



NYSDEC Summer Camps
Potential Volunteer Award



NYSDEC Summer Camps Volunteer Guidebook

CAMP COLBY, CAMP DEBRUCE, CAMP PACK FOREST, CAMP RUSHFORD

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This Guidebook is intended to be reviewed by volunteers before arrival at camp as well as with the Assistant Director/Camp Aide 1 shortly after arriving.

You do not need to bring a copy with you to camp.

Volunteer Position

Role

NYSDEC Camp Volunteers assist in many aspects of the Camp Program. Volunteers are provided room and board and participation in Camp activities for free for the week that they are chosen.

A volunteer's primary duty is helping out in the kitchen (i.e. washing dishes, setting up and cleaning up before and after meals, assisting with the serving line). Additional duties include assisting staff members with the general upkeep of the camp facility (i.e. cleaning windows, sweeping floors, storing supplies and taking inventory) and cleaning/washing camp vehicles.

The volunteer is also a camper and is expected to become an active part of the camp program. Included within this programmatic role is assisting staff members with recreational activities, observing and assisting staff on courses, participating in the opening and closing campfires, developing and completing projects requested by the Camp Director, as well as sharing any special skills and/or outdoor interests with both staff and campers. The volunteers are supervised by the paid camp staff on a 24-hour basis during the camp week.

At the end of the camp week, volunteers will receive a letter detailing their completion of 40 hours of community service.

Volunteers may be called back to volunteer additional weeks during the summer by the Camp Assistant Director depending on camp needs. These calls generally happen on Sunday after check-in.

Expectations

Volunteers are expected to understand and follow the expectations for campers in the Camper Handbook. Volunteers are campers; however, they are actively helping staff as needed.

Assistant Directors and Camp Aide 1s are responsible for ensuring volunteers know their unique role in the NYSDEC summer camp and for being a volunteer's point of contact should any issues occur relating to their volunteer duties during their time at camp. Soon after arrival, the Assistant Director and/or Camp Aide 1 should review the following subjects with a volunteer:

- Review Camper handbook sections to familiarize volunteers with DEC rules and standards
- Volunteer Discovery Project
- Rules and responsibilities in the kitchen
- A more in-depth review of how to help with camper homesickness
- Camper/ staff interactions
- Review of volunteer evaluation form
- Other camp-specific topics, as needed

Requirements

Volunteers will be required to:

- review expectations with the Camp Assistant Director and/or Camp Aide 1 shortly after arrival,
- be screened through the National and NYS Sex Offender Registry by Camps Administrative Staff,
- be between 14 and 17 years old,
- complete and submit NYSDEC volunteer application materials,
- have had a parent/guardian complete all registration forms online prior to arrival
- follow all rules while at the NYSDEC Camp

Application

All volunteer application materials and registration forms are housed on the registration site. Volunteers are campers and should therefore remain on the family's account.

Do not make a new account to apply as a volunteer.

Volunteers should be completing the volunteer application materials. Parents/Guardians should be completing the registration materials.

To apply you must submit the following by **MARCH 1st, 2025:**

- **DEC Volunteer Application**, see attached example.
 - A copy of a **photo ID**
 - If you have questions about what type of ID is acceptable, please email volunteer program coordinator, Shannon Post-Wilson, at Shannon.Post@dec.ny.gov
- **Volunteer Information Sheet**
- **Cover letter** explaining why you would like to volunteer at camp (about 1 page)

Late submissions may negatively impact your chances of being chosen as a volunteer this summer. If you choose NOT to apply to volunteer, it will NOT impact future placements.

Selection

Camp placement decisions and registration information will be emailed to families after March 21, 2025. Volunteers may be initially selected for multiple weeks depending on camp needs and volunteer availability. Volunteer parents/guardians confirm the placement via email and then fill out the registration forms and waivers, if not already complete. The online forms and waivers for volunteers are the same as the camper forms.

Starting in 2025, if only one volunteer selects a week, for example, Camp Colby week 6, no volunteer will be assigned to that week. The volunteer's next choice will be considered. We have seen that volunteers have much more enjoyable weeks when they're on a team of other volunteers rather than being by themselves.

Registration Forms and Waivers

Volunteer registration is initially completed by administrative staff and then finished by the family of the volunteer. It is a separate process from public registration and does not cost any money.

If the volunteer is selected to attend camp, parents/guardians will need to log on to the registration site, on the same account that the application was submitted to, and complete all forms and waivers to accept the placement.

