



CAMP AQ GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

2026-2027





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Welcome to Camp AQ!

Thank you for your interest in Camp AQ. We are so excited to welcome your family into our camp family at the Aquatarium! Children will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a combination of indoor and outdoor activities, exploration, and even behind the scenes adventures.

Our Camp AQ Team is excited to host more camps at the Aquatarium from PA Day camp, holiday camp, summer camp, outdoor camp, and teen camp; we have it all! Camp is such a fun and exciting time. To make the most of your child's camp experience, we have created this guide to help you best prepare for the camp season. Please take a look at the guide as it will help ease you through the process and answer some common questions. If you have any question or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at camps@aquatarium.ca.

At Camp AQ, we believe in the limitless potential of every child. Our mission is to inspire, enrich, and create memorable experiences for campers through hands-on activities, exploration of science and nature, and creative play. We want each camper to come home with new skills, new friends, and great stories to share.

Our goals for every camper's experience include:

- Have Fun & Be Active: Enjoy plenty of play and physical activity each day in a positive environment.
- Learn & Explore: Try new activities, be creative, and discover new interests or skills.
- Build Friendships: Develop social skills and make new friends through teamwork and group games.
- Grow Confidence: Demonstrate core values like respect and honesty, take on challenges, and gain independence.
- Feel Safe & Included: Always feel welcome, included, and protected at camp – every camper belongs here!

We are excited to partner with you in making this a wonderful camp season. Thank you for entrusting your child to Camp AQ – let's have an amazing adventure together!



Getting Ready for Camp

Preparing for camp in advance will ensure your child has a smooth and enjoyable experience. Here are some important things to know and do before camp starts:

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

As a parent or guardian, you play a key role in your child's success at camp. We ask that you please:

- **Equip Your Child:** Make sure your camper has the proper clothing, outerwear, and supplies each day (see "What to Bring" below). Weather-appropriate gear is essential for comfort and safety.
- **Communicate with Us:** Provide any information that will help our staff meet your child's needs – for example, health issues, behavioural considerations, or fears. Open communication helps us support your camper best. You can speak to staff at drop-off or email us ahead of time with any concerns.
- **Review Camp Guidelines:** Read through this handbook with your child and ensure you both understand the camp policies and behaviour expectations. By following the procedures outlined here, you help us maintain a safe, fun environment for all.

By preparing your child and staying in touch with our team, you set them up for a fantastic camp experience. We truly value our partnership with parents and guardians in making camp great!

Camper Code of Conduct (Camper's Promise)

Camp AQ is all about respect – for ourselves, for others, and for our environment. We ask each camper to make a simple promise to uphold our camp values:

- **Respect Yourself:** Take care of your own body and feelings. Stay safe, speak up if you need help, and always try your best.
- **Respect Others:** Be kind and inclusive towards fellow campers and staff. Treat everyone as you would like to be treated – no bullying, hurtful language, or discrimination of any kind.
- **Respect the Environment:** Take care of our camp space, equipment, and the natural environment. Keep the Aquatarium and off-site parks clean and safe for all.

These rules are the heart of our camp community. We will discuss them with campers on the first day and remind everyone often. By following this code of conduct, campers help create a friendly, welcoming camp where everyone can have fun and feel secure. Thank you for reinforcing these expectations with your child at home!



Our Staff and Supervision

Your camper is in great hands at Camp AQ. Our camp staff are selected for their friendliness, warmth, and ability to relate to children, as well as their qualifications and professionalism. Each staff member is dedicated to providing a safe, nurturing, and engaging experience for your child. Here's what you can expect from our team:

- **Qualified and Vetted Leaders:** All camp staff undergo thorough background checks, including a Vulnerable Sector Screening. They are required to hold current First Aid and CPR-C certifications. Staff also receive training in child safety, healthy child development, group management, diversity and inclusion, and behaviour support techniques. We regularly evaluate and mentor our staff to ensure high-quality programs for your child.
- **Enthusiastic Role Models:** Our camp staff strive to model good behaviour, empathy, and respect for others and the environment. They bring energy and creativity to camp activities, and they “co-conspire” in play – meaning they actively engage in games, crafts and learning with the campers, not just supervise from the sidelines. We want our staff to inspire campers to participate and try new things by leading with positivity and encouragement.
- **Focus on Safety:** Ensuring the physical and emotional safety of children is our top priority as camp professionals. Staff are vigilant about assessing and managing risks in activities, maintaining ratios, and following emergency procedures (see Health & Safety section). At least one staff member with advanced first aid is always on duty, and a fully stocked first-aid kit is kept accessible at all times. All staff carry a cell phone in case of emergencies.
- **Low Staff-to-Camper Ratios:** We pride ourselves on keeping excellent supervision ratios so that every child gets attention and support. Typically, we have 2 staff per 20 campers (1:10 ratio) for our core camp age group (6–12 years). This meets or exceeds industry standards for day camps. In fact, for certain activities we use even smaller groups – for example, during water activities our maximum ratio is 1:8 to provide extra supervision. Our low ratios allow staff to form close connections with each child and manage the group safely.
- **Inclusive & Supportive Approach:** Every child is unique – our camp staff are trained to be patient, inclusive, and supportive of different needs. They use positive reinforcement and adaptable programming to help all campers succeed. (See Inclusion & Accessibility for more on how we support campers with special requirements.)

By maintaining high standards for staff hiring and training, Camp AQ ensures your child will be cared for by capable and compassionate leaders. We are also proud to follow the best practices set by the Ontario



Camps Association (OCA) for safety, supervision and quality programming. You can relax knowing that your camper will be safe, engaged, and smiling throughout their time with us!

