



The Review Process, Feedback System, and Sample Reviewer Comments

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 continuous compliance* with the standards and ongoing quality improvement throughout the entire accreditation cycle. In every nonvisit year, accredited camps must submit the **Annual Accreditation Report** to maintain accredited status; failure to submit the report will result in removal of accreditation. Camps in a visit year do not submit an Annual Accreditation Report.

The AAR process includes reviewers providing comprehensive quality feedback to support the camp's ongoing improvements and learning from this peer-review process. As with all aspects of accreditation, the AAR review is an educational process. The AAR review varies from an on-site visit: during an on-site visit, you may work with a camp through their compliance, while the AAR is about reflection that can make policies, procedures, and practices even stronger.

We have a "good, better, best" approach for you, the AAR reviewer, to strengthen your written comment. This approach allows for consistent and quick reference to the camp's response, paired with thoughtful and valuable comments and your expertise that provides feedback, possibly improvements, or changes the camps should consider.

When reviewing your assigned AAR, you will see that each question has three feedback choices:

- *As described, the response **meets** the standards and intent of the accreditation program*
- **Unclear** from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
- *As described, the response **does not meet** the standards and intent of the accreditation program*

To support your feedback choice, reviewers must also provide a written comment for each answer. Thus, reviewers will not need to ask open-ended questions, do follow-ups, or chase the camp for missing information. Instead, you will meet the camp exactly where they are, provide feedback and comments, and allow them to use your review in their continued compliance and improvement.

If, for any reason, an AAR seems incomplete as submitted, if there are any issues, or if you have any questions, contact the [Standards Staff](#) for your region.

Understanding the Feedback Rating System

The feedback options allow reviewers to consistently quantify a camp's specific response and determine its quality and thoroughness. Please use the following parameters to help determine the feedback rating for each camp question response:

- *Select this choice: As described, the response **meets** the standards and intent of the accreditation program.*
 - If you feel confident that the camp director describes a thorough understanding of the standards, as applied to the question.
 - If the question was answered thoroughly and in its entirety.
- *Select this choice: **Unclear** from what is written if the **response meets the standards** and intent of the accreditation program.*
 - If you are unsure if the camp director understands the standards as they apply to the question.
 - If the question was not answered thoroughly or not in its entirety. (If there is missing information.)

- If when reading the camp's AAR response, you sought additional information (e.g., you went to the website to learn more, you skipped ahead to other questions to see if you could learn more).
- *Select this choice: As described, response **does not meet** the standards and intent of the accreditation program.*
 - If you find yourself shaking your head or saying, "hmm," or "what," or "I'm confused."
 - If the response does not apply directly to the questions asked.
 - If information is missing from the response and the question is not fully answered.
- *Select this choice: **Not Seen***
 - If the question does not apply to the camp's operations, and you agree with their assessment that it does not apply.

Crafting Educational and Thoughtful Comments

This is your opportunity to provide educational feedback around their policies, procedures, and practices in a nonvisit year. The goal is for your comments to be useful for them. One place to start is to use the related standards' contextual education to help formulate your feedback and comments. The referenced standards (in the AAR questions listed below) are from the Accreditation Process Guide (APG) v.2019. Remember, it is not the intent of the AAR to match the intent of a site visit with yes/no scoring. Instead, the AAR is an **educational tool for the camp that emphasizes ongoing improvement throughout the accreditation cycle.**

In crafting your comments, you will want to ensure they are worded as directives and not as questions:

Use directives...	...Instead of open-ended questions
<i>Consider adding...</i> <i>Remember to include...</i> <i>To meet the standards, you will want to...</i>	<i>How do you...?</i>

After using specific directives, reference directly back to the standard(s) that connect to the question. For example:

- *This question is asking if you or the rental group provides the guard for kayaking. A more comprehensive approach and to ensure compliance with the standard, you will want to clarify and add who will guard with your rental groups.*

2022 Sample Reviewer Comments

Q1. 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 (Short-term Camps, Resident Camps, Day Camps, and Camps Serving Rentals) impact the way in which you respond to the standards. Please list the modes that you intend to operate in 2022.

