

Staff Expectations Onboarding

You often hear people saying "We all need to be on the same page." Well, this one of those pages.

If a single one of these expectations is not something you can happily commit to in full integrity, please let us know. This process will help make sure everyone is moving in the same direction, and that they are happy to be moving!

The Site

Your "cabin" is a wooden roof, a wooden floor, and some boards that are about shoulder high. It is open air - no door. There are 5 campers and 1 counselor in each of these cabins. There are central bathhouses close by, with showers and bathrooms. You and your children will learn how to do without electricity and many modern conveniences, which allows people to focus on one another and nature. Non-counseling staff typically live in platform tents - a canvas tent on a raised wooden platform.



It will get hot and uncomfortable and you'll be expected to be positive, enthusiastic, and energetic when you're tired, sweaty, and dirty. Summer temperatures are usually around 90-95 (35C), and 60 (15C) at night. For 7-14 days, it often reaches 105-110 (42C). Early in the summer (May, and sometimes start of June), 35 (2C) is seen here and there.

Lake Vera is about 320 yards by 230 yards at its WIDEST points. You cannot sail on it. Canoeing and swimming are fine. This lake has ducks on it, which means that everyone needs to be rinsed off after being in the lake, due to the small chance of a skin reaction to the ducks. It basically does not rain during the summer, so the waterfall that the lake feeds is a steady trickle. The swimming hole at the bottom is quite nice, as is the amazing and nearby Yuba river. Depending on Spring rainfall, the condition of the lake changes towards the end of the summer -- sometimes fine, sometimes not. If not, the lake may be gone near the middle of July.



The Campers

Most children arrive via a bus from the Bay Area, and we must have staff on the buses to supervise the children and help with check in and out. The only way to do that is to have counselors do 'bus duty' to and from camp. All counselors (and some non-counseling staff) will have to take two turns at this, and maybe more. When campers are traveling to/from camp, staff spend the night in the Bay Area. Camp Augusta finds a housing location, usually with a board member. Staff ride on the bus with the campers and interact with them for the trip, while one driver will drive behind the buses in a chase van. It's a 3 hour journey, each way. These are assigned, usually, at the beginning of the summer, and it is up to you to switch with other people if your plans change or your counseling sessions change.

Your bus duty schedule looks something like:

9am bus leaves with you on it - arrive around noon;
check out the campers;
time off starts around 1pm;
stay in the bay somewhere;
check in the campers in the bay for the bus return around 10:30am;
ride the bus back from noon to 3pm.
After dinner on return, you'll have that evening off!



CHOICE

The nature of choice for the campers is important to understand on a few levels. Campers can choose to exit the daily schedule with their cabin and do something else -- chill at the river, go for a backpacking trip, take a hike, do a long service project, read and chat about the staff manual. . . endless possibilities. There are some logistical bounds, such as a single camper wanting to go for a hike, as we don't have the staffing ability to make that happen. With the help of counselors, campers create the pace they experience at camp -- from very chill days doing sedentary activities and meditation, to Iron-Man-like expenditures of energy every hour -- it is all possible. The structure of camp allows for campers to choose their experience at camp, and they need your guidance (not dictates) to make wise decisions. Campers often chose a very active schedule, especially in one-week sessions, which is cool as long as you're monitoring their energy and mood. Likewise, your energy is important to manage with your scaffolder and the Puppet Master.

The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. At camp, despite best efforts, things aren't always going to go as planned. When that happens, don't always assume problems are known. When they are known, understand that those problems are addressed, although perhaps imperfectly. You are welcome to solve them yourself, or be part of a group that does! :)

Essential Policies

We are role models for children, so smoking (or vaping) really isn't a possibility. If you smoke, find another pink camp to work for. Camp is not a place to go through withdrawal. If you used to smoke within the last year, you must disclose that.



Alcohol can only be consumed on your time off, and only if you are of the legal US drinking age: 21 years old. If there are campers on site, alcohol (or your inebriated self!) CANNOT be on site. Alcohol must stop being consumed at least 12 hours before you are back 'on' for work. This means when work resumes with an all staff meeting on Sunday at noon, you must STOP drinking on Saturday at midnight!!

