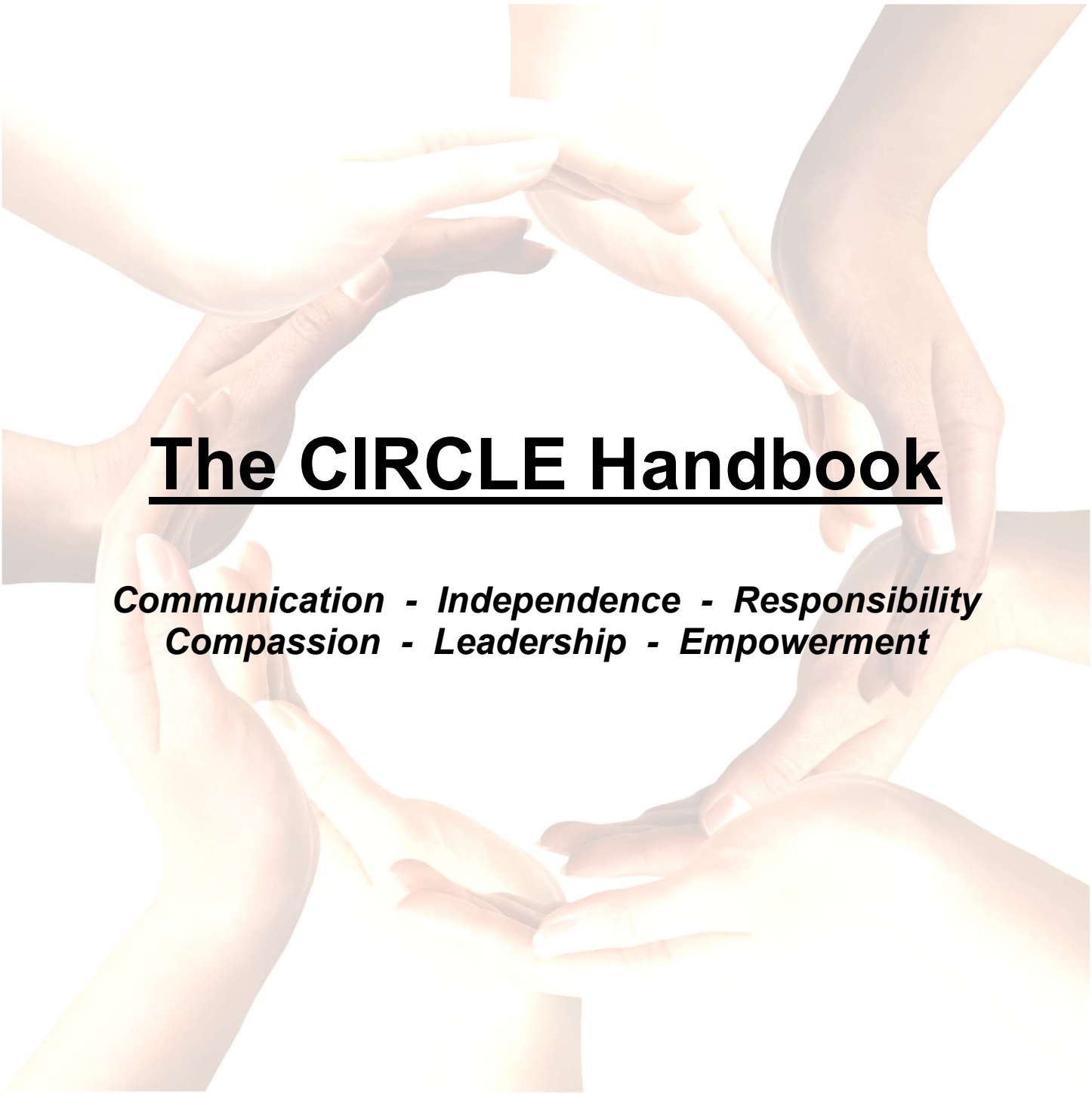


The CIRCLE Handbook

Communication - Independence - Responsibility
Compassion - Leadership - Empowerment

Welcome to the Camp Augusta CIRCLE Program!

