

COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Overnight Camps

This guidance document outlines practical prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in overnight camp settings. This guide to overnight camping supplements the [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](#) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf). Overnight camps can begin operating July 1, 2020.

Please ensure that your program is following the guidance outlined in the linked document above, including developing a program-specific plan. A template for a program-specific plan is available at [StaySafeMN: Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafemn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](http://staysafemn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp). Camps can determine how best to implement these guidelines within their unique programming.

General requirements

- Contact local municipalities (or county government) near the camp location to ensure they are aware of the camp's activities. Share your COVID-19 preparedness plan with them.
- Discuss precautions you are taking and strategies you can implement that will help mitigate transmission of COVID-19 between the local community and camp.
- Discuss access to testing if someone in the camp community needs it.
- Communicate with families before camping begins to set expectations for participating in the camp's program this summer. Communication should include the strategies to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the camp environment and notice to families that strategies may change if the level of community transmission requires disruption of programming.
 - For example, everyone would need to be sent home if there is a surge in COVID-19 cases in the camp community or if a stay-at-home order is issued while camp is in session.
- It is strongly recommended to limit participation in camp programming to campers and staff who live in Minnesota or bordering states.

- Review the CDC’s resource for initial considerations about whether or not to operate the camp program: [Youth Program and Camps Decision Tool \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-programs-decision-tool.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-programs-decision-tool.html).

Support a safe and healthy camp environment

- Follow social norms and health etiquette guidance in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
 - Consider using the American Camp Association’s [Suggested Camp Supplies and Materials for 2020 Camp Season \(PDF\)](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/operations-guide/ehe-suggested-camp-supplies.pdf) (www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/operations-guide/ehe-suggested-camp-supplies.pdf).
- Engage campers and staff in developing communications or creative strategies to limit the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., develop a competition around creating the new camp greeting to replace hugs or high-fives).
- While outdoor recreational facilities may be open, Minnesotans are discouraged from engaging in unnecessary travel. Camps should do their part to help campers limit their travel—for example, by providing supplies on site and thinking ahead about what other supplies may be needed.

Create a mindful culture

- Ask staff to be mindful of how their behavior affects the health of others in the camp community. Educate staff about the importance of maintaining physical distancing of 6 feet at all times, including while socializing with others on their time off.
- Encourage a culture where staff wear cloth face coverings whenever feasible, especially when indoors or when outdoors where physical distancing is hard to maintain.
 - MDH recommends campers only wear cloth face coverings if they can reliably wear, remove, and handle the cloth face covering throughout the day. The use of cloth face coverings may not be appropriate for all campers.
- Train all staff how to effectively use cloth face coverings. See [How to Wear Cloth Face Coverings \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html).

Conduct daily health checks

- Encourage a culture of daily health checks. Work with in-house health staff to implement daily screening, including temperature checks and screening for new symptoms.
 - Consider asking parents to send a digital thermometer to camp with their child so they can take their own temperature each morning.
- Refer to the “Promote health checks” section in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](#) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
 - Ensure all staff have proper training on recognizing symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19.
 - Because the situation is fluid, look for updated guidance on symptoms of COVID-19 at [Symptoms of Coronavirus \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](#).

Make a plan for isolating sick staff or campers

- Have a plan if staff or campers get sick, based on the guidance in this section.
- Follow exclusion guidance and isolate symptomatic staff and campers: [Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](#) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf).
 - Plan to have a cabin or area that can be used to isolate a symptomatic staff member, volunteer, or camper. Identify a bathroom or stall that could be used only by people who are sick. Ensure there is enough space for multiple people placed at least 6 feet apart if more than one participant becomes ill.
 - Ensure that they have hygiene supplies available, including a cloth face covering, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Identify one or two staff who will bring food and hydration, and who will check on staff or campers who are sick while you wait for them to be picked up.
 - Limit the number of staff who have face-to-face interactions with people who are sick.
- Make a plan with parents before summer program sessions that start with expectations if their child becomes ill while at camp. Parents should be prepared to pick up their child as soon as possible if they become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This should be regardless of test results at camps that have the capacity and choose to conduct testing.

Plan for access to health care and testing

MDH recommends staff and campers who are ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 be separated, sent home, and referred to their health care provider for testing.

