



An Introduction to Camp Administration

Basic Camp Management

American Camping Association®

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Printed in the United States of America

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Cover design by Joyce Koeper
Text design by IBJ Contract Publishing
Editorial services by BooksCraft, Inc.

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ISBN 0-87603-188-2

A CIP catalog record for this book can be obtained from the Library of Congress.

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Disclaimer

The purpose of this book is to provide an overview of issues with which camp directors should be familiar. It should be recognized that camp directors and others who run camp operations will require further education and experience in each of the areas covered herein. Neither the publisher nor the authors of this book undertake to verify that individuals who use this book are trained appropriately. Nor do the publisher or authors assume any responsibility for liability for any consequences of the use of information in this book. Further, the American Camping Association, Inc., and the authors hereby expressly disclaim any responsibility, liability, or duty to camp administrators, operators, personnel, any program participants or their families, for any such liability arising out of injury, illness, or loss to any person or organization, by the failure of such administrators or camp personnel to seek further training.

*Dedicated to Kathy and Robin, who found a love of
people and of the world outdoors while growing up at camp.*

*The Staff of YMCA Camp Widjiwagan,
St. Paul, Minnesota, 1963-1974,
who will always be a part of our lives.*

Preface

When the first edition of *Basic Camp Management* was published in the mid-seventies the idea was to provide a short and simple manual for the very new camp director. With each revision, further information and topics have been added, changing the manual from the rather elementary volume we had originally visualized. One major factor in this evolution has been the growing complexity of the management of camps and conference centers. The other has been the continued use of the book as a text in college courses and the American Camping Association's Basic Camp Director Courses, which required the expansion of information.

Some of the terms we use in the book should be thought of in the broadest sense and may require some explanation.

As we have used it, the term *camp* encompasses many many types of operations beyond the sites that run their own camp programs, including conference/retreat centers or camp sites that also rent their facilities for conference/retreat use or for the use of an environmental education program; camp programs using rented sites, the rented sites themselves..

The term *director* is used to refer to the administrator of the camp, conference/ retreat center, or program. The director is responsible for the site most of the time.

The terms *operator* or *owner* both refer to the entity (whether individual(s) or organization) that owns the operation. In some cases, the ownership involves the property and site and/or the program operated on the site. In other cases, it involves only the program operated in a rented facility.

Independent camp refers to one ordinarily organized for profit, sometimes identified as a private-independent camp or for-profit camp.

The term *not-for-profit* describes camps that operate under a 501 (c) (3) Internal Revenue Service classification or that are operated by a government body. This would include agency, organizational, public, and religiously affiliated camps, as well as a number of camps that were at one time for-profit camps that now operate under a board of directors in compliance with 501 (c) (3) regulations.

The term *core areas* refers to the fourteen topics that make up the body of knowledge for the camping profession, as defined by the American Camping Association. We've addressed all of the core areas . Since this is an introduction, you will want to pursue a more in-depth study of each as you gain experience. The core areas are:

- Leadership
- Target population and diversity
- Mission/purpose
- Participant development and behavior
- Program design and activities
- Human resources
- Risk management
- Health and wellness
- Business and finance
- Marketing
- Site and facilities
- Food service
- Transportation
- Strategic planning

Finally, rather than using “he” as the universal gender denoting both male and female, we have used the rather awkward form *he or she* (in the tradition of John Ledlie), to ensure equal billing for the many female camp directors and staff members, as well as the spouses of male directors and staff members.

Listed at the end of each chapter are references to the *American Camping Association’s Accreditation Standards for Camp Programs and Services*, the self-assessment tool “Additional Professional Practices” that is part of that volume, and the *Guidelines for Conference and Retreat Centers* on CD. Though these are modern documents, they have been developed through a professional review process over fifty-plus years. It is likely that these tools will continue to be updated after this book is published, so be sure you are referring to the most recent edition.

We wish to express our thanks to the staff of the American Camping Association; Ed Schirick of Schirick and Associates Insurance Brokers, Inc.; Linda Ecerg, RN, of Concordia Language Camps and the Association of Camp Nurses; and Dr. Dwight Jewson of Strategic Frameworking, Inc., for their assistance in reviewing relevant materials. We also express our appreciation to Connie Coutellier and the training teams of the Basic Camp Director’s Courses for their leadership in revising the Basic Camp Director Course curriculum, which, to a large degree, we are trying to parallel in the outline of this edition.