What to Bring to Camp:

Being prepared each day will help your child have a comfortable and active day at camp. Please pack the following items for your camper every day:

- **Nutritious Lunch and Two Snacks:** Campers must bring their own lunch and at least two healthy snacks for our morning and afternoon breaks. We are a peanut/nut-aware facility – all food must be nut-free. Do not pack items that contain nuts or nut products (we will check lunches at drop-off to ensure safety). Please also avoid glass containers.
- **Refillable Water Bottle:** Hydration is very important, especially with active outdoor play. Pack a sturdy, reusable water bottle. We have water refill stations at camp, and we'll remind campers to drink water frequently.
- **Weather-Appropriate Clothing:** Campers are active both indoors and outdoors, so they should dress comfortably for play and according to the weather.
 - **In Summer:** Pack a sun hat, sunscreen (SPF 30+), and lightweight clothing. Include a bathing suit and towel on days with water play (we'll let you know the schedule) – life jackets should be brought with camper on swimming days if needed. Please review our Swim Test Policy. Water shoes or sandals are a good idea for water play or beach walks. Also include running shoes or closed-toe footwear for games (no flip-flops during active play, please).
 - **In Rainy weather:** Send a rain jacket and boots – we don't let a little rain stop the fun, as long as it's safe! We may do indoor activities during heavy downpours or thunderstorms (see Inclement Weather policy), but light rain means puddle jumping.
 - **In Cooler weather (Spring/Fall):** Dress in layers. A sweater or light jacket for mornings, and long pants are recommended.
 - **In Winter (if attending our holiday camp):** Warm coat, snow pants, hat, mittens/gloves, boots – we will go outside for fresh air, snow play or short walks whenever possible. Pack extra dry socks and mitts in case the first pair gets wet.
- **A Complete Change of Clothes:** Accidents, spills, or muddy adventures can happen! Pack at least one full change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) in a labelled plastic bag in your child's backpack. This is important for all ages – even older kids might get soaked in a water activity or



need a fresh shirt after a messy craft. Having dry clothes ready will keep your camper happy and comfortable.

- Backpack: to hold all the above items. Your child will be responsible for keeping their things together, with our help. Please choose a backpack they can carry comfortably.

Please label all items (water bottles, lunch containers, clothing, etc.) with your child's name. This greatly reduces the chance of things getting lost. We will have a Lost & Found bin at camp (see Lost & Found section for retrieval process).

What Not to Bring

For everyone's safety and to prevent lost or damaged items, please do NOT send the following to camp:

- Electronics and Valuables: We strongly encourage camp to be a tech-free zone. Games, music players, tablets, and other electronic devices should be left at home. Campers will be busy playing and interacting with friends and won't need screens. If a camper does bring a phone or device for after-camp use, it must remain off and in their bag during camp hours. If staff see it out, we will remind the camper to put it away or hold it for safekeeping until pick-up. The Aquarium is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged personal electronics or valuables brought to camp, so it's best to leave them at home.
- Toys or Weapons: Personal toys, trading cards, etc., can cause conflicts or may get lost, so we ask you not to bring them. Absolutely no weapons or weapon-like toys (such as play swords, knives, or guns, including Nerf-type guns) are allowed at camp. Possession of real or pretend weapons will result in immediate parent contact and possible removal from the program for the day.
- Money: There is no need for money at camp, as the camp fee covers all activities. Please do not send cash with your child (unless we specifically advise for a special event - Gift Shop Day).

Thank you for helping us maintain a safe environment by adhering to these guidelines. Camp is an opportunity to "unplug" and focus on friends and fun!

Labelling & Lost and Found

Despite best efforts, items do sometimes get misplaced at camp. We maintain a Lost & Found box for any stray clothing, water bottles, etc. Camp Staff will display Lost & Found items at the end of each day during pick-up. If an item belongs to your child, we will return it to them. Please remind your camper to speak up if they recognize something of theirs in the Lost & Found display.



Any unclaimed items will be kept for 2 weeks after the camp session. If your child is missing something, please contact us at camps@aquarium.ca – we can arrange pickup of lost items during our operating hours. After two weeks, unclaimed items may be donated to charity. Labelling all personal items with names greatly helps us reunite lost gear with its owner!

Daily Camp Life & Logistics

Here's an overview of a typical day at Camp AQ and how drop-off/pick-up works. Being familiar with these routines will help your family know what to expect each day.

Camp Hours and Extended Care

Regular camp programming runs from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Drop-off and sign-in occur between 8:45–9:00 each morning, and pick-up/sign-out is at 4:00 p.m. We also offer supervised extended care before and after regular camp hours at no additional cost. Early drop-off begins at 8:15 a.m., and late pick-up runs until 4:45 p.m. to help accommodate parents' schedules. Please note that no formal camp activities occur during extended care – campers may do quiet games, colouring, or free play during these times.

If you will be utilizing Before Care (8:15–8:45) or After Care (4:00–4:45), please let us know in advance if possible (you will have the option to indicate this during registration or contact us at camps@aquarium.ca to have it added to your week. This helps us ensure adequate staffing. If your needs change (e.g. you unexpectedly need to drop off early one day), we will always accommodate your child, but a heads-up is appreciated.

Please ensure your child is picked up by 4:45 p.m. at the latest. Our staff also have end-of-day duties and need to wrap up by 5:00. If you are unavoidably delayed, call us as soon as possible. Repeated late pickups may result in additional fees or loss of after-care privileges, in line with common camp policy.

Drop-Off and Sign-In (Morning)

camp staff member will greet you and your child at the sign-in location (will be emailed to you 1 week out from session). For safety, all campers must be signed in by a parent/guardian (16+ years old) each morning. We will keep record of drop-off time and name of the guardian. If someone else (age 16+) is dropping off, please inform us in advance if possible.

