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# CampEmerge Information Sheet

## Purpose

To provide a supportive camp experience for families who have a member with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which might be Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, or a related disorder.

## Eligibility

Families involved with the ABOARD (Advisory Board on Autism and related Disorders) Local Autism Support Group, and any other interested families who have a member with ASD or PDD, which might be Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, or a related disorder.

## Steering Committee

Gerard Stropnick, <i>Camp Director (July)</i>	275 8904
Kathleen Baas, <i>Camp Director (July) &amp; Camp Nurse</i>	275 8904
Susan and Jim Newcomer, <i>Camp Directors (May)</i>	320 2710
Tami Tunnessen, <i>Camp Director (September)</i> & <i>Volunteer Coordinator</i>	784 3631
Robin Drogan, <i>Camp Director (September)</i>	
Marianne Tillotson, <i>Crafts Chair</i>	546 7370
Judy Hunchar, <i>Advisor</i>	784 8478
Bill Jones, Ph.D., <i>Advisor (Special Education)</i>	784 7876

## Cost and Funding

Camp fees for families are determined each year based upon funds raised. For 2008, CampEmerge has enjoyed significant support from Earthly Angels Autism Fund of the Luzerne Foundation, Geisinger's Children's Miracle Network Telethon, and KIDSKASH from Camp Victory, as well as gifts from several corporations, clubs and generous individuals and an extraordinarily successful "Basket Bingo" fundraiser. Every effort is made to keep costs low for all involved, to completely subsidize our volunteers, and to provide full scholarships to families in need. For CampEmerge 2008, the cost to the families will be \$20.00 per person, payable on arrival at Camp.

## Location

Camp Victory  
P.O. Box 810  
Millville, PA 17846

*Phone:* 570 458 6530  
*Email:* fun@campvictory.org  
*Web:* www.campvictory.org  
*Executive Director:* Jamie Huntley

## Camp Emerge Contact

Gerard Stropnick and Kathleen Baas, R.N.  
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Danville, PA 17821  
Porkey72@aol.com

*Phone:* 570 275 8904  
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## **History**

When CampEmerge began in 1999, it was the first time that our local ABOARD Autism Support Group had attempted anything of this sort, and it was the first time that Camp Victory had partnered with a group where the primary manifestations of the disability were behavioral rather than physical. Would the families find the time relaxing? Would our siblings have a chance to bond? How would our autistic campers, not particularly social beings, respond to all this? The risks were high, but the experiment proved successful.

For one wonderful — but *hot!* — weekend, our nine families (34 campers) and twelve volunteers established a relaxed atmosphere of acceptance. Traditional camp experiences like swimming, fishing, boating, campfires, and crafts were augmented by a “low-ropes” teambuilding course for siblings, a volunteer led nature walk for our autistic campers, and a roundtable for parents. All enjoyed the special magic of shared experience.

CampEmerge 2000 was another hot weekend (we know how to pick ‘em!), where we served 43 campers, including 11 autistic kids, plus a dozen volunteers. In rainy 2001, we had 59 campers, including 17 autistic kids, plus 22 volunteers for a total camp population of 81. In 2002, we served 69 campers, including 24 autistic kids, plus 29 volunteers for a total camp population of 98.

While this growth was invigorating, it created a problem. Crowds often make autistic kids anxious, and we’d determined that should our camp get too large, it would likely become counterproductive. We found ourselves in the unhappy position of turning families away. Something needed to change. CampEmerge needed to expand.

With the cooperation of Camp Victory, we added a second weekend of CampEmerge for the Summer of 2003, in effect doubling our capacity. Soon that new capacity was also filled. By 2006, it was time to grow again and a third weekend was added. CampEmerge is now offered on three summer holiday weekends: Memorial Day Weekend, Independence Day Weekend, and Labor Day Weekend. In 2007, CampEmerge served 61 families, 225 campers, including 70 ASD, plus 73 volunteers for a total population of 298. There is some room to grow -- CampEmerge can accommodate 70 to 75 families. Before long, we will again be filled to capacity.

Clearly, more and more families need CampEmerge. So long as it is fun and beneficial, CampEmerge will continue to find ways to welcome families touched by autism.

## **Philosophy**

We believe it is important to provide an opportunity to bring together families who face the challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Autism and related developmental disorders. Parents, siblings, as well as the affected individual, need to share common experiences, hopes and dreams, and to find support for the special challenges faced throughout the year. CampEmerge focuses on the strengths of individuals and families and provides the opportunity to simply “be a family” for a weekend, without fear of judgment or pressure to explain differences. Every effort is met with praise and celebration. Families need the support of one another as well as the

support of their community, demonstrated through the efforts of our volunteers and sponsors.

