsibilities.

- Where, in your policies, is the specific code of conduct related to sexual harassment outlined for staff?
- How is the policy shared with staff/volunteers?
- How do you ensure that specific state and federal laws, if applicable, are included in the policy?
- If a staff member would need to report an incident of suspected sexual harassment, what is the confidential process for doing so, and who do they go to?

Q4. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

Our code of conduct is outlined in the staff handbook, which is given to staff prior to signing an employment agreement so they are aware of our policies before committing to work at camp. During our staff training this policy is gone over thoroughly.

Our Human Resources Manager is responsible to identify state and federal laws and she then leads a segment of our staff training.

If a staff member needs to report an incident, they are instructed to go directly to our Human Resources Manager, and she manages it and then involves others (director or staff) as needed.

OR

We rely heavily on our insurance company for reviewing our code of conduct and for leading our staff training. An insurance representative comes on site during staff training to review local and federal laws related to sexual harassment.

Our camp policy is posted on our website and included in both our parent and staff handbooks.

Our camp policy is that staff are to report any and all incidents or suspected incidents to their unit leader.

OR

WHERE: Staff handbook and included in employment agreement.

HOW: Staff must sign a memorandum indicating that they have read the policy and will abide by it.

REPORTING: Staff are instructed to reach out to any supervising director, who then will include the CEO in dialogue surrounding the issue.

5. **Mental Health:** Over the past several years, there has been a documented increase in diagnosed mental disorders of individuals under the age of 18. And, most recently, the CDC has recommended that organizations that interact with children develop strategies to minimize the negative impact on mental and emotional challenges of COVID-19 in their respective youth-serving organizations.
- What are your specific, measurable, desired program outcomes that address a campers' mental well-being?
 - Describe the process for determining when to access additional external mental health resources.

Q5. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

Our intended outcomes for our younger campers, ages 5-8, are for them to have self-awareness and empathy toward others. For our middle age group, campers ages 9-13, we want them to develop problem-solving techniques. And for the older campers, ages 14-17, we encourage them to adapt and learn from failure and to express emotions in a controlled fashion.

To measure outcomes, we survey campers at the end of each session, and two weeks after camp ends we send a survey to the families (parents/guardians). Additionally, staff provide an individual write-up for each camper, which goes into the camper's file. This write-up includes the same questions and scale asked of the participants.

If a camper or staff member is not reacting positively to an intervention or if the behavior is beyond our training, we will seek outside help. We have a local youth counselor on retainer.

OR

Our program outcomes include providing a summer experience in which campers grow in their ability to be open-minded and critical thinkers as well as develop fundamental skills needed to interact with other humans as our students migrate out of an isolated time due to the coronavirus. We know that the pandemic has increased anxiety and depression in youth, and we strive to give our campers the tools to thrive in an in-person social setting.

We have added a full-time staff person to be a mental health care provider for both campers and staff. He is part of a local consortium of healthcare workers and can reach out to colleagues anytime. If at any point he suggests additional help, he and the directors will convene to make a plan for an individual.

6. **Mental Health, cont.:**
- When and how do you train staff about what your programs mental health outcomes are for campers?
 - What process is used to observe, measure, and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies to achieve a successful mental health outcome for campers?

Q6. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

During staff training, staff spend time reviewing our mission and intended mental health outcomes. In 2021 we learned that we had to adjust our expectations from the previous summer due to the changes in schooling during the pandemic, and we'll learn from that and adjust again in 2022. Our intended outcomes vary by age

group and when we divide our staff into their age-specific units, we then train them specifically regarding the age group they'll be supervising during the summer.

For 2022, we are bringing in a local school counselor to lead this session so that we are better equipped to understand the mental health of our campers.

To measure, observe, and evaluate the mental health outcomes, we have daily scheduled check-ins with the tent staff. Staff may find a director at any time to report any observations or ask any questions.