Health Check: Please do not send your child to camp if they are feeling unwell or showing signs of illness (see Illness Policy). If your child woke up with a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, unexplained rashes, or any



contagious illness, they should stay home for the day. We'll happily welcome them back when they're feeling better!

Once signed in, campers will join their group and a camp staff for morning welcome activities. Our staff are experts at helping children with separation anxiety – usually a fun game or new friend will have them engaged in no time!

Late Arrivals: If you arrive after 9:15 and no staff are at the sign-in location, please check in at the Aquatarium front desk and they will contact camp staff of your arrival. It's important that every child is accounted for at camp, so please ensure a staff member knows your child has arrived. If you know in advance that you will be late (e.g., due to an appointment), please email or call to let us know.

Pick-Up and Sign-Out (Afternoon)

Pick-up time is 4:00 p.m. at the same location as drop-off (Aquatarium main entrance), unless otherwise communicated. A staff member will be present with the sign-out sheet by 3:45 p.m. When you or an authorized person arrives to pick up your child, they will need to show photo ID and sign the child out. This is for your child's safety. Please be patient if a staff member asks for your ID; it's an important policy we enforce consistently.

Campers will only be released to individuals listed as authorized pick-ups on your registration form. If you need to have someone else pick up your child who is not on the authorized list, you must notify the Education Manager in writing or by a phone call before pick-up time. We cannot release a child to an unknown or unauthorized person without your consent. If an unexpected person comes to pick up and we have no record of permission, we will call you immediately and keep the child with us until consent is confirmed.

Our Camp Group Leaders may share a quick highlight or let you know if there were any issues. (For more detailed communication practices, see Communication with Families section.)

Early pick-ups will typically be handled at the Aquatarium front desk – we will bring your child from their group to meet you there.

Thank you for your cooperation in following these sign-in/out procedures – they ensure every child is safely accounted for.



A Typical Camp Day Schedule

Every week at Camp AQ is built around a theme. Campers take part in hands-on, interactive activities connected to that theme - think creative building, science and discovery, games, group challenges, and outdoor exploration. While each day follows a familiar rhythm (welcome, activities, outdoor time, snacks, lunch, and wrap-up), the specific activities change daily so campers stay engaged and excited.

During summer camp weeks, programming also includes:

- Ropes Course (scheduled during the week; timing may vary)
- Beach Day / Water-based programming
- Gift Shop visit (purchases optional; families may send a small amount of spending money if they choose)

Note: This schedule is subject to change and may be adjusted for special events, weather, or the specific camp theme. We strive for a mix of indoor and outdoor time – whenever the weather allows, we take activities outside to enjoy the fresh air! Please understand that specific activities can change (we might swap days due to weather or camper interest), but we will ensure a well-rounded camp experience every week.

Day Schedule

8:15-8:45 Before Care Drop-Off

9:00-9:20 Sign-in/Screening

9:20-9:50 Activity #1

9:50-10:00 Snack

10:00-12:00 Outdoor Play

12:00-12:30 Lunch / Free Play

12:30-1:30 Activity #2

1:30-1:45 Snack

1:45-2:45 Activity #3

2:45-3:45 Activity #4

3:45-4:00 Sign-out



4:00-4:45 After Care Pick-Up

Toileting and Hygiene

All campers must be toilet-trained and able to use the washroom independently. Our staff will remind younger children to take regular bathroom breaks and will accompany groups of campers to the restrooms. However, staff do not enter the stalls with campers; children should be able to manage their own clothing and cleaning up. We understand accidents can happen – if a camper has a bathroom accident, our staff will discreetly help them get cleaned up (we keep gloves and extra wipes on hand) and will have them change into their spare clothes. We will inform parents of any such incidents at pick-up. If your child has any special bathroom-related needs or anxieties, please let us know so we can accommodate them.

We place a big emphasis on hygiene and hand-washing throughout the camp day. Camp staff will have all campers wash or sanitize hands: before and after eating, after using the washroom, after messy crafts, after outdoor play, and any time it's needed. We also encourage the campers to “keep the germs away” by coughing into elbows, not sharing water bottles or utensils, and by keeping their hands clean. Our facility has plenty of soap and hand sanitizer available. Drinking water is always available for refilling bottles, and we remind children to drink water often to stay hydrated.

Lunch & Snack Breaks (Lunch + 2 Snacks)

Campers will have two snack breaks and one lunch break each day. Please pack one lunch and two nutritious, ready-to-eat snacks, plus a refillable water bottle.

- Nut-aware facility: Do not send foods containing nuts or products that may contain nuts.
- No sharing: Campers are not permitted to share food or drinks.
- No fridge or microwave: Pack food in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack if needed.
- Enough food for the day: Camp is active—please send portions that will keep your child energized.
- Hydration: Water is available for refills, and camp staff will encourage regular water breaks.
- Hand hygiene: Campers wash hands (or sanitize) before and after eating.



Suggested options: fruit, vegetables, cheese, crackers, yogurt, muffins, whole grain items, and water (or milk/100% fruit juice).

Health & Safety at Camp

Your child's health and safety is our top priority at Camp AQ. We follow strict safety protocols and industry best practices to ensure a safe camp environment, while still allowing campers to enjoy adventurous, active fun. This section details our policies on illness, medications, emergencies, and general risk management.