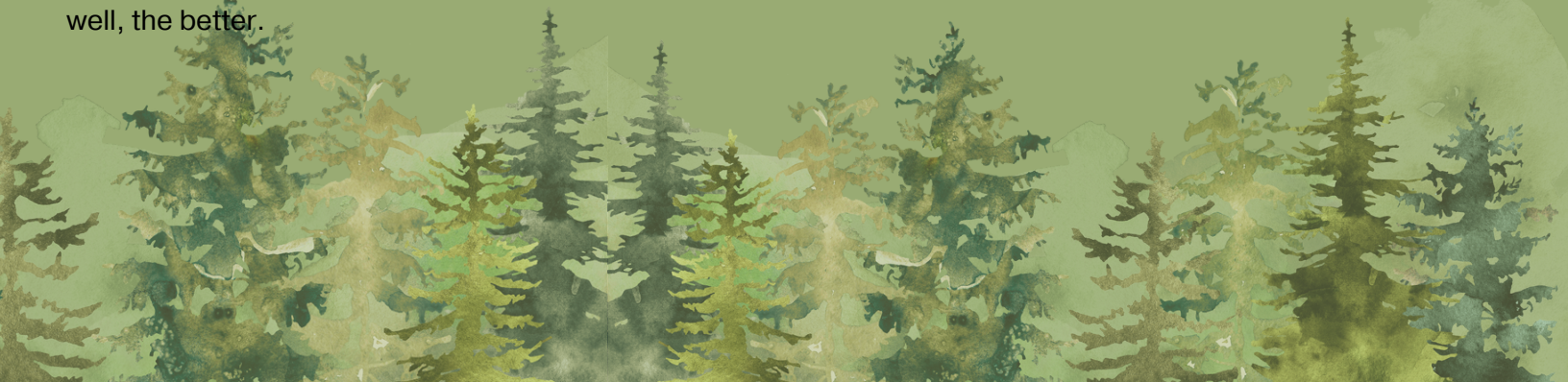
Your hair must stay a consistent color and style within a session. Hair colors are preferably found in normal human nature -- blonde, brown, ginger, black etc. At camp, we want campers to be thinking about CAMP, not what they, or anyone else looks like! Non-natural hair colors draw attention to physical appearance, so we prefer to avoid them. And, of course, there is a difference between some streaks of pink and a bright green mohawk that requires daily buckets of hair gel to maintain 😊



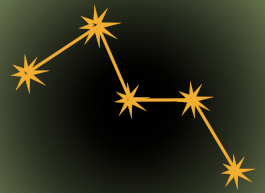
Also, ask about piercings and tattoos, which are fine unless extreme (grim reaper on your forehead, for example).

What Counselors Do

Although there is some variation, you will be teaching 2-6 core activities, 4 hours a day, for 9 weeks. We need competent clinic instructors that can improve what they are doing over the summer, and enjoy that challenge. There won't be much switching, especially for clinic directors. If there is a competent replacement available, or one that you train, more variety is certainly possible and welcome. The more people who can do your activity well, the better.



Once a session, you'll camp out somewhere on the property. You'll educate the campers about the environment and camping, and do other fun and educational activities. There are no tents, so everyone will sleep on the ground in natural splendor, under the stars, in open air. Kids need you to be excited, enthusiastic, and supportive.



Cabin cleanliness is important for health reasons. The cabin needs to be clean enough to maintain health standards. You clean with the children, everyone being equal. It teaches children responsibility and cabin pride. Counselors must model cleanliness by keeping their area extra-super clean. Cleaning the cabin and showering must happen once a day. Campers must change their clothes daily, which works well if they pick their clothes for the following day before going to bed.

Similarly, personal hygiene must be maintained so that your physical body odor isn't notable/offensive to campers or fellow staff (i.e., showering daily). Feet need special attention, so they stay healthy.

The only way to have the camp program area and site maintained is to have everyone do work projects after the children leave at the end of the session (and during the week when you're scheduled on them). This usually takes from about 9:00am until about 12:30pm. The more community minded we all are (when one project finishes, help others out), the faster everyone gets done -- possible to be done by 12:00.

Additionally, work projects are done on the opening day of each session, at night if you're not a counselor, during the day, every day, as we continually maintain and improve the site and activity areas.



What are work projects like, you say? Well, they can include so many things, of WIDE variance. Some examples include: doing dishes, picking up trash, doing clinic maintenance, making order of things, repairing, blowing things off, raking, digging holes, washing fabrics, preparing activities, sorting things, cleaning bath houses, shoveling horse poop, cleaning a community bathroom, cleaning kitchen areas, vacuuming, sweeping, climbing and fixing or cleaning, dealing with bodily fluids (wearing protection), plunging a toilet, mowing, preparing cabin/village activities, clearing brush, tarping things, . . . the list goes on for hundreds of items.



