



## **Summer Camp, Choose Safety**

Thoughts of summer time generally conjure up images of sun-filled days. But, when it comes to finding a summer camp for school aged children or toddlers, some parents are overcome by anxiety. Many working families are faced with a child care void and will be seeking full-time supervision for their children.

Others will be looking to find a place to enhance a specific skill or interest that their child has demonstrated. Some may want to let their child explore their independence in an overnight setting.

For the brave, it is a patchwork of all of the above.

Often, parents unknowingly make the assumption that all camps are regulated and operating by safety guidelines to protect their children. Unfortunately, many in Georgia are not. Additionally, we know from experience that summer time can hold the biggest risk and highest injury rates. It stands to reason that the more active children are, the more vulnerable they are to bumps and bruises.

That's why we believe that parents should be aware that not all camps are licensed child care programs which adhere to state mandated rules for health, safety and supervision. Hundreds of camps across the state operate without any state oversight by the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) or accreditation from the American Camping Association (ACA).

## **Licensed Camps Focus On Safety.**

- Background checks, fingerprinting are required; no person with a criminal history is employed.
- A lead teacher or camp counselor must have a Child Development Associates Credential, Technical Certificate of Credit in School Age and Youth Care or an Associate Degree in Early Childhood or Childcare.
- Teachers, counselors must be at least 18 years of age.
- At least half of the staff is CPR/First Aid trained and at least one trained counselor must be on hand wherever children are present.
- The maximum counselor/child ratio for children age 6 and older is 1 to 25; ratios for water safety are 1:15 for children who can swim and 1:16 for non swimmers.
- Meals and snacks must meet USDA nutritional guidelines and children and staff are required to use proper hand washing and sanitary practices.
- Equipment and toys are inspected to be safe, clean and must be free from hazards.
- Bus drivers must be at least 18 years old, have current CPR and First Aid certification and all vehicles undergo annual safety inspections and are equipped with proper safety restraints as mandated by the National Highway Safety and Federal Transit Administrations.
- Emergency medical information required on every camper.
- Licensed programs are subject to unannounced visits by state inspectors at least twice a year.

### **Finding a licensed or accredited camp**

- Licensed Centers - [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov)
- Accredited Camps - [www.acacamps.org](http://www.acacamps.org)
- Exempt Camps - [www.decal.ga.gov/childcareservices/ExemptDayCampPrograms](http://www.decal.ga.gov/childcareservices/ExemptDayCampPrograms)