We hope this book will be a practical help to persons just entering our field as well as to experienced directors and that it will inspire *better camping for all*.

Armand and Beverly Ball
Sanibel Island, Florida

The Tradition of Camp

Chapter 1

Camping needs the imaginative, the picturesque, the romantic; needs it for its own attractiveness and for the sake of young America, for whom the imaginative will be the only enduring type of play. . . . The . . . camp, if it is worthy, is one of the greatest socializing, humanizing, civilizing factors which can enter the life of a boy or girl.¹

Organized camping began in North America in the mid-nineteenth century. No accurate record exists of the exact location of the first actual camp. To gain a better understanding of the growth of the organized camp movement during its first one hundred years, one should read *History of Organized Camping: The First 100 Years* by Eleanor Eells and *Blue Lake & Rocky Shore* by the Ontario Camping Association. However, a brief summary of that history is provided here as a background for the person new to the field.

Historical Overview

The Beginnings

The Ontario Camping Association Committee reports that in 1840 a church camp group met for summer camping under canvas at Hogg's Hollow (since renamed York Mills), just north of Toronto's present city limits. It appears that other camps did not come into existence in Canada until the late 1800s.

The first recorded organized camp experience in the United States occurred in 1861, when Frederick William Gunn, the headmaster of the Gunnery School for Boys, Washington, Connecticut, led a group of students on a forty-mile trek to Milford on Long Island Sound. After the two-day hike, the boys camped out for ten days and then hiked back to the school. This experience was stimulated by the interest of youth at that time in the Civil War and the

encampments and campfires common to the soldiers of that day. A plaque commemorates that camp at Welch's Point near Milford. Mr. Gunn continued to offer such camp experiences until 1879.

In 1876, the first private independent camp was organized by Dr. Joseph Rothrock, a practicing physician in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The camp was designed to improve the health of children, and there was emphasis on physical fitness and health; the camp was short lived. In 1880, Camp Chocorua for boys aged twelve to sixteen was organized on Asquam Lake, New Hampshire, by Ernest Balch. This camp continued for eight years and focused on sports activities and the actual daily living chores of cooking, cleaning, and dishwashing. A decidedly spiritual emphasis was given to the camp. In both of these camps, fees were charged to cover the costs. These fees were, however, not very realistic because both camps closed with deficits.

The first youth camp run by an organization was founded in 1885 by Sumner F. Dudley as a YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) camp near Newburgh, New York. The camp, which still bears his name, later moved to Lake Champlain near Westport, New York, and is the oldest continuously operating camp in the United States. The oldest camp continuously operating on the same site is Keewaydin Camps, operated by the Keewaydin Foundation and founded as an independent camp in 1894.

In Canada, the first organizational camp and first independent camp were both organized in the same year, 1894: YMCA Kamp Kanawana in Quebec and Camp Keewaydin (formerly Kamp Kah Kiou) in Ontario.

All of these camps were camps for boys; it was not until 1892 that an independent camp, called Camp Arey, reserved a summer session for girls. By 1902 three camps exclusively for girls began: Kehonka in New Hampshire and Wyonegonic Camps and Pinelands Camps in Maine.

It was not until 1922 that the first independent girls' camp was organized in Canada, Camp Glen Bernard in Ontario. This delay in camping for girls was to some degree the result of Victorian attitudes toward young women's dress, decorum, movement, careers, and education.

During this same period, organizational camping was growing rapidly with the development of Fresh Air Camps, designed to serve inner-city youth. These camps sprang up in Connecticut (1886), Wisconsin (1887), and New York City (1892), as did Life Camps (1887) in Connecticut and New Jersey. The YWCA opened a vacation camp for industrial women workers in Asbury, New Jersey in 1874, which was likely the first camp for adults. Settlement houses sprang up during this period and established camps attached to such urban centers as Boston, Pittsburgh, New York City, and Chicago (1898-1908). A camp for children with disabilities began in Chicago in 1899-1900. National youth organizations came into being in the early 1900s with their own camping programs: Boy Scouts of America (BSA) in 1910, Camp Fire Girls (now Camp Fire USA) in 1910, and Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. in 1912.

