



# Congregational Coordinator Handbook

## The Day Camp Team

- You, the congregational coordinator
- erika page, the Crossways Director of Day Camp
- Congregational adult and youth volunteers
- Crossways summer camp coordinator
- Crossways summer counselors

Ongoing communication among this team will be essential for the week to run smoothly. Because we understand how overwhelming this can be, we want to make sure you are comfortable with your role prior to the Day Camp week. The Coordinator Handbook will serve just that purpose. Find important policies and standards for working with campers and running a Crossways Day Camp. Please take the time to read through the handbook now and a few more times as your day camp session nears.

## Introduction to Day Camp

Day Camp is a weeklong program held in your congregation for children finishing 1st through 6th grade. Day Camp is a unique blend of outdoor ministry and congregational ministry with crafts, music, worship, games, Bible study, fellowship, and recreation.

**The purpose of Day Camp** is to provide your congregation with a quality Christian experience for youth in your congregation. Both camps and congregations can have a dynamic impact on the faith development of children. Crossways' Day Camp partners with you to provide enthusiasm, energy, curriculum, and program ideas. Day camp supplements your year-round Christian education program and the faith development of your congregation's families and children.

**The strength of Day Camp** is the partnership between camp staff and the congregation's volunteers. Camp staff are caring, committed young adults who are trained to lead Bible studies, worship, music, recreation, crafts and building community. Their enthusiasm, energy, curriculum and program ideas are important to the success of the Day Camp week. On the other hand congregational volunteers provide important continuity to the children. The relationships the congregational volunteers develop at Day Camp will be beneficial to the children year-round.

## The Schedule

Most parts of Day Camp are able to be customized to meet your congregation's needs. A default/typical schedule follows.

### Sunday Volunteer Meeting

Please schedule a meeting **after 5 pm on Sunday** for Crossways staff and all volunteers from your congregation working with the day camp. This meeting allows for camp staff to meet the Congregational Coordinator and volunteers, to make final preparations, establish communication, and make specific assignments.

### Day Camp

Most congregations run Day Camp 9 am to 3 pm Monday through Thursday, and 9 am-noon on Friday.

Rotational schedule - At one time one age group does Bible study, one age group does Arts & Crafts, and the last age group does Recreation. Then, during the next rotations the groups switch activities.

8:30 am	Staff & Volunteers meet for planning and devotions
9:00	Morning Worship
9:30	Rotation 1 - Bible Study - Recreation/Music- Arts & Crafts/Nature
10:15	Snack
10:30	Rotation 2
11:15	Rotation 3
12:00	Lunch
12:30 pm	Quiet Time/Rest
1:00	Afternoon Activity
2:30	Afternoon Closing Worship
3:00	Staff & Volunteer De-Briefing Meeting

### Evenings

In addition to their day-time work the camp staff are available three nights of the week to participate in congregational events with junior high, senior high or family gatherings.

## Program Elements Description

### **Morning Worship**

Each day begins with a time to introduce the daily theme through use of scripture, song, drama, puppets, prayer, etc.

### **Bible Study**

The Bible Study and week's theme will unfold in small groups led by Crossways staff with the help of adult and youth volunteers from the congregation. Experiential learning is stressed.

### **Music**

Music is an integral part of the Day Camp program. Crossways encourages you to incorporate music into worship as well as provide it as one of the daily activity sessions.

### **Recreation**

Fun, non-competitive, outdoor games appropriate to each age.

### **Arts & Crafts and Nature Activities**

The campers make something each day that ties to the daily theme and provides them an opportunity to bring Day Camp home to their families.

### **Lunch**

Each day children bring a sack lunch for the noon meal. The congregation provides lunches for the camp staff.

### **Rest/Story Time**

Quiet time after lunch may be used to review what the campers learned during the day or stories and videos may be used to encourage quiet time.

### **Afternoon Closing Worship**

Each day ends with a time to review the daily theme through use of scripture, song, prayer, drama, and camper participation.