Applicants and parents, thank you so much for your interest in CIRCLE. The goal of this handbook is to give a holistic view of the CIRCLE program. It is important that both of you read this, and consider your role in the program.

This handbook is written with a few primary purposes:

- To provide a clear vision of the mission of CIRCLE.
- To provide insight into the scope of the program, including potential time commitments during the application process and typical pre-camp work.
- To explain some of the key Camp Augusta philosophies that are the focus of the CIRCLE program, as well as the entire camp community.
- To illuminate our (the CIRCLE counselors) expectations of the program, beginning with the application process.
- To highlight our excitement for working with your child and our hopes for them, whether through CIRCLE or otherwise!

The sections of the handbook include:

- Section 1: What is CIRCLE?
- Section 2: CIRCLE Timeline & Time Commitments
- Section 3: Tuition & Participation in CIRCLE
- Section 4: The Application Process
- Section 5: Pre-Camp Work for CIRCLE
- Section 6: CIRCLE at Camp - 3 weeks in the Summer
- Section 7: Our Expectation of CIRCLErs
- Section 8: Basic Rubric of for Applicants of the CIRCLE Program

Section 1: What is CIRCLE?

So, what does 'CIRCLE' refer to, exactly? CIRCLE is an acronym that identifies six core concepts that run throughout our programming, including the application, pre-camp work, and at-camp portions.

The first "C" stands for *communication*, perhaps the single most important tenet of camp and of CIRCLE. We will work on developing healthy and intentional communication practices throughout the program – this includes during the application process, the pre-camp work phase, and the actual 3 weeks that we spend together at Camp Augusta. Specific topics covered include non-violent communication (NVC) and clean communication.

The "I" stands for *independence*. You will find that the CIRCLE leaders will work directly with each CIRCLE participant from the very beginning. We certainly hope that parents and any other interested parties will be involved and invested in the CIRCLEr's experience, though *it is crucial that each participant is self-motivated to be a part of the program*. Our vision for parent participation is one in which CIRCLErs and their families communicate with each other regularly about the various aspects of the programs, including parts that are exciting or challenging. The CIRCLE leaders welcome questions, ideas, and concerns from anyone at anytime, ideally as soon as possible to the first occurrence of any particular concern.

The "R" stands for *responsibility*. This concept fits tightly with our intention to foster independence in the CIRCLErs, as greater independence and privilege necessitates a stronger sense of responsibility. Every CIRCLEr who demonstrates readiness and commitment will culminate their experience in the program with a sessin as a co-counselor in a cabin for younger campers at Camp Augusta. To be clear, co-counseling is not the primary focus of CIRCLE, but rather one avenue that we explore for CIRCLErs to begin putting their growing understanding of communication and leadership styles to work in a specific application.

The second "C" in the acronym stands for *compassion*. Our entire Camp Augusta community is founded on principles of compassion and fostering genuine understanding and connection between people.

The "L" stands for *leadership*, and is the central core of the whole program – CIRCLE is a teen leadership program. This includes both leadership of self and leadership in the world. Our hope is to help each CIRCLEr develop their individual leadership strengths and style through self-exploration and growth, as well as service to the Camp Augusta community, specifically the younger campers. Upon completion, we hope for CIRCLErs to feel ready to take their leadership skills beyond camp to the many other aspects of their lives.

Finally, the "E" stands for *empowerment*. CIRCLE gives participants opportunities to find the sources of their own personal motivation and to practice putting their ideals into action. Through the extensive training and reflection process, CIRCLErs will, ideally, gain confidence in the ability that they each possess to have a positive impact on their own lives and the lives of others beyond their time with the program.

Section 2: CIRCLE Timeline & Time Commitments

The timeline for the CIRCLE program covers approximately 9 months. For year-specific dates that correspond to each step of the CIRCLE program, please see the **Key Dates for CIRCLE** document on the CIRCLE webpage. Generally speaking:

- The application process begins mid-October.
- The application process concludes in early- to mid-December, with notification of acceptance into the CIRCLE program following immediately.
- The Pre-Camp CIRCLE Correspondence Course work will begin in early-January. The first half of the CIRCLE tuition is due in mid-January and the second half of tuition is due at the end of February.
- There will be various assignments throughout the months of January, February, March, April, and May. Pre-camp work will conclude in mid-June at the latest.
- CIRCLErs spend 3 weeks at Camp Augusta during the summer. The specific dates of CIRCLE at-camp sessions is year-specific and will be announced during the application process.

