



Camp Policies and Procedures

Revised December 30, 2024

Introduction

The mission of the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully. AuSM seeks to enhance the lives of all who are a part of the Minnesota autism community, with a fundamental commitment to advocacy, education, support, collaboration, and community building.

AuSM camps serve autistic children and adults of all abilities and can usually accommodate the support needs of all campers. Camp programs are planned and operated utilizing the most promising practices for supporting autistic people, including low camper-to-staff ratios, succinct and direct expectations, visual schedules, verbal notice of upcoming transitions, sensory accommodations, camper choice, and adaptive programming. All camp staff participates in comprehensive annual training that includes in-depth information about autism, proactive behavior management and support strategies, and the individual campers that they will be working with.

AuSM Camps

Camp Discovery

Camp Discovery is an overnight camp with a 1:4 staff-to-camper ratio. To attend, campers must be independent in activities of daily living, such as dressing, toileting, and showering. Campers must be willing to stay with a small group during activities. Camp Discovery is held at True Friends Camp Courage in Maple Lake, Minnesota.

Camp Hand in Hand

Camp Hand in Hand is an overnight camp with a 1:1 staff-to-camper ratio. We welcome and serve campers of all abilities but are unable to provide medical care. If your camper has significant medical issues, please contact us to determine whether Camp Hand in Hand will be able to meet your camper's needs. Camp Hand in Hand is held at Camp Knutson in Crosslake, Minnesota.

Working at Camp

Working at AuSM Summer Camps is a unique and rewarding opportunity for teachers, nurses, social workers, therapists, PCAs, paraprofessionals, students, service providers, siblings, and friends who want to support this amazing community. All camp staff must be over 18 years of age and undergo training before camp begins.

AuSM will post available summer camp staff positions on our website by January 1st each year. Interested candidates, including returning staff, must apply. All candidates will be interviewed by the Director of Camp Programs. AuSM will conduct a background check and/or reference checks on all prospective employees. All job offers are contingent upon clearance of such background and/or reference checks as applicable. Offers will be withdrawn if any of the above conditions are not satisfied.

Camp staff that work back-to-back weeks can stay at camp between sessions. Staff may leave the camp property when off duty if no campers remain on site. All staff must attend staff training before each session.

Registration and Payment Policies

Membership

To apply to an AuSM camp, a camper must be a current member of AuSM. Individual and household memberships apply. Members may then complete the Summer Camp Application. Any camper whose membership will expire before camp begins will automatically have that membership renewed for an additional year and the cost will be added to the camper fees due.

Application and Registration

All applicants are waitlisted at the time of application and placed in a random lottery to be conducted at the end of the application period on February 14, 2025. Applicants must complete the entire application and corresponding registration materials to be considered for the lottery. Results will be announced on March 1, 2025.

Waitlists

All applicants are placed on the waiting list until the lottery is complete. After the lottery, applicants who remain on the waitlist will be informed and contacted if a spot becomes available. People who apply after the lottery has closed will automatically be added to the end of the waiting list.

Confirming Camper Registration

Camper registration is not confirmed until all camper forms have been completed, payment has been scheduled, and AuSM has communicated the camp placement. This includes proof of a state-mandated annual medical exam completed within twelve months of the start of a camper's session. Any camper with an exam date scheduled later than May 30, 2025, must notify AuSM for their camp spot to be held. Incomplete registration materials and insufficient payments may result in registration being canceled.

Payment

By applying and registering for camp, a camper's family agrees to pay all associated costs that may not be covered by a waiver, grant, or scholarship. The cost of the camp must be paid in full upon confirming camper registration. Any registration fee that has been billed by AuSM to a camper's financial management service or other third-party payer represents "full payment for camp" while the fee is being processed. If an "in process" registration fee is denied after a camper has attended the camp, the camper's family will owe the balance due. AuSM will work with the camper and their family to set up a payment plan.

Waivers

Waivers can be applied to the cost of the camp only if the camper's MnCHOICES assessment indicates a need for adaptive social or recreational programming and if the camper's waiver is structured as a Consumer-Directed Community Supports (CDCS). **This is the only type of waiver that can be used to pay for AuSM programs.**

Scholarships

By registering for an AuSM camp, campers agree to pay in full any amount not covered by the third-party payer. Scholarships for AuSM Camps and other programs are available for those who qualify. AuSM seeks to make programs and services available to as many individuals as possible.