Camps throughout this period of history primarily focused on getting young people out of the city into a healthy, rural environment and providing recreational activities. However, much of the experience was related to activities necessary to daily living (e.g., cooking, cleaning). Boys' camps tended to place value on rugged outdoor living. Girls' camps also included hiking and aquatics, with a strong emphasis on the creative arts. There was a strong spiritual influence, often with Bible study, in most of the camps of this era. Moral or character development was a key element. Camps were often small and quite rustic during this period and placed much emphasis on small-group living.

The emergence of national youth organizations and local social service organizations and the continued growth and success of independent camps stimulated the growth of camps in a number of areas. Camps began to spread westward, with camps springing up in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Illinois, Missouri, and California. Local governments started camps in Los Angeles in 1914, Detroit in 1915, and Kansas City in 1920.

With the expansion of camps from around 1910 onward, a more open emphasis on the educational values of the camp experience was seen. Activities such as arts and crafts, music, and dance were added to the curriculum. The progressive education movement began to make its philosophy felt during this period. The training of camp staff began to be accepted as a necessary part of camp planning. By the 1920s, many camps were much more structured with greater emphasis on competition, awards, and scheduled activity. They stressed good character, spiritual attainment, and a good personality. The natural sciences became part of the instructional activities in many camps.

International Expansion

The greatest expansion of camps into other countries occurred through the efforts of several youth organizations in the United States and Canada that were international in scope, as well as through the missionary efforts by various Christian denominations. The world headquarters of various international youth organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts (Girl Guides in most other parts of the world), YMCA, and YWCA provided some guidance in the development of camp programs in their movements in other countries.

Missionaries from various Christian denominations simply replicated the camp model utilized in the United States of America, as they were prone to do with church, church school, and educational programs. Consequently, these camps were not always successful in meeting the needs of the indigenous people in these countries. Models adapted to the needs and culture of these people gradually emerged.

The governments of France and Russia developed camp models that they used to provide services to their youth. The camps began in France in the late nineteenth century, whereas they began in Russia in the early 1900s. In Russia, camps were primarily operated in canvas tents prior to World War II. After that war, camps began to spread and to upgrade their

facilities, and by the 1980s, Russia represented the largest camping movement in the world.

In Japan, camps began in the early 1900s. In Australia, camps began in the 1940s and developed primarily as facilities for schools to conduct outdoor education. Camps began in Venezuela in the mid-1900s.

Professional Associations

As camps grew in numbers early in the twentieth century, camp directors began to meet together to discuss common problems and to learn from each other. A professional association for directors of boys' camps, the Camp Directors Association of America, was begun in 1912. By 1916, an association of directors of girls' camps, the National Association of Girls' Private Camps, emerged. These associations merged in 1924 into the Camp Directors Association and published a new journal, *Camping*, in 1926. Concerns about health and safety were emerging, and directing a camp began to be taken more seriously as a profession, assuming the same recognition level as teaching or social work. Conventions or training conferences began for camp directors during this period. Camp directors in Ontario and Quebec were also attending many of the professional meetings in the United States. In 1933, the Ontario Camping Association was formed, and for a period it became part of the American Camping Association.

The emphasis on structured or regimented education in camp began to lessen in the thirties as the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, coming at the beginning of the Great Depression, focused the camp's attention on youth and health. One of the significant findings of that conference was the demand for an inclusive national organization to articulate the needs and interests of the growing camping movement in the United States.

The next several years led to the reorganization in 1935 of the Camp Directors Association (CDA) into the American Camping Association (ACA), with locally operated sections based upon geographical boundaries. This organization began to evolve a set of health and safety standards, which eventually became the set of accreditation standards accepted throughout the United States. The American Camping Association remains today the only professional organization for directors of all types of camps and the nationally recognized accrediting body.

The Canadian Camping Association (CCA) was formed in 1947, and it included the Ontario and Quebec Camping Associations, as they moved out of the American Camping Association. Gradually each Canadian province formed associations as part of the CCA.