Note: When reviewing, take note of the modes of operation as they influence responses to the questions

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>While you may be decreasing your modes due to COVID-19, be sure to prepare for all possible modes of operation.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>I see on your website that you have a day camp; I don't see that you have mentioned that here. Be certain which modes you operate as you manage your accreditation and ensure you are in compliance with all applicable standards.</i>

Q2. Annual Compliance Process: All accredited camps are required to have a legal representative of the camp sign the Statement of Compliance every year, even in visit years. This is the confirmation that the camp is meeting all applicable mandatory and other standards for 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.

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Congratulations on the retirement! Because someone new is coming into your position, check in with ACA staff to make sure the camp's records and accreditation requirements are up to date.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>I understand you may have some staffing changes and challenges with locating previous documentation related to your accreditation. If you need more time to accurately review your compliance, your statement of compliance must be signed prior to your camp operating this summer season, at the latest.</i>

Q3. 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.

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Remember that annual compliance is a great opportunity for professional development for staff. Consider who else you might include. If you have other team members who can support aspects and areas of your accreditation, this can help build a stronger culture of accreditation in your camp.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You say, "We review our materials every fall." This does not explain by whom and to what end. It is unclear how all of the standards are reviewed to insure compliance. Be sure that you are taking the time to assess your policies and documents regularly.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
----------------	--

Comments:	<p>a) <i>You mention that a lot of your compliance materials are housed in your staff manual, which is great if it is distributed to staff. From your description, I am not clear what the process is for comparing this document to the standards to ensure everything is in compliance.</i></p> <p>b) <i>It's a good idea to make sure your organic documents (handbooks, manuals, policy manuals, etc.) are easily connected to the standards. Digital highlighting, bookmarking, tagging, etc. can help make this process efficient for this annual review and at the time of the on-site visit. Since you are using paper copies, consider using a highlighter, labeling the standard(s) that go with each page in your staff handbook, and copying the portion of the book that demonstrates compliance and putting it alongside the standard.</i></p>
------------------	--

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>From what you describe, you are technically in compliance; however, it really benefits you, the visitors (at the time of an on-site visit), and the development of your culture of accreditation process if you can organize in a more detailed way.</i>

Q4. Sexual Harassment Describe how your program provides training relating to sexual harassment for staff prior to them assuming their job responsibilities.

- a. Where, in your policies, is the specific code of conduct related to sexual harassment outlined for staff?
- b. How is the policy shared with staff/volunteers?
- c. How do you ensure that specific state and federal laws, if applicable, are included in the policy?
- d. 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?

Possible Related Standards: ST.25

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You mention the policy is in your handbook, however, be sure to confirm local and federal laws are included in your policy and identify the process for a staff member to report an incident.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>That is great that you involve your insurance company and human resources manager on your policies and training.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You've clearly outlined how you inform and train staff; it is unclear if you have confirmed the state and federal laws and then implemented those.</i>

Q5. 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.

- a. What are your specific, measurable, desired program outcomes that address a campers’ mental well-being?
- b. Describe the process for determining when to access additional external mental health resources.

Possible Related Standards: HW.9, CR.2

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You have done a nice job of outlining the outcomes for your participants, and it is smart to have different outcomes for different participant age groups. You mention sending out surveys; I’m unclear if you have different surveys for the different age groups as well (if not, you might want to consider it).</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You describe that you provide meaningful activities in a safe environment, yet that does not specify how you hope the participants will grow. Consider being more specific with what you want those meaningful activities to lead to for the participant’s mental well-being. Additionally, under what circumstances do you access mental health resources outside of your organization.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You’ve shared your intended outcomes. Be sure to include how you measure them (which could be done via survey for participants or parents/guardians.), and also clarify when you access outside help.</i>

Q6. Mental Health, cont.:

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

Possible Related Standards: HW.9, CR.2

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Your descriptions of staff training indicate that you integrate your mission into your training on a consistent basis and that it helps you train your staff for managing campers.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You’ve provided elaborate detail about staff training, especially as it relates to your special population of campers. Consider exploring opportunities to determine the effectiveness of your outcomes as relate to mental well-being.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Having volunteer staff does pose some unique challenges, you may consider training methods that are accessible to your volunteer staff and support their work with your camper population.</i>

Q7. Parental Communication: Engaging parent(s) or guardian(s) 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 parent(s) and guardians(s) of processes and program expectations prior to the first day of the camp.
- b. How are you informing parents and guardians what the communication channel (e.g., mail, email, text, web) will be if they are being notified during camp season?