Scholarship applications are available on registration forms for activities where scholarships are available. Full and partial scholarships are awarded on a basis of need as funds permit. The scholarship application is part of the payment form.

AuSM's camp scholarship fund is limited. To support camp scholarships, donors may designate any donation to the camp scholarship fund. A small number of our campers have also received partial scholarships or grants from programs in their counties or from tribal nations.

Cancellation and Refunds

If a camper cancels at least two weeks before the start of a camp session, a full refund will be issued. The camp fee will be refunded if a camper becomes sick before camp. Please do not bring campers to camp if they are sick. Full or partial refunds beyond those described above will be determined by AuSM on a case-by-case basis.

Camper Responsibilities and Behavior

Cabin and Bunk Placements

Campers are assigned a bunk when they arrive at camp. Bunk assignments are at the discretion of the camp directors. Only one camper should be in or on a bunk at any given time. Campers should not sit or lay on any other camper's bunk at any time. If two or more campers are together on a bed, they will be asked to move to a common area.

On-site Camp Directors will create a list of the campers and staff assigned to each cabin during each session of camp. Groups and camper assignments will be recorded in CampBrain by the Camp Program Coordinator.

Access for All Genders

People of all gender identities and sexual orientations are welcome at camp. Transgender campers will be housed in the cabin that corresponds to their gender identity. Gender non-conforming campers, or their guardians, may need to specify the cabin assignments that best meet their needs. All campers will be afforded privacy for personal tasks such as changing clothes, showering, and using the restroom. If a camper has not identified themselves to other campers as transgender, staff should not share that information with other campers. Campers and staff will always treat everyone with dignity and will respectfully use preferred names and pronouns.

Packing List and Personal Belongings

A suggested packing list and belongings inventory form is provided to every camper. Campers or guardians should label everything with a permanent marker or adhesive label, and abstain from bringing anything that is expensive, or irreplaceable.



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Camp staff will support campers to inventory belongings before they leave the grounds but cannot be held responsible for a camper's personal belongings being lost or damaged.

Please note that laundry facilities at camp are very limited and can only be used to wash camper clothing on an emergency basis.

Lost and found items from the camp will be taken to the AuSM offices in St. Paul. The owners of identifiably labeled items will be notified. Unclaimed items will be donated after ten days.

Electronics Policy

Camp is an opportunity to disconnect from media and electronics to listen to nature, engage in camp activities, and make social connections with peers. We realize that many autistic campers use electronic games and music to self-regulate and fall asleep. To honor both the spirit of camp and the needs of our campers, we allow some electronics but have firm rules regulating their use. Campers do not have access to Wi-Fi. Electronic devices are to be used in the cabin, during scheduled technology breaks and will be collected by camp staff after each use. Cell phones, handheld gaming devices, iPads, and e-readers are permitted. Laptop computers, console gaming systems, and large electronic devices are not permitted.

No Smoking Policy

Though we strongly discourage the use of tobacco products and vaping at camp, there are designated smoking areas that may be used by adults on a limited basis.

Bullying, alcohol, recreational drugs, and weapons.

None of these belongs at camp. Campers in possession of alcohol, recreational drugs, or weapons will immediately be sent home at their own expense. Bullying and violence will not be tolerated.

Behavioral Challenges at Camp

During a session, any behavior that may make others feel unsafe will be met with staff attempts to redirect camper behavior. If repeated attempts at redirection are unsuccessful, the On-site Camp Directors will assemble a team meeting to determine how to adjust the camper's program, environment, or support. The camper's parent/legal guardian will be notified by the On-site Camp Director, who will tell the guardian about the camper's actions, attempted staff interventions, and options for adapting the camper's program/environment/support. Parents or guardians will be consulted, and family recommendations will be incorporated into the support plan. Any behavior that necessitates a team meeting must be documented as an Incident Report and will be kept in the camper's information file.

Phone Calls

Campers are allowed to call parents and family while they are at camp, particularly if doing so will alleviate anxiety or homesickness. We encourage campers to make these calls between 5:30 PM and 7:30 PM.

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Partner Camp Policies and Procedures

All AuSM camps are offered in conjunction with ACA-certified camp properties. All campers and staff will follow the established policies and procedures at our host facilities. These may include but are not limited to, protocols concerning general camp maintenance, waterfront safety, inclement weather, unusual incidents, active emergencies, and facility use standards.

