

# Parent Handbook



Camp Otyokwah  
Summer Camp – Butler, OH

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## WHAT IS THE PARENT HANDBOOK?

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We understand that sending your child to a camp is a big decision. For over 70 years, we've been entrusted by parents to take care of their kids and foster their spiritual growth in an atmosphere of fun, safety, acceptance and care. This handbook is intended to help parents learn about and become comfortable with Camp Otyokwah. We've gathered tons of camp procedure information into one convenient booklet. We've included information that many have specifically asked for, as well as some that you may have never thought to ask for. It's all about you, your kids and your comfort. Our goal is to make sure you are confident in Camp Otyokwah's ability to care for and nurture your child.

If you'd like more information after reading this booklet, or if you'd just like to talk to a real person at Camp Otyokwah, feel free to contact us. Office: 419-883-3854 Ext. 0 Email: [info@otyokwah.org](mailto:info@otyokwah.org)

## OUR STORY

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Otyokwah Camp and Retreat Center began in June 1947 under the foresight and leadership of the Churches of God, General Conference. Its purpose has been to provide the setting and facility for fellowship, nurture, and ministry to people of all ages.

Over the years at Otyokwah Camp and Retreat Center, many people have come to know Christ, been baptized, made friends, had enjoyable times, and made many memories. With a program based on biblical principles, many campers have been led to a relationship with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Summer camping ministry has consistently been an instrument to reach young lives with the importance of personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

## MISSION, VISION and VALUES

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Camp Otyokwah aspires to be a resource to families and provide innovative year-round experiences to help build faith in young people. We seek to fulfill this through our mission which is facilitate life-changing experiences that encourage young people to personally grow and have fun while connecting with God, staff, and friends.

In addition to our mission, we hold a number of values that influence the way we think and do camp:

- We desire **life change** for ourselves and others through a **Christ-centered** message of love, forgiveness and hope.
- We are passionate about doing ministry in the context of personal, caring **relationships** and close community.
- We are committed to delivering unique, exciting **fun** experiences.

## ACCREDITATION

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We engage multiple licensing agencies, consultants, partners and vendors in areas ranging from medical and emergency procedures to food service and staff training. Our Summer Camp is a member of the Christian Camp and Conference Association.

## INVESTMENT IN CAMPERS

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Everything we do is for the kids. And everything we do is intentional. We've purposefully designed camp to accommodate the varying needs of campers of different ages. All of these considerations create a customized experience for each Otyokwah camper.

## INVESTMENT IN STAFF

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Our counselling staff receive training to meet the behavioral, spiritual and activity needs of our campers. The primary purpose of the counsellor is to build relationships with campers and foster their spiritual growth. Counselors emphasize the importance of teamwork, safety and respect, and build a culture of inclusion throughout the week. To accomplish these goals effectively, they are on duty and with their groups the entire time they are at camp outside of a short staff meeting each day when they are under the supervision of the program staff. Our program staff receive special in-depth training in order to facilitate activities for children. Our lifeguards are certified by the Red Cross and also have CPR/First Aid certification.

Our counsellor to camper ratio is 1:5. Including all other activity, support and full-time staff, our overall Summer Camp staff-to-camper ratio is 1:3. In part because of our program design and our low ratios, our counsellors get to know each child. You'll see these relationships in action when you pick up your child(ren).

## SAFETY

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### EQUIPMENT AND ACTIVITY SAFETY

Each activity area has trained staff who is responsible for that specific activity. They are responsible in running the activity, conducting debriefs, keeping track of equipment use and pulling any worn equipment from service. Trained staff inspect all elements and equipment, including ropes, carabiners, and boats each time prior to use. In addition, safety checks include:

- High adventure activities inspected annually by Universal Ropes Courses, llc. (MI), an independent, certified high adventure vendor member.
- Archery equipment is maintained by our program manager who has years of archery experience.
- Waterfront equipment and boats are inspected and repaired regularly by our program manager.

### PERSONAL SAFETY

In order to protect children, our policy prohibits any staff person from being alone in a private location with a camper. If a one-on-one conversation is necessary between a staff member and a camper, it will always be in public view of other people. Our staff is easily identifiable. Visitors are required to check-in with the office.

## IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

A signal system allows instant communication with all campers and staff in the event of an emergency. Staff monitor weather radar and we move staff and campers to severe weather shelters when there is an immediate threat of severe weather. Staff are trained in our Emergency Action Plan, which covers scenarios like severe weather, fire, and medical emergencies. The focus is on accounting for and protecting campers in these situations. Our lead staff are connected via radios/cell phones. Our Summer Camp nurse is trained to respond to emergencies 24/7. Our lifeguards are certified by the Red Cross and also have CPR/First Aid certification.

## BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

All counsellors are trained in our behavior management and anti-bullying policy. If a child causes a disturbance, that child is removed from the situation and there is a very caring conversation about a change in behavior. We partner with the camper to come up with a solution that works for everyone, grace is given and consequences are enforced, if necessary. If there is no change in the camper's behavior, the camper's parent/guardian will be called to discuss options.

## STAFF

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### SELECTION

We strive to find staff members who are spiritually, mentally and emotionally mature to ensure that not only is your child in good hands, but in good hearts. Each paid staff member has been interviewed, reference checked, and background checked before they set foot on the property. Our volunteers are people we have a personal relationship with and most are past campers. They also follow an application procedure with reference checks and a background check.

### HIRING PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

Our staff selection process leads us to the best people. Our interview process covers where applicants are in their spiritual walk, maturity of faith, experience working with kids, and overall competencies for the job. Once hired, every staff will have a background check covering criminal history. We also require three positive non-family references. All staff complete sexual abuse awareness training as part of the hiring process.

### COMPENSATION

Research has shown that best practices in the spiritual formation of children and youth include involvement with multiple-generations of Christians. Our staff teams are a blend of paid and volunteer staff with a variety of ages. We find this brings a great combination of wisdom from Christian adults with the energy of younger Christian adults.

### STAFF TRAINING

Our paid and volunteer staff are trained in camper care, safety protocols, child protection, and conflict management.

Camper Care – focuses on camper behavior management, how to deal with bullying, how to help with homesickness, and making sure that every camper gets individual attention.

Safety Protocols – covers training in scenarios like severe weather, fire, medical emergency and intruder on site.

Child Protection – focuses on two aspects of child protection: prevention and how to report suspected abuse. Prevention of abuse at camp includes what is and is not appropriate.

First Aid Certification – Program staff are certified in first aid through the Red Cross.

## PROGRAM STAFF TRAINING

Program staff receive training specific to all program areas with an emphasis on safety, proper use of equipment, engaging campers and effective debriefs. In some high-risk areas, certification by a national industry association is required.

## LEADERSHIP STAFF TRAINING

Leadership staff oversee cabin areas, activities, or have specialized functions at camp. Their main job is to oversee counselors, support and activity staff, ensuring that those staff have all the resources they need to deliver an exceptional Otyokwah experience for all campers.

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Our volunteers receive similar abbreviated training but are not required to have first aid training.

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

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### HOW TO REGISTER

We encourage parents to register are done online at [www.otyokwah.org/summer-camp/register](http://www.otyokwah.org/summer-camp/register).

Registration opens on January 1. Paper registration forms can also be mailed in. Should you need assistance during registration, please contact us at 419-883-3854 x 0 or [info@otyokwah.org](mailto:info@otyokwah.org) and we will be happy to help.

### REQUEST A CABIN MATE

During the registration process you will have the opportunity to request one cabin mate for your child's Summer Camp week. We know campers want to be with their friends. We are happy to guarantee one mutual request for cabin mate for your camper provided they are similar ages and of the same gender. Please do not list multiple names. It is best if you can confirm with the friend's parent prior to registration to avoid disappointment at check-in.

### PAYMENT OPTIONS

Camper registrations must include full payment of camp fee and be received by the deadline date.

Methods of payment include:

- Credit card, through the online registration, or
- Check mailed to camp.

### CANCELLATION POLICY

All refunds are subject to a \$50 non-refundable administration fee. The Executive Director makes the final decision as to who qualifies for refunds. Refunds are not granted for inclement weather, for a child sent home for any reason, or if a parent/guardian withdraws the camper early from the session.

Cancellations must be made in writing (mail or email).

## WAIT LIST PROCEDURE

When any of the camp programs reach their capacity, we will create a wait list. This wait list is created on a first come, first served basis. You will be contacted when a spot becomes available.

## FINANCIAL AID

The Pop Tewell Campership Fund is available to assist families who would like to have their children attend summer camp but need financial help. Call 419-883-3854 or email [info@otyokwah.org](mailto:info@otyokwah.org) for a campership request form.

# SUMMER CAMP

## CAMPER HEALTH

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Our counselors are trained to make sure your child is eating enough, staying hydrated and applying sunscreen. We require that you send sunscreen with your child. Our staff will ensure it is applied regularly. We also encourage campers to bring a water bottle to camp to stay properly hydrated. There is water accessible around the property. On especially hot days, we will take extra care to ensure kids stay hydrated. Our kitchen is familiar with special diets and food allergies. If your child has specific dietary needs, please let us know and we will make proper arrangements for your child. An additional charge may apply.

## MEDICAL CARE AT SUMMER CAMP

We depend upon volunteer Registered Nurses for Summer Camp sessions. The nurse responds to emergencies, distributes medications and provides basic first aid care for our campers and staff.

All medications need to be turned in to the nurse in the original containers during check-in.

The parent/guardian will be consulted at check-in to determine if a camper's epi-pen or inhaler needs to remain with the camper or nurse's station.

During the camp week, campers will go with their counselor to the nurse's station to get their medication at the designated time.