Illness & Absence Policy

Please keep your child home if they are sick. This helps protect the health of all campers and staff. If your child will be absent due to illness or any other reason, notify us as soon as possible via email (camps@aquarium.ca) or phone (613-342-7946). If a camper is not at camp by 9:20 a.m. and we haven't heard from you, we will attempt to contact you to ensure everything is okay. We do not provide make-up days or refunds for absences due to routine illness (see Refund Policy), but if your child has a serious illness or injury that will keep them out of camp for multiple days, please contact the Education Manager (via contact details above) to discuss possible arrangements.

If a camper becomes ill during the camp day (for example, develops a fever or vomiting), we will phone a parent/guardian to pick them up early. We will make the child comfortable in a quiet area until you arrive. For everyone's well-being, a child who is sick cannot remain at camp. They may return when they have recovered (for fevers, we ask that the child be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning).

If a camper has been exposed to a contagious condition (like strep throat, pink eye, lice, COVID-19, etc.), please inform us so we can discreetly monitor any symptoms in the group and inform other families if needed (we won't reveal your child's identity). We will also notify parents if any significant communicable illness arises among campers, so you can watch for symptoms.

Medication Policy

We understand that some campers may need to take medication during camp hours or may have emergency medications (e.g. EpiPens). Our staff are prepared to assist with medications under strict guidelines:

- **Medication Authorization:** During registration, you will fill out a camp waiver/medical form. On this form, list any medications your child needs to take at camp (including inhalers or EpiPens).



Parents/guardians must provide permission and clear instructions before staff can administer any medication.

- **Original Containers:** All medications (prescription or over the counter) must be sent in their original pharmacy container or packaging, with the child's name and dosage instructions visible. We cannot accept or dispense pills or medicines in unmarked baggies or daily divider cases. For prescription meds, ask your pharmacist for a separate labelled bottle for camp if needed (they can often provide an extra labelled vial with just the doses needed for the week).
- **Instructions:** The medication's label or your doctor's directions should clearly state the dosage and timing. Additionally, please provide a written schedule of when the medication should be given, and any specific administration instructions (e.g. "Give with food," "Use spacer for inhaler," etc.). We will follow your written instructions exactly.
- **Handing Off Meds:** A parent/guardian should hand all medications directly to a staff member at drop-off. Do not send medication in your child's backpack without informing us.
- **Health Conditions:** Please ensure you have fully disclosed any medical conditions, allergies, or special health needs on the camp forms. The more we know, the better we can care for your child. Our camp staff will review all health information prior to the session and will be alerted to any child with serious allergies or concerns.

The Aquatarium team is committed to working with families to meet campers' health needs while at camp. If you have any questions about managing your child's medications or health issues at camp, please contact us before your session – our Education Manager will be happy to make a plan with you.

Allergies and Dietary Restrictions

Camp AQ is a nut-aware camp – all lunches and snacks must be peanut and tree nut free (see "What to Bring" for details). We take allergies very seriously. If your child has an allergy (food, insect sting, etc.), please be sure it's noted on their medical form. We create an "Allergy Alert" list for our staff so they are aware of which campers have allergies and what the allergens are. Staff carrying the emergency contact list will also have allergy info and any emergency action plans on hand.

We enforce a strict no-sharing policy at snack and lunch time – campers are told to only eat/drink what they brought. This prevents accidental exposure to allergens and helps respect dietary needs. Our camp staff will monitor mealtimes.



If your child has dietary restrictions (e.g. vegetarian, no pork, gluten-free), let us know. While campers bring their own food, occasionally we might have treats or cooking activities. We will accommodate dietary needs or provide alternate treats as needed so no one is left out.

All staff are trained in recognizing allergic reactions and using EpiPens. In case of a suspected allergic reaction, we will administer the autoinjector and call 911 immediately, then contact parents.

Your child's safety is our priority – if you have specific concerns about allergies or diet at camp, please discuss them with us. We are happy to make reasonable accommodations to ensure every camper is safe and included.

Sun and Water Safety

We love to take advantage of our waterfront location and sunny summer weather, but we do so with caution and proper safety measures. Sun safety is emphasized daily: all campers should arrive with sunscreen applied, and we will take a sunscreen break 15–20 minutes before going outside for extended periods. If your child needs help applying sunscreen (common for our under-9 campers), a staff member can assist if you have given permission. Our staff wear disposable gloves when applying sunscreen and use a new pair for each child to maintain hygiene. Our preferred sunscreen is spray. We encourage campers to wear hats and sunglasses during outdoor activities to protect from sun exposure. We also try to schedule strenuous outdoor play in the morning and keep to shaded or indoor areas during peak sun (mid-day), especially on very hot days.

For any open water swimming or water-based programming, all campers must complete a swim test (regardless of age). Swim assessments help camp staff understand each camper's swimming ability so we can apply the right safety measures.

Swim Test Requirement: (Created in partnership with the YMCA Lifeguards)

Campers must be able to swim confidently and continuously from the beach to the dock and back, with:

- arms coming out of the water,
- feet kicking,
- and without touching the bottom.
- This swim may be freestyle/forward crawl.

Swim Levels (Wristbands):



Campers will be assigned a wristband level during open water programming:

- Yellow Level (No Lifejacket Required): Camper has passed the swim test and may swim without a lifejacket and access water elements such as the dock (as permitted by the activity plan).
- Red Level (Lifejacket Required): Camper has not passed the swim test and must wear a lifejacket while in the water. Camp staff will ensure the camper is within arm's reach in the water.

Supervision & Safety Notes:

- Swimming will only take place with certified lifeguard supervision.
- Children under 6 must wear a lifejacket.
- Campers and camp staff wear wristbands at all times during water programming, so supervision is clear and consistent.
- Open water swim tests are supervised with two camp staff positioned appropriately (in-water and dock/beach).