Health and Safety Policies

Health Forms, Physicals, and Medication Handling

Medical Form

Camper must have a complete Medical Form on file in CampBrain, our camp registration software. This form will remain with a camper's profile year-to-year. Camper must complete medication administration directions in CampBrain. This information will be collected in the registration forms after the lottery has been completed and is not required for the application. Any camper with incomplete registration paperwork is at risk of forfeiting their spot at camp. No camper can be at camp without having a completed Medical Form on file.

Physician's Signature Form

Camper must have a complete Physician's Signature Form as proof that each camper has been examined within the 12 months immediately preceding camp and has been deemed eligible to attend an overnight camp.

Medication Handling

Campers are not permitted to store and self-administer medication at camp. All medications must be administered by the camp nurses, who can only give medications to patients under the orders of a physician. Those orders must be clearly printed on pharmacy packaging. All prescription medications and over-the-counter medications must arrive at camp in their original packaging, with labels intact. Multiple medications should be stored in one or more Ziploc bags labeled with the camper's name, but must remain in their original packaging. Large, bulk packaging is not permitted, nor are weekly pill containers. Prescription medication can be packetized at your pharmacy by request. This can improve safety by ensuring each dose is protected, labeled, and secure.

Supplements and Over-the-Counter Medication

Camp nurses will administer over-the-counter medication that is medically necessary and permitted in writing on the medical form. Camp nurses will not dispense unprescribed vitamins and minerals, except melatonin. Unprescribed supplements interfere with the nurses' capacity to administer prescriptions and tend to campers with medical needs. Please do not send unprescribed supplements to camp. Such products will not be administered.

Personal Care Assistance for Campers

Camp staff will minimize situations in which they are alone with a camper in a non-public area. When helping a camper with personal activities of daily living, camp staff will afford the camper as

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much privacy as possible. Staff should also verbally note the assistance they are providing to ensure clarity about what support is being provided.

Overnight Supervision

Campers and Camp Counselor sleeping areas are adjacent to one another in all cabins. Sleeping attire must be appropriate. At least one Camp Staff will be assigned overnight supervision in each cabin every night. Overnight supervision staff will position themselves in a strategic location and will not sleep until all campers are asleep.

COVID-19 Safety Policies and Procedures

The federal COVID-19 public health emergency declaration ended on May 11, 2023, but COVID-19 continues to represent a danger to people with immunocompromising conditions. The Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) and camp participants should make every effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 at camp. These efforts may include vaccination, face masks, quarantine, testing, etc. These efforts are not mandated but are strongly encouraged.

Camp Testing Procedure

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, we strongly recommend that families, campers, and staff vaccinate themselves for COVID-19 and take precautions such as wearing masks during the week before coming to camp.

Employees and Volunteers

Camp staff will be asked to self-administer a rapid antigen test for COVID-19 upon arrival at camp. AuSM will make tests available on-site. Those with positive test results will be sent home immediately. Staff will re-test before every session.

Campers

Campers are asked to self-administer a rapid antigen test for COVID-19 before arrival at camp. Families and caregivers should assist campers who cannot self-administer a rapid antigen test. AuSM will also make tests available on-site. Campers testing positive for COVID-19 will not be admitted to camp and will receive a full refund for any camp fees.

Mask Use

People with immunocompromising conditions, unvaccinated individuals, and those working closely with them should consider wearing face masks when attending in-person gatherings in any enclosed space. AuSM will make masks available upon request.

Vaccinated Individuals

Fully vaccinated individuals are exempt from requirements to wear face masks and produce negative COVID-19 test results.

Retaliation

The organization prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation against employees who report violations of this policy. This policy is not intended to restrict communications or actions protected or required by state or federal law.

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Modification of Policy

The organization reserves the right to modify this policy at any time in its sole discretion to adapt to changing circumstances and business needs, consistent with its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace.

The Autism Society of Minnesota seeks a safe, fun, and healthy camping season for everyone. If a camper or employee tests positive for COVID-19 in the days before their camp session, please notify the Camp Program Coordinator at 651-647-1083 or camp@ausm.org.

Special Diets and Dietary Restrictions

Each camp employs attentive local cooks who intentionally design the camp menu around foods that are popular amongst campers, and they find gluten-free and vegetarian versions of those same foods for campers with dietary restrictions. Before camp, the campers and their guardians will receive a menu of all items that will be served. If the camper requires alternative foods beyond those, campers and/or guardians should bring alternatives in labeled, heat-and-serve portions which can be dropped off at camp during camper check-in.

