

CAMP SEQUOIA 2023

PARENT HANDBOOK



An essential guide to help you prepare for a great summer at Camp Sequoia!

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the Camp Sequoia family! We greatly appreciate the trust and confidence you have placed in us and we want you to know that your daughter's physical and emotional health, safety, and well-being are our priority. Our staff members have been specifically selected for their judgment and are being further trained to provide a safe, nurturing, and meaningful experience for your daughter. You have chosen to provide your daughter with an incredible experience that will help them build self-confidence and internal tolerance to frustrating situations as well as develop her social cognition skills while having an amazing summer in a safe, accepting camp community. We are excited that you have chosen to join our camp family and we hope this is the beginning of a long relationship.

We are sending you this handbook to help you prepare for camp. It contains information on our policies and procedures, our packing list, strategies to help prepare your daughter for camp, how to order Camp Sequoia clothing, plus more. We encourage you to read through the handbook and use it as the resource it is designed to be. Within the next few weeks, you will receive another set of forms to fill out pertaining to travel arrangements and information that will help us get to know your camper so we can provide them with the best experience possible.

As the summer approaches, questions are sure to arise, so don't forget to revisit this handbook as you prepare for the summer. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time with questions or concerns.

Looking forward to a great summer,

Kristen and the Camp Sequoia Team

2023 Camp Sequoia Dates

June 24th to July 22nd

Camper Arrival and Departure Information

Camp Sequoia provides bus and van transportation from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland at the start and end of the camp season. All campers attending Camp Sequoia are required to take the bus to camp if they are not flying into Philadelphia International Airport (yes, we also have transportation from the airport). Taking the bus to camp makes the transition process much easier for campers and allows them to become acquainted with fellow campers prior to her arrival at camp. We will have experienced staff on each bus who know how to make this transition a positive one for your daughter. **We do not permit campers to be dropped off at camp on opening days. Please refer to camp communications and the transportation and baggage form (on your parent portal) for your selections based on your daughter's session.** You may pick up campers on campus at 9:30am on departure day. You can also pick up your daughter's luggage with her if you choose to come to campus. We do not have a closing ceremony or activities but do invite families to pick up on campus so you can meet other campers and her staff members.

Our campers report that taking transportation to camp has been tremendously helpful in easing their anxiety and helping to form initial friendships. Most importantly taking the bus is part of the overnight camp experience!

Luggage Options

We require that luggage arrive at camp before our campers arrive at camp. Our staff will unpack your camper's belongings, make her bed for her, and have her room set up for when she arrives. Arriving at camp and seeing their rooms set up helps campers feel like they have their own space once they arrive. Furthermore, it allows our busy opening day to run more smoothly. Campers typically only have space for carry-on items on the bus/van on the way to camp. Additionally, this allows us to take additional sanitation measures to ensure all our campers' health and safety. There are no exceptions to luggage requirements for the health and safety of our community and for the supported success of our campers' transitional period when they first arrive at camp.

Unless you will be utilizing our luggage drop off day (details below), we ask that you ship your daughter's belongings to camp ahead of time. You can use any provider you wish to ship luggage to camp. Historically, parents seem to prefer UPS, USPS, or FedEx, and use priority shipping for reliability. We want to guarantee that luggage arrives BEFORE Wednesday 6/21 for all campers as our mail room is closed over the weekend. Please ship luggage to 6832 Phillips Mill Rd, New Hope, PA 18938 by no later than Thursday, June 15th with 3-to-5-day shipping. (For our west coast and Texas families, we recommend shipping a few days earlier than these listed dates to ensure that luggage arrives in a timely fashion). We transition to our summer address on June 14th, so please do not ship luggage to arrive before the 14th. Families who live within driving distance of camp may drop off their daughter's belongings on designated drop off days.

Dropping Off Luggage at Camp

If you would like to drop off your daughter's belongings on campus, our designated drop off day will be on **Monday June 19th from 4:30-7:30 P.M.**

As that Monday is a federal holiday, please let us know if you need to make alternative accommodations for luggage drop off, as we would be happy to do so.