We are very aware of the busy schedules that most CIRCLErs' keep throughout the school year. As such, we work hard to make sure that assignments during the pre-camp phase of the program are spaced appropriately and that CIRCLErs have ample notice about due dates. We typically plan and distribute the pre-camp work schedule a month of more in advance, so that CIRCLErs have the opportunity to plan and manage their time accordingly.

A rough estimate of the amount of time we expect CIRCLErs to dedicate to the CIRCLE program during the pre-camp phase (post-applications) is **8 to 20 hours per month (about 2-5 hours per week)**, depending upon the specific assignments for each month and the work habits of each CIRCLEr. CIRCLE counselors are always happy to work with CIRCLErs on time management skills and expect that *CIRCLErs will communicate any struggles to keep up at least a week prior to an approaching due date*.

Consistently missing due dates for assignments, especially when paired with a lack of communication, is a reason for the CIRCLE counselors to reconsider a CIRCLEr's participation in the program for the current year and will be taken on a case-by-case basis. We have developed a few specific guidelines to manage these kinds of circumstances and invite you to read about them in full below. Our hope is to have all CIRCLE participants (and their parents) on the same page from the Day 1.

Section 3: Tuition & Participation in CIRCLE

The tuition for the pre-camp and at-camp portions of camp are billed and considered separately. Admittance into the at-camp portion of CIRCLE is conditional upon the participant's presence, persistence, and performance in the pre-camp portion of CIRCLE. Applicants will receive consistent and regular feedback on the quality of their work through assignment reviews, individual calls, and emails. **Admission to the pre-camp portion does not necessarily guarantee continuation to the at-camp portion:** if assignments are habitually late, of poor quality effort, or the participant drops out of consistent communication, there will be an intervention process to see if the CIRCLEr will things turn around - first, directly with the teen, and then including the parents in the conversation. CIRCLE is an active, participant-driven program - the effort to communicate and find solutions must come from the teen, not the parents.

If, for whatever reason, the teen is not 'doing CIRCLE,' there will be a process for exiting CIRCLE during or after the pre-camp portion, and not attending the three weeks at camp. This has happened before, and we expect it to happen again. We understand that if this happens it does not reflect on the teen's character nor their ability to succeed in other programs… it's usually a matter of timing and balancing other priorities in life, and readiness for the high level of communication, independence, and responsibility expected. **Families will be refunded the at-camp tuition if their teen does not move forward.** Partial refunds *may* be available for uncompleted sections of the pre-camp portion if the teen leaves the pre-camp program early, depending on the circumstances and timing of departure, however, pre-camp refunds are not guaranteed. Families are advised to consider the teen's level of commitment and availability prior to enrolling in CIRCLE.

Please see the **CIRCLE Tuition Breakdown** document for complete details about the tuition costs for the CIRCLE program.

Finally, if it is helpful to the applicant, the use of a payment plan instead of the two installments is possible. If this is preferable, reach out to office@campaugusta.org regarding this possibility.

Section 4: The Application Process

The application process for the CIRCLE program is rigorous and unlike any other program application that your child has ever come across. The application is essay-based and designed to help the CIRCLE counselors get to know the applicants on a deeper level. We ask all applicants to consider each question thoughtfully and to provide full and honest answers to each. A few sample questions are, “Who are you?” and, “Why is this opportunity a good fit for who you are and who you want to become?” This open style of questioning not only helps the CIRCLE counselors get to know the applicant, but also provides an incredible opportunity for the applicants to explore aspects of themselves that they may not be asked to consider often, if ever.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers in the CIRCLE application. We simply want to get to know each applicant and ensure that s/he and CIRCLE are a great fit for each other. CIRCLE is an intense program both mentally and emotionally. It is our genuine belief that both program and participant need to be a mutual match, just like any job that one would consider taking. The three values that we base our acceptance rubric upon are:

1. **Timeliness**
2. **Thoughtfulness**
3. **Dedication to Communication with CIRCLE Leaders/Counselors**

A decision that an applicant is not a fit for the CIRCLE program is a difficult task and not one that we take lightly. There are multiple levels of conversations that will take place prior to any such decision and both you as a parent and your teenager will be fully informed of when and why these check-in conversations occur. As with our staff hiring process, we work diligently to ensure that every CIRCLEr is in a space of genuine openness to learning about the philosophies that guide our camp community and are working to serve that community as well as themselves.

