

HOW TO CHOOSE A SUMMER CAMP FOR YOUR CHILD

Summertime is almost here, so it is time to start thinking about choosing a summer camp for your child. How can you ensure that you choose a qualified and safe environment? Here are several important tips to help you make the right decision.



The type of camp

In the face of so many choices, the first criteria is to choose the type of camp. Are you looking for a day camp or a camp where your child will be expected to stay for at least a week?

In the latter case, you must ask yourself if your child has the maturity to handle this type of situation.

Are there specialized camps geared towards your child's likes: theatre, science, learning a new language etc. Listen carefully to your child's wishes.

Confirm that the camp is accredited by the A.C.Q.

L'Association des camps du Quebec website is a great starting point. In order to earn accreditation by the Quebec Camp Association, camps must comply with up to 60 best-practice industry standards relating to camper health, safety and program matters important to a camp's operation. To learn if a camp is a member of the Quebec Camp Association, consult their website at www.camps.qc.ca/en

Visit the camp site

As much as an accreditation with the A.C.Q is reassuring, if possible, visit the camp site and speak with the Director in person. Bring your child along for the visit and once on-site, carefully observe your child's reaction.

Examine the environment

Is the area well cared for, clean and safe? Is the equipment in good condition? Is the noise level acceptable?

Speak with the camp personnel on location

Are the camp counselors warm, patient and dynamic? Are they able to communicate effectively with you? Are they adequately trained?

Inquire about the camp's programming and daily schedule

Are the activities varied and stimulating? Are there daily opportunities for outdoor play? What is on the menu for lunch and snacks? How do staff intervene with children who cry or are upset, children with behavior problems or who have health issues? What is the camp's policy when a child is sick or there is an emergency?

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Ask about the safety rules in place

Does the camp perform a systematic police background check before hiring staff? Have all the staff received First Aid training? What is the camper-to-counselor ratio? Does the camp have a policy and procedure system in place regarding appropriate behavior and interactions between employees and the children under their care? What is the proper procedure for picking up your child at the end of the day?

If you are unable to visit the camp in person

It may not always be possible to visit a camp in person. In this case, it is recommended that you schedule a phone call to talk with the Director and ask him about his experiences and philosophies. Sometimes, the tone used by the speaker, along with the quality of his replies, combined with your gut feeling can help inspire confidence or not. Recommendations from friends are also very valuable as well as references from past attendees. And remember to always trust your instincts!

About sexual abuse

It is important to speak with your child about secrets. Teach him the difference between a good and bad touch and make sure that he knows he has the right to say **NO!** to anyone that approaches him or touches him in a way that makes him feel scared, uncomfortable or confused. Explain to your child that no one should touch parts of the body that would be covered by a bathing suit. This includes both children and adults.



HAVE A SAFE SUMMER!