



OVERNIGHT
PARENT & CAMPER
HANDBOOK
2023

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Dear Camp Families,

We are grateful for your interest in our camp for summer 2023 and look forward to meeting you soon! My name is Victoria Anderson and I am the Director of Camp West Mar. I was born and raised in Minnesota and moved to Maryland to be closer to my older sister and her growing family. I am thankful to have been raised by parents who valued time in the outdoors. We camped at state parks, spent summers swimming at the lake, and hiked year round. My experiences in nature as a child led to my passion for outdoor recreation and education.

At Camp West Mar, we are committed to providing a safe space for campers to grow socially, emotionally, mentally and physically. Overnight camp is a unique experience that will challenge your camper in new ways. Our exciting activities are designed to be fun and promote growth through challenge by choice. We hope to inspire your camper to try something new, learn through discovery, and find their Y.

Our core values guide us in all that we do. We are caring, honest, respectful and responsible. Our community is strongest when all staff and campers demonstrate these core values. I encourage you to discuss with your camper what each of these mean and how they can uphold these positive character values while at camp.

Please, take some time to review this handbook. It outlines policies and procedures and answers many commonly asked questions.

I am eager to meet each of you and to provide a memorable camp experience!

Sincerely,

Victoria Anderson

Director of Camp West Mar

Our Camp Philosophy

It is the goal of Camp West Mar to build community while providing a safe, fun, magical and educational experience for all campers through the demonstration of our four core values:

Caring: To be sensitive to the needs of others and go the extra mile

Honesty: To tell the truth, have integrity and build trust

Respect: To value the worth of every person and treat others as you would like to be treated

Responsibility: To do what is right and be accountable for your behavior and your obligations

Contact Information

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| YMCA of Frederick County | 301-663-5131 1000 N Market St, Frederick, MD 21701 |
| Camp West Mar | 301-416-0980 west-mar@frederickymca.org 14509 Brown Rd, Sabillasville, MD 21780 |
| Victoria Anderson, Director | 240-931-9283 vanderson@frederickymca.org |

Camp Dates and Sessions

**denotes 3 day session*

June 18th-23rd

June 25th-30th

*July 5th-7th

July 9th-14th

July 16th-21st

*July 26th-28th

July 30th-Aug 4th

August 6th-11th

Packing List

Please pack in duffel bags. They are easier to store and maneuver. Be sure to pack clothes (and shoes!) to have fun in! It is likely that your camper will get wet, dirty or muddy while they are with us. Please keep in mind that a camper wearing clothing that is deemed inappropriate (e.g. graphic t depicting weapons, crop top that leaves stomach exposed, etc.) may be asked to change at the discretion of their counselor and/or the camp director. Please label your child's belongings.

Clothing:

1 white, cotton t-shirt (for tie dye!)

7-8 shirts

4 pair shorts

1-2 pair pants, jeans, sweats

8 pair underpants

8 pair socks

1 pair pajamas/sleepwear

2 swimsuits *One piece swimsuits recommended

1 light jacket/raincoat

2 sweatshirts/long sleeve shirts

2 pair athletic shoes

Shower shoes

Toiletries:

Toothbrush and toothpaste

Shower soap, shampoo, conditioner

Hairbrush

Hair ties/scrunchies

Shower caddy

*As our bathrooms and shower houses are shared spaces, storing toiletries in them is NOT possible. Please be sure to bring a toiletries basket, caddy, or case for carrying your toiletries to and from the bathroom and shower house.

Bedding (beds are twin, extra long)/linen:

Summer weight sleeping bag OR 2 sheets (beds are twin extra long)

Pillow and pillow case

2 towels (one for the pool, one for showering)

Washcloths (2-4)

Stationary:

Paper, envelopes, stamps (pre-addressed is AWESOME)

Pens/pencils

2 books for reading (there will 1hr of independent rest time every day after lunch)

Other:

Water bottle

Medications (in original containers/boxes, with medication forms, prescription from doctor)

Insect repellent

Sun screen (please practice self application)

Baseball cap or sun hat

Flashlight (headlamp recommended) and batteries

*Optional:

Swim goggles

Wet bag in case items are still wet on Friday

Camera (disposable or digital, but no phones or iPods allowed, even for camera use)

Watch, if your child likes to wear one; however: no smart watches are allowed

Extra reading materials or other quiet activities for rest hour

Hammock (we do provide these, but some campers love to bring their own)

Examples of what NOT to bring to camp:

Food or snacks of any kind

Electronics of any kind, including smart watches

Bicycles

Valuables

Weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco

Electronics

In a continued effort to maintain a more “unplugged” atmosphere, camp is a place to connect with fellow campers and staff members and to play outdoors. Therefore, we do not recommend that electronic devices be brought to camp. They tend to be expensive, fragile, and bringing these valuable items is done at your own risk. Camp is NOT responsible if any of these items become damaged, lost/misplaced, or stolen. All electronic devices are prohibited, including, but not limited to, smart watches and handheld video games. What constitutes “electronic” is up to the discretion of the camp director.