OR

Outcomes are reviewed during staff training and broken down by age groups. As part of this training, we also review issues and lessons learned from the previous summer and use that as a tool to help staff anticipate how they can support campers in the current year.

Supervising directors check in daily with unit staff and campers, and unit staff meet weekly for the express purpose of collaborating on camper health.

- 7. Parental Communication:** Engaging parents or guardians is paramount to the overall success of the camp experience. Please describe your processes for both proactive and reactive engagement in your program.
- a. What communication platforms/channels are used to notify parents and guardians of processes and program expectations prior to the first day of the camp?
 - b. How are you informing parents and guardians regarding which communication channel(s) (e.g., mail, email, text, web) you will be using if you need to notify them of anything during camp season?

Q7. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

Prior to the start of camp, families receive a printed handbook detailing camp mission and expectations as well as frequently asked questions. This same information is available on our website. Once a camper is registered, we then send weekly email communication to the families.

During the camp session we rely on email for individual communications to family members. We continue to send out weekly email newsletters as well as post the same content on the parents' section of our website.

OR

New camp families all have a one-on-one meeting with one of the directors. At this meeting, the camper parent(s) or guardian(s) are given a printed manual that includes program expectations as well as contact information for program staff. For returning families a manual is mailed annually.

For ongoing communication, we set up groups in Slack.com so our camper parent(s) or guardian(s) may engage with both the camp and with each other. On our application, we ask parents/guardians if they prefer to receive individual messages via text or email, and we accommodate their request. Our policy is to send a message by whatever method they choose; that message asks that they call us. We do not include any details in that message.

- 8. Parental Communication, cont.:**
- a. Provide three examples of when you would notify camper parents or guardians in case of an illness or injury, medical or behavioral problem, natural disasters, or other significant program disruptions.
 - b. How is the communication documented and how is the documentation maintained?

Q8. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

Anytime we involve an outside resource, we notify the parents or guardians. For example, if we have to call a doctor or EMS regarding their child, we notify the camper parent(s) or guardian(s). Or if we have to engage a supervisor, such as for a disciplinary reason, we notify camper parent(s) or guardian(s)

Communication is documented on the camper's record in their electronic record. The documentation is maintained through electronic record company.

OR

Because we are a day camp, it is convenient for us to call or text camper parent(s) or guardian(s). We notify them if there is a time change in our schedule, such as thunder storms requiring them to pick up at an earlier time. If we provide transportation for them, we notify them if the bus is to be more than 30 minutes late for either drop-off or pick-up. If there is a medical emergency that we are not trained to treat on site, we call the parent(s) or guardian(s) to have them take their child for treatment.

Communication is stored in Icloud because we can easily keep all texts and emails in the cloud. These are reviewed and organized into appropriate folders by our office administrator at the end of each weekly session.

- 9. Vendor-Provided Activities (Specialized and Aquatic):** Vendor-provided activities include activities that are conducted by individuals who are not directly hired by the camp and activities where the equipment is maintained by someone other than the camp staff. Campers may travel from camp to a specific site for these activities, vendors may come to the camp and run activities, or vendors may be from within the same organization (e.g., lifeguard from YMCA or JCC also guards for camp program). When choosing vendors, one needs to ask questions related to safety and also gather documentation that supports the stated training and certification of the vendor's instructors (including for individuals who are part of the same organization but not hired or trained by the camp).
- Please identify all vendor-led activities that you use for your campers (e.g., specialized, aquatic, adventure challenge, horseback riding).
 - Provide up to two examples of how you collect verifiable documentation on the certification, training, and/or experience of the vendors' instructors.

Q9. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

We have vendors for our swimming and horseback riding. Our camp is operated through the town recreation center and our lifeguards are provided by the town, yet not hired or trained by us. Our older campers go riding once a week at a local barn.