## **Camp Goals**

1. To have a fun-filled and safe family camp experience.
2. To provide a camp that celebrates what we can do, and will not dwell on what we can't.
3. To help all campers achieve their fullest potential.
4. To strengthen the bonds of friendship and support between and among families that share the challenges of Autism and related disorders.
5. To show the benefits of supportive communities through our volunteers who offer their help wherever needed.
6. To help volunteers better understand how to provide needed support to families and help families accept and utilize this support more effectively.

### **Basic Keys to Understanding Autism:**

*People with autism perceive the world differently from everyone else. They find the rest of us strange and baffling.*

*Tony Attwood  
from his book, **Asperger's Syndrome***

*Much of the time, I feel like an anthropologist on Mars.*

***Temple Grandin, PhD.**  
Describing her life as an autistic person*

## **Definition**

Autism is a developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. The result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, autism and its associated behaviors occur in as many as 1 in every 150 individuals, according to the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC). Autism is four times more prevalent in boys than girls and knows no racial, ethnic or social boundaries. Family income, lifestyle and educational levels do not affect the chance of autism's occurrence.

It is conservatively estimated that about two million people in the U.S. today have some form of autism, yet most people are not familiar with this spectrum of disorders.

Autism is often thought of as a spectrum disorder, meaning the symptoms and characteristics can present in a wide variety of combinations, from severe to mild. Under the general heading of *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD) are several more specific diagnoses. The most severe occurrences are sometimes called *Profound Autism*. On the other end of the spectrum are *High Functioning Autism* (HFA) and *Asperger's Syndrome*. Another designation is *Pervasive Development Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified* (PDD-NOS). Each is part of a continuum.

While there are treatments, medications, educational systems, special diets, and other programs that can aid patients with autism, there is as yet no cure for this permanent condition. Some individuals never emerge from their autistic symptoms, and

will require lifelong assistance; others learn to function well in the world. Some help lead the world to new perceptions: Albert Einstein was almost certainly autistic. We cannot “give up” on our autistic children. It takes patience, humor, opportunity, understanding and love from family and community.

## Causes

Researchers are looking into the probable causes of autism, but as yet there are no definite answers. Recent advances in the fields of genetics and immunology, and new technologies that provide real-time brain scans offer fresh understanding.

Just a generation ago, the incidence of autism was estimated at 1 in 10,000; now it is 1 in 150. Why? A portion of the increase can be explained away by better awareness and diagnosis, but certainly not all. Autism is certainly becoming more common. The search is on for environmental triggers that might be causing this condition in ever increasing numbers, sometimes in clustered specific locations. We know (or think we know) the following:

- **Autism has a genetic component.** Genes on five or more chromosomes in a particular combination seem to set the stage for the conditions which could permit autism to develop. Apparently, all people with autism have these genetic markers, but not all people with these genetic markers are autistic. Genetics “loads the gun,” but something else “pulls the trigger.”

- **Autism is connected to the immune system.** In autism, the immune system apparently develops more slowly than normal. Some feel, because of these immature immune systems, that childhood vaccination may be the trigger for the increasing incidence of the condition. Infants and children with the genetic predisposition for autism may be receiving inoculations (for measles, mumps, hepatitis B, etc.) before their particular bodies are ready for the “insult.” Minuscule amounts of mercury, used as a preservative in several of these vaccines, may be the culprit. In a related fact, most autistic people demonstrate a strong negative behavioral response to many antibiotics; but about 5% show a remarkably strong positive behavioral response to the same antibiotics. Antibiotics should not change behavior at all, yet in autism such changes are clearly evident — more evidence for an immune system link. Some children with autism have shown remarkable progress when treated with Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IV-IG), an expensive treatment usually reserved for children with HIV or other severe immune system abnormalities.

- **Autism is connected to the digestive system.** Most autistic people suffer either chronic diarrhea or chronic constipation — what is constant is the imbalance. In addition, many suffer from “leaky gut,” which allow certain undigested amino acids to enter the blood stream. These amino acids chemically mimic certain immune system “keys,” which then inhibit the proper functioning of the immune system. Many people with autism exhibit strong food sensitivities, most commonly regarding lactose (milk) and gluten (wheat) products. Radical diet changes, such as a Gluten Free/Casein Free Diet or vitamin regimens can bring behavioral improvements in some cases.

- **Autism is neurological.** It can affect the growth of the brain, the development of neural linkages and pathways, and ultimately the shape and size of the brain itself. It has some relationship to the brain's ability to make and receive Serotonin, a still-mysterious but powerful hormone produced in the brain. Interestingly, Serotonin production and reception is affected by both Secretin (a digestive hormone) and certain immune system triggers. Serotonin, or the lack of sufficient Serotonin, appears to be the mysterious hormonal culprit behind a wide range of imbalances, including depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and eating disorders. Indeed, Prozac, Zoloft, and other such "Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors" have been found useful in controlling anxiety in adolescents and adults with autism.