Camps Increase

Following World War II, there was a rapid expansion of camp paralleling the increased population of youth in the country. Camp was widely accepted as an appropriate

summer experience for youth. The numbers of camps and campers expanded rapidly. As Nelson Wieters, then of George Williams College, pointed out, many camps with generally global objectives began because of that broad acceptance and a ready marketplace, while other camps began for very specific purposes, either philosophical or instructional in nature. The latter objective led to the specialty camp boom in the sixties. Parents and educators raised more and more questions about the specific impact of the camp experience on character development, physical skills improvement, or spiritual growth.

School camping or outdoor education began to come into its own in the early 1940s. Large programs were begun in Michigan, under the auspices of the Kellogg Foundation; Tyler, Texas; and San Diego. Though early efforts began in the early thirties, it did not begin to grow rapidly until the fifties. Colleges and universities began teacher education programs in this field. The Outdoor Education Council of the American Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) also began during this period and gave leadership to much of the professional development in this field. Other organizations formed in the 1970s and 1980s to promote environmental education and supported the work of environmental educators. These include the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors.

Camps for very specific spiritual objectives grew beyond church-sponsored camps to interdenominational and nondenominational camps and conference settings, many privately operated. Out of this growing segment of camps emerged CCI/USA (Christian Camping International/USA) in 1963, which initially required the signing of a statement of personal Christian faith for membership. Its national offices are in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In the past twenty years, the number of experientially based outdoor programs, primarily involving adventure and stress/challenge activities, has grown. The expansion of this type of program accelerated greatly with the establishment of Outward Bound, an adventure program that began in England and spread to the United States and other countries. Variations of the Outward Bound methods have spread to many settings, including work with at-risk youth, adjudicated youth, and even business executives. In 1972, the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) began as a professional organization to bring together people interested in this discipline. Concern about the impact on the environment spurred organizations such as the Wilderness Education Association, founded in 1977 by leaders from the academic community concerned with excellence in the development of outdoor leadership and the role of education in the preservation of this country's wildland areas.

Camps and camping associations are now operating around the world. There are national camping associations in at least eleven countries: Australia, Canada, Colombia, Greece, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, United States, and Venezuela. With the help of the Canadian Camping Association and the American Camping Association, three international conferences have been held: in Toronto in 1983; in Washington, D.C., in 1987; and in

Toronto in 1994. In 1987, an International Camping Fellowship was organized to provide information sharing among individuals interested in international education and exchange. This group publishes a newsletter and promotes international events. Since its formation, the International Camping Congress has held international camping conferences on a three-year cycle: St. Petersburg, Russia (1997); Tokyo, Japan (2000); and Melbourne, Australia (2003). Future Congresses are scheduled for Mexico City and Athens, Greece.

Types of Camps

Camps are almost as varied as people; however, there are basically two types of camps: day and resident. The day camp operates only during a portion of the day, typically morning and afternoon, usually for five successive days of the week, Monday through Friday. Nevertheless, some day camps operate only three days a week, others operate in the evening hours, and many others include at least one overnight experience as part of the camp period. Resident camps bring participants to a setting in which housing is provided for a period of days. The typical resident camp provides lodging and meals. However, the resident camp experience may also take the form of travel or trip camping, in which the housing may be tents, shelters, or hotels and motels, and the campers move every day. Camp sessions vary in length from three to sixty days.

The camp program is operated and staffed by the camp, and supervision of individual campers is a camp responsibility. Camps may be operated with paid or volunteer staff, or a combination thereof. Many camps operate twelve months a year, involving a more typical summer camp experience, as well as school camps, conference groups, retreat groups, and adult education groups. A camp may also be a program operated by a given group for only one or two weeks a year on property owned by an individual, public park, or another camp. Camps may serve youth, adults, senior adults, or families.

Camps are generally recognized as for-profit or not-for-profit. The for-profit camp or entrepreneurial camp may be operated by an individual, partners, or a corporation to return a profit to the owner, including some return on the capital investment made in property and facilities. While for-profit camps are commonly known also as independent camps, some not-for-profit camps also use the term independent because they are not connected to any national organization.