If the volunteer is also registered as a camper for another week, the forms and waivers will not need to be filled out again. The forms and waivers for campers and volunteers are the same and only need to be completed once a summer.

Health Care Provider Form

NYSDEC Camps require a NYSDEC-specific Health Care Provider Form (HCPF) to be on file to stay at camp.

This form must be completed by a health care professional, signed by both the professional, and a parent/guardian.

Immunizations can be either added on the form or attached separately. The HCPF must be complete to attend camp. Another form, like a school physical form, cannot be substituted.

Volunteers at Camp

Volunteer Discovery Project

New for 2025!

Volunteers will now have an active role in their Camp's sustainability. They will set goals for the week with the Assistant Director and Camp Aide 1 for team-building and environmental interests.

Volunteers will learn about food waste and sustainability. We call food waste 'ORT' and we have a goal of 'NORT' or No ORT. Volunteers will be "ORT Overseers" by tracking the camp's food waste and sharing their findings with the camp community in creative ways. Each week will have a general goal of tracking food waste while the project's progression will be determined by the Camp staff and volunteers.



Group Dynamics and Team Building

Volunteers often form strong bonds with their teammates throughout the camp week. NYSDEC encourages team building with volunteer-only group dynamics activities and get-to-know-you games, volunteer projects, and check-ins with staff. Volunteers should also be active in seeking out other campers as friends and buddies. Volunteers may be split up to sit with assigned tables during meals, assist on programs, and/or overnight trips.

Vol Night

Vol night is a tradition across all the NYSDEC Summer Camps. To thank our volunteers for all their hard work during the week, they have a vol night event on the last night of camp (Thursday). Vol night activities are determined by the staff at the camps and often are creative and vary week to week. Staff maintain supervision ratios at all times including during vol night.

Some example activities include:

- Karaoke dance party in the Director's office
- Sleepover in the dining hall
- Scavenger hunt across camp
- Going off-site to get ice cream (paid for by staff, please do not send money)
- Board games and charades



In the Kitchen

Volunteers will be given a safety and rules talk ahead of their time in the kitchen.

Volunteer tasks may include:

- serving food
- setting up food serving line with dishes and utensils
- collecting dirty dishes and bringing to the dishwashing area
- putting away clean dishes
- wiping down tables, sweeping, mopping

Volunteer tasks will not include:

- loading/unloading food deliveries
- driving camp vehicles
- using ladders
- handling sharp and/or hot objects
- spending time in the walk-in fridge or freezers
- cooking food
- any other tasks that violate Dept. of Health and/or labor regulations

Packing List for Kitchen Time

In addition to your volunteer's standard packing list, volunteers should have additional changes of clothes in case they get dirty in the kitchen. Long pants are recommended for kitchen work.

Additionally, volunteers should ensure they have adequate footwear to help in the kitchen. Crocs or other closed-toe sandals should not be worn in the kitchen.

Aprons, camper t-shirts, and volunteer hats/bandanas will be provided.



In Program

Volunteers are often exceptional role models for campers while participating in the camp program. They set the tone for camper behavior and enthusiasm in the Camps' Program.

Volunteers who are having a fun week and are engaged in the camp's games, activities, and educational topics open the doors for campers to break out of their shells and also participate.

Volunteers may be asked to be buddies with campers who are struggling making friends or with homesickness at camp, if they're comfortable. Having been a camper, a volunteer's perspective is valuable and they can often connect with campers who may be nervous about joining in.

Other ways that volunteers help include, helping set-up or break-down activities, answering questions, or demonstrating what to do.

During the overnight trip, volunteers help campers create skits to perform during closing campfire later in the week. While camp staff are close by, this is often lead by the volunteer(s) on the trip.

Volunteers have opportunities to lead songs and skits throughout the week, especially during the campfires.



Camper and Staff Interactions

Distinctions

As a volunteer you have been a camper, often more than once or at multiple camps. All these experiences sometimes add up to more time at camp than new counselors! With that in mind, volunteers are minors and considered campers by the NYS Dept. of Health and NYSDEC. Camp staff have extensive training before each season and must meet minimum qualifications for the position as set by NYSDEC. Understanding and respecting this distinction can help everyone have a smooth week at camp.

Relationships

Romantic relationships are not appropriate at camp. Relationships between volunteers, volunteers and staff, or volunteers and campers are all prohibited.