Please read the Application Rubric and guidelines for maintaining high expectations throughout the CIRCLE program found in this program handbook. Though many campers truly love and are committed to Camp Augusta, returning as a member of the CIRCLE program is a huge commitment that some applicants simply are not at a place in their lives to make – mentally, emotionally, and/or logistically.

There are many other options for teens interested in camp work, being outdoors, working with kids, or Camp Augusta specifically. Some of them include:

- Outward Bound, NOLS, etc.
- Domestic or international travel programs
- Service learning programs
- Tutoring at a local school
- Assistant coaching a sports team
- Wilderness trips at Camp Augusta
- Applying for CIRCLE another year

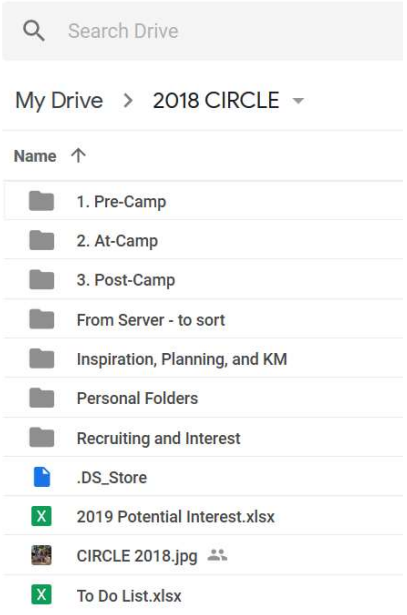
Section 5: Pre-Camp Correspondence Course

The pre-camp phase of the CIRCLE program is *crucial* for helping the CIRCLErs develop a strong foundational understanding of the key concepts and philosophies that guide the Camp Augusta community. Our camp community is a special place – one that both campers and staff look forward to coming back to year after year. The daily workings of Camp Augusta are intentionally crafted to create the exceptional atmosphere that your child has become accustomed to.

Some of the concepts that are especially relevant to growing into a position of leadership at Camp Augusta are clean communication, compassionate communication (NVC), and integrity. We also give CIRCLErs the chance to explore themes such as "The Context of Culture", and "Creative Expressions of Leadership" to prepare them for working effectively with younger campers.

CIRCLErs will also work on developing unique aspects of programming to bring to camp. This includes individual brainstorming, group discussion, creating, directing, and running their own programmatics. In the past, this has often been in the form of one large Evening Program, though the creation of playstations, story experiences, or village activities are possible as well. Planning and execution process allows the CIRCLErs to gain true insight into the creative process behind our programming at Camp Augusta and the dedication and resources that it takes to make each moment at our summer camp truly special.

Finally, the pre-camp phase of the CIRCLE program is when we start to build the community and camaraderie within the group of CIRCLErs and counselors. Full participation from each CIRCLEr during this phase of the program allows the group to hit the ground running upon arrival at camp and begin to work as a cohesive team.



It is helpful to know in advance that the pre-camp portion of the CIRCLE program is more similar to an online leadership course than it is to a typical summer camp experience. CIRCLErs will receive personal, individually-tailored responses to their journal entries, have multiple opportunities to work in pairs (over the phone and/or Skype), as well as the opportunity to work on collective group projects. CIRCLErs must have regular and reliable access to computers and Internet, and a willingness to engage online almost on the daily (to catch any announcements etc) in order to successfully complete this program.