The not-for-profit camp may be operated by an organization such as the YMCA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, a settlement house, a health-related association, a religious entity, or a government body. Public camps are operated by a government body, such as a parks-and-recreation department, school systems, or 4-H. Funding comes from fees and tax dollars. A number of camps that were formerly independent for-profit operations have preserved their identity as a private tax-exempt corporation or foundation. In all these cases, the camp has a

tax exemption under article 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code or is operated by a governmental body. In the last two decades, a number of independent camp owners have moved from for-profit to not-for-profit corporations and secured 501(c)(3) status from the federal government. The camp is owned by a corporation and is provided tax breaks, and, as a result, the camp is preserved for the future. This change frequently occurs when second or third generations of the family are no longer interested in running the camp.

The mission, outcomes and/or goals of many not-for-profit camps and for-profit camps are parallel. The facilities in some not-for-profit camps may, in fact, be more expensive than in some for-profit camps because they have the advantage of securing tax-deductible contributions for development. The for-profit camp generally charges higher fees for many reasons, including the need to recover income from the capital investment made by private parties, as well as the need to pay a number of taxes that not-for-profit camps do not have to pay. Therefore, the for-profit camp's clientele tend to come from a socioeconomic level that can pay such fees. Both types of camps may provide financial assistance for those who cannot afford the fee and thus provide a more diverse camper group. The for-profit camp has most often offered longer sessions (three to eight weeks) than the not-for-profit camp, though many have changed to shorter sessions in recent years. Not-for-profit camps have tended to have shorter sessions (one or two weeks) than have for-profit camps, though some camps offer four- or eight-week sessions in order to offer special programs or address child-care needs.

Few generalizations can be made about one type of camp or the other concerning wages, clientele, program, outcomes and goals, objectives, and facilities. Peter Drucker suggests that "The task of the not-for-profit manager is to try to convert the organization's mission statement into specifics." The task of any camp director is to try to bring the camp's purpose/mission into practical accomplishments, and that purpose/mission may be very similar in both for-profit and not-for-profit camps.

In both cases, it is essential that the camp operate in a fiscally sound fashion and that the director earn a decent living. In the not-for-profit camp and in some independent for-profit camps, where the owner is director, the director receives a set salary. In other independent for-profit camps, the director receives a bonus or a portion of the profit (if any) as salary. A not-for-profit camp may have a hard time offering a competitive salary; however, it will be difficult to retain a good director if the salary is not consistent with other comparable professions. The camp cannot long continue to operate in today's competitive climate (however lofty the stated purpose or mission of a camp is) if it does not have as a parallel purpose to be financially accountable.

One of the growing complexities of the camp world is the increase in camps providing a variety of services and serving a variety of audiences. Many camps operate twelve months a year, a portion of which is devoted to the more traditional camp experience; the other portion is devoted to short-term programs run by the camp or by rental or user groups. These include

weekend retreats, school environmental education classes, and parent-child programs. When a camp is accredited, the public assumes that all programs on the site are accredited. In 1998, the American Camping Association, addressing this trend and perception, changed its standards to affect all the camp-related programs and services of the organization throughout the year. A separate set of guidelines for conference and retreat centers is available from ACA on CD. Many of the principles in the management of camps, short-term and year-round programs, and conference centers are the same. This text identifies some of the differences wherever possible.

What Is Camp?

Because the early camps were primarily directed toward getting youth out of the city into a healthy and moral environment, little energy went into defining a camp. By 1929, a special committee of the New York Section of the Camp Directors Association reported the essential functions of the camp as being "education for: physical health, emotional integration, an understanding of primitive processes, enlightened social participation, the acquisition of tastes and appreciations, and spiritual growth."

The "primitive processes" referred to outdoor experiences. By the late forties, Hedley S. Dimock identified that the "characteristic elements, blended together in the right proportion, of an organized camp included: (1) people, (2) outdoor life, (3) living in groups, (4) a camp community, and (5) leadership and conditions designed to satisfy personal needs and interests, and to stimulate wholesome personal, social and spiritual development."²

He goes on to underline the importance of experiences that are "indigenous to group living in the out-of-door setting." The American Camping Association offers as its definition: "A sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the outdoors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper's mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth."