Electronic devices of any kind are not allowed at camp and will be confiscated and safely stored until you arrive to pick up your child. We ask that you please support us in our decision to not allow electronics and discuss with your camper the importance of this policy so there is no misunderstanding when they arrive at camp. Should you have questions on this policy, please contact our camp office.

Valuables

Please leave all valuable items at home. If we find campers with these items, we will collect, record and store them until the end of camp.

Food/Meals

Special medical food concerns or needs including food allergies (e.g., gluten or lactose intolerant or nuts) and preferences (e.g., vegetarian, etc.) should be brought to our attention PRIOR to the summer. We ask that no beverages (including bottled water), candy, and/or food, be brought or sent to camp for the following reasons:

1. Food in the cabin attracts chipmunks, flies, mice, and skunks.
2. It undermines the community if a few have food and others do not.
3. Snacks and limited amounts of dessert offerings are offered at camp.
4. Filtered water is available. Campers SHOULD bring a water bottle to camp.

Any food and beverage items brought or sent to camp will be disposed of at our discretion and will not be returned to the sender. Please discuss this policy with your child as well as with their friends and relatives prior to camp.

We serve three meals a day plus an afternoon snack. Our goal is to provide nutritious meals that keep campers well fed and happy. Desserts are only served after dinner.

Campers Missing Home

Missing family members (even pets) and home are natural for children. Our staff members are trained in working with children and helping them to deal with missing their family members.

Being away at camp will help your camper grow in their confidence and independence through skill building and making new friends. Your support of this normal process is critical to your camper's success.

How can you help your child adjust to being away from home?

- Practice overnights with family members/friends to help first time campers get used to being away from the comforts of home.
- Please send pictures of family members and friends with your camper to camp.
- Set the goal of staying the whole session. Please do not tell your child that they can come home or that you will pick them up if they are homesick as it sets them up for failure instead of success.
- Start while your camper is still at home and help them be proud of being independent and ready for camp.
- While your camper is at camp, please send cheerful, upbeat letters or emails that focus on how much fun they are having and less on what they are missing at home.

What About When You Miss Your Child?

We know it is difficult for parents to be away from their child during camp, which is completely normal. We want to work together to make the experience positive for you and for your child!

Here are some tips, from other camp parents, on what you can do:

- Before your camper leaves, make a list of things you are going to accomplish while they are enjoying their camp experience (like things you have not gotten around to before now!).
- Remind yourself about why you chose to send your child to overnight camp and of the development, growth, and independence you want for them.

- Talk with another parent who has experienced the same feelings when their child left for the first time.
- Take time for yourself! Just like your camper is trying new things and experiencing personal growth, please be sure you do the same so that you can be reenergized when they arrive home with all their stories.
- Write your child encouraging letters by mail or send emails daily.

Communication with Your Camper

How can you stay in contact with your camper? Write letters and/or emails! Getting mail is a big deal, even if campers do not yet realize this.

- We recommend that you write and send your first letter prior to the start of your campers week; give your letters 3 days to arrive. If you'd like your child to read a letter on Monday night, send it by the Friday before they come to camp. Please keep letters uplifting and encouraging: let your camper know you are proud of them and that you hope they have a great week at camp. It is best to refrain from sharing what your camper is missing that is happening at home. You are welcome to send care packages, but they will be opened and checked by a staff member to make sure they do not contain any items not allowed at camp, including food or money.

Please send mail to:

Camp West Mar

C/O (insert campers full name)

14509 Brown Rd

Sabillasville, MD 21780

- You may also write emails to west-mar@frederickymca.org that we can print and deliver at mail time to your camper. Please put CAMP MAIL and your campers full name in the subject line. Remember that our staff will be able to see them, but they will not read them.
- We will encourage campers to write home, as well, even if those letters arrive once the camper has returned home. It helps them feel connected and allows them to document some of their experiences. We encourage you to send them with paper, envelopes that are **pre-addressed** and **stamps**.
- You will not be able to reach your camper by phone, except for emergencies (to be determined by the camp director). If you would like to speak with your camper's counselor, please email us to arrange a phone call. Also, email us if you are concerned about anything and we will do our best to address it. Just remember that time passes differently at camp, so our response time might not be as quickly as we're all accustomed to in everyday life. We are busy having fun with our campers!

