



## Camp Royall

### Handbook & Policy Information

For Camper Families & Caregivers

#### Philosophy & History of Camp Royall

In 1972, the Autism Society of North Carolina began its residential Summer Camp Program. In its first year, the Summer Camp Program was held for one week and served six campers. Currently, Summer Camp consists of 10 one-week sessions held at ASNC's Camp Royall, near Pittsboro, serving approximately 320 overnight campers and 160-day campers each summer. Camp Royall offers programming all year including Spring, Fall & Winter Residential Camps, Day Camps, Mini Camp weekends, Adult Retreats, Family Fun Days & Family Camping, Field Trips and Social Groups, allowing us to serve close to 2,000 individuals with autism and their families each year.

Camp Royall was developed to provide a recreational and therapeutic camping experience for individuals on the autism spectrum. Campers aged 4 years and up, on various levels of autism spectrum, come from all parts of North Carolina.

The philosophy of our program is to give our campers a typical camp experience, in a structured and specialized way to meet their needs, with an emphasis on the campers' enjoyment. Activities are designed to encourage appropriate behavioral, social, and recreational development while the camper is away from home. Further, the camp provides respite for families while their campers are at camp.

#### Goals of Camp Royall

- **Recreation Experience:** Over the years, Camp Royall has grown tremendously in the services it provides for children and adults with autism and their families. The primary focus of camp continues to be to provide recreational experiences in a camp setting.
- **Therapeutic and Educational Experience:** Camp also provides a therapeutic and educational experience for our campers. Campers are given the opportunity to practice and improve existing skills in self-help, communication, social behavior, and independence, as well as learn new skills and try new activities.
- **Respite for Families:** The majority of our campers reside at home with their families. For most of these families, camp is the only respite they have all year. Raising a child with autism requires a fantastic amount of physical and emotional energy, attention and love. Parents and siblings of an individual with autism need and deserve time just for themselves. Many families plan their vacation during the time their child is attending camp.
- **Educational Training for Professionals in Autism and Related Fields:** Camp is also a valuable training experience for college students interested in a career in Special Education, Psychology, Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy and other Human Services. Summer staff receive an intensive week-long, hands-on training session. Course credit is available at most colleges and universities for working in the Summer Camp Program.
- **Employment Opportunities for Adults with Autism:** For the past few years, 5-10 adults with autism have worked at camp performing jobs ranging from kitchen staff to counselors. Both full

and part-time summer work has been provided; some volunteer, but most receive competitive pay.

- **Model for Replication:** Finally, Camp Royall serves as a model recreation program for campers with autism or related communication disorders. Information and consultation are available for other organizations, across the country and internationally, who are interested in developing a similar program.

## Our Campers

### **Who we serve**

At Camp Royall, we serve individuals on all levels of the Autism Spectrum. Our campers have varying levels of verbal language and varying levels of behavior challenges. Our campers do not have to be toilet trained to attend camp, are staff are trained and supported in providing personal care to our campers. We want every camper to be able to attend Camp Royall and will work hard to make this a reality. If you have questions about your camper attending camp, please contact a Director to discuss this.

### **Gender & Sexuality**

Camp Royall respects the right of every camper, staff and family to self-determine their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and family structure. Camp Royall supports every person in safely expressing themselves and promotes a culture of inclusion, safety and diversity. Staff are trained to support our campers with challenges that could arise from these areas of self-expression. Camp Royall will not restrict a person's self-expression, as we know this to be harmful to that person's well-being, safety and mental health. In short, Camp Royall celebrates every person for who they are.

## Nighttime & Cabin Supervision

During Summer Residential Camp, when there are 16 campers in each cabin, there are 3 staff on night duty per cabin. These staff are the same each night and you will have the opportunity to meet them when you move your camper in on Sunday. These night duty staff are Counselors, just like the one working with your camper each day but are assigned to night duty for the week. *\*\* Please note that during our HFA weeks when we have fewer campers at camp our nighttime staff ratio may be reduced to only 2 staff per cabin.*

The night duty staff supervise the cabins at nighttime and during rest time in the afternoon. They are off the rest of the day, and so are expected to be as awake as they need to be in order to maintain supervision of all campers throughout the night.

We find that campers sleep much better at camp than they do at home because we are keeping them very busy throughout the day! However, if your camper has difficulty sleeping or needs someone to be next to them while they are sleeping, this is what the night duty staff are for.

If your camper could have bed wetting accidents during the night, the night duty staff will make sure to check their beds regularly and will do laundry as needed to ensure your camper is clean.