End of Session Luggage Departure

If you are picking up on campus or at the airport, luggage can return home with parents. **If you are utilizing any of our departure stops, please arrange for luggage to return by UPS using the form on your parent portal,** as we do not have room on returning vans to accommodate camper luggage. That form can be submitted to us via email at kristen@sequoiagirls.com.

Dress Code

All campers are required to wear socks and sneakers at appropriate times (given the activities they are doing). One exception is for trips to and from the pool when they may wear crocs, sandals, or aqua shoes. Wearing flip-flops is not permitted in camp because they have limited support and may cause injuries. Appropriate bathing suits are required for the pool.

Camp Sequoia light blue t-shirts are mandatory on trip days. If your daughter loses or damages her camp shirt and does not have an extra we will provide her with a new one at your expense. Expensive clothes are not necessary at camp. Every camper receives one free shirt, and we ask that you purchase one extra so there will always be a clean one for trips off campus.

Please leave t-shirts from other camps at home. The Solebury School staff may be confused if they see our campers wearing t-shirts from other camps.

Purchasing Camp Clothing and Ordering Required T-shirts

Camp Spot is our official camp supplier from which you can order your free Camp Sequoia t-shirt and other items that are useful for camp that are included in our packing list. Please visit our website to enter the online store.

All campers must have one light blue Camp Sequoia t-shirt. We provide one free of charge and must be ordered from our online camp outfitter, Camp Spot. Campers may bring last year's light blue shirt if it is in good condition and does not have stains, tears, etc. Returning campers may still order their free t-shirt for this year. **We recommend you purchase an additional couple of t-shirts in either light blue or dark blue.**

Please order as soon as possible to ensure on-time delivery as Camp Spot gets extremely busy as the camp season approaches. We suggest ordering one size up so your camper can (hopefully) fit into their camp shirt next summer. **If you have questions about your order, please contact Camp Spot** as Camp Sequoia cannot answer questions about your order.

Additional Sequoia Gear: Additional Sequoia apparel designed by our staff and campers can be purchased from our Bonfire site. This apparel is not required and can be purchased at any time. Funds from Bonfire gear go towards camper scholarships. <https://www.bonfire.com/store/sequoia-swap/>

Laundry

Laundry for the majority of our campers is done by staff at designated times on campus. Our oldest division of campers will have the opportunity throughout the summer to learn to do their own laundry as part of their life skills program. If younger campers have interest in doing their own laundry that can be discussed with their Division Head. If your camper is prone to nighttime accidents, we ask that you send her with extra detergent as staff will wash their sheets as needed outside of the normal laundry schedule.

Communication with Campers

Camper Mail

Address all mail as follows:

Camper Name

Camp Sequoia

6832 Phillips Mill Rd

New Hope, PA 18938

Campers really look forward to mail at camp. A few days without a card or letter can be upsetting. We suggest you send one letter several days before the start of camp.

Some Do's and Dont's when it comes to writing letters to your children (please share this with relatives, etc.):

Do sound enthusiastic and offer encouragement in your letters.

Do provide your child with pre-stamped postcards or stationery.

Do understand that most campers don't like writing long letters home while at camp. Therefore, postcards are great.

Do comment on pictures you see of your child on our website.

Do keep your questions positive. Rather than saying: "Is anyone being mean to you?" ask "Which kids do you like being with the most?"

Don't say "We miss you, the dog misses you, etc." in letters as it can make children feel upset and responsible for your emotional well-being.

Don't write letters about events they may be missing out on at home.

Campers write home generally once to twice per week. Campers who need assistance with handwriting will be assisted by their counselors. We ask that you provide your camper with stationary and pre-addressed envelopes. You can also find excellent camp stationery in our online store that does not require a lot of writing.

Parents can send emails to their camper at camp. Emails will be printed once each day and are delivered with the campers' regular mail. Please note that we cannot print out pictures or attachments to emails.

We request that incoming email be limited to no more than once per day. Emails received after 4:00

P.M. will be delivered the next day. **Camper emails should be sent to the following email address:**

letters@sequoiagirls.com. It is essential to put your daughter's full name AND DIVISION in the subject line of the email.