Beyond the research are the people and their stories. Autistic people like Temple Grandin and Donna Williams have eloquently communicated how they think and feel. Their first person accounts have immeasurably increased our understanding.

### **Debunking Common Misunderstandings**

- Autism is **not** a mental illness.
- Children with autism are **not** unruly kids who *choose* not to behave.
- Autism is **not** caused by "bad parenting." Bruno Bettelheim's contention that autism was brought on by "refrigerator mothers" has been completely discredited, but not before it ruined thousands of lives.
- No psychological factors in the development of the child have been shown to cause autism.
- Autistic people are **not** usually mentally retarded. Early literature did link these conditions, but it is now more generally accepted that standard IQ tests and the ways in which they are administered fail to get a true reading of the autistic individual. People with autism, because they often lack the social awareness that leads to a desire to please others, are notoriously difficult to test. Mental retardation can exist with autism, but most probably at about the same percentages by which it affects the general population. Indeed, some people with autism are extremely intelligent. Some are geniuses.
- Autistic people do **not** all act just like Dustin Hoffman in the film **Rain Man**. And they do not all have amazing abilities. While **Rain Man** was well researched and accurate in many ways, Hoffman's character of Raymond was not meant to be typical of autism. Everyone is different. Savant characteristics, like Raymond's ability to count cards in the casino, do occur in about 10% of autistic people. Savant abilities have been shown in drawing, in music, in mathematics, and other areas — but they are absent in the vast majority of autistic people.

- Many children and adults with autism make eye contact, show affection, smile and laugh, and demonstrate a variety of other emotions, although in varying degrees. Like all of us, they respond to their environment in both positive and negative ways.

## **Areas Affected by Autism**

### **• *Communication.***

In many cases, language develops slowly or not at all. There might be:

- use of gestures instead of words;
- use of words without attaching the usual meaning to them;
- the presence of echolalia, or the repeating of certain phrases, frequently from movies, TV commercials or favorite cartoons;

When language is present and not delayed, there may be:

- an overly formal construction of phrases, or an unusual vocabulary; and
- a limited ability to pick up cues or “sense the other” in conversation.

### **• *Sensory Impairment or Oversensitivity to Sensory Stimulus.***

There are frequently abnormal responses to physical sensations, such as being overly sensitive to touch or under-responsive to pain. Sight, hearing, touch, smell, pain and taste may be affected to a greater or lesser degree. Some people with autism report that they feel like they “have no volume control on their ears.” Certain sounds, like bells or fireworks or vacuum cleaners may be perceived as literally painful, and therefore terrifying. Fluorescent lights may be perceived as “blinking,” or “like a strobe light.” (Indeed they are blinking, about 60 times per second, yet the “normal” brain filters this out, and most of us perceive the light as steady. Not so for the person with autism.) Sensitivities to texture and taste cause many autistic children to be very picky eaters.

### **• *Motor Control.***

Many people with autism exhibit deficits in fine or gross motor control, or both. Holding a pencil might be very difficult, as might throwing and catching a ball. Some walk or run with a distinctive gait, perhaps striding with no involvement of the arms. These deficits can themselves become barriers to social interactions.

### **• *Social Interactions.***

Individuals may spend time alone rather than with others and show little interest in making friends. Actually, many people with autism are desperate to make friends, but have no idea of how to go about it. They are less responsive to social cues such as eye contact or facial expressions. Social interactions, which most of us absorb by a kind of osmosis, are incredibly complex: people with autism need to learn them by rote. One autistic teenager said, with some exasperation, “*I just wish someone would tell me the rules!*” Temple Grandin, a remarkable autistic woman who has written several books and who is a Professor at the University of Colorado, states that she is continually astonished by the unspoken, indirect elements of human communication. She feels as if she were a kind of alien observer, a visitor from another world, “an anthropologist on Mars.”

- ***Play.***

Sometimes there might appear to be a lack of spontaneous or imaginative play. Sometimes, to the young child with autism, the imagination may be so rich and powerful and clear that it is itself terrifying. Sometimes the imaginative play may be so involving that the line between imagination and reality may seem blurred. Often the autistic individual will not imitate others' actions or initiate pretend games.

- ***Behaviors.***

An individual may be active or very passive. They might throw frequent tantrums for no apparent reason. (There *is* a reason, of course, but the person with autism may not be able to describe that reason, and if they can, their reasons may seem to you “unreasonable.”) They might show aggressive behaviors, or may injure themselves. They may seem to lack common sense — many are extremely literal minded. Common phrases such as “You’re pulling my leg” or “I laughed my head off” or “The battery is dead” or “If looks could kill” or “Has the cat got your tongue?” will be taken completely literally, elicit gales of laughter, and require explanation. Many people with autism closely identify with the character of “Data” from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Like “Data,” they have intelligence and at times superhuman sensory perceptive abilities. Like “Data,” they need to have every joke explained, and often are mystified by the human interactions around them.