## Drop off & Pick up

### **Check in on the First Day of Camp**

*Revised May 2023*

We will be in touch the week before your program to confirm the exact timeslot you will be assigned for check in and check out for the program that your camper is attending. The general timeframe for check in for all our weekend programs is Friday evening between 5-6pm. The general timeframe for check in for weeklong programs is between 3-5pm (summer camp) or between 5-6pm (spring and winter camps). Check in for all of our programs (with the exception of Adult Skills) is at our welcome house, please do wait at the welcome house until directed to enter camp. If the gate is closed when you arrive it may be because check in has not begun yet. Please wait at the gate until it is opened and then proceed to the welcome house to wait for check in.

When you arrive, you will check in with one of the Directors at the welcome house to confirm some basic information. You will then be directed to move on to drop off medications with our nursing staff (if applicable), followed by camper drop off at the cabin. Once the camper is dropped at the cabin and you have had time to talk to the counselor you will then be directed to drop off food at the dining hall (for those who are bringing special diet food only) and then back to the gym to park and wait for confirmation of medication administration from our nurses (again only if you are dropping off meds). If you have no food or medication to check in for your camper you will simply drop your camper and their belongings at the cabin, talk to our staff and then proceed to exit camp.

During the medication check in, you will bring any prescription medications, over the counter medications and/or vitamins to be administered to your camper while at camp. It is vital that all over the counter med and vitamins or supplements are noted on the doctor's signature form as well as the online medical form. This helps the process go more smoothly. The medical process can take a while as we go over necessary information thoroughly, please expect a wait for this process and plan accordingly. **More medication reminders are written below.**

Our responsibility for your camper begins when your camper's counselor greets him/her at check in and ends when care providers arrive for check out (either at the end of each day for Day Camp, or at the end of the week or weekend).

Please take the time to talk to your camper's counselor as (s)he will have questions to ask. There is plenty of time to ensure that you get a chance to meet and get to know your camper's counselor and discuss any important information.

Some campers will have difficulty with the transition to camp. Campers typically warm up quickly once engaged in a preferred activity. Remember that our staff are well-trained and well-supported by other highly trained staff, your camper will be in good hands when you leave.

### **First Time at Camp**

First, please know that it is completely normal to feel apprehensive about sending your camper to camp for the first time! Most parents/care providers feel this way! However, realize that your camper will be in very well-trained and capable hands. Our staff are well informed of your camper's needs and how to best approach those needs. We will take every measure to help your camper adjust to camp.

Please contact us if you have concerns about sending your camper to camp for the first time. We welcome these calls because we want you to feel comfortable sending your camper to camp. You can come to visit camp before your camper attends if you like, we recommend coming to a scheduled Family Fun Day!

### **Check out on the Last Day of Camp**

We will be in touch the week before your program to confirm the exact timeslot you will be assigned for check in and check out for the program that your camper is attending. The general timeframe for check out during our weekend programs is Sunday between 11-11:30am. The general timeframe for check out during our weeklong programs is Friday between 1-2pm. Check out for all of our programs is at our welcome house, please do wait at the welcome house until directed to enter camp. If the gate is closed when you arrive it may be because check out has not begun yet. Please wait at the gate until it is opened and then proceed to the welcome house to wait for check out.

When you arrive at the welcome house, the Director on duty will confirm check out details and send you to the cabin for pick up. All materials (medications, foods or food storage containers, etc.) will be at the cabin awaiting pick up with your camper luggage.

Families will pick up campers from designated area near the cabin and depart camp. Please do not linger too long in the pickup area as we have more families waiting to check out as well. There will be time to talk to your counselor, take some photos and pick up luggage. \*During summer camp we may have an end of week camper celebration for families to attend after picking up camper's belongings.

### **Registration and Discharge Policies**

#### **Early Discharge**

All measures are taken to assure that each camper is being appropriately served. It is recognized, nonetheless, that there may be certain circumstances in which a camper's behavior becomes so extreme and uncontrolled that it poses a danger to that camper, other campers and/or staff. In such a situation, the Directors may decide that a camper should be discharged early.

Camp Royall reserves the right to discharge any camper for illness or injury upon the advice of the Camp Nurse.

No campers have been sent home due to homesickness.