An important note about letters from campers: At any overnight camp it's not uncommon for children to write letters home when they are upset about something. This is particularly true for our campers who have a tendency to be overly emotionally reactive to challenges or who "get stuck" and perseverate on the negatives. Parents often call camps concerned about a letter they have received only to find that whatever their child was upset about at the time they wrote the letter has been forgotten about. We are always happy to speak with you via phone or email about any concerns you may have.

It is common for some of our campers to want reassurance that their parents are worried about them while they're at camp. As a result, they express a negative tone in their letters (or during their phone call) knowing that their parents will react. At times, this is the case with campers who are doing beautifully at camp.

If you hear about something from your camper that is upsetting, please don't panic. Instead, please contact us and let us know what your camper shared with you. We will investigate your concerns and respond to you with factual information. **An important part of our work at Camp Sequoia is helping our campers understand perspectives aside from their own. This is part of the process of building social thinking skills.**

Camper Phone Calls

It is our policy that campers do not receive phone calls unless pre-arranged. From past experience and documented research on homesickness, we have found that phone calls home don't help campers who are having a difficult time adjusting to camp and they can create new difficulties for campers who are adjusting well.

Parents may choose to schedule a limited number of calls with their camper during camp so as not to disrupt from the camp program. Phone calls will be scheduled during the day and evening on the Monday of the second week she is with us. You may email us during the first week of camp to let us know if you would like to schedule a phone call.

Should you decide to speak to your daughter while at camp please follow the same "Do's and Don'ts" that apply to writing letters. Campers who share their time between separate parent households may arrange a phone call with each parent. If your daughter has a birthday at camp, you will be able to schedule a brief phone call on her birthday. **Phone calls can be difficult for some of our campers. A camper who is doing beautifully at camp can become anxious upon hearing their parent's voice and can become emotional. Phone calls home often leave parents worried and concerned. You are not obligated to schedule a call so please don't feel guilty if you think your daughter would be more successful at camp without a phone call. Some of our campers choose not to have a phone call home as they feel it will hinder their progress. If your daughter requests to not have a phone call home, please respect her decision, as she is invested in her own success at camp.**

Timing of Calls

All camper phone calls are limited to around 10 minutes in order to assure that we do not disrupt your daughter's routine too much and to allow other campers to make calls. Please note that we only have two phone lines at camp and phone calls go in order from youngest campers to oldest so getting through phone calls will take several days.

Camp Office Information

Our winter office will be relocating to camp on June 14th. Our phone number for the summer is 215-671-6944 and our fax number is 610-771-0122. Any mail sent to us after June 14th should be sent to the following address:

Camp Sequoia
6832 Phillips Mill Rd
New Hope, PA 18938

Camper emails should be sent to the following email address:
sequoiagirlsletters@gmail.com

Our summer camp office is open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily Monday-Friday. We will check voicemail and email on weekends, but our office staff typically has those days off and our administrative staff prioritizes being out and engaged with campers rather than waiting for a phone call or email. We do close for lunch and dinner but have our voicemail engaged. If you call at other times, or if all of our lines are in use, you will connect to our voicemail system. We will reply to you as quickly as possible, but if urgent, please additionally send an email to us at kristen@camp-sequoia.com if you do not reach us by phone.

In the event of an emergency after hours, please realize that your message will roll to an after-hours phone which is answered on a rotational basis by a member of senior staff. Please consider emailing office@camp-sequoia.com as a better means to get a message to us after hours for questions that are not absolute emergencies.

Parent Communication with Camp

You will hear from us individually within the first few days of your daughter arriving to let you know how your child is adjusting to camp. Please let us contact you rather than you contacting us as the first few days of the session are extremely busy and our attention is focused on helping our campers adjust to camp. We will also send a daily email summarizing camp events for you to get a flavor of camp and keep track of what is going on each day.

We are always happy to speak with you and we regularly communicate with parents to share information and ask for advice.