### **Afternoon Activities**

Each afternoon there is a 1½ hour time frame for an Afternoon Activity. We rely on your connections with your community. Three of the four afternoons the congregation is responsible for making activity arrangements. During the afternoon activity camp staff will actively participate and support the program. For example, the congregation makes arrangements with a local nursing home to do some singing and passing out cards. The congregation should schedule a day, a time, transportation (walking or driving) and the specific activity. Then, during the afternoon activity, Crossways staff will lead the children – teaching songs to sing at the nursing home, rehearsing, helping the children make cards to pass out at the nursing home.

Arrangements for three out of four afternoons should be made by the congregation. The fourth afternoon activity is typically WaterDay led by the counselors.

Some ideas that have worked well are listed below.

- Service Projects - Campers can clean up the park, sing at a nursing home or make craft projects to give away, paint garbage cans, help with a local food shelter, visit shut-ins, do yard-work for elderly members of the congregation, etc.
- Field Trips - For extra opportunities to learn.... trips to parks, hikes, training facilities, museums or nearby nature centers. Tried and true trips include libraries, children's museums, fire and police stations, etc.
- Recreation - Swimming at a nearby pool (a certified Lifeguard must be present), bowling, and skating are all popular Day Camp events.
- Special Guests – Bring the field trip to you. Bring in local people, tap into the gifts of your congregation. A naturalist could talk or bring in an animal. The Forest Service has environmental education specialists to work with children. A special craft program, history program, or musical

event works well. Storytellers, police liaison officers and firefighters keep kids attention while they learn too.

**Transportation to and from afternoon activity** is the responsibility of the church. The church needs to provide insurance for any transportation. Any trip away from the day camp site must be specifically mentioned in the permission slips or separate permission slips must be provided. Staff provide their own transportation, but are not permitted to transport campers.

## Custom Fit your Day Camp

Each congregation is different and has special needs. Day Camp can be custom fit to meet your congregations' needs. I am happy to meet with you well in advance to work out a custom schedule to better serve you. Some common problems and possible solutions follow.

### **Lots of our kids are busy with summer school.**

Change the time that Day Camp is held. Consider an afternoon to evening program with dinner included. Camp staff take time off in the morning.

### **We have lots of jr. high and sr. high youth who want to participate.**

Use the Split Day Camp model. Involve more age groups. Hold day camp for 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders from 9 am to noon, Monday through Friday and hold a "Night Camp" from 7-9 pm for 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Camp staff take time off mid-day.

### **We can't get more than 15 or 20 kids to participate.**

Partner with another congregation (Lutheran or other) or another organization and sponsor Day Camp together. The cost as well as the work is distributed among more people.

### **We have special needs campers.**

Enrolling campers with special needs is encouraged! Day camp is a wonderful experience for all youth. One additional adult volunteer from the congregation is needed for each child who has special needs. Christian love and concern will go a long way, but you must do some prep work for all to succeed. Speak with the parent of the child to gather tips on how to include the child in programming, both mentally and physically. Take time to orient the adult volunteer to their role. Camp staff are not able to lead an age group **and** shadow a special needs camper.

### **We have 50 campers.**

Large congregations are encouraged to offer a Crossways Day Camp. The biggest challenge is providing enough adult leadership and supervision for the children. Even with large numbers we expect that a 1:8 adult to camper ratio will be upheld. Typically this means finding more congregational adults to volunteer in a cabin group. When our onsite numbers allow it, we may be able to provide another counselor or two to help meet the needs of your congregation. To meet the 1:8 ratio you have three choices:

- 1) Camp staff lead large cabin groups with one to two well qualified adult volunteers from your congregation. Pro: congregational adults need not learn the curriculum material. Con: large groups of 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders are hard to manage and often require more discipline because individual attention is lacking.
- 2) Camp staff lead a specific program area (bible study, recreation, arts & crafts, or nature). Adult volunteers relate to one cabin group and their needs. Cabin groups rotate through each program area. For example, Erin the counselor will lead recreation. Throughout the day each cabin group will meet with her for a one hour rotation. Pro: Camp staff can excel at their area. Con: Camp staff do not have an opportunity to get to know campers on a personal level.
- 3) Each camp staff leads a cabin group of 8 to 10 children. Qualified adult volunteers lead the remaining cabin groups of 8 to 10 children. Leading involves following the bible study and arts and crafts curriculum. Pro: all campers receive adequate leadership and supervision. Con: some campers will not have a Crossways counselor as their leader. Some/many children will be saddened by this loss.