- ***Perseverations.***

Autistic people often develop an intense interest in a specific topic, idea, or person. It might be train schedules, or dinosaurs, or the origins of the universe, or farm tractors, or Pokemon, or the recordings of Elvis, or whatever. Once they begin to speak, there may be no stopping them. And, if interrupted, they may need to return to the beginning of the monologue and start over. Think of this like a CD or a computer — the program, once accessed, must play out. Perhaps they feel safe in the topic. Perhaps, in their desire not to be seen as stupid, they feel compelled to demonstrate mastery. Perhaps it is just the way their minds work.

- ***Fears and Anxieties***

Central to understanding autism is an understanding of anxiety. Brain scans indicate that the area of the brain related to panic, to the “flight or fight” reflex is almost constantly overstimulated in people with autism. In her best-selling book, **Nobody Nowhere**, autistic Australian author Donna Williams reports that she feels fear almost constantly, and at a level beyond anyone she knows: “On a scale of one-to-five, my anxiety goes right to nine.” This can lead to a strong aversion to crowds, and to an avoidance of new situations. Once an autistic person feels safe in an environment, they want to stay there; once they feel safe with an experience, they choose to repeat it. Often endlessly. This deep need to feel safe is a direct response to the omnipresence of anxiety.

## **Specific Issues in Autism**

- ***Fighting and Arguments.***



These are common, everyday events in autism. People with autism can be very rigid, unbelievably stubborn. Remember in the movie **Rain Man** when Raymond (Dustin Hoffman) would only wear underwear purchased from one particular K-Mart? Remember the growing frustration of his brother (Tom Cruise)? But most people with autism — even those who are nonverbal and may appear distant or uninvolved — are desperate to build friendships. Like everyone else, they want to have fun. They just don't know the rules. Their own ideas of fun can be quite rigid, and they may not be able to explain their reasoning. Do try to intervene, but do so gently. Maintain your own careful sense of logic, and never lose your own sense of humor. Do not raise your voice — shouting is usually counterproductive with our autistic campers. Most of them are hypersensitive to sound, and they seem to become more so when their anxiety level is elevated. A shouted voice can sound to them like a firecracker held to their ear. Separation from the group, or a change of location may be helpful.

• ***Temper Tantrums.***

People with autism have glorious temper tantrums. It is part of the diagnosis, and you will almost certainly witness such behaviors during camp. If you see a tantrum developing, get the parents; the parents are sure to have developed strategies that work with their child. If you cannot locate the parents, first send another volunteer to find them, and then take steps to isolate the camper. Do not try to hold or restrain the camper unless they pose an immediate danger to themselves or others. When their anxiety level is this high, their adrenaline is pumping like crazy. Even a small child can become incredibly strong. Be careful. Whenever possible, let the parents deal with the tantrum.

**IMPORTANT NOTE!**

*We have arranged with Camp Victory to reserve the back room of the “Med Shed” for our use as an isolation area. Should a camper need a quiet, indoor place to calm down, this is the place to go.*

• ***Communication Tips***

- Speak slowly and comfortably. Allow time between sentences. Autistic people may need a bit more time to process what you are saying.
- Be willing to repeat instructions several times, without frustration, and without raising your voice. Autistic people perceive everything all at once — it may take time to “break through the noise.”
- Wait for a response. The autistic person may need to process what is said, and decide how to rationally respond. A “Hello!” from you may not be followed by an automatic social response. Wait for a response, especially if you can see “the wheels turning.”
- Don't expect eye contact. The constant, tiny movements of our eyes can be a distraction to the autistic. They may turn an ear toward you to listen.
- Gentle, trusting touch can be good. It takes time to build that trust.
- They want to be your friend. They need to learn how.

**Autistic Strengths**

Autistic people have real strengths as well. If they get the help they need, they can succeed in education and they can thrive in many fields. The tendency to persevere becomes an asset in postgraduate work in math and the sciences. Many become writers, or even actors: the need to consciously study and record human behavior produces some keen observers. The comfort with logic and detail lead many into computer programming or engineering. It has been said that “computers are designed by and for people with autism.” Some other strengths include:

- **Visual Thinking.** One of Temple Grandin’s best-selling books is titled **Thinking in Pictures**. Albert Einstein, who was almost certainly autistic, was famous for his lack of social skill and failed at his early attempts to get an education — he even failed math. Yet, his focus on the mechanics of the universe amounted to a perseverance. He described his theory of relativity in elegant visual metaphors.

- **Unique Perspectives.** Some people with autism bring their unique perceptions into the world of art. Many people with autism describe their visual world as “being made of dots.” Other autistic people talk of seeing everything as bright swirling masses of color. Many scholars today believe that some now famous artists, who in their lives were infamous for their lack of social skills, may have indeed been autistic. Georges Seurat and Vincent Van Gogh immediately come to mind.