Please understand that emails/phone calls may not be returned until later at night or the next day. While we want to respond to parents as quickly as possible our primary concern is making sure our campers are safe, healthy, and successful thus we are out and around camp during the day.

Email to Camp Office

To email us at our Camp Office, use kristen@sequoiagirls.com; **please do not use this address to send emails to your camper.** **The email address to send letters to campers is: sequoiagirlsletters@gmail.com**

Vacations While Your Camper is at Camp

If you plan to be away from home for extended periods during the summer, please provide our office with vacation dates, an address and telephone number at which you can be reached as well as an emergency contact.

Camper Evaluations

We offer detailed evaluations of your daughter's time at camp upon request. If you would like a report from camp, we provide those to families **as requested** by late August to early September regarding your camper's experience at camp as well as information about the topics covered during their weekly social group. We know that you may be eager to read your camper's evaluation before that time. However, we invest a tremendous amount of time into writing camper evaluations. Thus, to be fair to all our families, we need to send out all evaluations at the same time.

Camp Photographs

We have staff dedicated to photography and post pictures each night on our secure picture website, Smugmug. You may view the photos on our website by clicking on the "Pictures" tab or by going to:

<http://campsequoia.smugmug.com>

We will send out the password to view photos in our first nightly newsletter of the summer, as Smugmug will not allow logins when there are no pictures to view in an album. We make a concerted effort to make sure all campers are included in pictures frequently. However, you may not see your camper in a picture every single day. It is very common for parents who have children at overnight camp to over-analyze pictures and worry if they see a picture with their camper not smiling. Please keep in mind that your daughter is most likely not always smiling at home and should not be expected to smile at all times during camp. Photographs capture only a split second of time.

Package Policy

Each camper may receive **one package per week** (and no more) in order to reduce feelings of competition between campers.

CARE PACKAGES CANNOT CONTAIN FOOD OF ANY KIND (including drink mixes, gum, ramen soup, candy, etc.) We are conscious of allergies and other food issues with our campers and want to avoid any potential problems. If you wish to send a package to your daughter, please make it one containing books, magazines, games, puzzles, etc. **Please inform all family members of our package policy. Contact us if you would like to arrange something special for a birthday celebration etc.**

Conduct Policy

Camp Sequoia is dedicated to providing a friendly, inclusive, safe, and harassment-free experience for all campers. To assist us in offering an incredible camp experience please help your daughter keep in mind the following principles:

- **Respect yourself.** Campers are expected, in accordance with their age, to take appropriate care of themselves. (Personal hygiene, getting sufficient sleep, dressing appropriately for the activities they participate in)
- **Respect the environment.** Sequoia Girls is lucky to be located on the beautiful Solebury School campus.
- **Respect others.** We expect campers to treat one another, our staff, medical team, and dining hall with courtesy and respect. We are dedicated to creating a welcoming community and providing a nurturing environment where campers can become their best social selves.

Staff and Supervision

Our most important off-season task is the hiring and training of our exceptional staff. We pride ourselves on the quality of the individuals that work with the campers. We employ three types of staff that work with our campers in all divisions (age groups): General Counselors, Activity Specialists, and Division Heads. Division Heads are administrative staff members who are college graduates and/or have more extensive experience with camps and our population. Division Heads provide active oversight, evaluation, skill building and support to a division of campers. General Counselors stay with their division throughout the day and work with campers in activity periods, in the dorms, and eat meals with them. Activity Specialists teach our activities while also living and eating meals with a division of campers. Many of our staff members are undergraduate and graduate education majors, special education majors, psychology majors, or going into clinical fields such as speech and language pathology or social work. Leadership staff members are college graduates and hold licensure or expertise reflective of their role at camp. All staff members are subject to a thorough background check and a multiple interview process before hiring.

In addition to offseason training seminars, staff members report for an intensive staff orientation 10 days prior to camper arrival. Senior staff typically have additional training prior to camp to prepare for your camper. This training includes building a comprehensive understanding of Social Cognition, Frustration Tolerance, our camper population, dynamic inquiry-based instruction, and building team dynamics.