For the lifeguards we have a letter from the director of recreation confirming that the guards have current certifications in lifeguarding, CPR/AED, and first aid. In our contract, we also clarify roles and responsibilities: our camp staff are responsible for the campers when they are on the deck of the pool and the lifeguards are responsible when they are in the water. In the event of a medical emergency, the town lifeguards are to treat the participant, but in the event of a behavioral issue the camp staff are to treat the participant.

For the horse barn, we have an email stating that all the staff are trained by the barn and that they all have current CPR/AED and first aid certifications. Similarly, if there is a medical emergency, the barn staff treat the camper, and if there is a behavioral issue, the camp staff manage the camper.

OR

Our camp is on the site of a school, and we use their challenge course.

We collect from the school a copy of the annual challenge course inspection and a copy of the staff skills checklist used by the vendor and any certifications. Additionally we confirm group sizes so that staffing ratios will be maintained. We provide no more than 12 campers, and they have at least 2 trained staff. This is in our contract with them.

- 10. Risk Management Plan:** Review your risk management plan, which evaluates exposure in three major areas: human liabilities, financial/operational liabilities, and property resources. Hint: staffing challenges, financial challenges, transportation challenges, environmental impacts (e.g., storms, heat, draught, fire, and smoke), communicable disease, change in modes of operation, and governmental restrictions.
- List three risks that you will or have added or updated in your risk management plan in the past two years.
 - How are you documenting updates to your risk management plan?
 - List your techniques to control, reduce, or prevent those selected risks.

Q10. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

We have identified wildfires as a new risk and have added that to our plan as of 2021. We have updated our natural disaster/severe weather plan as well as our communicable disease plan.

Our risk management plan is maintained in a spreadsheet, which lives in a shared cloud file; we update directly on that document. Annually our insurance representative reviews this document.

To control for both wildfires and severe weather, we reviewed and updated our evacuation and communications plan. We took steps to fireproof our buildings and added lightning rods to all buildings. To reduce communicable disease, we rearranged our healthcare facility to allow for more isolation beds and more open-air space for treatments. We installed a ventilation system, an open-air waiting room, and additional sinks for handwashing.

OR

Three Risks: Staff mental health, communicable disease, financial/operational liabilities.

Documentation: Identified risks each have a folder in Google Drive, i.e., Wildfire, Flooding, Financial Risk, Buildings, Grounds.

Techniques to Control: Financial Risk – We diversified our income by offering virtual programming as well as food preparation and delivery.

Techniques to Reduce: Eliminated one cabin for camper use and designated it as living space for a newly hired full-time mental healthcare provider for staff.

Techniques to Reduce: Installed 20 handwashing stations throughout camp.

- 11. Incident Reporting and Analysis:** In reviewing your system of annually evaluating incidents, accidents, “near misses,” and emergencies, please answer the following (for all modes):
- How do you gather and document information?
 - Who are the outside advisors on your review team? How do you review data?
 - In the last year that you operated, list one of your “near misses” or “emergency not resulting in injury” (e.g., lost campers, near drownings, the use of drugs or alcohol by staff or participants).
 - What steps will you take to reduce this/these “near miss(es)” in the future?

Q11. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

Incidents and accidents are reported electronically via Google Forms, which allows us to easily review them.

Data is first reviewed by the key staff and then shared with our insurance representative as well as our healthcare and facilities supervisors. We can easily sort the data and share what is pertinent to their expertise.

Staff managers are trained to report any patterns directly to their supervisor, such as the healthcare manager treating 3 campers from the same cabin with splinters. At the end of each session, the facilities manager, healthcare manager, program director, and assistant director meet to review the incidents and accidents prior to the next session in case there is information that can inform staff for the upcoming session (such as repairing a board in the cabin to prevent splinters). At the end of the season, the director joins with those same managers to review the season’s data. Prior to opening the following year, the data is once again reviewed by managers as a reminder and as a useful tool in planning.

Each near miss is reviewed, and consideration is given to making changes in program, supervision, or facilities. If changes can be reasonably accommodated that will help prevent the same incident or accident, then we work to make that happen.