Possible Related Standards: CR.2.4, AD.12, AD.21.2, HW.8.1, HW. 8.2

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>The printed handbook that you provide to parents is a great idea, and it sounds as if that is the right medium for your camp families. Having it available at the local public library is an idea I have not seen before.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>The information you send to parents at the time of registration is clear. However, it isn't clear when (under what circumstances) and how you reach out to them subsequent to that initial communication.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>This question is about more than just medical notification. If there is a weather emergency or change in pick-up or drop-off time, or if you simply want to send a newsletter, how are you getting information to parent(s) and guardian(s)?</i>

Q8. Parental Communication, cont.:

- a. Provide three examples of when you would notify camper parent(s) or guardian(s) 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?

Possible Related Standards: CR.2.4, AD.12, AD.21.2, HW.8.1, HW. 8.2

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Your phrase "anytime we involve an outside resource" is a good way to classify when you reach out to families. Sounds like your electronic record company makes maintaining the documentation convenient.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You've listed three times you would notify parents. Consider what your plan is for when these situations actually happen (that is, have a plan for documenting that messaging and deciding how to keep it).</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>This question is about more than just medical notification (for example, if there is a discipline issue or a concern raised in an activity group and you want to be sure the family learns of it from you directly). With critical notifications, consider how you document the outreach as well as what you do to maintain those records.</i>

Q.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. The campers may travel from camp to a specific site, or vendors may come to the camp site 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 to 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).

- a. Please identify all vendor-led activities that you use for your campers (e.g., specialized, aquatic, adventure challenge, horseback riding).
- b. Provide up to two examples of how you collect verifiable documentation on the certification, training, and/or experience of the vendors’ instructors.

Possible Related Standards: AD.45, AD.46, AD.47

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>The activities sound fun, especially the waterslide!</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>For your rafting trip, it’s not clear if your email to the rafting company has you confirm that their staff are certified and trained.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>To collect information from the vendor, consider sending a letter (and include a copy of the applicable standards) and then give them a date by which to return the information (so you have it prior to the start of the season).</i>

Q10. 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, governmental restrictions.

- a. List three risks that you will or have added or updated in the past two years.
- b. How are you documenting updates to your risk management plan?
- c. List your techniques to control, reduce, or prevent those selected risks.

Possible Related Standards: AD.13

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Sounds like you take this seriously and are thorough in your assessments. Well done.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You’ve identified your risks, be sure to also consider how to reduce, control, or prevent them.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Consider finding someone familiar with the camp program to help you review your risks.</i>

Q11. Incident Reporting and Analysis: In reviewing your system of annually evaluating incidents, accidents, “near misses,” and emergencies:

- a. How do you gather and document information?
- b. Who are the outside advisors on your review team? How do you review data?

- c. 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).
- d. What steps will you take to reduce this/these “near miss(es)” in the future?

Possible Related Standards: AD.14

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Well documented and smart that you involve your insurance company in the review.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You’ve listed possible “near misses,” remember to also identify how you review this information to reduce the chances of something similar happening in the future.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>While “none of this has happened yet,”it is important to think about what could happen so that you can plan to reduce that risk. This applies to more than just at your high risk activities; you mention only horseback riding, waterskiing, ax throwing.</i>

Q12. 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)?

Possible Related Standards: ST.1, ST.2, ST.5, ST.8-ST.17, ST.35

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You have thought this through thoroughly. Seeing that you might cancel registration (with refund) if you do not find enough staff, I’m sure your families are willing to help recruit.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>You mention that it is hard to find waterfront staff, and if you can’t find enough coverage to meet your ratios, consider what your back-up options are.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>That’s great that you were fully staffed in 2021, consider having a plan in case you find yourself strapped in 2022.</i>

Q13. Sensitive Issues: Camp is a place where campers feel comfortable asking questions and talking about subjects 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?

Possible Related Standards: ST.31

Rating:	As described, the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>I like the idea that they start the training virtually prior to arriving at camp. Thanks for sharing that resource. Consider as well soliciting from staff additional resources they may have from their experiences outside of camp (school, other jobs, other trainings) so that you may add more to your library of resources.</i>

OR

Rating:	Unclear from what is written if the response meets the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Thanks for providing your policy, be sure to also specify how the staff are trained to implement the policies.</i>

OR

Rating:	As described, the response does not meet the standards and intent of the accreditation program
Comments:	<i>Be specific with the behaviors that you will train your staff to address.</i>