Our Administrative Staff includes our Director, Associate Director, Program Director, Aquatics Director, Medical Team, and Division Heads. We are all actively involved in camp and with our campers. Aside from our Office Manager, we are not in the office much of the day.

Camper Living Arrangements

Campers will live in a dormitory room with one or two other campers who are in their age group. We group campers together based on the information you provide about your daughter as well as our impressions on who would do well living together. **We will send out a Camper Profile form which will, in addition to our conversations, help us place roommates appropriately.** Living with peers is an incredible bonding experience for campers. It teaches children how to live in a community, share living space and become more flexible. If you feel your daughter may have issues about privacy, please let her know that she can change her clothing in the bathroom. However, she should not expect their roommate to leave the room each time as it is a shared living space. We find that most campers quickly overcome their privacy issues at overnight camp which can be a self-confidence booster.

It is natural and expected that some campers may have disagreements with their roommates during their stay at camp. This is particularly true for campers who can present with rigid thinking and have trouble understanding others' perspectives. Our goal at Camp Sequoia is to help our campers build their social thinking skills and learning how to resolve conflicts is a significant part of this process. Unless we believe the situation warrants a change, we will not change roommates as a result of disagreements. Rather, we will help campers work through their disagreement and learn how to compromise.

It is a natural tendency for some parents to want to "make things better" any time their child is upset and alleviate their discomfort. Please understand that demanding that your child change roommates will deprive them of the opportunity to develop resiliency and social problem solving skills. This is an integral part of the overnight camp experience for campers, and particularly for many of our campers.

Campus Security & Crisis Response

Our camper's safety and health is key to a successful summer. The Solebury School staff prioritizes safety on campus. Senior Sequoia Staff are trained on site and are internationally recognized with **Crisis Prevention Certification**. This training includes a myriad of "what- if" scenarios to give staff the experience and confidence to appropriately respond with camper welfare in mind. We review emergency response procedures (fire drills etc.) with our campers within 24 hours of their arrival to camp and maintain open lines of communication with local authorities in the unlikely event the need should arise. We coordinate with the Solebury School in regards to potential campus wide events and a synergistic response.

Electronics Policy

Cell Phones, Apple/Samsung/Smart Watches, Video Games, Switches, Video Cameras, Computers, iPod touch, iPads, Tablets, etc. are not permitted at camp.

We strongly believe that these items detract from the camp experience and our goals at Camp Sequoia. Campers traveling alone to camp by plane may bring a cell phone in order to communicate with camp and parents while in transit. Campers should turn the cell phone into the Sequoia office upon arrival.

iPods/MP3 players/ Radio Clocks: We allow personal music players that cannot access the internet or have games on them at camp for use at specific times (rest period and evenings before bed). Good rule of thumb: if it has a touch screen, it is not allowed at camp. Campers are not permitted to listen to their personal music players during activities, meals, clean up time, etc. **We do NOT allow phones with the SIM card removed as music players.**

Kindles, e-readers and electronic reading devices that cannot access the internet are fine to bring.

Other Items: Any other devices that access the Internet or can be used for electronic communication are prohibited at camp.

Please be aware of the risks involved with sending any expensive/fragile possessions to camp. Camp Sequoia is not responsible should these items be lost or broken by your child or another camper during the summer. If any of the prohibited items listed above are found at camp, we will hold them until the end of your camper's session.

Other items prohibited at camp:

Pocket knives, video cameras, air conditioners, bicycles, scooters, skateboards, any type of toy that shoots things (ex. Nerf guns, water guns), water balloons, mini refrigerators, scissors, televisions, DVD players. Be advised that this is not a comprehensive list. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Health Care & Medications

Please see the medical and prescription forms covering all areas pertaining to health care and medications while at camp. If you have questions, please contact us sooner rather than later.

Diet and Nutrition

Camp Sequoia is very fortunate to have the Solebury School Dining Staff managing our food service. The Solebury School dining service offers a wide array of food options at each meal. The dining staff serves over 200 students during the academic year and are well educated regarding dietary needs for children with a wide variety of food allergies/sensitivities. The Dining Staff will have a list of our campers who have food allergies/sensitivities.

