



## Public Policy Position Statements

**Camp Safety:** The American Camp Association (ACA) actively promotes and supports camp safety. We provide camps and their leaders with well-tested programs and services that advance a continuous improvement process that goes well beyond fundamental protection. For assurance of fundamental protection, ACA believes state governments are better able than the federal government to determine levels of care for organized camp operations. Furthermore, we believe states should collaborate with non-governmental national organizations, such as ACA, in order to further advance a higher level of care and well-being during the camp experience.

**Children and Nature:** ACA believes that young people benefit emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually from spending time in close contact with the natural world. This critical connection is essential to healthy development. ACA supports and actively participates in public and private partnerships and collaborations that make positive nature-based opportunities available to children, youth, and families. Furthermore, ACA will advocate on behalf of and in cooperation with children and youth to develop and mobilize resources that introduce, educate, and personally connect children with the natural environment.

**Children and Physical Activity:** ACA believes that all children need to be provided with a broad range of opportunities to be physically active. Physical activity produces fundamental physical, psychological, and social benefits — including an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in the risk of cardiovascular disease and obesity. For more than 150 years, camp programs have sought ways to create healthy communities for children by providing environments that offer frequent and varied opportunities for physical activity. ACA supports and promotes active living in camp communities and other environments that offer access to developing healthy lifelong habits and skills. Furthermore, ACA advocates on behalf of and in cooperation with children and community partners to mobilize resources that educate and facilitate physical activity.

**Criminal Background Checks:** ACA is committed to the physical and emotional safety of children and youth. This commitment is reflected in the education, training, publications, and camp standards that ACA provides. ACA believes that camps should utilize multifaceted screening and hiring programs and support practices appropriate to the clientele, staffing, supervision, and program consideration of each camp.

An important aspect of any screening program is biometric-based\* criminal background checks for all staff and volunteers with access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. In order for camps to implement effective biometric-based criminal background checks, a reliable federal program must be in place. ACA supports the establishment of a comprehensive federal biometric-based criminal background checking system that is reasonable in cost, timely in response, uniform in availability to

camps across the country regardless of sponsorship, and consistent in the information provided according to identical pre-determined indicators of potentially harmful behavior.

In order for a federal program to be viable, ACA believes that states must mandate timely reporting to the state of information held at the county level; provide both county and state data to the federal program in a timely manner; mandate that checks be done for all staff and volunteers with access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults; and provide assistance to camps in accessing the system in a timely and affordable manner.

Furthermore, ACA advocates for the establishment of a coalition of agencies and associations with similar interests and concerns in order to promote a national response to this critical issue.

**Public Lands:** ACA supports a legislative and regulatory approach to public lands that provides nonprofit and for-profit camps with fair and equal access to public lands under conditions and regulations that are consistent from one region to another, and provides access to public lands at a fair price — with simplified and reasonable fee structures — including those for camps based on public lands. Furthermore, public land use strategies should also recognize the occasional need for new or short term access by youth-serving organizations. In addition, any legislative or regulatory design for public land use should recognize the contributions made by camps for the preservation and stewardship of natural resources and provide all stakeholders, including camps, with the opportunity to have input before decisions are made. Finally, ACA urges continued recognition that the public needs the support of organizations with outdoor expertise to experience public lands fully.

**School Calendars:** ACA believes the organized camp experience is a vital component in the development and education of the whole child. ACA supports local educational objectives, which include a school calendar that recognizes and promotes the developmental needs of children and youth with appropriate programming and schedules. In addition, ACA encourages educational objectives that allow for the extension of organized summer camp experiences to all children. Furthermore, ACA also supports a partnership between educational officials, community youth development professionals, and parents in determining the school calendar.

**Year-Round Education:** ACA believes the organized camp experience is a vital component in the development and education of the whole child. ACA supports year-round educational opportunities and actively supports the extension of organized camp experiences to all children.

*\*Data gathered from a biological source unique to an individual — possible examples include fingerprints and retinal scans.*

### [For More Information](#)

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