

Hello,

I am so glad you are considering applying to join our Summer Staff team for the 2021 season as a paid staff member or LIT! Summer 2021 will be like no other as we "honor tradition and embrace innovation" by making necessary modifications to our staffing structure, program schedule & curriculum, and other systems around camp in order to operate a resident camp in a time when the coronavirus will most likely still be a large part of our lives. I want to be open with you. We do not have everything figured out. The virus will require our year-round leadership staff to make modifications until the last moment to guarantee our camp systems align with the CDC and local public health department guidelines.

For summer 2021 to be successful, we will need a strong, dedicated, and FLEXIBLE staff willing to be a positive and productive part of the process. I am hopeful you will be that person. As you consider working at Camp Ondessonk this summer and what position(s) you want to apply for this season, I want to share what I know at this point.

- Traditional & Mini Camp units will have a capacity of 24 campers instead of 32 campers.
- We are creating program schedules, content, and staffing within the constructs of a "cohort" summer camp model. A cohort is a group of campers and staff that spend the session together and do not mix with other cohorts.
- In a cohort model of summer camp, Activity Heads & Service Areas will live unattached from the unit. Unit staff members will live in a unit with campers and be cross-trained in three or more areas of the operation. It will be vital that you read the job descriptions before applying.
- Activities during the day will either be 45 minutes or 90 minutes, except for the All-Day Nature Exploration. There will be 10 minutes built into the schedule for travel and disinfection between each activity. This is a change from the recent norm of 75 minutes for activities.
- LITs will be assigned to live in a unit during their contracted time and will receive specialized training in each of the four activity "areas of focus".
- CITs will focus their program on leadership growth, theoretical counselor skills, and activity skills. To protect the cohort model, CITs will not be assigned to a unit.
- A new time-off system will be implemented to allow staff to take necessary breaks for health and self-care. To minimize the possibility of viral transmission during time off, staff will be required to wear masks and remain physically distanced from those not in their cohort.
- Campers, staff, and volunteers will undergo daily health checks.
- Meals will be delivered to a pre-determined location for staff and campers to enjoy while in their cohort.
- Campers will have assigned shower houses and shower times throughout the week.
- Staff will have assigned shower houses and will shower when their schedule allows.
- Mask wearing will be a part of the Camp Ondessonk summer experience in 2021. Though our plans are not complete, we know that staff, volunteers, and campers will be required to wear masks for portions (or all, depending upon guidance and conditions) of each day during summer camp.

- Summer camp is contingent on the state of Illinois allowing overnight camps to operate in 2021.
- These changes and others to come will, in theory, allow camp to continue operating in the event that a cohorted group of campers and staff is sent home due to a positive test or outbreak within that cohort. We cannot do this unless the staff enforces and follow these changes. If hired, your diligence may make the difference between a partial shutdown and a full shutdown.
- Hundreds of residential summer camps operated in 2020 without experiencing coronavirus transmission. The protocols and procedures summarized above are modelled after the experiences of those “pioneer” camps. We are working to learn from their success. Having said that, the highly contagious nature of this virus means that we can do everything right and still encounter community spread. Nonetheless, we will strive to do everything right.

As Abraham Lincoln said in a message to Congress, "The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew."

Once selected, this summer’s staff will be asked to rise to the challenges of a changing program. Like all worthwhile endeavors, our success will be largely determined by our attitudes and commitment.

Staff applications will be available by mid-December. It is my hope that you will submit one now that you understand some of the adaptations we must make in order to operate during these challenging times.

Sincerely,



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