We contact parents/guardians when:

- A camper has significant bumps, bruises or cuts with the potential for scarring, especially on the face,
- There is something out of the ordinary (ie. seizure/accident),
- A camper has had an exposure to a contagious disease, bug or parasite,
- A camper is sent off-site for professional medical treatment,
- Any other concerning medical issue staff deems necessary to communicate with parents.



# PREPARING FOR SUMMER CAMP

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## PRIOR TO CHECK-IN

- Your balance must be paid in full prior to arrival.
- Report any changes in address, email or phone number for your family or your emergency contacts.
- At any time you can sign into your account to view and print your statement / receipt.

## PACKING GUIDELINES FOR SUMMER CAMP

- We recommend two bags only - a suitcase for clothing/shoes/toiletries, and a large duffle bag for your camper's sleeping bag/bedding/pillow.
- When getting sleeping bags out of storage, if you put them in a clothes dryer on high heat for 30 minutes, it will kill any bugs or eggs that may have made a home there over the winter months.
- Place toiletries in a plastic bag or kit that makes it easy to travel to the showers. This also reduces the chance of spilling.
- Make sure your camper's name is on all items. Unlabeled lost items will be donated to charity throughout the summer.
- Pack together with your camper. This allows your camper to know where everything is and to develop a sense of responsibility.
- We recommend packing some plastic bags for dirty/wet laundry.
- Please bring any medications in their original packaging and submit them to the nurse at check-in. Please do not pack medications in your camper's luggage.
- Make your bags visually distinctive. Add something brightly colored to your bags. This makes it easier for you to spot them at pick up, and prevents other people from taking your bags by mistake. Distinctively marked suitcases and duffel bags are easier to find if they are misplaced.
- Identification tags on your bags is important (inside too is helpful).

## WHAT TO PACK FOR SUMMER CAMP

Please label everything with your camper's first and last name:

- pajamas, underwear and extra socks
- camp clothes
- jacket/sweatshirt, rainwear
- modest swimsuit (i.e. tankini, one piece)
- beach towel and sunscreen
- towel, washcloth, toiletries, comb or brush
- sleeping bag/bedding/pillow
- water bottle
- insect repellent
- Bible
- notebook, pen/pencil
- flashlight
- extra shoes
- special medicines and supplies
- optional - camera (as cell phones are not permitted)

## WHAT NOT TO PACK

If brought to camp, these items can be claimed by the parent/guardian from the camp office at check-out:

- valuables
- cell phones, gaming devices, iPods or mp3 players, radios, CD players, etc.
- silly string
- fireworks
- squirt guns/balloons
- weapons including pocket knives
- lighters
- illegal substances (if brought to camp, will be confiscated and disposed of, not returned)

## SENDING MAIL TO YOUR CAMPER

Campers love receiving mail when they are at camp. Camper mail can be left at the check-in table for delivery on the day(s) you indicate. If you prefer postal mail, put your camper's name and camp program name and send it to Camp Otyokwah 3380 Tugend Rd. Butler, OH 44822. Mail is often delivered during a meal. You can include small gifts and food if you'd like.

## CHECK-IN AT SUMMER CAMP

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Check-in starts Sunday at 3:00 PM at Hopewell Hall. Exceptions are as follows:

- For our Pioneer Camp arriving on a Thursday, check-in starts at 3:00 PM

All balances must be paid prior to arrival. At check-in we will make sure all camper forms are collected and completed, and medication is dropped off. If your child registered to receive a gift card promotion, you will receive the gift card at check-in to visit the camp store. You will also get to meet your child's counselors.

## CAMP STORE

The camp store will be open for parents, campers and visitors to purchase Camp Otyokwah merchandise at check-in and at check-out. There are low-cost souvenir items as well as Camp Otyokwah attire. Forms of payment are cash, check, and credit card. Promotional gift cards given at check-in can be redeemed at this time.

## CHECK-OUT DAY

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Check-out time is 11:00 AM on Saturday at Hopewell Hall. Camper should be on the road by noon.

Without a note, only the people who are listed as authorized on the registration form will be able to pick up the child. Please notify the office in advance to update permissions should something arise during the week. You will need to bring photo ID with you for the check-out process. Our staff will be available to answer any of your questions.

## EARLY PICKUP

Should it be necessary for you to pick your camper up early, please notify the office as soon as possible. You will report to the camp office upon arrival. Please remember to bring your photo ID.

# LIFE AT SUMMER CAMP

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## A SAMPLE DAY AT SUMMER CAMP

### Morning:

Breakfast

Cabin Clean-up

Morning Activities or Classes

Worship

### Afternoon:

Lunch

Cabin Rest Time

Afternoon Recreation

Snack Shack

Swim Time

### Evening:

Supper

Evening Games or Activity

Vesper Worship

Campfire

Ready for bed

Cabin debrief

Lights out