#### **Payment Policy**

Camp Royall runs 2 annual registration periods for programming, January through August and September through December. Each registration period has specific due dates for the application fee, nonrefundable deposit, and full payment. Registration for our January - August programs starts on November 1<sup>st</sup> each year and registration for our September – December programs starts on May 1<sup>st</sup> each year. You can visit our website [www.camproyall.org](http://www.camproyall.org) to learn more about registration and find the link to our program registration site.

We are pleased to offer payment plans for families that wish to spread out payments for Camp Royall programs. We can work with you to set up an automated payment plan using automatic payment with MasterCard, Visa, American Express and Discover. This option is available in the payment section of the online registration process.

Payment plans are available for each program and required to be set up by the full payment due date. Weeklong programs can be split into 6 monthly payments. Weekend camps can be split into 4 monthly payments.

Camp Royall will attempt to charge your account one time after a decline for payment. If the payment is unable to be processed after the second attempt, you will be contacted by email to make a payment. If

a payment has not been made to correct the problem within 30 days, you will forfeit your camper's registration and any payments for unattended programs will be refunded minus the \$100 nonrefundable fee.

Unpaid balances may result in your camper being declined from future programs.

If you have questions, please call our Camp Office to discuss setting up an automatic payment plan.

### **Cancellation Policy**

If you have to cancel your camper's spot at camp for any reason, we ask for as much notice as possible so that we might be able to fill his/her spot. If you wish to get a refund of the camp fee (all except the \$100 nonrefundable deposit) you must let us know at least two weeks in advance of your camper's scheduled date of arrival.

If your camper leaves mid-program for unexpected circumstances due to illness or injury, your camp fee will be prorated for the days your camper attended. Your total fee will be the \$100 nonrefundable deposit and a prorated daily fee for the days attended. The unattended days will be refunded.

### **Late Start Policy**

If you do not arrive for your scheduled drop off time, you may still bring your camper later the day of check in so long as you give us notice. The latest we will admit a camper for a weeklong program is one day into the program (for example, if program starts on Sunday, you can arrive no later than Monday).

## **Communication during Camp**

### **Mail**

We will gladly pass along any mail that arrives for your camper. Remember that mail often travels slowly. You may want to start mailing the letters before your camper arrives. You may also bring a bundle of letters for the counselor to distribute daily. Packages are allowed. You can also email or fax messages to your camper. Email to campers can be sent written and addressed to your camper and emailed to our general inbox [camproyall@autismsociety-nc.org](mailto:camproyall@autismsociety-nc.org). We will check this daily (before 4pm) and distribute email to campers.

### **Telephone**

Campers & counselors are very busy during the day and are very rarely close to a phone. Counselors are not allowed to carry their cell phones on them while with your camper. We encourage families to stay in touch with their campers if this will make both the family and the camper feel more comfortable. If you would like to talk to your camper while they are at camp, please arrange times while talking with your camper's counselor at check in. It is easiest for counselors to make these phone calls at these times: 1:15 pm and between 7:45 and 9pm. You may also call the camp office and request your camper to call you at a certain time.

Keep in mind that phone calls from home can make homesickness worse. If this is perceived to be the case, one of the Directors will contact you to decide on a solution together.

You may call a Director at any time to check in on your camper. We are often out of the office, taking care of your campers, but leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible. You are also welcomed to call a Director's cell phone if you need to speak to us immediately, numbers are provided at check in.

### **Communication in an Emergency**

A Camp Director will be in touch as soon as possible, with the 1<sup>st</sup> emergency contact given, in the event of a significant health concern or first aid incident. Camp Directors will also be in touch as soon as possible with the 1<sup>st</sup> emergency contact if there is a significant behavioral concern or incident. If the 1<sup>st</sup> emergency contact cannot be reached, the 2<sup>nd</sup> contact will be tried and all numbers available will be called.

### **Daily Notes**

During any week-long camp (spring/summer/fall/winter) or Mini Camp weekend, our staff will write a daily summary of your camper's activities. These will be sent home with your camper at check out for summer camp and emailed to our mini camp participants the week after the program, so that you can read about the fun times had at camp!

### **Online Photos**

During our Summer Camp programs we will post photos online at least two times per week, but every evening as much as possible so that you can log on and get a glimpse of the activities that are taking place. We cannot guarantee a certain # of photos per camper, but we do our best to make sure each camper, who we are given permission for, is represented on the photo site each day. You will receive information on how to view these photos on Monday morning. Please ensure that you have given us proper permission to post your camper's photo online, and we would be grateful to have full permission to use photos of your campers for various other uses in supporting our efforts at camp. For weekend programs we will send out a link for photos the week following the program.