Rest assured, water activities are closely monitored and done only when conditions are safe. If at any point a camper is uneasy about the water, they can choose an alternative land-based activity with a counsellor. Safety comes first, and we want water play to be a positive experience for everyone.

Emergency Procedures

We have a detailed Emergency Action Plan in place for Camp AQ, covering scenarios from injuries to fire alarms to severe weather. All staff are trained in emergency response and know their roles if an incident occurs. Here are key points of our emergency protocol:

- Immediate Response: In any emergency situation, the first step is for staff to ensure all campers are safe and accounted for. We will quickly take attendance and move children to a secure area if needed. For example, in a fire alarm, we evacuate to a designated meeting spot outside and perform a headcount.
- First Aid and 911: If there is an injury or medical emergency, our staff will administer appropriate first aid right away. We will designate a staff member to call 911 with clear information if advanced medical help is required. We always have a cell phone and the address/location information ready to give to emergency services. A senior staff or the Education Manager will be notified immediately as well.



- **First Aid Kit Supplies & Permission to Administer:** Camp AQ first aid kits include standard first aid supplies, as well as a few comfort items we have deemed helpful for outdoor programming, including bug spray, Polysporin, aloe, sunscreen (spray), and After Bite. To support camper comfort and safety, camp staff may apply these items when appropriate (for example, sunscreen before outdoor time, or After Bite following an insect bite).
 - **Permission:** By registering, you acknowledge and provide permission for camp staff to administer these non-prescription first aid/comfort items to your camper as needed.
- **Parent Notification:** In the event of any significant emergency (medical or otherwise), we will contact the parent/guardian as soon as it is safe to do so. If a child requires medical treatment beyond minor first aid, you will be called right away – even as we call 911, another staff will be tasked with phoning the emergency contacts on file. For minor bumps and bruises that do not require a doctor, we will inform you at pick-up via an incident note or in person. For anything more serious, expect a call immediately.
- **Inclement Weather Plans:** For forecasted severe weather, we may modify or cancel outdoor activities in advance. For example, if thunderstorms are predicted, our outdoor camp group will operate indoors at the Aquatarium for the day. If storms clear later, we might resume outdoor play cautiously. In heat warnings, we limit time outside and ensure frequent water breaks and indoor cool-off periods. Any decision to change the day's location or schedule due to weather will be communicated to parents (typically via email by 8:00 a.m. or via phone) so you know where your child will be. Always check your email on days calling for extreme weather.

Remember, safety is at the core of our program. We have first aid kits and emergency contact information with us at all times, even when off-site. Our staff are trained to stay calm and follow established procedures to handle emergencies effectively. Camp AQ also partners with the Aquatarium facility's safety team and follows all local fire and safety regulations. By choosing Camp AQ, you are entrusting your child to a program that meets high standards for safety and risk management – a commitment we take very seriously. (As an example, Camp AQ follows many of the standards set by the Ontario Camps Association, a recognized leader in camp safety.) We're proud to provide a safe space for your child to explore and have fun.

Child Protection Policy

Camp AQ and the Aquatarium are committed to the safety and protection of children from abuse or neglect. All camp staff are considered mandated reporters under Ontario law, meaning if we suspect a child is being abused or is in danger, we are required to report it to child protection authorities. Staff are



trained on how to recognize signs of possible abuse and on the proper reporting procedures, in accordance with the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. Our policy can be summarized as follows:

- Staff will document and report any signs or disclosures of abuse or neglect immediately to the Education Manager. Together, we will follow the law in notifying **Children's Aid Society (CAS)** or the appropriate authority.
- We maintain confidentiality and sensitivity during this process. Only those who need to know (Camp management and authorities) will be informed. Parents/guardians will be involved as appropriate, guided by the advice of child protection professionals.
- Our goal is not only to react to signs of abuse, but to create an environment where abuse is prevented. That means our staff always work in pairs or within sight of others when supervising children, and physical contact is limited to appropriate assistance (like helping with a craft, or first aid if injured) or brief, positive encouragement (like a high-five). We do not tolerate any form of harassment, abuse, bullying or neglect at camp, whether between campers or by staff.
- All staff and volunteers must agree to follow our Code of Conduct and child protection guidelines. They receive training in these policies as part of orientation. Any breach of these policies can result in immediate dismissal.

Please know that these measures are in place to ensure camp is a safe and supportive place for your child. If you ever have any concerns regarding your child's safety at camp or a staff member's conduct, contact us immediately. We will investigate all concerns thoroughly. Camp AQ has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse: the well-being of our campers comes first, always.

Inclusion and Accessibility

At Camp AQ, we believe camp is for everyone. We are dedicated to providing a welcoming, inclusive environment where children of all backgrounds and abilities can thrive. Our goal is to remove barriers to participation so that every camper feels valued and supported, in line with principles of dignity, independence, and equal opportunity.

Embracing Diversity

We celebrate the diversity of our camp community. Families come from many different cultures, religions, and family structures, and we encourage campers to share and learn from each other. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are promoted through respecting all persons in speech and action, and absolutely no harassment, racism, or discrimination is tolerated. Campers and staff are expected to treat one another



with understanding and respect for differences. This includes being respectful of different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities.

Bullying or exclusionary behaviour will be addressed immediately (see Behaviour Management). All children deserve to feel they belong, and we actively work to make that happen.

Supporting Different Needs

Camp AQ works hard to support a wide range of needs, and we intentionally maintain small group sizes and strong supervision to help campers succeed. However, Camp AQ is a group-based day camp program, and we are not always able to provide 1:1 support.

To participate successfully, campers must be able to:

- remain safely with the camp group,
- follow camp staff directions with appropriate support and reminders,
- participate without requiring constant 1:1 attention, and
- engage in a way that does not significantly disrupt the program or the safety of others.