- Before camp begins, work with your local public health agency to plan for access to health care and COVID-19 testing to address situations where there may be delays in sending ill staff or campers home.
- Questions to consider asking your local public health agency include:
 - Is there adequate access to testing should a staff or camper become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19?
 - How long will it take to receive results?
- Contact your local public health agency before using the local health care system, except in the case of an emergency.

Have a plan for quarantining close contacts where a person has a lab-confirmed or clinically diagnosed case of COVID-19.

- Staff or campers who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 will need to be separated and sent home for their quarantine period. Follow the plan made in advance with parents and staff for getting them home.
- If a close contact of a staff or camper from home is diagnosed with COVID-19 within 14 days of that person arriving at camp, separate them and follow the plan made in advance to get them home.

Follow recommendations for group sizes

- Follow social distancing guidelines in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf) including:
 - Within the program, create and maintain groups of the same staff, volunteers, and campers, with a maximum number of 10 people for indoor activities and up to 25 people for outdoor activities.
 - Camps should not feel pressured to increase groups to 25 people in outdoor settings. The first priority is to take time to feel comfortable about bringing kids together.
- Adapt practices to allow physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- If social distancing is not possible with the group size, then the number of participants must be reduced.

Establish plans for safe housing

- Reduce the number of participants staying in cabins to allow for campers and staff to spread out.
 - Maintain the same cabin groups of the same staff and campers of 10 people or fewer.
 - Staff-only cabins need to follow the same guidelines of 10 people or fewer.
- Ideally, participants should maintain 6 feet of social distancing while in cabins.
 - Maintain good air flow in cabins as much as possible, keeping windows open as weather allows.
 - Have a designated area to keep personal belongings of campers and staff separate from each other's belongings.
- Consider head-to-toe sleeping arrangements.
- MDH does not recommend wearing cloth face coverings while sleeping.
 - Clean high-use surfaces daily.
 - Limit cabin access only to people who reside in that cabin.
 - Camps that use tents for housing should adhere to the same guidelines listed above. Additional guidance for wilderness trips is provided below.

Shared bathrooms

- Ensure routine cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms.
- Create showering schedules that limit the number of people using the bathroom at one time.
- Encourage campers and staff to bring their own toiletries from home to avoid using communal supplies.
- Post signs encouraging campers and staff to properly wash their hands.
 - [Why Hand Hygiene is Important and When to Wash Your Hands \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/why/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/why/index.html).
 - [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives \(www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html).

Consider options for activities

- Follow these activity guidelines to maintain safe practices while congregating indoors: [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\) \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).

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- Adhere to the rule of limiting groups to 10 people or fewer. If social distancing cannot be attained with the group size, then the number of participants must be reduced.
- Whenever possible, implement programming that refrains from intermixing groups. If intermixing groups is necessary (e.g., sheltering indoors together due to severe weather), limit the number of groups that intermix and keep records of staff and campers.
 - These steps will help minimize transmission and also allow for swift contact tracing if needed.

Shared equipment

- Do not share equipment among people whenever possible.
 - For example, consider designating paddles or tennis rackets to campers at the beginning of the session, or asking families to send them with campers from home whenever feasible.
- Clean high-touch surfaces of equipment between uses.

Swimming

- Do not use pools or beaches that are open to the public.
- Maintain physical distancing of 6 feet while swimming or playing in a beachfront area.
- Limit camp's private waterfronts to a maximum of 25 people at a time.
- Do not wear cloth face coverings while swimming.
- Follow guidance on [Reopening of Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/poolreopen.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/poolreopen.pdf).

Singing

- Be mindful that there is evidence that COVID-19 has rapidly spread among groups of people singing together in indoor environments.
 - Learn more at [High SARS-CoV-2 Attack Rate Following Exposure at a Choir Practice — Skagit County, Washington, March 2020 \(www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm).
- Consider not holding singing sessions, or sing outdoors with people **more** than 6 feet apart.

Sports

- Limit sports activities to groups of a maximum number of 10 people for indoor activities, and up to 25 people per group for outdoor activities. Do not have intermixing between groups.
- Keep any play or interaction between players contactless.

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- For example, kick a soccer ball back and forth, but do not allow for stealing the ball where contact between players may occur.
- Follow [Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth Sports \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/youthsports.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/youthsports.pdf) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions About Organized Youth Sports \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html).

Horseback riding

- Maintain the same social-distancing best practices as with other activities. Staff should wear a cloth face covering when assisting campers to mount horses.
- Ride outdoors whenever possible versus using indoor arenas.
- Encourage campers and staff to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately before and after horseback riding.
- Clean reins, saddles, and other shared equipment between uses.