## **Packing: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Food at Camp**

Food at Camp Royall is typical of camps (think school cafeteria) except that we do offer more choices. There is always milk, juice, cereal, and fresh fruit offered along with our hot breakfast. Peanut butter and jelly for sandwiches and a fresh salad bar available at lunch and dinner. We strive to make our meals as healthy as possible, on our limited budget.

We can accommodate special dietary needs and restrictions. However, if your camper is on a very specialized diet, such as a gluten and casein free diet, we ask that you bring food that your camper can eat to supplement the camp menu. We will email you the menu, the week before your camper is attending.

If your camper has a particularly restricted diet of foods they will eat, please call ahead to make sure that we have those foods available. You may also be asked to bring food to supplement the menu.

### **Electronics**

Electronic devices (ipads, phones, tablets, adapted device) that are used as a communication tool are allowed at camp as needed and will be monitored by staff during use.

Electronic devices (ipads, tablets, phones, handheld gaming devices) for uses other than communication will be restricted to use in the cabin area during rest time and nighttime. If the electronic device is becoming problematic for the camper or other campers, we may prohibit its use. We work hard to get our campers engaged in activities outside of their electronic devices which is why we limit the use of electronics at camp. We also understand that our campers may have pretty specific routines around the use of various devices that could be hard to divert from. We will work with each camper to make a plan that is right for their needs while also trying to honor the general rules at camp.

Camp Royall is not responsible for any lost or damaged items while at camp.

### **Reinforcers**

If you regularly use reinforcers (candy, other edibles, sodas, favorite magazines, toys, etc.) to motivate your camper and/or to reward appropriate behavior, we encourage you to bring these with you to camp to ensure a successful experience for your camper.

### **Lost/Damaged Items**

Any items brought to camp are at the families' own risk, Camp Royall is not able to replace any broken or lost items. We recommend that families label all their camper's belongings and do not bring anything to camp that is irreplaceable. We go to great efforts to make sure all belongings are sent home with each camper; however, this can often be a challenge. Any items which are left at camp, that are labelled, will be mailed back to families.

### **Spending Money**

Your camper will not need any spending money while at camp during the week or weekend. We do have a Camp Store, so if your camper or family cares to make purchases of camp related items (these may include T-Shirts, Magnets, Water Bottles, hats, etc.), feel free to let us know and we can add credit to their camp store account! All items should range between \$5- 30. We do not accept cash at camp.

### **Gratuities**

If you want to show your camper's counselor your appreciation, a written thank you note is always appreciated. Monetary gifts can be made in your counselor's name as a donation to the camp program.

## **Medication and Health Care Information**

### **Medication at Camp**

Your camper will not be allowed to attend camp without a completed Online Medical form as well as a completed Doctor's Signature Form that has been signed by a physician or other approved attending medical professional.

If your campers medication administration has changed since you submitted their paperwork please let us know ASAP and we can open up the online medical form so you can make those changes and we must also have any changes in medications in writing and signed by a Doctor. A copy of the new prescription from the pharmacy is usually the easiest way to provide this. This includes, but is not limited to, increases and decreases in dosage or new medications. For legal and safety reasons, the Camp Nurse must be able to verify that the medication given during camp is exactly as ordered by the Doctor. We compare the original med bottle to the online medical form to the doctor's signature form and need accurate info in all places.

Vitamins, supplements, topical agents, and over the counter medications, such as medicated shampoos, ear drops, antifungal creams, melatonin, ibuprofen, etc. are considered medication and must be signed off by your camper's Doctor to be given while at camp.

All medication must arrive in the original containers (i.e. prescription bottle), including vitamins and supplements. If it is not in the original bottle, we will not be able to accept it or administer it at camp. Be sure to send enough medication to last the duration of the program and probably just a few extra in case of dropped pills, etc. And conversely please don't bring a hugely full bottle of pills as we have to count all meds that enter camp as well, if you bring a full bottle the process will take longer for you and everyone else. If additional medication is needed, this is the care provider's responsibility and we will contact you for billing information.

If your camper requires any special methods for administration (i.e. putting in food or liquids) or has any special routines associated with taking medication, please bring any necessary items to complete that routine and advise our staff of the process (mini candy bars, applesauce, pill crushers, pill cutters, syringes, etc.).

### **Health Care at Camp**

During our summer programs, sunscreen will be applied to your camper at least 3 times per day (before each swim session) as a part of our Sun Safety Program. Campers are asked to bring their own sunscreen.