If a camper requires ongoing 1:1 supervision or specialized support to participate safely, families are encouraged to contact us before registration so we can discuss options and whether reasonable supports are available for that session. When required supports are not available, we may recommend alternative programming or a pause from camp until participation can be successful within a group setting.

Camp Fit: Camp AQ reserves the right to determine whether our program is an appropriate fit for a camper's needs and the group environment. If we determine we cannot safely or reasonably meet a camper's support needs within our staffing model, we may recommend alternative programming, request additional supports, or require a break from camp.

Our inclusive philosophy is grounded in the belief that every child deserves a safe and enjoyable camp experience. We are continuously learning and improving our inclusion practices, and we welcome conversations with families about how we can best support their child. Camp AQ is committed to being a safe, welcoming place for everyone—regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical ability, gender, and more.

Behaviour Management and Camper Well-Being

We want every camper to feel safe, happy, and respected at Camp AQ. To achieve that, we set clear expectations for behaviour (our Code of Conduct) and use positive strategies to guide children in making



good choices. This section explains how we handle behaviour issues, discipline, and emotional well-being at camp. Our approach is aligned with best practices at leading day camps – focusing on education and restoration rather than punishment, while also taking firm action against serious misconduct.

Positive Behaviour Support

Camp AQ's staff are trained in positive behaviour management techniques. This means we try to catch and encourage good behaviour and use redirecting or problem-solving when minor issues arise. We strive to create a culture where campers understand the reasons behind rules and are involved in making group norms (like coming up with a team name and motto). Some of our strategies include:

- **Setting Clear Expectations:** At the start of camp and each new activity, staff remind campers of the rules (in age-appropriate terms). Visuals or role-play might be used for younger kids to model good behaviour. Consistency is key – all staff enforce rules uniformly, so campers know what to expect.
- **Conflict Resolution:** When conflicts between campers happen (as they naturally will), staff act as mediators. We give each child a chance to voice their feelings and help them find a solution or compromise. Often, just discussing it calmly helps. We encourage campers to apologize and forgive, or at least to agree on how to move forward respectfully. Bullying is not tolerated – any mean-spirited behaviour is addressed immediately by staff.
- **Emotional Support:** We understand that kids have big feelings. If a camper gets upset, frustrated, or has an emotional outburst (e.g. crying after losing a game, or getting angry at a friend), our staff respond with patience. They will take the child aside, ensure they are safe, and help de-escalate the situation. Techniques might include deep breathing, taking a short walk, or using a quiet “chill zone” space to cool down. We validate the child's feelings and once they're calm, discuss better ways to handle those feelings. We want children to know that all feelings are okay – it's what we do with them that matters.

Behaviour Expectations and Consequences

Despite positive practices, there may be times when a camper exhibits inappropriate or unsafe behaviour that needs correcting. Our goal is to teach appropriate behaviour and maintain a safe environment, not to shame or punish. However, campers must understand that certain actions have consequences. We follow a progressive discipline approach:



- **Minor Misbehaviours:** These include things like not following directions, interrupting, being overly silly or mildly disrespectful (e.g. not listening to the camp staff). For minor issues, the response is typically a gentle verbal reminder or redirection. The camp staff will explain what the camper should be doing and why it's important. If needed, we might have the camper take a short break from the activity (sit out for 5 minutes to reset) and then rejoin. We call this a "take a break" rather than a time-out. If the minor misbehaviour repeats frequently in the day, staff will inform the parent at pick-up so we can work together on consistency at home and camp.
- **Moderate Misbehaviours:** These could be repeated minor behaviours that aren't improving, or more disruptive actions like inappropriate language, frequent refusal to participate, or a temper outburst that affects others (throwing an object in anger, for example). In these cases, the response escalates: the Education Manager will be notified and likely will speak with the camper, and parents/guardians will be contacted promptly (especially if the behaviour is impacting the group). The camper might be given a written behaviour plan or goals to work on. Depending on severity, we may ask that the camper be picked up early or even sit out for the remainder of the day if they need time to regroup. We aim to reset the situation and welcome the camper back the next day with a fresh start and clear expectations.
- **Serious Misbehaviours:** These include any dangerous or harmful actions such as physical violence (hitting, biting, fighting), bullying or harassment, running away from the group (leaving camp boundaries without permission), theft or vandalism of property, or any form of discrimination/hate speech. It also includes possession of prohibited items (weapons, drugs, alcohol – though these are extremely rare in a day camp context). For serious incidents, the response is immediate: the camper is removed from the group for safety, and a parent/guardian is contacted to pick up the child without delay. Depending on the incident, the camper may be suspended or expelled from camp. Expulsion (being sent home for the rest of the session or summer) would happen in cases of very severe or repeated incidents, such as intentionally hurting someone, or continued bullying despite interventions. In the event of an expulsion due to behaviour, no refund will be provided for missed days. This is due to staffing and program commitments already in place.

Removing a camper from the program is rare and only used as a last resort. Whenever possible, we work with families to support improvement and consider individual circumstances, while always prioritizing safety.