Kitchen staff can store the prepared meals in the kitchen and serve them in place of the meal indicated. Each meal substitution must be labeled with the camper's name, day, and time that the meal is to be served. (ex. John Doe, Wednesday Lunch). On a printed copy of the menu, the camper or guardian will indicate which meals they will supplement or replace. Camp Counselors will ensure campers receive these alternative meals from the kitchen staff. AuSM cannot serve any camper who has dietary needs beyond what the camp is offering, and what their family can prepare and provide for kitchen staff to serve.

First Aid

In the event of illness or injury, camp staff will administer first aid and monitor the affected camper. If an illness or injury requires treatment beyond first aid, the camp nurse will seek professional emergency medical care. Camp staff will call that camper's parent, legal guardian, or emergency contact.

If no legal guardian or emergency contact can be reached, the signed medical release included on the Camp Health Form serves as permission to seek necessary emergency care. Licensed local medical providers are granted access to all health records from any provider that may be necessary for accurate diagnosis and treatment, and licensed local medical providers shall determine what tests and treatments are necessary. AuSM, our partners, and our employees are not responsible for any medical expenses that occur in the case of emergency care.

Swimmer's Itch Risks and Treatment

Swimmer's itch, or cercarial dermatitis, appears as a skin rash caused by an allergic reaction to certain microscopic parasites that can be found in shallow water. Swimmer's itch is found throughout the world and is more frequent during the summer months. Most cases of swimmer's itch do not require medical attention.

Before swimming and after applying sunscreen, apply a layer of baby oil gel. This helps keep water droplets from collecting on the skin when getting out of the lake. Thoroughly rinse off immediately after exiting the lake and thoroughly dry off. If campers get swimmer's itch despite using prevention strategies, please know that the itchy rash is usually gone within 7 – 10 days. Benadryl (oral and topical) and hydrocortisone can help with symptoms.

Accident, Injury, and Unusual Incident Reports

In the case of an accident, injury, or unusual incident, the On-site Director will immediately inform the Camp Program Coordinator and complete an incident report form within 24 hours. Incident report forms may be supplemented with written statements by other witnesses. Employee injuries will also require a first report of injury form.

Camper Pick-up

Campers will only be released from camp to a person who has been designated as a trusted adult. If any protective order exists limiting the access of persons known to the camper, please provide the appropriate documentation in advance.

Photo/Video Media Release

By enrolling at and attending camp, campers and/or their legal guardians give their consent to AuSM, Camp Knutson, and True Friends Camp Courage to keep and use photos and videos of the camp participant. Photos and video clips may be used in promotional materials including, but not limited to brochures, fundraising materials, and advertising. Subjects will not receive compensation for their appearance in promotional materials. Any image that shows a camper whose family has denied permission – even if that camper's appearance in the picture is incidental - must be immediately deleted.

During camp, counselors are encouraged to take pictures of campers engaged in camp activities and then forward those images to Cabin Leaders and On-Site Directors who will screen all photos and videos. Images will be shared with families via Cluster, a private, invitation-only, photo-sharing service. At the end of camp, staff will delete all images of campers from any personal devices.

Camp staff may not post any pictures, videos, or information about campers on any social media account. Camp Staff shall not initiate a friend request with a camper regardless of the camper's age. If a camper initiates a friend request with a staff member, that staff member must either decline the request or ask permission from the camper's legal guardian.



Emergencies

When calling 9-1-1, callers may be directed to emergency response dispatch facilities that correspond with the caller's area code. This may cause a delay while callers are redirected to the appropriate authorities. Since the camps serve people from all over Minnesota, it is essential to know the local emergency information. Please refer to the emergency information below when contacting emergency responders.

Camp Discovery Emergency Information

Call 9-1-1

Camp Address (for Emergency Responders):
True Friends Camp Courage
8046 83rd St NW
Maple Lake, MN 55358

Non-emergency numbers:

- Wright County Sheriff: 763-682-1162
- Maple Lake Fire Department: 320-963-5983
- Buffalo Hospital Emergency Department: 763- 682-1212

Camp Hand-in-Hand Emergency Information

Call 9-1-1

Camp Address (for Emergency Responders):
Camp Knutson
11148 Manhattan Point Blvd.
Crosslake, MN 56442

Non-emergency numbers:

- Crosslake Police Department: 218-692-2222
- Crosslake Fire Department: 218-692-2688
- St. Joseph's Medical Center, Brainerd: 218-829- 2861

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