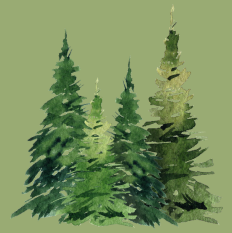
At the end of the session, counselors finish writing "Parent Letters." These are letters to the parents that include a list of what the camper did here along with a description of their wookie and why the name was chosen. If left all until the end to finish, this can make for a late night at the end of a session. You can't leave for your day off until this responsibility is completed. Wookies are wisely started on Monday, and notes taken on campers continuously.



Claim jumping is when a non-counseling staff monitor a village area after campers are put to bed, allowing counselors to have some unscheduled time at night. If you are NOT a counselor (or a HERO for the session if you are a counselor), you will spend 1 to 2 nights per session "claim jumping." About 9:45pm, you'll begin, which is checking in with the counselors and campers of each cabin in the village you're claim jumping. At 10pm, counselors will be able to leave, and you'll walk around the village and check on the five cabins. That continues until midnight, or all counselors return for the night, which will not be after midnight. The next morning, you won't be on setting up clinics, so you'll be able to sleep in until breakfast at 8am. If you're a HERO, you will be claim jumping. Expect to claim jump about 4 blue times over the summer, but it, very rarely, may be as many as 5 or 6.



Punishment (unrelated consequences) and guilt can NEVER be used as a means of controlling people. Getting children to behave simply because they like you or you are their buddy is not acceptable either. We'll teach you a better way to manage behavior that preserves dignity, helps educate, and empowers people.



Mattresses never go directly on the ground (must have tarp under them). A cabin sleeping outside is sleeping on \$1000 worth of mattresses, and they can be damaged easily. Radios never go within 30 feet (10 meters) of the water. If you keep that rule, you won't need to buy one when it goes for a swim (\$350).

You'll experience a small, tight community, which is a very rare experience indeed in today's world. The joys (shared values and goals, mutual influence, belonging, home) and troubles (rumor mills, personality issues, we're stuck with each other) that go along with that will be yours to treasure and endure.

Reality Check

Camp can be intense.

We want to be honest with you and we want you to be honest with us - that's why we tell you all the nitty gritty right off the bat. The next section is a perfect chance to check in with yourself and ask: Is this what I want?

Staff Training

It is 25 days long, from 7am until nearly 11pm every day. Yes, Every. Single. Day. You're scheduled for all of that time with about an hour off (not necessarily consecutive) every other day. "Is there a day off during that time?" No. We do have a day where we take a fun staff trip together. Outside of that, no, you have essentially no time to yourself, or to communicate with the outside world.



You're going to learn/practice numerous philosophies, play most of the evening programs, get trained in numerous clinics, play the Playstations, experience a dozen+ wakeups and evening embers, experience a story experience, and much more. You're unlikely to love everything you experience. You're going to be busier/more full than any other time in your life, unless you went through a military boot camp. Your freedom to do what you want when you want it will be nearly zero.

Staff training is enhanced with your active participation. If you're "bored," get engaged and present and you won't be. Being vulnerable and authentic are foundations for your (and the community's) training success. **Get real. Get busy. Get uncomfortable.** Over 650 people have done this before you. Have fun – this is a staff training you'll never forget.

Unscheduled Time



Outside of training, during the summer, **your unscheduled time is nearly zero outside of your day off.** When counselors have a purple "counselor hour" during the day, they're working on parent letters, wookies, wakeups, embers, and more. Non-counseling staff have an hour after 10pm if they choose not to go to bed early. Counselors have evening hours off after 10pm (until just before midnight), if it is a claim jumping night, which is Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday in a one-week session (not Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday). In a two-week session, for counselors, claim jumping (nights available) in the second week are Mon, Tues, Wed, Thursday. Although things may shift, they usually don't.

Your “screen time” is likely going to be around 15 minutes a day. During staff training, you may go a couple/few days without touching your phone a single red time. You’re not going to have time to be on your laptop or camp computer unless it is your day off. Your family and friends are going to miss you, and you’re going to miss them.



Challenge

You’ve read the secret page around the challenges of working at Augusta, as well as other pages/documents like the staff training schedule, daily schedules, this document, and more.