Meals are served buffet style with The Solebury School staff serving. We also have a policy for all meals that campers must drink at least one cup of water to aid in hydration before they have juice.

Our staff sits amongst the campers during all meals and monitors each camper's food intake during meals. We are happy to discuss any concerns you have regarding your child's diet at camp as we want you to feel comfortable knowing that we are watching out for them as closely as you would at home.

Sodas are not served at camp beyond special occasions and campers are not permitted to use the soda machines on campus. While we do allow campers to purchase 1 soda while on trips, we are happy to limit their purchasing of soda, etc. at your request.

We have found that many campers are more open to trying new foods at camp than at home and we encourage them to try new foods, eat vegetables and salads, etc. That being said, we do want to be clear that overnight camp is not a place to get into power struggles over food with campers. We will not force campers to eat anything they don't want.

Any food sent with campers will be given to their Division Heads to be given out at appropriate times. This helps to ensure the safety of campers/staff with allergies. Additionally, this helps to limit impulsive eating in the dorms.

Hygiene

Prior to attending camp, please discuss hygiene expectations with your camper. All campers are required to take a shower once a day during shower hour and are required to brush their teeth twice a day. Campers are expected to maintain overall good hygiene such as wearing clean clothes, having their hair brushed, etc. Part of developing perspective building skills is to understand how others perceive you based on your hygiene and overall appearance. We closely monitor our campers' hygiene and are happy to assist them with any hygiene tasks. Overall, we find that many of our campers are more open to being responsible for their hygiene and appearance at camp than they might be at home. Furthermore, we have found that many campers are willing to take on new hygiene tasks at camp when they see their peers doing these tasks (using deodorant, shaving, etc.).

As indicated in our packing list, please make sure your camper's toiletries are in a shower caddy with a handle. We find that shower gel and a shower sponge is best for camp instead of a bar of soap.

Preparing Your Camper for Camp and Homesickness

It is both normal and expected that both you and your daughter may be anxious about attending camp for the first time. Some of our first-time campers are very anxious and, in some cases, resistant to attending camp. This can be due to several factors, including her fear of being outside of her comfort zone and a lack of self-confidence regarding her ability to be successful in new situations.

We have a lifetime of camp experience as campers, staff members, and administrators and know what is necessary to help prepare for a successful overnight camp experience.

According to Bob Ditter, psychologist and camping expert, the more a child has a chance to “practice” behaviors that are similar, the more the child will experience mastery. Going away to overnight camp for most children will be most successful if parents try the following:

Talk About What to Expect:

Use the camp website and mailings to talk about what camp will be like. Let your daughter know she can turn to the counselors when she needs help at camp.

Practice Makes Perfect:

Campers who have not spent significant time away from home should “practice” by having sleepovers before camp. Talk to your daughter afterwards to discuss how the experience went for her.

Getting Ready:

Have your camper participate both in shopping for camp and some of the packing. Practice folding clothes, and making a bed from “scratch,” putting their clothes away on their own, etc. The more involved you have your camper in the preparation process, the more ownership she will feel in getting ready for camp.

Problem Solve with Your Camper Before Camp:

“What should you do if you run out of underwear? Answer: Tell your Counselor. You might want to try roleplaying some possible camp scenarios with your camper.

VERY IMPORTANT: Examine Your Own Feelings About Your Camper Being Away:

Children are excellent sensors of parental angst. If you are not ready for your child to be away, she will sense this and may feel responsible for your emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, it will be harder for your child to go to camp and feel permission to have fun.

Camper Spending Money

We ask that you please send \$80.00 with your camper. Please send the money in an envelope labeled with your camper’s first and last name. Each camper’s spending money will be kept in our safe. Campers will be given spending money from the “bank” each morning of our trip days. We give campers between \$15-20 per trip (depending on the trip) and do work with our campers around money management skills. We find that some of our campers would like to buy anything and everything they see so we work with them to limit impulsive spending. We suggest that you send your camper’s spending money prior to camp if they will be flying or that you give it to us on arrival day.