- **Honesty.** A lack of social skill has some benefits. Autistic people have trouble with the idea of deception. They tend not to lie, and when they try they are bad at it. This can make them appear tactless or impolite. (“Why are you so fat?” “It must be hard to be stuck in a wheelchair.” “ You are much older than I thought you’d be.”) Their ruthless honesty can also stand in the way of peer relationships. If something is thrown in the classroom when the teacher’s back is turned, and she spins and says, “Who did that!?” it is sure to be the autistic child who answers, truthfully, “Tommy did!” Because the autistic child misses many social cues, in this case the classroom code of silence, and because he must be honest, this autistic child may have some unintended issues with Tommy down the road. They are, as a group, unfailingly honest.

- **Loyalty.** Once an autistic person builds trust with another, and feels safe, they will not intentionally do anything to break that trust. They are loyal employees and friends.

- **Dependability.** Autistic people tend to be perfectionists, and amazingly good at detailed, repetitive tasks. Writing thousands of lines of computer code might be right up their alley. And, once they feel safe in a job or a task, their tendency to persevere guarantees the task will be completed.

## **Steering Committee Responsibilities**

### **Purpose**

To plan and organize a weekend camp that will be fun and rewarding for families and volunteers.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Attend meetings to plan and organize program areas such as:
  - Activities
  - Finding and Scheduling Volunteers
  - Meals
  - Cabin Assignments
  
2. At Camp take care of:
  - Registration
  - Clean-up
  - Check-out
  - Preparing and Running Activities
  - Trouble Shooting (i.e. complaints, building and grounds issues, discipline issues, etc.)
  - Announcements (Rules, schedule changes, acknowledgments, etc.)
  - Evaluation by Campers
  - Monitoring Camp Operations
  
3. Recruit and Train Volunteers
  
4. Investigate Fund Raising as needed.
  
5. Prepare Program Handbook
  
6. Attend daily meetings at camp to discuss problems or concerns and assess what is going well.
  
7. Attend debriefing meeting after camp to review camper and volunteer evaluations, and discuss the strengths and needs for the camp in future years.
  
8. Insure that thank-you notes are sent to all who have helped.

### **Camp Director Responsibilities**

#### **Purpose**

To oversee the CampEmerge Program year round.

## **Duties and Responsibilities**

1. To communicate and coordinate with Camp Victory staff.
2. To work with the Steering Committee to determine schedule, program, rules and procedures.
3. To develop the volunteer application form for potential volunteer candidates with the Steering Committee.
4. Plan and conduct pre-camp training session(s).
5. During camp, serve as the contact person to resolve immediate issues or concerns addressed by the volunteers or the campers.
6. Meet with volunteers daily to discuss any problems, provide information or updates on situations, and obtain suggestions for improvements for smoother camp operation.
7. Inform Steering Committee of any need for verification or volunteer time given, or letters needed by the volunteers.
8. Discuss purpose of volunteer program with Steering Committee.
9. Conduct evaluations by the volunteers of their experience at CampEmerge.
10. Report the volunteer evaluations to the Steering Committee for future program recommendations and changes.

## **Nurse's Responsibilities**

### **Purpose**

To provide for the health needs of campers and staff during camp.

### **Duties & Responsibilities**

1. Tend to scrapes and cuts (i.e., first aid)
2. Assess health status of each person at camp.
3. Keep a log of all incidents.
4. Determine if and when further treatment is advised, and help families to secure such treatment.

## **Volunteer Rules and Responsibilities**

*We hope CampEmerge will provide all participants with a memorable and fun-filled camp experience. To achieve this goal, there are some basic rules and responsibilities we all must follow.*

1. Volunteers are expected to remain at Camp Victory at all times during the camp session. If it is necessary for a volunteer to leave the property, the Camp Director must be notified prior to departure.
2. Volunteers are expected to be on time for scheduled activities and meals.
3. Volunteers will participate in, or assist campers to participate in all assigned activities.
4. Volunteers must remain aware of and watch the campers they are assigned to when parents are not present.
5. Volunteers should notify the Camp Director or a Steering Committee member of any unsafe situations or areas.
6. Volunteers must notify the Camp Director, or the designated Steering Committee member, or any suspected physical, sexual or emotional abuse.
7. Volunteers will assist campers in getting their meals to the table and returning camper's dishes to the rinse area as assigned.
8. All volunteers are expected to have child abuse clearance.

## **Volunteers Working as a Team**

As a CampEmerge volunteer you will have the opportunity to work with campers of varying ages and special needs. Although you will not be the primary caregiver, your role as a volunteer is to be a support to the campers and their families. In some cases, an important goal may be to try to give the primary caregivers — usually the beleaguered parents — a respite. Let the autistic child get used to you. Build a level of comfort. For the two days of camp, work to help give the parents “a break.”