Sample Daily Schedule

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 8:00am | Breakfast |
| 9:00-11:00am | Morning Activity Rotations |
| 12:00pm | Lunch |
| 12:30pm | Rest Hour (mail is passed out) |
| 1:30pm-4:30pm | Afternoon Activity Rotations |
| 4:30pm | Campers Choice |
| 5:30pm | Dinner and Core Value Ceremony |
| 6:30pm | Group time for Friday Fun! |
| 7:00pm | All Camp Activity |
| 8:00pm | Cabin time, showers, get ready for bed |
| 9:00pm | Lights out |

Activity Examples

Here are some ideas of what your camper might be participating in. This is not a complete list.

Activity Blocks: archery, canoeing, sports (e.g. soccer, basketball, kickball, etc.) hiking, swimming, arts & crafts, hammock village, low ropes, etc.

Campers Choice: During this time of the day, there will be a couple of activity areas open. Campers will have the freedom to choose what activity they would like to participate in and will be free to move between activities.

Core Value Ceremony: All staff and campers are held to the standard of our YMCA four core values (caring, honesty, respect and responsibility). Each night, four campers will be recognized for exemplifying one of these core values during the day.

Friday Fun!: During this time Monday through Thursday, campers will work in groups to prepare for an all camp show or competition on Friday mornings, along with our day camp campers. Examples include a comedy skit, dance battle or olympic games.

All Camp Activities: Capture the flag, scavenger hunt, etc.

Cabin Time: Each night during cabin time, campers will reflect on their day and experiences with each other and staff through a variety of reflective activities.

Camp Store

Our camp store will be open during arrival and departure times for you and your camper to visit together. The camp store only accepts CASH. Additionally, all campers will have the opportunity to visit the camp store during their week with us. Each camper has a \$5 credit with the camp store through their registration fee. If you would like to leave additional cash for your camper to spend in the camp store during the week, please drop it off at the camp store where we can safely store and track camper spending. Campers will not be allowed to keep cash with them. If campers are found with cash, it will be collected, recorded and kept in the camp store. Your camper can only spend what we have on file - we will not allow purchase on credit. We will return all remaining funds (above the \$5 included in registration) directly to YOU at the end of the week during sign out, along with a log of your campers spending. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the camp director.

The camp store will offer the following for purchase: camp apparel (sweatshirts, sunglasses, etc.), postcards, stuffed animals, water bottles, stickers, headbands, treats, beverages and more!

Safety at Camp

Safety is given top priority at camp. Facilities and policies have been constructed to provide a consistent and thorough safety program. During training week, counselors are trained in safety expectations and rules for all aspects of camp life. Safety regulations are posted and practiced by all campers and staff members. Please talk to your campers about the importance of following safety rules and appropriate risk-taking.

Health Center

This year, we have a new health center located at the back of our dining hall. Campers can receive basic first aid care here, as well as be safely isolated from others if they were to become ill. This is also where camper and staff medication is safely stored and locked. If your camper has medications they will need to take during their time with us, be sure to stop at the health center to turn in all medications and necessary forms. This is also where you will retrieve them during departure.

Body Piercing and Tattoo Policies

For safety reasons, all body piercings (apart from a single post or stud earrings) must be removed. Any camper tattoo that is regarded as harassing, inappropriate or offensive, towards fellow campers, staff members, or others with whom the camps conduct business, as determined by the camp director, will be required to be covered for the duration of the session. If this is not done, the camper may potentially be sent home. The director will have the final say in which tattoos meet this criterion.