Wilderness trips

Travel in wilderness areas requires additional precautions to ensure a safe experience for everyone. Camps should consult with their boards and medical advisors while weighing the risks of implementing programming during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Adhere to local travel restrictions when considering travel to other areas. See [Travel](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).
- Camps where core programming is not focused on wilderness trips should cancel trips to areas off camp property that require interaction with the public.
- Camps with core programming focused on wilderness trips located off camp property should implement strategies before and during camp sessions to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Beginning 14 days before arriving at camp, staff and campers should limit their activities and maintain physical distancing from others.
- Consider asking staff and campers to do daily health checks for 14 days leading up to camp.
- Consider asking staff and campers to get tested for COVID-19 prior to departing for a wilderness trip camp. Anticipate that it may take several days to receive test results.
 - A negative COVID-19 test at one point in time does not mean a person will stay negative. A negative test result does not replace the need to continue frequent hand washing, avoid touching the face, and practice social distancing. These are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.

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- Once campers and staff arrive at camp, ensure programming that prevents groups from intermixing before traveling to wilderness areas.
- When traveling in wilderness areas, have a tent available for each person, if possible, or multiple tents per group, where campers sleep head-to-toe.
- Do not wear cloth face coverings while sleeping.
- Continue to implement daily health checks while on wilderness trips.
- Have evacuation plans in place, including information about how to evacuate the group should anyone develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This should include communication plans with local officials who may assist with the evacuation.
- Ensure that first aid kits include cloth face coverings.

Consider your transportation plans

- Encourage families to transport their children to camp in private vehicles whenever feasible.
- Reduce the number of staff and campers on individual transportation buses or vans to allow people to spread out. Consider using visual cues to illustrate where campers may sit to adhere to social distancing. Siblings may sit together in the same seat.
 - These steps will help minimize transmission and allow for swift contact tracing if needed.
- Drivers should adhere to the following CDC guidelines: [What Rideshare, Taxi, Limo, and other Passenger Drivers-for-Hire Need to Know about COVID-19 \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html).

Keep interactions with the public to a minimum when traveling to and from camps. Refer to the travel section below for more guidance on traveling to and from camp.

Screening at the bus

- Screen staff and campers before boarding vans or buses, or require parents and staff to perform screenings at home in the morning before boarding transportation vehicles.
- Follow the CDC screening process for children: [Examples of Screening Methods \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren).
- Screening should include asking if anyone in their household has symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
 - Staff or campers with household members who are sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are not allowed to attend camp for 14 days from their last exposure with that person.

- Consider using a system similar to this [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist \(PDF\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

Be mindful of traveling

Consistent with state and federal guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our neighbors, Minnesotans are discouraged from unnecessary travel. If travel is necessary to engage in authorized outdoor recreation like camps, the following will help you minimize potential points of virus transmission:

- Travel as directly as possible to your destination, minimizing stops along the way.
- Bring all needed supplies with you.
- If you do need to stop for gas or supplies, wear a cloth face covering.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching common surfaces (e.g., gas pumps, door handles, shared bathrooms, etc.).
- Do not travel if sick.

MDH strongly recommends limiting participation in summer programming to campers and staff who live in Minnesota or bordering states.

- Camps that are accepting campers or staff from geographic regions outside of Minnesota and bordering states should communicate that information to families.
- Parents must have a plan in place with the camp if their child becomes ill and needs to be sent home.
- Anyone arriving from international locations must follow the 14-day isolation and quarantine guidelines before arriving at camp: [Returning from International Travel](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html).
- Ask staff to limit their interaction with local communities when off-site to obtain only essential services, allowing interaction only sparingly, or find other ways to get supplies/services. Follow appropriate social distancing and health etiquette measures when interacting with the community.
- Remind staff to limit their interactions with others on their time off and to maintain social distancing.

Establish procedures with vendors

- Establish clear procedures with vendors that mitigate interaction with the camp community.
- Staff who interact with vendors should wear a cloth face covering and practice social distancing.
- Allow for curbside drop-off and pick-up of services whenever possible.

Resources

- [Camp Operations Guide Summer 2020 \(www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020\)](http://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020)
- [Suggestions for Youth and Summer Camps \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html)
- [Youth Programs and Camps Decision Tool \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-programs-decision-tool.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-programs-decision-tool.html)



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