Please provide your camper’s spending money in cash using small bills (1’s, 5’s 10’s only) and please do not send us checks to be cashed for spending money. We will not be able to easily cash checks while at camp. One option is to add the \$80 to your final payment (along with fees for any of the optional trips described below).

Focus on the Positive:

Parents who talk about how much they are going to miss their children actually create more anxiety and a heightened sense of homesickness. While it may be hard for you to see her go, remember that camp is a wonderful gift that you are giving your daughter, one that will help her grow and develop as a person while also having a GREAT time.

Homesickness

What is referred to as homesickness is really anxiety about being in a new situation and not feeling emotionally safe yet. Most campers attending overnight camp feel some anxiety about being away from home. In fact, we believe that managing and overcoming homesickness is an integral part of the camp experience. Camp is the best place for young women to learn coping skills, gain independence and enhance their self-esteem. Adapting to camp life, with the help of a caring and attentive camp staff, is a challenge that helps young women develop those important life skills.

Here are some helpful tips to help your camper prepare for camp and feel a sense of investment in the process:

- When packing for camp, ask your daughter what special (non-valuable) personal items she might want to take along. This is to increase her comfort level by having something familiar nearby as she adjusts to a new place.
- Talk about going to camp in the days leading up to it. About one week before her departure, start talking about what she is looking forward to, what she wants to do most at camp when she gets there, etc. Please keep the discussion positive even if she shows anxiety or resistance.
- Let her know that most kids feel nervous about going to a new place. Reassure your camper that you believe in their ability to be successful, make friends and have fun.
- Have a letter ready to mail a day or two before camp begins so it is there the day your daughter arrives. Avoid talking about how you'll miss her or what she'll be missing at home.

Here are some GREAT things to say to your camper as she prepares to leave for camp:

"I'm going to be looking at the pictures on the website every day to see what you're doing at camp" "I'm

going to write to you so you'll know that we're O.K., the dog is O.K. etc."

"It's going to take you some time to get used to being at camp and feeling comfortable, but I know you'll be fine and have a great time"

"Your room is going to be set up for you when you arrive"

Here are some NOT GREAT things to say to your camper as she prepares to leave for camp:

"Just try camp for a week and see how you like it"

"You can call me anytime"

"I'm going to miss you so much"

"I can't believe you'll be gone for such a long time"

PLEASE AVOID THIS MISTAKE!!

Whatever you do, please don't tell your daughter: "If you don't like it, I'll come get you." Promises like this are guaranteed to set your daughter up for failure and make our job much more difficult. Most importantly, they deny your daughter the opportunity to develop the resilience, pride, and sense of independence that

come from working through something that is difficult. Should you decide to pull your daughter out of camp early, there will be no tuition refund or prorated tuition.

Homesickness typically happens during specific times (mornings, rest period) and rarely during activities. The way we deal with homesickness is to help campers focus on an activity and connect with peers as distractions. In our experience, staying active and having social connections are the cure for homesickness.

Homesickness typically lasts between 1-5 days; however, it is very common to take up to a week for campers to feel fully comfortable. **Based on our experience we find that camper's ages 10–12 typically present with a shorter period of homesickness and have a faster adjustment (typically within 1–4 days they are adjusted to camp life). Campers ages 13–17 sometimes are more inclined to be homesick and may have a slightly longer adjustment to camp life.**

If your daughter is experiencing homesickness and does not show any signs, she may convey this to you in a letter. Often by the time parents receive a letter the period of homesickness is over. **Please note that we will not have your daughter call you if she is homesick. This is guaranteed to make campers more anxious and will sabotage her ability to be successful at camp.**

We have many years of experience helping children through homesickness at camp and specifically train our staff to assist campers in their transition to camp.

Let Us Help!

Campers can always email us before camp (kristen@sequoiagirls.com) or talk to us on Zoom or FaceTime with questions or concerns about coming to camp.

