

Essential Functions of a Camper Checklist

Tracey C. Gaslin PhD, CRNI, CPNP, FNP-BC

These essential functions may serve as a guide for determining a camp's ability to best serve each camper. Be sure to add and/or subtract applicable functions for your unique camp experience.

Physical Requirements

Consider the following:

1. Does the camper need to be ambulatory?
2. Does the camper need to be able to self-toilet and provide his or her own self-care?
3. Does the camper need to have a certain aptitude in communication? What if the camper is nonverbal?
4. Can the camper with Asperger's participate in your basketball camp?
5. Is the camper who wears a leg brace able to do the hiking expeditions as part of your camp experience?
6. Is the camper with food allergies able to attend the all girls' camp?
7. What are the cognitive requirements of a camper? Can a child with developmental delay manage your camp experience?

Behavioral Requirements

Can the camper do the following?

1. Sleep in a room with six to eight other people or fall asleep without assistance. This may be a challenge for the only child, especially if this is the first time he or she is away from home for an extended period.
2. Follow a structured schedule. This may be challenging for the ADHD camper.
3. Follow verbal directions. If your camp is a "hands off" facility, how will you manage a child who has been physically manipulated by parents or guardians to do what they require at home?
4. Self-manage frustrations or emotional outbursts. How do we promote positive coping skills in children?
5. Understand camp rules regarding being safe, loved, and respected. A child from a dysfunctional home may not have an appropriate understanding of these terms, especially if they come from situations where they have been physically hit or assaulted because they are "loved."

Camp Structure and Function Requirements

Physical — Consider the following:

1. Does the camp have many steps? Unpaved walkways?
2. How much walking is required daily? Is it a large hilly facility or a smaller organization on flat land?
3. What are your sleeping accommodations, and is there opportunity to make adjustments to these arrangements?
4. How is your nutritional program organized? Do you have the kitchen staff, funding, or ability to provide food alternatives?
5. What does camp staffing include? Do you have flexibility in your camper-to-staff ratios? What training is provided to camp staff for behavioral challenges? Is this included in orientation?
6. Are there accessible healthcare services? What level of care can you offer to camp participants?
7. Is the camp program a structured or unstructured schedule? How might your schedule impact children with attention deficit issues, heat intolerance, or developmental delays?

Behavioral — Can the camper do the following?

1. Self-calm following an event that causes frustration, sadness, or anger.
2. Sleep without sleep aids (lights, music, movies, etc.).
3. Follow verbal directions from counselors.
4. Does not wander.
5. Is not impulsive.