For transparency, here are a few specific behaviours and how we handle them (as per our internal guidelines):



- Physical Aggression (Hitting/Fighting): Child is immediately separated from others and supervised one-on-one to calm down (if injured, we administer first aid). Parent is called right away to discuss next steps – possibly immediate pick-up if serious. We document the incident. Repeated or serious violence is grounds for suspension/expulsion.
- Bullying or Hate Speech: We do not tolerate bullying, racism, discrimination, or harassment. Camp staff will intervene immediately, document the incident, and contact parents/guardians. Consequences are determined case-by-case, with camper safety and well-being as the priority.
- Running Away/ "Flight Risk": If a camper leaves the group or attempts to run, camp staff will immediately alert leadership and follow our missing camper protocol while ensuring the rest of the group remains supervised. Parents/guardians will be contacted right away if a camper leaves camp boundaries without permission. This is a serious safety concern. Camp staff will use clear, positive reminders and supervision strategies to support the camper in staying with the group. If the behaviour continues and safety cannot be maintained, the camper may be removed from the program and may not be permitted to return.
- Emotional Meltdowns/Threats of Self-Harm: If a camper has an emotional breakdown, cries inconsolably, or makes statements like "I hate myself" or other self-harm remarks, staff will respond with compassion. The child will be gently removed to a quiet space with a staff member who will listen and reassure them. We do not ignore statements of self-harm – our staff will notify the Education Manager and you, the parent/guardian, will be informed that same day of what was heard. Together we can decide if further action is needed.

In every case, we try to use restorative practices – meaning if someone was harmed or something was damaged, the camper should, if possible, take action to make it right (for instance, help rebuild a knocked-down project, or speak an apology to the group). We also talk through incidents with the camper to reflect on better choices. We acknowledge positive changes, too, so campers have the opportunity to improve.

Finally, parent involvement is crucial. We will keep you informed about any behaviour concerns, big or small. If a pattern is emerging, we might request a meeting or call with you to collaborate on strategies. Our experience is that when camp and home work together – sharing insight into what motivates the child or effective techniques – the camper is much more likely to succeed. Please reinforce camp rules at home and let your child know that you support the camp staff. And if you have advice (you know your



child best!), we're eager to hear it. We all share the same goal: to help your child grow, learn, and have a positive camp experience, even if there are a few bumps along the way.

Communication with Families

We believe that keeping parents and guardians informed and involved enhances the camp experience for everyone. We want you to feel connected to your camper's day and confident in our program. We communicate in a few key ways:

Updates During Camp Sessions

- **Daily Highlights:** At pick-up each day, our Camp Group Leaders will share brief highlights or important notes. Minor updates (like small bumps, friendship challenges, or a tough transition) will be shared at pick-up. If a significant incident occurs, families will be contacted sooner as needed.
- **Weekly Preview/Wrap-Up:** At the start of each camp week, families will receive a Week at a Glance outlining theme highlights, special activity days (ex. ropes course, beach day), and reminders about what to bring.
- **Photos and Social Media:** With guardian permission (via the media release during registration), we may take photos during camp activities for private family sharing and/or Aquatarium promotional use. We never post campers' full names publicly. If you do not consent, we will respect that choice.

"Today at a Glance" Camp Feedback Form

To support open and consistent communication, Camp AQ uses a brief feedback form called "Today at a Glance." This helps us share important information when pick-up is busy and ensures families receive clear updates when a camper needs extra support or correction.

- This form is used for significant concerns, such as incidents impacting safety/well-being or persistent rule violations.
- Camp staff will review the form with the guardian at pick-up to discuss what happened and how we can support the camper moving forward.
- The form includes both "Feedback from the Day" and "How to Prepare for Tomorrow."



- Initials are required from the camper, guardian, and camp staff, and the form is photographed for our records once signed.

Our goal is always to partner with families - sharing both successes and concerns - so campers can have safe, positive, and successful days at camp.

How to Reach Us

- Camp Office Phone: The fastest way to get a message to us during the camp day is to call (Each summer camp group will have a contact number). During camp hours (8:00–5:00), a staff member or receptionist will answer. If you call outside camp hours, you can leave a voicemail.
- Email: Non-urgent inquiries can be emailed to camps@aquarium.ca. We check this email daily. For urgent matters (like a change in who's picking up, or if you're stuck in traffic at pick-up time), a phone call is preferable, but you can email as backup. We will reply to confirm the message was received.
- In-Person Chats: At drop-off and pick-up, staff are available for quick check-ins. If you have a question that needs a longer discussion, we can schedule a meeting or phone call.
- Emergencies: If there is an emergency involving your child (medical or behavioural), we will call you. Make sure we have the best numbers to reach you and keep your phone on if you're expecting a call. If we cannot reach the first parent/guardian, we will call the alternate contacts provided. Similarly, if there is a general emergency at camp (for example, a facility issue requiring evacuation), we will send out a text alert or email blast in addition to individual calls. We hope to never need to do this, but we are prepared.

Our communication policy is rooted in transparency and partnership. We want you to know not just the challenges (if any) but also all the wonderful things your child is doing at camp! Never hesitate to reach out with questions or feedback. Families are an essential part of day camp and we want to engage with you openly and promptly. Whether things are going great or something isn't working, please let us know – we will work with you to ensure the best possible camp experience for your child.

Parent Feedback and Visits

You're welcome to share feedback at any time - questions, concerns, or compliments. Contact the Education Manager by phone, email, or in person; we'll respond respectfully and keep matters confidential when needed. If you need to pick up early or see your child urgently, check in at the front desk and camp staff will bring your child to you.



Administrative Policies (Registration, Payments, and Cancellations)

This section covers the more formal policies regarding registration, fees, and cancellations. We strive to be fair and transparent with our policies. Please review these details, as they contain important information about refunds and program changes.

Registration and Payment

All camp registrations are processed through our online portal (<https://www.aquatarium.online/campaq>). Registration must be completed in full before your child attends camp – this includes filling out all required forms (health information, authorized pick-ups, waivers) and making payment. If you have any issues with the online registration or need assistance, contact us at camps@aquatarium.ca.