The counselors check campers daily and any health concerns are brought to the Camp Nurse. If for any reason, the Camp Nurse determines medical attention is necessary for your camper's safety and wellbeing, your camper will be seen by a medical doctor. We will make every effort to contact you before leaving for the doctor's office. Depending on the severity of the issue, we will take campers to the Urgent Care in Pittsboro, Chatham Hospital in Siler City or UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill. The Urgent Care in Pittsboro does not accept Medicaid, for campers with Medicaid we will take them directly to one of the hospitals.

The Autism Society of North Carolina has an accident insurance policy for campers attending camp. However, you are responsible for any health-related expenses above the care that our nurses are able to provide. These expenses will be filed with the insurance carrier on the Camper Medical Form when possible. Otherwise you will be billed directly.

All injuries and illnesses are documented. You will receive a copy of this documentation at check out. Any camper determined to have a communicable illness will be sent home in the interest of the health and safety of the other campers and staff.

### **Behavior Challenges**

Our staff are highly trained and strongly supported to handle the varying challenging behavior that our campers may face. Due to the camp environment, our high level of supervision and support, and the quality of our staff, we tend to see less challenging behavior from our campers than might be typical for them in a school or home setting.

Camp Royall counselors implement best-practice preventative procedures that increase the likelihood of appropriate activity and social engagement and decrease the likelihood of interfering behaviors. Such procedures include, but are not limited to, a predictable daily schedule, visual cues to support and augment communication and expectations, clear and concise directives, positive language, choice-making opportunities, high quality attention, competing activities/stimuli and supervision. In addition, counselors regularly provide individualized positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior and redirection, interruption, and blocking when inappropriate behavior occurs.

The Autism Society of NC trains their staff on a curriculum of 'Preventative Strategies and Physical Interventions.' The physical interventions in this curriculum are only to be used as a last resort, in the case of an emergency, to ensure the safety of the camper or staff. If a physical intervention is used to ensure the safety of your camper, you will be notified by a Camp Director as soon as possible and can receive a copy of the incident report by request.



## **Bugs & Animals at Camp**

### **Animals at Camp**

No pets of any kind are allowed at Camp Royall to ensure the safety of all campers, caregivers and staff. If you or your camper have a service animal, please contact a Director to discuss.

As a camp facility in the Chatham County woods, we encounter lots of different kinds of bugs, including mosquitos, spiders, ticks and bed bugs. Your camper's health and safety are our number one concern, we have procedures in place to support this and need your help in the process as well.

Our counselors are required to support their campers in doing **tick** checks after any outdoor activities and at the end of each day. If a tick is found on a camper, an Activity Director will remove the tick and document this on a health note to be sent home to the family.

**Bed bugs** are a common pest in the US and are on the rise. They are often found in group living settings such as hotels, group homes, and camp facilities. Bed bugs bites can be itchy, but do not transmit disease. We have a robust and comprehensive bed bug management process, consisting of training, inspection and both chemical and heat treatment. We take preventative precautions at the onset and departure of every group that stays at camp, including routine inspection and regular treatment of our cabins.

If you have experienced bed bugs at your home, please let us know prior to attending Camp Royall. **At check in** your camper's belongings will be visually checked by facility staff before entering the cabin. If bed bugs are found on your camper or their belongings, the camper will not be sent home. We will put all clothing and bedding through the dryer before they are moved into the cabin. All suitcases or large bags will be sent home immediately with the family.

We encourage all families to follow general precautions when **returning home** after any travels. We highly recommend drying all of your camper's bedding and clothes at a high heat for 30 minutes before entering your home or upon your arrival home. Leaving any large bags or suitcases tied tightly in black trash bags in the sun or in the trunk of a car for a few days in the summer is another great practice. Heat is the best killer of bed bugs as the bugs are never able to develop resistance to it as they can with chemicals.

If bed bugs are encountered at Camp Royall, we will close the affected area of camp until treatment has been completed. We will inform families if bed bugs are found and whether their campers stay at camp will be affected as soon as possible.

An info sheet with more information regarding ticks and bed bugs will be provided to you at check in. For more information about bed bugs, we suggest these resources:

<https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>

<https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/bedbugs.htm>

<http://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/bed-bugs-what-every-camp-needs-know>

If you have any questions about the information detailed above, please do not hesitate to contact the Directors at Camp Royall: 919 -542- 1033 or [camproyall@autismsociety-nc.org](mailto:camproyall@autismsociety-nc.org).