With all of the words that have flowed from experts, it is still difficult to draw narrow lines around what a camp is and what a camp is not. There is substantial support for the definition that characterizes a camp as an institution that provides a group living experience, with trained leaders who facilitate that group and community experience and utilize the outdoor surroundings to accomplish the mental, physical, social, and spiritual outcomes and goals of the sponsoring body or owner.

As Bernard Mason suggests in the opening quotation for this chapter, camps must be imaginative to interest individuals in the outdoor experience. Camp owners and directors have not always been the best source for interpreting the value and meaning of the camp to the general public, relying more often upon the voice of previous campers to propagate the camp.

The commonalties among all types of camps, resident or day, for-profit or not-for-profit, are far greater than the differences. The basic similarities are easily discovered when the directors of camps take the opportunity to sit down together, get to know each other, and get beyond labels, terminology, and preconceptions. Regardless of the type of camp and program, the similarities bind camps together because they all work for an ultimate developmental experience for each camper.

Generic Values of Camping

If one reviews the literature in the camp field concerning how others perceive the value of the camp experience, the lists will be varied and idealistic because camp directors tend to be idealistic people. However, several values can be found on almost any list.

Understanding the Outdoor Environment. The camp environment should be a key factor in determining program and objectives. Being outdoors is one of the distinctive features of the camp experience, and youngsters have few other opportunities to learn about the natural world and recognize their responsibility as stewards of its resources.

A Group Living Experience. The learning experience involved in living in a group of one's peers provides opportunities for teachable moments not easily encountered elsewhere.

Fun. Camp should be fun. Play is a natural growing experience of children and a lifelong need of adults. Gaining leisure skills and attitudes that can be used throughout life is a valuable experience.

To these, Betty Lyle would add:

Experience in Democracy. "With campers from various backgrounds, children may for the first time have an opportunity to live in a really democratic community."

Participation in Program. Programs need to be "related to the interests and needs of the camper," and "campers must have an active share in planning what the camp life and program shall be."

Understanding and Guidance. "The relationship with a counselor is a new kind of relationship with an adult for most campers . . . a good counselor (is) one who likes his campers, understands them as individuals, helps, suggests, listens, guides."³

Reynold E. Carlson would add to that list:

Experiencing Individual Growth and Development. "Camp should offer children a chance to discover their own potentialities, to exercise their personal initiative, and to earn respect for what they do as individuals."

Practicing Health and Safety. In camp, children should be "practicing . . . good personal health habits . . . [and] practicing rather than talking about health and safety."

Developing New Skills and Interests and Perfecting Old Ones. "Many of the camp activities have a high carry over value into later years."

Developing Spiritual Meanings and Values. "Many of these insights are caught as well as taught."⁴

James C. Stone, in a 1986 study, found that "campers made a statistically significant gain overall, and increases in the following characteristics:

Responsibility. Skill in being accountable for one's own behavior.

Decision Making. Skill in thinking for one's self.

Self-concept. Skill in getting along with others.

Interpersonal Relations. Skill in making friends and being accepted.

Citizenship. Skill in respecting the rights of others.

Environmental Concern. Skill in appreciating one's natural surroundings."⁵

In 2001, the American Camping Association began an ambitious four-year effort to quantitatively assess the youth development outcomes and goals of the camp experience. According to ACA Executive Director, Peg Smith, "For many years, ACA has recognized the important benefits that the camp experience contributes to youth development and education. Through a Lilly Endowment gift, we will have tangible evidence that will identify the program elements common to the most successful programs and allow us to provide training concerning the developmental value of the camp experience."⁶

The youth development outcomes will be measured through surveys of 5,000 campers and their parents, staff observational checklists, camp questionnaires, and focus groups with a sample of participating camps. The outcomes under study include:

- Increased positive identity
- Increased social skills
- Enhanced positive values and spiritual growth
- Enhanced cognitive and psycho-motor skills

Upon completion of the study, ACA will publish the results and plans to provide materials and training on outcome measurement.

What Are Conference/Retreat Centers or Outdoor Centers?

