



## **Local Regulatory Advocacy for Camps During COVID-19**

States are beginning to set parameters for when and how camps may operate this summer. States set the large parameters for this response, but local decisions and implementation are the final steps. This calls for a different type of advocacy especially in the local area where camps who choose to operate are relying on their own actions and messages of influence with regulatory bodies. The advocacy should not be based on an economic argument but a goal to seek a path to opening in a safe and effective partnership with regulatory agents.

We recognize that many local Departments of Health may not have the experience or resources to understand how camps are preparing for the summer. We are recommending camps engage directly with the local health department. Collectively, camps should help them understand the new protocols and practices camps are putting in place in order to be the best public health partner possible. Individually, camps should be sharing their COVID-19 response plans and establishing agreements around communication and collaboration this summer.

### Preparation/Do Your Homework

- Review all state and local jurisdiction orders, guidance and prescriptive guidelines related to camp and its operation. Remember they may be updated regularly. Understand which of these has priority. A state order often affords the opportunity for a local jurisdiction to be stricter.
- Compare camp guidance to existing camp regulations. What additional measures will a camp be required to implement? How will a camp be held accountable and to which agencies?
- Compile a list of camper parents, friends of camp and alums who might be useful to help carry your message to your regulatory body. Where can they be the most useful?

### Organize

- Talk to other camps in your county/jurisdiction. Share questions, concerns and proposed action.
- Agree on a common strategy if possible.

### Engage

- Approach your local environmental health officer and/or public health officer directly and keep your local supervisor/elected official informed of your action.
  - Be ready with your “ask” – what do you specifically want to be allowed to do?
  - Be ready with an explanation/demonstration of how you feel you can meet the points on the guidance safely. Bring a detailed communicable disease plan for their input. Ultimately, they will need to agree with and have confidence in how you will manage any instance of communicable disease that you may have at camp this summer
  - Be ready with the history of why you feel you are equipped to handle this new challenge.

- Be ready to negotiate – be flexible but know your limits. Determine the conditions that you can or cannot implement in your situation. Ask about expectations on timing and mode of communication with them this summer.

#### Key questions from local officials on the impact of camp opening

The [American Camp Association](#) (ACA) and the [YMCAs of the United States](#) (Y-USA) are engaged together to provide educational resources to both day and overnight camps, state and local health departments, and parents/guardians and campers. The educational resources have been developed by an independent expert panel being coordinated by [Environmental Health & Engineering, Inc.](#) (EH&E), a Boston-based consulting firm specializing in environmental health. The [Field Guide for Camps](#) is available to camps to help them understand key components of guidelines and directives and to determine how they might adapt/implement those guidelines in their camp setting. The table of contents of the guide shows many of the area's camps can expect to address in conversation with their local health officials.

- Communication
- Content and Guideline Communication
- Health Screening and Preventing Covid-19 infections
- Facilities
- Food Service and Deliveries
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Activities
- Campers and staff
- Transportation
- PPE for workers and staff
- Supplies
- Related checklists

Camps are encouraged to highlight the Field Guide for Camps in conversations with their regulatory bodies. Ask if the health officer has seen this resource and offer to send a link before any meetings. Many local jurisdictions have been actively engaged with discussions about this resource through their public health organizations.

In addition to the topics listed above, health officials will want to discuss additional specifics about your camp following the points on your local public health orders and guidelines. These could include:

- Overall physical distancing plan including decreasing densities
- Enhanced sanitation plan
- Communicable disease plan and response to outbreak
  - identification
  - isolation (separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick)
  - quarantine (separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick)
- Projected impact on local community health care and facilities
- How much of your program operates primarily outdoors vs indoors?
- Home of origin of your projected campers/staff
- Contact tracing capability
- Training plan for your staff and campers in new procedures
- How quickly you can pivot in instances of a resurgence of the disease around you and potential reinstatement of stricter shelter at home orders