In other cases, the family may need this weekend as a valuable time to bond with each other. Help the parents and children enjoy one another. Perhaps you might give the siblings special attention. Always remember that the objective is to have fun! During Camp, you may be required to lead or help organize a group activity. There will also be time that you spend one-on-one with a camper. Here are some basic pointers on how to work with campers individually and as a group.

### **As a Group:**

1. Volunteers should always be aware of possible conflicts and safety concerns.
2. Sarcasm or ridicule never helps a situation and usually causes worse rather than better behavior. *This is always true, but never more so than with our autistic campers. They take things at face value — the subtleties of sarcasm tend to escape them. Be direct, be friendly, be honest.*
3. Rely on appropriate steering committee members or the Camp Directors to answer questions and/or for suggestions.

**As Individuals:**

1. Each child and adult is unique. Try to make the necessary accommodations for each camper. (Some love swimming, some would rather do another activity.)
2. Give as much individual attention as possible to campers throughout the day. Campers include parents and siblings as well as our autistic participants. Some campers want a lot of attention. Some may need or want it but never ask. Some may not care one way or another. Give time to those who need it.
3. Inappropriate behavior is at the very center of autism. Be patient, be gentle, do not over-react. Seek advice from the parents if they are available, or from a steering committee member if they are not. Each of our families has devised their own strategies for each child. Let the parents guide you.
4. Praise for even small accomplishments can help a camper's self-esteem.

## **Some Things to Keep in Mind**

1. Patience is essential.
2. Fun is contagious.
3. Recognize success.
4. Show approval of a job well done.

## 5. Encourage participation.

## 6. Use positive suggestions.

### **General CampEmerge and Camp Victory Policies and Rules**

1. Campers may only be at the water areas (i.e., swimming pool or pond) when a lifeguard is on duty in that area. Designated times for swimming, fishing and boating will be scheduled.
2. Everyone will wear a life jacket when in a boat.
3. All persons swimming in the deep area of the pool must pass a swimming test approved by the lifeguard staff.
4. No camper or volunteer shall swim in the pond.
5. To prevent injuries, footwear must be worn at all times.
6. No firearms, liquid flammables or power tools (especially chain saws) are allowed.
7. No alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs are allowed on the campgrounds. Violation of this rule will result in dismissal from the camp.
8. Smoking is allowed in designated areas. (i.e., the parking lot by the main entrance to the camp.)
9. All campers and volunteers are to complete a Health Information form to provide information in case of emergency. All medications are to be kept safely by the parents, under lock and key in the person's cabin, or with the Camp Nurse/EMT on duty.
10. If physical, sexual or emotional abuse is suspected, the Camp Director or a member of the Steering Committee shall be notified immediately.
11. CampEmerge volunteers and campers will abide by all policies and rules of Camp Victory.
12. All campers and staff under 18 years of age are required to have a signed permission form and a health history on file with the medical staff.
13. Camp staff are not to bring any pets to camp or house stray animals. Any stray animals should be reported to the Site Director.

14. Accident reports must be filled out for any incident requiring medical care. All treatments by Healthcare staff will be recorded in a log book that must be kept with permanent camp records.
15. All staff are responsible for site cleanup daily and following each camp session.
16. Personal phone calls should be made on the phone provided in the Med Shed, but only with permission of the Camp Director. The camps will be billed at the end of their camping session for any long distance calls made during their camping session.
17. Vehicles are to be left in the camp parking lot. Only emergency and delivery vehicles should be allowed in the main camp area. Unattended vehicles should be locked and keys should be in the possession of the vehicle owners or designee at all times. No campers or staff under age 18 are to be transported in staff cars.
18. Personal information regarding campers should not be released to anyone. All inquiries should be referred to the Camp Director or Site Director. Only the Site Director, Camp Director and /or Healthcare Director should release information to the news media.
19. It is against Camp Victory policy for any member of the Camp Victory staff to accept moneys, gifts, or tips from camper families. Staff should suggest that a grateful family member make a contribution to the individual camp or to Camp Victory.
20. Visitors to camp while campers are present should be cleared in advance and accompanied by someone from the CampEmerge staff or Camp Victory board. Anyone noticing unfamiliar faces should report them to the Camp Director or Site Director.
21. Any staff member noticing safety hazards should report same to the Camp Director or Site Director, and arrange for appropriate temporary corrective measures.
22. Shoes and shirts should be worn at all times in the dining hall.
23. Sound equipment and the megaphone should be operated by camp staff only.
24. Only the kitchen staff is allowed in the kitchen area — all campers and counselors food should be stored in the refrigerator in the dining hall and the cupboards in the island.
25. NO FOOD IN CABINS!
26. No running or playing ball in the dining hall.
27. Decorations can be hung from the porches of the cabins only. No tape on walls inside the cabins.