As camps have moved to year-round operations and facilities designed and improved for multiseason use, many have had to reevaluate their purpose. Most operations that desire to provide programs or lease facilities to other groups for camp-style programs focus primarily on outdoor and recreation activities, and the improved facility allows the operation to provide year-round services. Some camps have changed their name from camp to outdoor center to encompass both the summer camp and the year-round operation.

Some camps design multipurpose facilities and/or may operate a conference/retreat center along with other camp-style programs. Designing one facility that serves both a camp-style

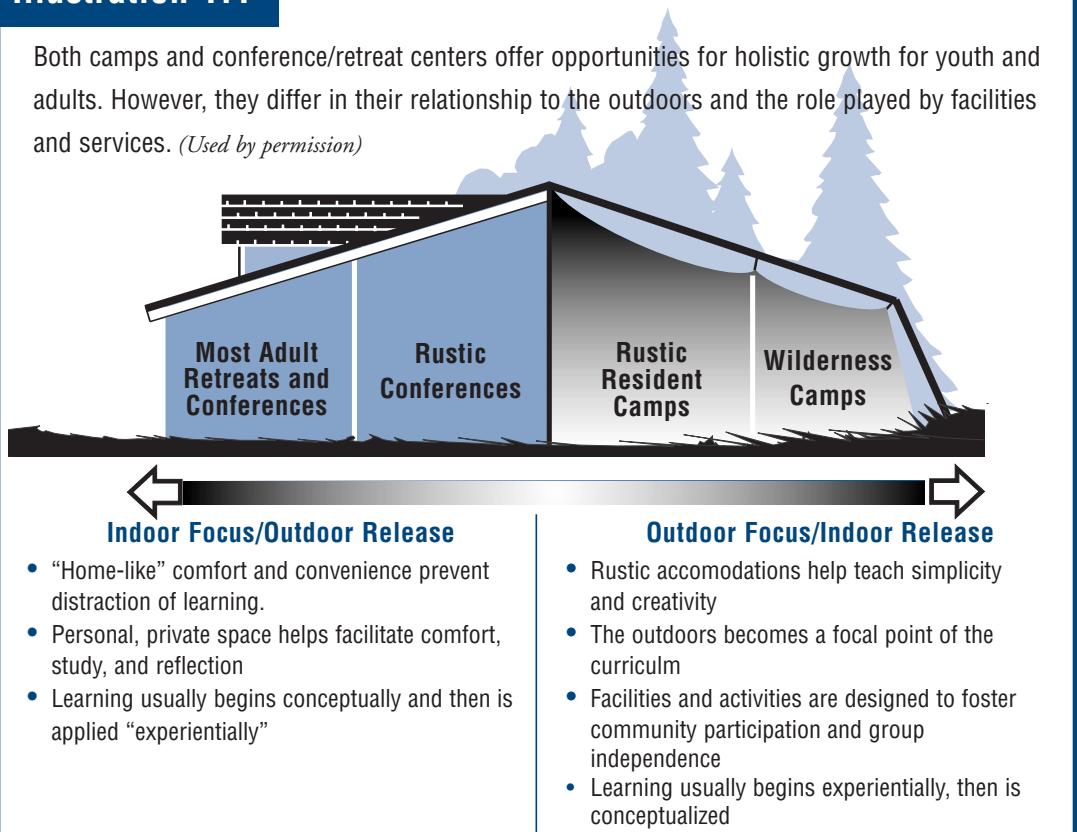
group and an adult-conference group and that focuses primarily on indoor meetings utilizing the outdoors for release from the thought process is a challenge. Many operations that desire to serve both groups have both kinds of facilities on one piece of property. As a camp moves into more year-round use and develops its statement of purpose and subsequent outcomes and goals, these client and usage differences should be kept in mind.

