



YMCA CAMP WEST MAR

**OVERNIGHT CAMPER &
PARENT HANDBOOK 2026**

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Dear Camp Families,

We are grateful for your interest in our camp for summer 2026 and look forward to meeting you or welcoming you back soon! My name is Matthew Collins and I am the Resident Coordinator at Camp Westmar. Summer 2026 will be my 9th summer working for Y camps. Before that I was a camper for 10 summers, frequently at Camp Westmar and a part of the first overnight camps that were hosted here. I believe shared experiences in the outdoors are foundational for building community.

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. Time at camp provides time away from screens for your child to develop face-to-face friendships and build confidence. 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.

At the 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,
Matt Collins

Our Camp Philosophy

At Camp West Mar, we empower youth to achieve through skill development, strengthen relationships by cultivating strong character, and create a sense of belonging through shared outdoor experiences.

Our 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

Cancellation Policy

When cancelled by the participant, a request properly submitted 21 calendar days prior to the Monday of the week within which the program session starts will receive a full refund. When cancelled by the participant, a request properly submitted 8-20 calendar days prior to the Monday of the week within which the program session starts will receive a 50% refund to the original form of payment or 100% YMCA Account Credit, based on the participant's preference. A request submitted 7 or less days prior to the Monday of the week in which the program session starts will not be eligible for a refund.

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 |
| Resident Camp Coordinator | 240-457-2209 mcollins@frederickymca.org |

Overnight Camp Dates 2026 (all resident camp weeks begin on a Sunday, single night sessions are on Thursday night and run each week)

**denotes 3 night session*

Week 1: June 21st-26th

Week 2: June 28th-July 3rd*

Week 3: July 5th-10th*

Week 4: July 12th-17th

Week 5: July 19th-25th*

Week 6: July 26th-July 31st*

Week 7: August 2nd-7th

Week 8: August 9th-14th

Required Camper Documents: Parents/guardians are required to complete all necessary paperwork before their camper arrives at camp.

- Camper Health History Form: All campers must have a completed Camper Health History Form. This can be located in your account on the Alaris platform, and can be completed digitally. If you did not automatically receive an email for this platform when you registered for camp on our website, please reach out to the camp director for assistance. Your camper cannot be checked in for their camp week without completing this required form.

If your camper is bringing **any medications**** with them to camp, there are forms required to be completed:

- Medication Administration Authorization Form: This form needs to be completed if your camper is bringing *any* form of medication (prescription or over the counter) with them to camp. (i.e. seasonal allergy medication, vitamins, melatonin, ear or eye drops, topical medications, any prescription medications, etc). **All medications, prescribed or over-the-counter, require the approval of both the child's physician and the parent/guardian.** The physician section and the parent section MUST be completed in full for ALL medications.
- Allergy Action Plan: This form only needs to be completed if your camper is bringing medication related to an allergic reaction (i.e. EPI pen or benadryl for allergic reaction). If this is the only medication your child is bringing, this is the only form that needs to be completed, both by the physician and the parent/guardian.
- Asthma Action Plan: This form only needs to be completed if your camper is bringing medication related to asthma (i.e. inhaler, nebulizer, etc). If this is the only medication your child is bringing, this is the only form that needs to be completed, both by the physician and the parent/guardian.

ALL medications **MUST**:

- Be in their original container (prescription and over the counter)
- Contain pharmacy prescription label (if it is a prescription medication)
- Be turned in directly to the camp director (or other med certified staff) on arrival day with the necessary completed form(s) listed above

*Note: Medications will not be accepted at check in without proper documentation.

****Anything with a drug label is considered a medication, i.e. neosporin, melatonin, zyrtec.**

The only exceptions to this rule are insect repellent and sunscreen.

Packing List (5 day session)

Please pack in duffel bags. They are easier to store and maneuver. Be sure to pack clothes (and shoes!) to have fun in! Your camper will get wet, dirty and/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. There will be no opportunities for campers to do laundry during the week. For the 3 day sessions plan to pack roughly half of the 6 day session packing list.

Clothing:

7-8 shirts
 4-5 pairs of shorts
 1-2 pairs of pants, jeans, sweats
 8 pairs of underpants
 8 pairs of socks
 1 pair of pajamas/sleepwear
 2 swimsuits *One piece swimsuits recommended
 1 light jacket/raincoat
 1-2 sweatshirt(s) or hoodie(s)
 2 pairs of athletic shoes that can get dirty
 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)/linen:

Summer weight sleeping bag OR twin sheet set and blanket

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

Other:

Water bottle *PLEASE label with your child's name

Medications (See above for additional information and requirements)

Insect repellent

Sun screen

Baseball cap or sun hat

*Optional:

Swim goggles

Wet bag in case items are still wet on Friday

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 recommend that all electronic devices be left at home. 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. Additionally, please do not send your camper(s) with any favorite/valued items (clothes, shoes, baseball hat, water bottle, etc) as they tend to become misplaced or lost.

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 start of your campers session. We ask that no beverages, 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 with their name on it.

