

SUMMER CAMP PARENT CHECKLIST

What to Ask Before You Enroll. Not all camps are equally prepared around water and supervision.

1) Licensing, accreditation, and oversight

- Are you licensed, regulated, or inspected by the state?
- When was your last inspection and did you have any deficiencies?
- Can I review your recent inspection history and safety policies?

2) Staff qualifications and supervision

- What is the specific child-to-staff ratio by age group? What is your ratios around water?
- What percentage of your staff returned from last year?
- What pre-camp training do counselors receive regarding supervision?

3) Water safety and swimming

- What specific water safety training does the camp staff complete?
- Do you test all the children for swimming? What happens if my child doesn't pass?
- How many certified lifeguards are present during all aquatic activities?
- How many days will my child have access to water activities?

4) Emergency planning

- Can I review your written emergency action plan?
- What is your protocol for missing children or severe weather?
- Do staff and campers actively practice emergency drills? When?

5) Health care and medications

- Is there a nurse or medically trained health supervisor on site?
- How are emergency medications (like EpiPens) stored and given?
- Do you have arrangements or communication with local EMS or a nearby hospital?

6) Behavior, discipline, and child protection

- What is your discipline policy and how is bullying handled?
- How do you prevent 1-on-1 unsupervised staff/camper situations?
- What background checks and abuse prevention training are required for your staff?

7) Special needs and inclusion

- Can you accommodate my child's specific medical/sensory needs?
- Has your staff successfully worked with similar children before?
- Are specific accommodations available during water activities?

8) Transportation and field trips

- Who drives the vehicles, and what safety training do they have?
- How are children tracked during arrivals, departures, and in field trips?
- What are your seat belt rules and pickup authorization procedures?

9) Communication with parents

- What situations will trigger an immediate phone call to parents?
- How can I quickly contact my child or the director in an emergency?
- How does staff manage homesickness and adjustment concerns?

10) Reputation and fit

- Can you provide objective references from current camp parents?
- What is your overarching camp philosophy and daily routine?
- What makes your camp safer and better prepared than others?

Quick Red Flags

- “We’ve never needed a formal emergency plan.”
- “Our counselors just keep an eye on the kids.”
- “We don’t really do formal swim tests.”
- “We’ve never had an incident here.”
- Vague, defensive answers about training or ratios.

Texas Parent Note

If you are evaluating a Texas child-care or day-care operation that allows children access to swimming pools, ask how the program complies with **Cati's Law (HB 59)** and what **annual water-safety training** staff and directors complete to meet the law's requirements and help protect children in and around water. If your child is a weak or non-swimmer, teach them not to enter the water until they are wearing a properly fitted and fastened life jacket. Everyone, regardless of age or swimming ability, should wear a life jacket when on a boat or when they are in or around open water (river, lake, beach).