Alcohol, Drug, Tobacco, Vape, and Behavior Policies

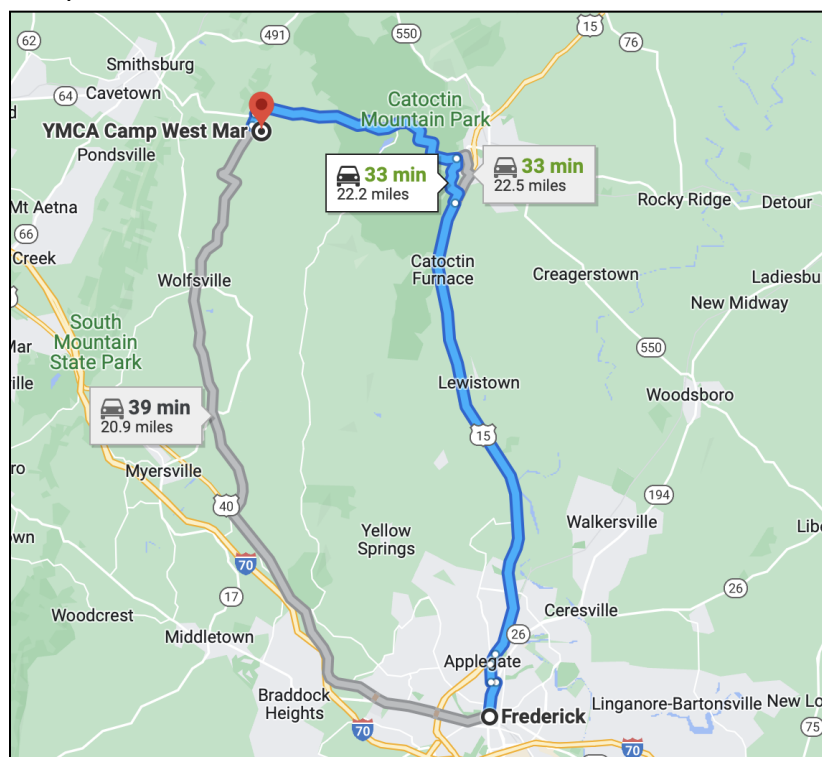
Camp offers a safe, substance-free environment. Our positive core values (caring, honesty, respect and responsibility) set the tone at camp and are role modeled by our staff members. There shall be no chewing/smoking/vaping of tobacco, drinking of alcoholic beverages, use of illicit drugs, or other abusive/harassment behaviors at camp. We reserve the right to dismiss any camper or staff member whose actions, attitude, or behavior, in our judgment, is contrary to the best interests of the camp or other campers and staff members. Please discuss these policies with your camper prior to their arrival.

Our core values are central to all that we do here at Camp West Mar. Additionally, it is important that we are SAFE above all else. It is expected of all staff and campers to practice safety, caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

Arrival and Check-In

Camp West Mar: 14509 Brown Rd, Sabillasville, MD 21780

Camp is located on Brown Road, off MD-77, between Thurmont and Smithsburg.



When you arrive, please park in one of the four designated parking areas:

1. Dining Hall
2. Pool Area
3. Boulder Wall/Spider Web
4. Pond Area

Please do not park on the grass. There will be staff to help direct you to check in upon arrival. Check in will be on Sunday (or Wednesday, for 3 day sessions) for the week of your campers session. Please follow the check in schedule below.

- Campers ages 9-11: Check in from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm
- Campers ages 12-14: Check in from 4:00 pm-5:00 pm

**** If you have campers in both age groups please check in from 3:45 pm-4:30 pm**

Sign in with camp staff at the pavilion.

- Camp staff will verify camp balances are paid in full and review all paperwork with you. You will also find out which cabin your camper is in.

Visit the Health Center, located at the back of the dining hall.

- If your camper is bringing medications of any kind to camp, they will need to be turned in to the health center upon arrival. Please leave all over-the-counter and prescription medications in their original containers and have the necessary medical forms completed.

Helping your camper get settled.

- Camp staff will be around to assist you in locating your camper's cabin and getting their belongings inside.
- Beds are first come, first serve. Please help your camper locate a bunk. You may help your camper unpack and put away their belongings.

Saying good-bye

- We know it will be hard for both you and your camper to say goodbye. We have found it works best for parents/guardians to leave shortly after their camper has unpacked and settled into their cabin. Our staff will take great care of your camper and provide them with a week to remember for a lifetime!
- On your way out, please stop at the check in table under the pavilion, one more time, to make sure you are all set!

Departure

Pickup is between 4 and 6pm. When you return to pick up your camper on Friday, please follow the same parking rules. Please do not arrive any earlier, as the buses for our day campers depart camp at 4pm; we need to keep the road and parking lots available for those buses until 4pm. Thank you for understanding! If, for any reason, you should need to arrange an earlier pick up time for your camper, please let us know. Be aware that your camper may miss out on closing ceremonies and end of week traditions if they leave early.

If you visited the health center to turn in camper medication on arrival day, please also stop there on departure day to collect it.

Your camper will receive breakfast, lunch and a snack on their final day with us.

All of us at Camp West Mar look forward to meeting you and your camper this summer!