The American Camping Association defines a conference/retreat center as "a residential facility designed for adults and other groups who come together for meetings, training sessions, and educational or inspirational programs. Such a facility generally operates at least three seasons of the year and is designed to minimize outside distractions. It provides dedicated meeting space, food service, hospitality and support services, access to facilities and natural environments for release and diversion, and housing styles appropriate to the target clientele."⁷

Kathleen M. Trotter illustrates these conceptual differences in an article for *Camping Magazine* and through her camp consultancy firm, KALEIDOSCOPE, Inc. The myriad of camp and conference center programs for people of all ages takes place in a variety of natural settings and styles of accommodations. Notice in *illustration 1.1* that the spectrum from rustic

Illustration 1.1

Both camps and conference/retreat centers offer opportunities for holistic growth for youth and adults. However, they differ in their relationship to the outdoors and the role played by facilities and services. *(Used by permission)*



camps to refined centers is, indeed, wide, and it is sometimes difficult to see common ground among these diverse facilities and programs.

Facilities and program styles differ because of what we want to accomplish. We increase our effectiveness with our clients and with each other when we remember that we share similar values but offer different environments in order to implement our various programs.

"All of us as camp and conference center leaders strive to positively influence our clients in holistic ways so that they leave camp healthier, stronger, more skilled, and mature. Some of us facilitate this process by designing *educational activities* for our campers or guests.

"Others among us provide the context for the experience by creating comfortable, caring *residential environments* that free campers or guests to fully engage in learning and growth. Regardless of the focus, the very nature of our enterprise calls for two essential ingredients: some kind of structured experience, usually called a *program*, and the group living accommodations, which can be referred to as *hospitality* services. Neither of these is dispensable if we are to truly accomplish our mission."⁸

Many camps have increased their year-round staff and are providing environmental education programs to schools and special programs for an existing or new client group. Program staff may switch from outdoor education instructors to camp counselors or program specialist roles in the summer. Often the program looks and feels like camp with a stronger environmental emphasis and the staff skills needed are very similar. Some camps provide services for rental groups whose needs range from strictly facility use to food service and optional program services such as challenge activities or winter sports. This may be the first step toward a year-round operation or provide additional income for the camp to better serve their primary client group.

There may be specific outcomes and goals that deal separately with each type of operation. Any program or service could contribute to the overall purpose of the camp and/or conference center. As long as the decision concerning facilities and program styles is a conscious part of the planning process and is consistent with the mission, there should be few problems that cannot be worked through. However, to slip into one style or the other for expediency in meeting number, dollar, or other goals without being a part of the purpose of the camp can only lead to severe problems in setting priorities and serving clientele. There are additional considerations about budgeting for a year-round operation in chapter 14.

Checkpoints

1. Compare your camp history to the historical overview of camp.
2. What are the overall generic values of camps? How do your camp values compare?
3. How would you determine whether the camp is for-profit or not-for-profit?
4. What are some of the differences between camps and conference/retreat centers?

Related Standards and Guidelines

Listed at the end of most chapters are references to specific standards from the American Camping Association's *Accreditation Standards for camp programs and services*. These are the accepted industry standards. References are also made to the "Additional Professional Practices," a section in the *Accreditation Standards for Camp Programs and Services* and *Guidelines for Conference & Retreat Centers* on CD.

Accreditation Standards for Camp Programs and Services: HR-1

- ¹ Bernard S. Mason. 1930. *Camping and Education*. New York: The McGraw Company.
- ² Hedley S. Dimock. 1948. *Administration of the Modern Camp*. New York: Association Press (YMCA of the USA).
- ³ Betty Lyle. 1947. *Camping: What Is It?* Martinsville, IN: American Camping Association. pp. 4–5.
- ⁴ Reynold E. Carlson. 1975. *The Values of Camping*. Martinsville, IN: American Camping Association. p. 4.
- ⁵ James C. Stone. 1986. "Kids Learn Responsibility." *Camping Magazine*, Vol. 59, No. 1, September/October. p. 21.
- ⁶ Peg Smith. 2003. *ACA Launches a World Class Research Project* Martinsville, IN: American Camping Association Press release (cited on 1 October 2003) www.ACAcamps.org
- ⁷ American Camping Association. 1993. *Standards for Conference and Retreat Centers*. Martinsville, IN: American Camping Association. p. 5.
- ⁸ Kathleen M. Trotter. 1989. "Getting Out of the 90-Day Mentality." *Camping Magazine*, Vol. 61, No. 7, May. pp. 28–29.