Section 6: CIRCLE at Camp: 3 Weeks in the Summer

The CIRCLE program culminates with a 3-week session at Camp Augusta when all of the CIRCLE participants and the CIRCLE leaders come together as a group. They live, with the leaders in small, designated 'village' known as CIRCLEville, sharing large tents with members of the same gender. During the three weeks, CIRCLErs participate in various activities including communication and leadership training sessions, success counseling, self-awareness exercises, extensive team building, and a short backpacking trip. There is also time built in to the schedule for CIRCLErs to take part in many of the regular summer camp activities such as clinics, evening programs, embers, and more. In the context of CIRCLE, however, these often feel very, different from participating as a camper, as the schedule and intention of them are different.

CIRCLErs will be affected by certain community agreements which are in place to create the Augusta atmosphere for campers, and as role models in the community CIRCLErs will be expected to abide by these agreements while also being invited to discuss them. The details of these policies will be provided during the application process. Staff policies will apply to CIRCLErs regarding the dress code, media references, discussions about relationships, demonstrations of physical affection, etc. CIRCLErs will have an 11pm curfew (later than campers, but earlier than the 12pm curfew for staff), and generally a rising time of 7am.

It is helpful to imagine the three week *at-camp* portion of CIRCLE as a continuous spectrum from camper to co-counselor. CIRCLErs move along this spectrum throughout their time at camp, gradually assuming more responsibility and leadership opportunities as they deepen their knowledge of effective communication and empathy. In the final week CIRCLErs take on the role of co-counselor in a regular cabin. Though this step can be great practice for those who wish to work as counselors in the future, the primary purpose of this arrangement is to provide context for each CIRCLEr to practice the skills they have been developing throughout the program. Skills that will serve them in all future ventures whether they be within the Camp Augusta community or elsewhere.

At the end of their CIRCLE session, CIRCLErs have the opportunity to share with the community what camp has meant to them, to present wookies to the campers that they have connected with as co-counselors, and to have a closing ceremony of their own where they honor each other and their time together.

Section 7: Our Expectations of CIRCLErs

CIRCLE is different than any other leadership program, just as Camp Augusta is very different from any other camp. The mission of the CIRCLE program is as follows:

To empower participants with leadership skills that foster peace, empathy, and responsibility in their lives and the lives of those around them.

Camp Augusta is a summer camp through and through, and we take our job of working with children very seriously. The amazing challenges, fun activities, costumed games and cabin bonding that impact our campers all happen because of the sincere personal investment that every one of our community members brings to each day. The CIRCLE program strives to ensure extreme fun balanced with real responsibility for each and every one of its participants.

We have a few very important expectations of all participants in the CIRCLE program:

1. **CIRCLErs communicate openly and consistently with CIRCLE counselors.** The application process and pre-camp work will be done almost exclusively via email, with some phone calls and/or Skype conversations. It is *imperative* that each CIRCLEr assumes responsibility for having and checking an email account and is in touch about all CIRCLE work on a regular basis. This high level of communication will continue in person at camp, where CIRCLErs will be expected to initiate frequent and candid checkins with the CIRCLE counselor/s, to both give and receive feedback for mutual growth in their relationship, personal growth in themselves, and to help the program itself grow to better fit the needs of the participants. This all depends on communication, and the relationship with the CIRCLE counselor/s is essentially a mentorship, which we hope that the participant will fully embrace as an exciting opportunity to relate with someone who genuinely cares for them yet will nudge them outside of their comfort zones when they need it.
2. **CIRCLErs complete applications and pre-camp work in a timely way.** We don't believe in assigning "busy work" during CIRCLE. Every assignment is included with the intention of guiding CIRCLErs through a process of personal growth that will allow them to serve the campers at Camp Augusta and will continue to impact their lives long after they have completed the CIRCLE program.
   Each CIRCLEr must communicate any struggles to keep up with work directly with CIRCLE counselors… it's a part of the growth process! *Parents, please allow your child to find the inner drive and motivation to complete the work associated with the CIRCLE program*. This program is about developing inner strength, outward leadership and communication skills, and the desire to interact with the world in a meaningful, productive way. We consistently share the motto "You will get out what you put in" with the CIRCLE participants in regards to how seriously they take it. The At-Camp CIRCLE Program attendance is conditional, depending on successfully completing the Pre-Camp work, and if you don't "Do CIRCLE" you won't be in CIRCLE anymore.
3. **Actions meet words.** No one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. CIRCLE is all about personal growth and we welcome any and all challenges that our participants bring to the table. What is crucial is that each participant's *actions* truly reflect their *desire* to be a part of the CIRCLE program. Again, CIRCLE is a very challenging program that is not the right fit for everyone at this point in her/his life.

