

New American Camp Association Survey Demonstrates Camps Can Operate Safely

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Summer 2020 survey confirms safety and offers hope for children to rebuild necessary social and emotional connections through camp experiences this summer.

Martinsville, IN — (March 9, 2021) — A new American Camp Association (ACA) [study](#) of 486 camps that served 90,000 campers reports that only 30 campers had confirmed COVID-19 cases in 2020. This is a direct result of the summer camp industry's focus on developing leading-edge child safety standards from the earliest days of the pandemic. Camp directors were able to offer crucial childcare and essential experiences for many children and families when they needed it most. "The science demonstrates that camps that have implemented strict, layered mitigation strategies — including masking, cohorting, physical distancing, cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, proper handwashing, and respiratory etiquette — have been able to safely operate in person," said Tom Rosenberg, president and CEO of ACA.

The new ACA survey results provide hope for campers — with evidence that COVID-19 camp cases can be contained and minimized when facilities are prepared with effective mitigation strategies. When camps follow the rigorous scientific approach outlined in the [Field Guide for Camps on Implementation of CDC Guidance](#), camps can operate safely and successfully.

The survey screened 90,000 campers from 486 camps that ran in 2020 and found only 102 total COVID-19 cases identified (less than 1 percent of campers and camp staff). Other highlights from the [research](#) that offer evidence of camp success include:

- Out of those 486 camps, only 74 camps experienced at least one COVID case (30 campers and 72 staff).
- Camps consistently implemented strategies for quarantining, contact tracing, sanitization practices, and cohorting, reporting that they successfully mitigated cases from spreading.
- The study from summer 2020 suggests camps that reported consistent use of nonpharmaceutical interventions also reported lowest incidence of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.

"This summer is looking hopeful!" said Gregg Morrow of UltraCamp, an ACA member and industry leader. "Registration has already opened for many camps, and spots are filling up fast. We're excited for camps to provide kids a space to learn and grow together again this summer."

As the pandemic continues to evolve and we learn more from researchers and scientists, the ACA will continually update the Field Guide — and the camp community — with the latest and most accurate scientific research and practices. March 2 brought the release of "[Model State Guidelines for Overnight Camps](#)", and in April, ACA will release additional resources for camps based on research to understand children's summertime activity participation specific to summer 2020, and how this changed from expected participation due to COVID-19.

"Summer camps provide the optimal context for kids to practice social-emotional learning (SEL). After such an isolating and traumatic year of disruption and loss, the SEL outcomes that result from camp experiences will help young people prepare to thrive in school this fall," said Rosenberg.

For low-income households, the negative impacts of the pandemic are particularly significant. In addition, many BIPOC families and children are struggling with access to remote-learning technology, causing a higher likelihood of academic failure. However, we know summertime

experiences can help to overcome learning deficits. Decades of camp research have proven that the skills learned at camp support academic performance and are at the core of college and career readiness. The American Rescue Plan (current legislation in Congress) is focused on introducing more equitable access to immersive summer learning opportunities right now.

"Last summer's mitigation practices highlight the necessary foundation for a successful 2021 camp season. Our new research demonstrates that children can be with their friends and counselors and take a break from technology this summer. In fact, camp provides critical support for children as they recover from the challenging effects of the pandemic in a safe environment away from home." Rosenberg said.

[Infographic: 2020 CampCounts Report](#)

[Infographic: Swiss Cheese Respiratory Virus Defense](#)

About American Camp Association

The American Camp Association® (ACA) is a national organization serving the more than 15,000 year-round and summer camps in the US who annually serve 26 million campers. ACA is committed to collaborating with those who believe in quality camp and outdoor experiences for children, youth, and adults. ACA provides advocacy, evidence-based education, and professional development, and is the only independent national accrediting body for the organized camp experience. ACA accredits more than 2,400 diverse US camps. ACA Accreditation provides public evidence of a camp's voluntary commitment to the health, safety, risk management, and overall well-being of campers and staff. For more information, visit ACAamps.org or call 800-428-2267.