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 your letters ahead of time and leave them with camp staff during check in on Sundays. This (or emailing) is the only way to guarantee your camper will receive mail daily.
- If you would like to send letters in the mail, we recommend sending them a week in advance. 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:

YMCA 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
- 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 print and hand out emails daily after lunchtime.
- We will encourage campers to write home, as well, even if those letters arrive in the mail 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, **stamps**, and envelopes that are **pre-addressed**.
- 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 |
| 9:00am | Day campers arrive, opening ceremony, all camp announcements |
| 9:15am-12pm | Morning activity rotations |
| 12:00pm | Lunch |
| 12:30pm | Cabin Time (mail is passed out) |
| 1:30pm-3:30pm | Afternoon activity rotations |
| 3:30-4pm | Closing Ceremony, day campers leave |
| 4-5pm | Swim for overnight campers |
| 5:30pm | Dinner |
| 6:30pm | Evening activity |
| 8:30pm | Embers, showers, get ready for bed |
| 9:30pm | 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, slingshot, team building, arts & crafts, sand volleyball, hammock village, low ropes, etc.

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

Evening Activity: Capture the flag, kick the can, scavenger hunt, skits, high ropes/big swing, etc.

Embers: Each night, campers will find a quiet place with their cabin mates and counselors to reflect on the day, their experiences and our core values through a variety of activities.

Camp Store

Each camper has a \$5 credit with the camp store through their camp registration fee. If you would like to leave additional cash for your camper to spend in the camp store during the week, please leave it with the check in staff during arrival on Sunday. **The camp store only accepts CASH.** Campers will have the opportunity to visit the camp store during their week with us; note that purchasing of snacks and beverages are limited on a daily basis. 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. If you would like to visit the camp store with your camper during arrival or departure, just ask a camp staff member.

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

Our health center is 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. There will be an EMT on site during day camp hours. Additionally, several staff and the camp director are trained in medication administration and will be able to safely administer any medications to campers. 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 turn in all medications and necessary forms to the camp director at check in on Sunday.

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

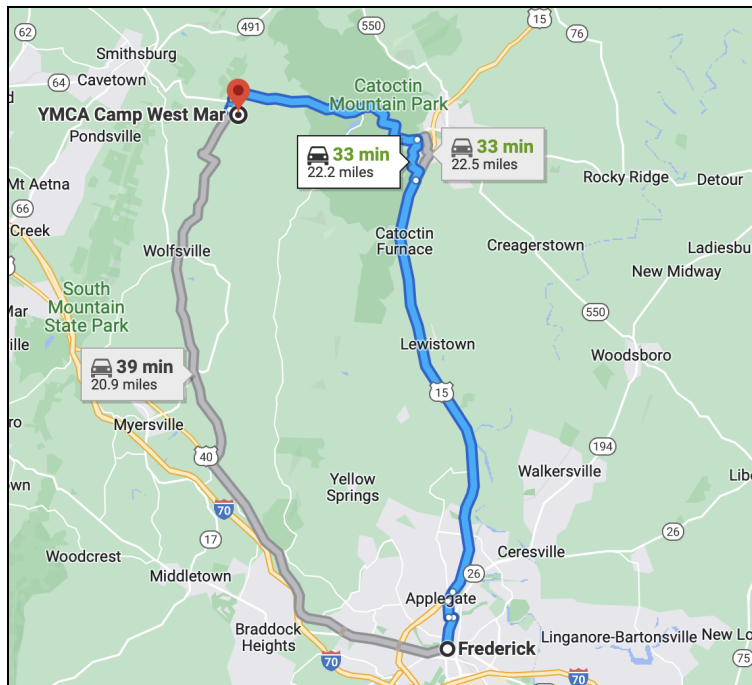
or other campers and staff members. Please discuss these policies with your camper prior to their arrival.

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

YMCA 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 follow the directions of signage & camp staff for parking & check in.

Check in is from 3-4pm on Sunday for the week of your campers session, regardless of age.

For one night sessions drop is Thursday morning from 7:30-8:30. Children must be dropped off at Westmar and cannot ride the bus

Sign your camper in with camp leadership.

- Camp staff will ensure all online forms have been completed.
- The nurse will collect all camper medication(s) and complete a lice check. All over-the-counter and prescription medications MUST remain in their original containers. Prescription medications MUST have a printed pharmacy label. All medication forms MUST be complete in order for us to store and administer medication(s) to your camper(s).
- Camp staff will collect cash for the camp store if you wish to leave any with your camper(s).

Helping your camper get settled.

- Camp staff will be around to assist you in locating your camper's cabin and getting their belongings inside, once you have checked in with camp leadership.
- 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!
- One final check of the car! Does your camper have everything? Pillow, water bottle, towels, suitcase? Thanks for double checking!

Departure

Pickup is between 4pm and 5:30pm on Friday (for 6 day and 1 day sessions) or Wednesday (for 3 day sessions). When you return to pick up your camper, 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 ahead of time. Be aware that your camper may miss out on closing ceremonies and end of week traditions if they leave early.

Please sign your camper out with the camp director and collect your campers medication(s) before leaving.

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

A Final Note

We know that choosing to send your child to overnight camp can be difficult, financially and emotionally. We are here to support you and the success of your child. Not only do we have aid and scholarships available for those who need financial assistance, we also want you to feel confident that you are making the right choice for your child's development. Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns leading up to your child's camp week. We want to provide as much information as possible to help you feel safe and secure in your decision.

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