It’s true; Camp Augusta is a VERY challenging place to work. If you’re looking for the “Wet Hot American Summer,” or a place that offers more time off or different facilities, then you should go there and be happy / better met with your expectations/desires.

Yes, it might rain; the temperatures can be very high and very low; children can be very difficult, for a long period of time, and your campers may not gel with you like you’d enjoy; there are work projects to keep the community functioning, and as noted elsewhere, you’ll be doing them, a lot, and they may not be your favorite thing to do (to say the least); you’re willingly giving up freedoms around alcohol or other substances; your normal self-care rituals are exceedingly unlikely to be available to you and you need to be able to highly function in a challenging lifestyle without them; there are bees, wasps, flies, and mosquitoes, and they can be painful and/or annoying; the community is not going to be as perfect as you imagine it to be, and that’s perfectly imperfect.

Money

You’re working at a very small, nonprofit summer camp. If you need the money, and/or it will be a stretch for you to work here financially, you may regret your choice to work here. You can make more money at a for-profit camp, or a larger and more established camp. If that’s important to you, please do work somewhere else where you’ll be happier and more financially supported.



There is a “Passion Pot” available to the staff. It is a small sum of money set aside for passionate ideas that would contribute significantly to the camp. In addition to some year-round staff, a random group of interested people will review proposals and come to consensus on whether or not to fund the idea.

Our Philosophies

You have the right to be treated with dignity, honesty, and compassion at all times.

Trust is important. If you feel someone is falling short of the mark in being credible, being open with communication, and treating everyone with respect, please bring it to that person’s attention. We all have every intention of being all those things, and everyone needs your help when mistakes are made – compassionately.



We expect people to “communicate cleanly.” In other words, if you have a problem with someone, it is your responsibility to talk directly with them about it, within 24 hours. This is important, vital, and critical to the health of the community.



We appreciate intelligent mistakes, and value people’s ability to fail forward. We encourage carefully planned experimentation even if it might result in failure.

Within the philosophy manual (and often expanded information elsewhere if desired), the below are central and necessary for community and individual health. If you make a mistake, you take 100% Responsibility, and make restitution. You're here to learn and practice, yet not at the continued expense of one other, the team, or the community. It is your responsibility to understand the below BEFORE you arrive at camp, and ask questions/seek training as necessary. The below are central and necessary, yet also not exhaustive of community tools and perspectives/philosophies.

Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

Clean Communication

Intentional Speech

Creative / Reactive Brain

Creator – Coach – Challenge instead of **Villain – Victim – Hero**

Enemy Images (not holding them) and Forgiveness

Curiosity

Communication that Cuts Off Connection (Listening)

100% Responsibility

Your Storied Life

The Music Philosophy

We believe that campers benefit from listening to one another, nature, and make their own music (sing, instruments, etc.) for the brief time that they are here. No music playing devices are allowed in the cabins. Music is fine in the staff house and on your time off, provided it cannot be heard outside. There is no television in the staff house, as people are encouraged to spend time with each other without electronic interference. Likewise, movies etc. on the computer are not in line with communication (except days off).

There is also a music philosophy, and we play music in line with community values, unless we're the only one that can hear it. Even then, those who can hear it need to be okay with the values/messages/content of what you're playing.

Ear buds/phones are only usable when your interaction with other people is not of importance, such as when you're doing a task alone, and not doing a task that involves danger/risk. They can never be used in sight or presence of campers.



Likewise, sunglasses are NOT to be worn unless you are in direct, full sun, which is few places at Augusta. The eyes are the window to the soul, and we're making "soulful" connections with one another.

Is Augusta right for you?

Augusta might **not** be right for you, if:

- You do not LOVE (!!!) being with children.
- You need more than 1 green hour of alone time every OTHER day. (not daily)
- You can't handle paperwork. Writing / reading / processing / absorbing / acting upon . . .
- You rely on alcohol, nicotine (including vaping), or other substances to get you through your week.
- You have a substance use disorder and less than 18 months of sobriety/recovery.
- You have, within the last two+ years, unaddressed trauma that may be triggered by being around children/others constantly.
- You are trying to prove to someone else that you can do something difficult (i.e. working at camp out of spite).
- You need to see a therapist regularly to keep you buoyant, positive, productive, joyful.
- You are not EXCELLENT at managing your physical and mental health before arriving at Augusta.