### **Visitor Policy**



All visitors to either campers and volunteers must be approved in advance and must be identified to the Camp Director or a Steering Committee member upon their arrival.

There will be no overnight guests. Only registered volunteers and campers may stay overnight at camp.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

It is important for all CampEmerge Steering Committee members and Volunteers to be aware that certain information provided by our campers to facilitate the smooth operation of our camp may be of a sensitive nature, and cause hardship or pain if disclosed to people outside our camp. Discretion and sensitivity to the feelings of our campers must be used as we relate our camp experience to others.

### **Medication Policy**

CampEmerge is a family camp. In most cases, you are responsible for monitoring and administering your own family's prescription medications, just as you would be at home. However, as there are lots of children running around, please make the following efforts to keep your medications secure:

- Keep medications with you and secure, in a fanny pack or purse. Keep medications in child proof containers.
- Medications left in cabins must be under lock and key.
- Medications can be held for you at the Med Shed. Please coordinate this with the CampEmerge nurse.
- Medications which require refrigeration will be kept at the Med Shed. Please coordinate this with the CampEmerge nurse.

A selection of over-the-counter medications (Ibuprofen, Tylenol, etc.), as well as First Aid supplies (bandages, neosporin, etc.) will be on hand, and available from the CampEmerge nurse. Whenever possible, an adult family member should make the request.

### **Parking/Traffic Policy**

Please park all cars in the lot outside the Main gate. Except for very special circumstances, equipment should be carried from here. If you must use your car to bring something to the cabins or any pavilion, please get permission from the Camp Director. If permission is given, the car will need to be returned to the Parking Lot once the delivery is complete.

### **Child Abuse Policy**

The Domestic Relations Code Act 151 of 1994 requires that school administrators, teachers, social service workers, registered nurses, day care center workers, or any child care or foster care workers, among others, report suspected cases of child abuse. An abused child, as defined by the PA department of Public Welfare regulations, is a child under the age of 18 who exhibits serious physical or mental injury, serious physical neglect, or sexual abuse caused by acts or omissions of the child's parents or by a person responsible for the child's welfare.

It shall be the staff members responsibility to notify a member of the Steering Committee immediately if he/she suspects that a camper is being abused. The steering committee shall contact the appropriate agencies.

Tapline: 1 800 222 9016

Childline: 1 800 932 0313

The CampEmerge volunteer who has reported the suspected abuse to a Steering Committee member will be relieved of the responsibility and obligation for making the report of suspected abuse to the appropriate agency.

The designated Steering Committee member will work cooperatively to interview the camper, and the nurse shall conduct any physical inspection of the camper with the camper's consent.

Should a staff member be suspected of causing abuse to any camper, the Steering Committee shall immediately bring the case to the attention of the appropriate agency, and the staff member or volunteer will be dismissed immediately from Camp Victory.

*The Child Protective Services Law provides that "any person, hospital, institution, school, facility, or agency participating in good faith in making report or testifying in any proceeding arising out of an instance of suspected child abuse, the taking of photographs, or the removal of or keeping of a child pursuant to those regulations shall have immunity from any liability, civil, or criminal, that might otherwise result by reason of such actions."*

### **Bicycle Policy**

Camp Victory's bicycles and other pedaled vehicles are available for camper use. No passengers are to be taken on bicycles. Other pedaled vehicles should carry only the number of people indicated. Helmets are available, and must be worn by riders and passengers. Please share with others — we all should "take turns."

### **Golf Cart Policy**

Golf Carts are the property of Camp Victory, and are subject to the rules set by Camp Victory. Safety is the paramount consideration for all involved with the operation of Camp Victory.

- Camp Victory Golf Carts must be signed out by a responsible adult, who will agree to assume full responsibility for its safe and appropriate operation at all times.
- Golf Cart drivers must be at least 18 years of age.
- Keys will be removed from all carts at all times.
- Appropriate uses of Golf Carts are limited to the following:
  1. Transport of campers, when medically necessary, by an authorized adult.
  2. Transport of heavy or bulky materials within the confines of the camp by an authorized adult.
  3. For night security by an authorized adult.
- When not required for authorized use, carts must be returned to the Site Director. They will be stored in a locked facility at the Staff Quarters Building.
- Golf Carts are not to be used for “joy riding.”

### **Hot Tub Policy**

- Never enter the hot tub without permission from the Camp Director.
- Campers under 18 must also have their parent’s permission to use the hot tub.
- Never use the hot tub by yourself — always have a buddy in the tub or on the porch.
- Limit 6 in the hot tub at one time.
- Maximum time in the hot tub for ages 10 and up: 20 minutes.
- Maximum time in the hot tub for ages 9 and under: 10 minutes.
- Long hair must be pulled back and put on top of your head.
- No cutoff shorts allowed in the hot tub.