OR

Information is gathered on paper forms, which live on clipboards throughout camp. These are collected at least daily by area supervisors. These reports, once reviewed, go into a 3-ring binder as a form of documentation and are available for annual review.

Outside advisors are the board of trustees, camp attorney, camp financial officer, and insurance representative, who review the information in the notebooks annually.

A near miss for us was a staff member returning from a night off and falling asleep in a camper's bed.

That staff member was dismissed, staff had an in-service training, and staff time-off policies were updated.

12. Staff Hiring and Ratios: Having qualified staff and meeting minimum ratios of staff versus campers is of extreme importance to the safety and well-being of your campers or groups, the integrity of your accreditation, and the liability for your organization.

- a. What position(s) are you prioritizing in the hiring process for 2022 (e.g., director, food service supervisor, healthcare provider, supervisor of specialized activities, or staff to meet your overall ratios)?
- b. What is your plan going into 2022 to hire qualified staff and to meet your staff-to-camper ratios? What is your plan if you are unable to hire the staff needed (e.g., who will fill in? will you reduce enrollment, cancel groups, outsource, change the offering of an activity or program)?

Q12. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

For 2022 we are prioritizing health center staffing. We have increased our staffing from 3 to 5, and we know that finding qualified healthcare staffing will be a challenge.

To hire qualified staff, we are first asking our community to help us find qualified staff. We are hosting many virtual informational sessions for any interested candidates.

We have added a clause to our application indicating that if we cannot find enough staff to maintain safe ratios, we reserve the right to cancel a registration and we will offer full refund.

OR

Priorities for 2022 include program supervisors, specifically waterfront and challenge course supervisors.

We anticipate that we will continue to meet our ratios as we have traditionally exceeded what is required in standards, and we were able to absorb reduced staffing in 2021 without having to adjust our enrollment.

Adjustments for 2022 include hiring short-term staff, hiring staff for part of the summer, recruiting more families as staff, and adding internships. For programming, if we have fewer staff to cover an activity, we are preparing to offer that activity less often or to fewer campers.

13. Sensitive Issues: Camp is a place where campers feel comfortable asking questions and talking about things that they are curious about. Counselors are not always experienced enough to know the right things to say. The sensitive issue policy is a tool to give staff direction on how to respond to questions that may not be appropriate for them to answer on their own.

- a. Please explain your policy on sensitive issues. Identify both (a) conversations and (b) behaviors that may need to be addressed.
- b. How are staff trained in that policy?

Q13. SAMPLE RESPONSES:

For sensitive issues we work to give staff some scripts to use with campers in conversations. In staff training we stuff their pockets with appropriate words to use when talking with campers and fellow staff. We also work with staff on listening. Listening for specific trigger words coming from campers and peers. These trainings are conducted by an outside consultant who we found through our insurance company.

Staff are trained initially during our precamp training by an outside consultant. From the consultant, our supervisors are given tools to use with staff, which include check-in questions, self-evaluation questions, and a board to post questions for all. This board is reviewed by directors regularly. The consultant is available throughout the season for support and questions.

OR

We identify and share issues that we then train for. Staff are given training in talking about gender identification because our agency supports that. They are also given guidance for stopping a conversation and indicating that this should either be “redirected to the director” or is “not appropriate for our camp setting.” Staff are asked not to discuss their own experiences.

OR

We identify diversity, equity, and belongingness as integral to building our camp community. Additionally we promote individual growth while at camp. We work with staff to be able to facilitate discussions around those traits and to model behavior that is inclusive.

Staff are trained as mediators specific to the age group with whom they are working. This training includes an online workshop, followed by in person follow-up during staff training. Topics include managing bullies, talking about gender, appropriate language as it relates to race and religion, and inclusive language. This is the first topic addressed in staff training so that we may then practice the behaviors and use of appropriate language throughout staff training, prior to camper arrival.