Success at Camp Sequoia

Through our thorough application process and conversations with all of our camp families, we do our best to ensure that each camper is a good “fit” for our camp community. However, children respond to new environments in different ways, and we occasionally may determine that a camper’s required level of support or behavior is not what we are equipped to handle. Usually, before this decision is made, the camper’s parents will be engaged in problem-solving discussions. After all other possibilities are exhausted, a camper may be asked to leave camp. Parents must make arrangements to pick up their child at that time or arrange for transportation at their expense. No refunds will be granted. This decision is always a last resort.

While we have never asked a camper to leave due to homesickness, we have unfortunately found that there are times when parents are not willing to allow their child the time to work through their adjustment to camp and choose to pull their child out of camp early. We strongly discourage this and ask that you have a dialogue with us before you make this decision. As camp professionals with a lifetime of camp experience and clinical backgrounds, we know what is necessary for campers to be successful at camp and ask that you trust our professional judgment. Pulling your daughter out of camp early can clearly send the message to your camper that you are not confident in her ability to be successful in new situations, work through her discomfort, and develop resiliency. When children believe that their parents will “rescue” them from any discomfort they experience, they have a much harder time developing coping skills and resiliency as they mature. We believe that camp is a “healthy challenge” for all campers and even more so for our camper population. Should you choose to pull your camper out of camp early there will be no refunds or prorated tuition.

Most importantly, we want all our campers to leave Camp Sequoia feeling great about themselves. In cases of early departures, we will make sure that campers recognize the successes they had during their stay at camp – and we hope that parents will be equally committed to emphasizing the positive. Below is a company that offers camp cancellation insurance. Please review their policies carefully to select the specifics that best suit your needs. We always recommend that you enroll for a 'no fault' policy if you choose to be insured. **Travmark: 1-800-358-0779 Ex 221**

Sharing Additional Information About Your Camper

We often find that some parents would like to share additional information about their camper with us right before the beginning of camp. **While we appreciate the effort in helping us to get to know your daughter so we can provide them with a successful experience we ask that you please share any additional information with us prior to June 14th which is when our office moves to camp.** The 10 days leading up to the beginning of camp is our staff orientation, which is a very intensive week for our staff. We are conducting staff orientation typically for 12 hours per day. It is difficult for us to speak on the phone with parents during the week and a half of staff orientation.

Supporting Your Camper's Growth After the Camp Season

We are always happy to hear from our camper's parents after the camp season when they recognize the growth their child has made at camp. Granted, it is easy for our campers to fall into the same patterns at home once they are back in their comfort zone. We encourage you to take advantage of the growth your child has made at camp. For example: Your daughter will become accustomed to picking up her clothes and putting them in the laundry every day. Rather than doing it for her once she gets home, we encourage you to remind her that she can do it herself now. **The skills, independence, and maturity your camper will develop at camp will only last if you support and encourage continuing maturity, which we believe is particularly relevant to our camper population.**

Another area we encourage parents to support is maintaining friendships. Our campers need to learn that they have a responsibility in maintaining friendships after camp, which takes effort. We encourage campers to keep in touch by email, phone and other methods that kids use to socialize today. For our younger campers we find that Zoom and Facetime are a great way to keep in touch with friends at camp. Some of our younger campers also play games together online. Our older campers tend to communicate by texting, group chats, or playing online games together. We suggest that your camper communicate with at least one camper from camp monthly. Many of our campers need reminders to make the effort to reach out to camp friends. It may be a good idea to set up a Zoom account for your camper if she does not have one already.

Other Ways to Support Your Camper's Growth After Camp

"Learning Social" as we call it at camp is a lifelong process. Since social expectations increase with age and the "hidden rules" of social interaction become more abstract there is always room to learn more. We are happy to work with you to try to find people in your area who are adept at using the Social Thinking framework as we find this is the most effective method to help children develop their social cognition. Granted, Social Thinking is still considered a "cutting edge" approach and many professionals are not yet familiar with this work. We are also happy to speak with your camper's teachers, therapists, etc. after the camp season if you feel this would be helpful in helping her transition back to home.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time if you have questions. We are here to support you and want your camper to have a successful, fun-filled summer at Camp Sequoia!