### **Severe Weather Policy**

In case of an official severe weather alert from the National Weather Service such as high wind or tornado warnings, campers and volunteers are to gather immediately in the Med Shed or the Bath House. CampEmerge Camp Directors must account for all campers and volunteers. All must stay in the Med Shed or Bath House until the formal “all clear” is sounded.

### **What to Pack (The Overnighter Version)**

#### ***For Sleeping***

- Pillow (for each person)

- \_\_\_ Pillowcase (for each person)
- \_\_\_ Set of sheets: 1 top & 1 bottom (for each person)
- \_\_\_ Warm blanket (for each person) *or*
- \_\_\_ Sleeping bag (for each person)
- \_\_\_ Pajamas / Sleepwear (warm!)

***For Washing***

- \_\_\_ Soap, bar or liquid
- \_\_\_ Shampoo
- \_\_\_ Hairbrush
- \_\_\_ Toothbrush
- \_\_\_ Toothpaste
- \_\_\_ Deodorant (if needed)
- \_\_\_ Plastic bag or bucket to carry stuff to bath house
- \_\_\_ Washcloths
- \_\_\_ Bath towels (2 per person)
- \_\_\_ Pool towels (2 per person)

***For Wearing (for each person for 2 days)***

- \_\_\_ Underwear
- \_\_\_ Socks
- \_\_\_ Shorts
- \_\_\_ Long pants
- \_\_\_ Hot weather shirt
- \_\_\_ Cool weather shirt
- \_\_\_ Bathing suit
- \_\_\_ Sweatshirt
- \_\_\_ Light jacket
- \_\_\_ Rain slicker or poncho
- \_\_\_ Sneakers
- \_\_\_ Flip flops or rubber shoes for pool & bath house
- \_\_\_ Water shoes (or old shoes for walking in creek)
- \_\_\_ Closed shoes (tie or velcro closure) no open toe sandals for climbing wall
- \_\_\_ Laundry bag

***For Comfort and Health***

- \_\_\_ Flashlight with fresh batteries
- \_\_\_ Sunscreen
- \_\_\_ Insect repellent
- \_\_\_ Hat for the sun
- \_\_\_ Battery alarm clock
- \_\_\_ Medicines as needed
- \_\_\_ Sunglasses, Eyeglasses (& case) or Contacts (with cases and all solutions)

***For Fun***

- Sports stuff (frisbees, baseball gloves, etc.)
- Camera and film, or disposable camera
- Bandana
- Books, magazines or cards for free time
- Games your family likes
- Gameboy and games (if it helps calm your child)
- Videotapes/DVD (we'll have a VCR/DVD set up in our Med Shed "Calming Room")
- Special foods if your family will need them (Pack in container with your name, for placement in designated refrigerator)

***Pack your things in a suitcase, duffel bag, a crate, or a laundry basket.***

***Label EVERYTHING!***

*Please do NOT bring:*

- Valuables
- Candles
- Fireworks
- Lighters
- Dangerous stuff

**What to Pack (The Day Camp Version)**

***For Washing***

- Soap, bar or liquid
- Shampoo
- Hairbrush
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant (if needed)
- Plastic bag or bucket to carry stuff to bath house
- Washcloths
- Bath towels (2 per person)
- Pool towels (2 per person)

***For Wearing (consider bringing spares!)***

- Underwear
- Socks
- Shorts
- Long pants
- Hot weather shirt
- Cool weather shirt
- Bathing suit

- \_\_\_ Sweatshirt
- \_\_\_ Light jacket
- \_\_\_ Rain slicker or poncho
- \_\_\_ Sneakers
- \_\_\_ Flip flops or rubber shoes for pool & bath house
- \_\_\_ Water shoes (or old shoes for creek walking)
- \_\_\_ Closed shoes (tie or velcro closure) no open toe sandals for climbing wall
- \_\_\_ Laundry bag

***For Fun***

- \_\_\_ Sports stuff (frisbees, baseball gloves, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Camera and film, or disposable camera
- \_\_\_ Bandana
- \_\_\_ Books, magazines or cards for free time
- \_\_\_ Games your family likes
- \_\_\_ Gameboy and games (if it helps calm your child)
- \_\_\_ Videotapes/DVD (we'll have a VCR/DVD set up in our Med Shed "Calming Room")
- \_\_\_ Special foods if your family will need them (Pack in container with your name, for placement in designated refrigerator )

***For Comfort and Health***

- \_\_\_ Flashlight with fresh batteries
- \_\_\_ Sunscreen
- \_\_\_ Insect repellent
- \_\_\_ Hat for the sun
- \_\_\_ Medicines as needed
- \_\_\_ Sunglasses, Eyeglasses (& case) or Contacts (with cases and all solutions)

***Pack your things in a suitcase, duffel bag, a crate, or a laundry basket.***

***Label EVERYTHING!***

*Please do NOT bring:*

- Valuables
- Candles
- Fireworks
- Lighters
- Dangerous stuff