Section 8: Basic Rubric for Applicants to the CIRCLE Program

The expectations we hold of CIRCLE participants also act as the three main determining factors to whether a CIRCLE application has been completed to an acceptable level: timeliness, thoughtfulness, and dedication to communication with the CIRCLE leader(s).

1. **Timeliness**. We cherish flexibility and the need to account for various circumstances in everyone's lives. That being said, there are a few basic "rules" around timeliness during the application process:
   - All dates listed on the application process timeline for the current year are to be considered set and firm, unless an applicant has requested an alternate timeline or the CIRCLE leader(s) have notified the participants otherwise.
   - The cut-off date to begin the application process is 1 week after the given due date for the Round 1 questions.
   - All applications must be fully complete by the end of the second week in December in order to be eligible for acceptance into the program.
   - Each element of the application must be completed no more than 24 hours after the mutually agreed upon (applicant/CIRCLE leader) due date to meet the timeliness standard. Missing this grace period is cause for reconsideration of an application. CIRCLE leaders will view each applicant's ability to meet application deadlines as representative of their ability to meet deadlines throughout the pre-camp process.

2. **Thoughtfulness**. The heart and soul of any Camp Augusta application! Our primary, **#1** standard for accepting any applicant into the CIRCLE program is the level of thought they display in their application writing.
   - Consistently offers responses that are in-line with the directions of each part and question of the application process (meets basic expectations).
   - Responses are heartfelt and offer insights into the true nature of the person who is applying. As honest and genuine as possible.
   - Clear communication about what the applicant hopes to learn and gain from their time in the CIRCLE program (beyond hanging out at camp for another summer).

3. **Dedication to communication**. The CIRCLE program is deliberately designed to be a custom experience for each participant and, as such, requires flexibility from both CIRCLE leaders and CIRCLErs. Clear, honest communication forms the foundation for individualizing this program for each person.
   - All communication relevant to completing each step of the application process must come from the *CIRCLE applicant* rather than a parent or anyone else.
   - An "extension request form" must be completed *at least 24 hours prior to a due date* if an applicant has a legitimate need for more time. All requests for due date extensions must come with a new, set due date proposed by the applicant and agreed upon by the CIRCLE leader.

Note: Completion of the CIRCLE program is **not** a requirement for past campers to become a counselor at Camp Augusta. Anyone who is 19 or older can apply to be a counselor through the same application process that virtually all of our staff members have completed. The CIRCLE application process and overall program mimic the staff application and staff summer training experience in many ways.

In contrast: those who wish to participate in the Junior Counselor (JC) program at Camp Augusta **must complete** the CIRCLE program and successfully apply for a position as a JC. Becoming a JC is neither an expectation that we have of CIRCLErs, nor a guarantee for someone who completes the CIRCLE program.

Prior to acceptance into the CIRCLE program, we will ask that all potential CIRCLE participants read and sign our "Integrity Contract". This contract addresses the three expectations outlined above (timeliness, thoughtfulness, and dedication to communication) in greater detail and serves as an initial foundation of mutual understanding and agreement that the collective CIRCLE experience is built upon. We encourage parents and/or guardians to read that document as well in order to gain a more complete understanding of how the CIRCLE program is run and why.

For Parents/Guardians of the CIRCLErs, we will be sending out monthly parent newsletters throughout the CIRCLE program with updates and information, as well. In addition, you are welcome to get in touch with the Camp Augusta office with any non-CIRCLE concerns.

Thanks for Reading!

We hope that this manual was informative, and gave you a clear vision of the program and the processes of it. If there is anything you would like to know that wasn't covered in this manual, please let us know so we can update it for the future.

And, as always, please feel free to contact the CIRCLE counselors with any questions at any time.

- **CIRCLE Program Email**: circle@campaugusta.org
- **Camp Augusta Office Email**: office@campaugusta.org
- **Camp Augusta Office Phone**: 530-265-3702