



## Mental, Emotional, Social Health (MESH)

The camping industry in general has had an increased focus on mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) issues since COVID. These issues have become so prevalent in our society that camp professionals world wide are making these a top priority. The following ACA articles [“MESH Essential Eligibility Criteria: Creating a Recipe for Camper Success” by Diane Tyrrell, CCD, MAEd](#) and the [ACA’s “Assessment of a Camper’s Behavior of Concern”](#) are guiding points that we encourage our families to review so that we can to work together with parents and guardians to manage mental, emotional, social health in addition to physical health at camp. **These requirements are not intended to be exclusionary, but to provide a safe and positive environment for both campers and staff members.** Partnering with parents is essential for assessing camper eligibility to give Camp Ton-A-Wandah staff and potential campers (and their parents/guardians) the information needed to make an accurate, objective assessment when deciding if the individual’s abilities are a good fit for camp.

Camp Ton-A-Wandah strives to support, to the best of our ability, campers’ social and emotional well-being so that your camper may have a successful session at camp. We want to create a camp community that is safe, inclusive, and welcoming and that helps build on our core values: curiosity, creativity and community. We understand that campers come to us from different backgrounds, home experiences and history and that these situations may impact behavioral situations as well as social and emotional well-being while at camp.

Camp can lead to a change in typical behaviors as it is considered a new experience and environment for many campers. Guardians should be well aware of the possibility of certain behaviors or situations occurring or presenting themselves while at camp (away from home) as campers tend to become comfortable and willing to share in their new environment. Camp creates connections that encourage strong relationship building and ease of communication, which in some situations may lead to more severe conversations/situations such as suicidal ideation, self-harm, eating disorders, or other mental health struggles and harmful behaviors.

Our staff is trained in a range of pre-season sessions to develop skills and techniques in managing and understanding behavioral, emotional and mental health situations that could arise during camp. As our first point of contact with our campers, they are trained at an appropriate level to support our campers’ individual needs and to bring in additional support, such as our infirmary team, administration and/or outside medical personnel when a situation becomes harmful to the individual, the group or when it cannot be resolved.

Please understand that we will work through situations that may arise to the best of our ability and connect guardians as appropriate, depending on the scope of the situation and the individual camper’s needs. Our camp team holds a range of compassion and expertise in certain areas, **but we are not mental health professionals nor social workers.** In the case that a behavioral or mental health situation creates a need for 1-1 support, we will develop a plan with the guardian to find resolution. Should any MESH issues arise during your camper’s stay which exceed our ability to serve your camper or should a camper present a danger to herself or others, our camp nurses or administration will contact the guardian and request the guardian to pick up their camper from camp. The guardian will be asked to work with us to create an exit plan for their camper.

As such, using ACA guidelines as a framework and the above information, if you have any concerns or would like to discuss specific needs your camper needs to thrive at Camp Ton-A-Wandah, you may contact our Camp Director to confidentially determine our ability to provide those needs. It is very important to remember, we are limited in our ability to provide rehabilitative or therapeutic programming and therefore, we must create a plan that works best for both camp and our camp families.