- **Payment:** Full payment is due at the time of registration to secure your camper's spot. We accept card payments through the portal. If you need to arrange an alternative payment method, please contact us. All payments are processed electronically – we do not accept cash or cheque for camp fees except by special arrangement.
- **Confirmation:** Once registered and paid, you will receive a confirmation email with your receipt and a reminder of your camp dates. We will also send a "Welcome to Camp" information email a week prior to your session start, which will include any last-minute details, what to bring, etc. If you do not receive confirmation or if any details are incorrect, please reach out to us.
- **Age Policy:** Camp AQ programs are designed for specific age ranges (for example, ages 6–11 for our regular camp, with a separate teen leadership program for ages 12–15). The age cutoff date and details will be listed in the program info when you register. Please ensure your child is within the appropriate age group for the camp you select.
- **Group Requests:** If your child has a friend or sibling they wish to be grouped with, you can indicate this in the registration notes. We do our best to honour one mutual friend request if both campers are of similar age and in the same program. However, we cannot guarantee all requests, as we balance groups for size and dynamics. Part of camp is also making new friends! Thank you for understanding.
- **Financial Assistance:** We believe finances should not be a barrier to camp. If you require financial assistance, please inquire about any subsidies available. The Aquatarium, through community partners, may have limited sponsorships for families in need. Check out our Send a Kid to Camp Recipient Form - <https://www.aquatarium.online/subsidies>.



Cancellation and Refund Policy

We understand that sometimes plans change. Our cancellation policy aims to be fair to families while also recognizing the costs and planning required to hold a camp spot for your child. Please submit any cancellation or refund requests in writing to camps@aquarium.ca as soon as possible if you need to cancel a camp registration.

- If you cancel 14 or more days before the camp session start date, you are eligible for a refund of camp fees minus a \$25 administration fee per camper, per session. (This administrative fee helps cover the costs we incur for processing and the likelihood that we may not fill the spot on short notice.)
- If you cancel between 7 and 13 days before the camp start, we will issue a 50% refund of the camp fees (or 50% credit, your choice). The remaining amount is retained because by that point we have committed staffing and materials for your child.
- If you cancel less than 7 days before the start of the camp session, or withdraw after the session has begun, no refund will be issued. Last-minute cancellations are very difficult to fill and still incur the full cost for us.
- Refund timelines reflect staffing, scheduling, and materials commitments required to operate camp safely.
- Exception – Medical: Cancellations due to a camper's illness or medical emergency (e.g. broken bone, doctor-verified illness) will be evaluated case by case. In such cases, we will attempt to provide a partial refund or credit toward a future program, depending on circumstances.
- Program Cancellation: If we (Camp AQ) must cancel a camp program or specific camp day due to unforeseen circumstances on our end – for instance, low enrollment, facility issues, or public health directives – you will receive a full refund for the affected days. We reserve the right to cancel a camp session if enrollment numbers are not sufficient to run a high-quality program. This decision would typically be made at least a week prior to the session, and we would notify you immediately and offer either a refund or a transfer to another session. Fortunately, cancellations on our end are rare.
- Behaviour Dismissal: If a camper is sent home permanently from camp due to behavioural issues or violating camp rules (see Behaviour Management), no refund will be given for the remainder of the camp. This is standard policy at most camps, as a deterrent and because we cannot fill that spot on short notice. We only take this action in serious cases, as described earlier. Similarly, if a parent/guardian chooses to withdraw a child mid-session for personal reasons, we cannot typically provide a refund for the unused days.



- Transfers: If you wish to transfer your child's enrollment to a different week or program, contact us as soon as possible. Transfers are subject to space availability. We do not charge a fee for a first transfer request made well in advance (at least 2 weeks prior) and within the same camp season, as long as the fee for the new session is equal or greater.

All refunds approved will be processed back to the original payment method. Please allow up to 2–3 weeks for processing, especially during the busy summer period. If you paid by credit card, the refund will appear on your statement (timing depends on your bank). If we are issuing a credit for future use, we will provide a code or confirmation email for that.

To avoid any charges, if you know you need to cancel, please try to let us know as early as possible (the earlier, the better chances we can fill your spot or adjust resources). Cancelling well ahead also ensures you don't miss the refund window.

If you have any questions about refunds or need clarification on the policy, please contact the Education Manager. We know life happens – we'll work with you as much as we can while being fair to our commitments.

Terms and Conditions Acknowledgement

By registering for Camp AQ, you acknowledge certain terms and conditions on our registration waiver. These include agreeing to follow camp policies (such as those in this handbook), granting permission for your child to participate in all programmed activities (including off-site walks within the community), and acknowledging the inherent risks of camp activities. While we work diligently to minimize risks, camp by nature involves active play, outdoor adventures, and more, so scrapes and bumps might happen. We expect campers and guardians to understand this and not hold the Aquatarium/Camp AQ liable for ordinary incidents. (Of course, negligence on our part is a different matter we carry insurance and always prioritize safety.)

You also agreed to the Aquatarium's privacy policy regarding personal information. In short, any personal data collected (health info, contact info, etc.) is used only for camp purposes and kept confidential. We do not share your data with third parties except as required for safety (for instance, providing necessary info to medical personnel in an emergency). We store registration records securely. If you have questions about privacy, please refer to the Aquatarium's privacy statement or ask us.



Finally, by allowing your child to attend, you give consent for them to fully engage in camp life, which includes following the instructions of camp staff, cooperating in group activities, and being photographed (unless you opted out). We expect parents to support the camp rules and help ensure a positive experience for all.

Thank you for reading through these details. They help ensure everyone is on the same page and that Camp AQ runs smoothly and safely. We truly look forward to an amazing camp experience with your family. Should you need any further information or clarification on any topic in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact us.