## Expectations of Volunteers

The best way to gather volunteers is to define their role. Many gifted volunteers are over-used and under-appreciated, consequently they never volunteer again...or worse yet, they volunteer out of guilt. Use the following expectations to invite people to volunteer their gifts. Working with children can be very rewarding – give your congregation the opportunity.

### Congregational Coordinator

- Is present at all times during the week of Day Camp
- Serves as liaison between Crossways and the local congregation working with the Crossways Day Camp Director year round and the summer camp coordinator during the week
- Is interested in building relationships with youth of the congregation and even more excited about continuing the relationships after Day Camp
- Is organized
- Is excited about the opportunity Day Camp offers the church and community
- Carefully chooses adult and youth volunteers for their team
- Orients, trains and communicates the philosophies and policies of Day Camp to the adult and youth volunteers
- Leads the Sunday planning meeting between summer counselors and congregational volunteers

### Adult Volunteers

- Are interested in building relationships with youth of the congregation and even more excited about continuing the relationships after Day Camp
- Are carefully chosen for their gifts of working with children, faith, and patience
- Understand the philosophies and policies of Day Camp
- Attend the Sunday planning meeting prior to day camp with camp staff
- Work with the camp staff to implement the program and provide camper supervision at a minimum 1:8 adult to camper ratio
- Are assigned to a cabin group to participate in all aspects of programming and build relationships

### Youth Volunteers

- Are carefully chosen for their gifts of working with children, faith, maturity, patience, and helpfulness. Do not make a blanket invitation to youth groups to “come and help”.
- Are, at minimum, entering **10<sup>th</sup> grade** and work with age groups that are at least 4 grades younger than themselves
- Are interested in building relationships with youth of the congregation and even more excited about continuing the relationships after Day Camp
- Attend the Sunday planning meeting prior to day camp with camp staff
- Are trained in the policies and philosophies of Day Camp and what is expected of them. A training curriculum is provided by Crossways to be used in the weeks prior to Day Camp by the local congregation
- Are assigned to a cabin group to participate in all aspects of programming and build relationships

### Host Families

- Are chosen for their hospitality and desire to build a relationship with the counselors.
- Each counselor housed in their home should have their own sleeping space.
- The counselors may be housed in the same room given that they are of the same gender
- Counselors should **not** be housed in the same room as one or more of your children
- Environmental allergies are on the rise. Most counselors prefer a home free of smoke. Often cats and dogs are problems for some counselors

## Planning Committee Checklist

Completed	Date to Complete:	Responsibilities to be Completed
Site		
		Is church the main site used? If not, where will the main site be?
		Write emergency procedures in accordance with the guidelines submitted
		Complete the emergency telephone sheet
		Post the emergency telephone sheet
		Meet safety and risk management standards

Volunteers		
		Recruit planning committee members
		Select a Congregational Coordinator
		Recruit adult volunteers – one per cabin group - to meet a minimum 1:8 ratio adult to camper – including camp staff
		Recruit youth volunteers that are entering 10 <sup>th</sup> grade or older– one per cabin group
		Train youth volunteers
		Assign volunteers to bring the daily snack
		Set time and place for the Sunday Planning Meeting
		Notify adult volunteers, youth volunteers, and camp staff of the Sunday Planning Mtg time and place (after 5 pm on Sunday)

Camp Staff		
		Arrange housing for the camp counselors – free of smoke & pets
		Arrange sack lunches for camp counselors
		Arrange evening meals for camp counselors

Registration		
		Create individual registration forms
		Create Health History Form and Medical Release
		Does each child have a completed registration form on site?
		Does each child have a completed Health History and Medical Release Form on site?
		Decide how and when you will receive money from each camper

Afternoon Activities		
		Choose activities
		Create permission slips for off-site activities
		Provide for transportation for off-site activities
		Choose guest speakers
		Name someone to be in charge of safety for each off site field trip

Publicity		
		Decide on types of publicity for Day Camp
		Assign publicity to a volunteer
		Print full color posters & flyers at Kinko's
		Decorate area of church to promote Day Camp
		Include Day Camp in your church bulletin
		Do a "temple talk" regarding Day Camp