As a camp volunteer, you should strive to behave in a professional manner when interacting with camp staff and a role model for campers.

Ratio

Camper and staff safety is the first priority of staff. There are various ratios that camp staff need to maintain during different activities. During all activities volunteers count as campers, **not** staff, and will **not** be asked to supervise other campers.

Safety drills

Each week there are mandatory safety drills that take place at camp. Volunteers should follow staff directions and help if asked.

During emergencies

In the event of an emergency, volunteers should follow directions from Camp Director Staff that follow the emergency safety plan.

Social media

Online social networking sites and apps can be fun and positive ways for people to interact with friends. While NYSDEC has an official Facebook page for the camps program, we cannot monitor unofficial camp pages on social networking sites. NYSDEC is not responsible for interactions among campers, volunteers and staff after the camp season has ended or on other than our own Facebook page. We recommend our camp staff not "friend" campers on other sites, but we cannot monitor their actions during the off season or on sites where we have no control.



Contact Information

	Address	Phone, Fax, Email
Volunteer Program Coordinator Shannon Post-Wilson	NYSDEC Summer Camps Program attn: Shannon Post-Wilson 625 Broadway Albany, NY 12233-4501	Year-round (Mon. – Fri., 8:30AM – 4:00PM) Phone: 518-402-8014 Fax: 518-402-9033 Email: Shannon.post@dec.ny.gov
Camp Colby	90 Camp Colby Road Saranac Lake, NY 12983	Only during Camp Season Phone: 518-891-3373 Fax: 518-891-0077 Email: colby@dec.ny.gov
Camp DeBruce	307 Mongaup Road Livingston Manor, NY 12758	Only during Camp Season Phone: 845-439-4627 Fax: 845-439-4433 Email: debruce@dec.ny.gov
Camp Pack Forest	Mailing: PO Box 777 Warrensburg, NY 12885 Physical: 276 Pack Forest Road Warrensburg, NY 12885	Only during Camp Season Phone: 518-623-2037 Fax: 518-623-4433 Email: packfore@dec.ny.gov
Camp Rushford	8717 Rush Creek Road Caneadea, NY 14717	Only during Camp Season Phone: 585-437-5351 Fax: 585-437-5400 Email: rushford@dec.ny.gov

DEC Summer Camps Volunteer Evaluation

Evaluating a volunteer's performance will help to ensure that they grow with the opportunity given to them. To help a volunteer understand the areas where they exceeded expectations and the areas that may need improvement, the camp staff will complete this form based on the volunteer's week at camp. This evaluation will weigh heavily if volunteers decide to return as a volunteer or apply for an internship or a camp staff position with the NYSDEC Summer Camps program.

Volunteers will fill out a copy of the table portion of this evaluation ahead of their evaluation with the Assistant Director and Camp Aide 1 at the end of the week.

Here is an example of a blank evaluation. Shortly after arrival, the Camp Assistant Director and/or Camp Aide 1 will go over this and outline the expectations for the week. Volunteers will also be asked to complete a self-evaluation using the same form at the end of the week to help reflect on their performance.

You do not need to bring a copy of this evaluation to camp.

NYSDEC Volunteer Evaluation

Volunteer Name _____ Camp Name and Week _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5 = always exceeds expectations, never needs reminders from staff

4 = sometimes exceeds expectations, very few instances where staff give reminders

3 = meets expectations, occasional reminders from staff

2 = sometimes meets expectations, usually needs help from staff

1 = Does not meet expectations, always needs corrections and reminders from staff

Area	Expectation	Comments	Score out of 5
Kitchen	Is on time and ready to help with all tasks.		
	Conducts themselves safely and follows kitchen rules.		
	Works well with other vols & kitchen staff to finish tasks by following directions and asking for help as needed.		
Program	Actively participates in adventures, games, and other camp programs without overstepping.		
	Is kind and welcoming to campers, helping create an inclusive camp environment.		
	Works well with counselors by making safe, fun, and helpful contributions to activities.		
	Seeks opportunities to do new activities, step-up as a leader, or otherwise grow as a volunteer.		
	Is a role model and leader for campers and follows camp rules.		
Volunteer Project	Displays an interest in environmental topics and care for the natural world.		
	Actively contributes to the group's success and goals established at the start of the week.		
Self Eval Score		This Page Total Score	This Page Total Score/10 (ex. 4.5)

NYSDEC Volunteer Evaluation

Volunteer Name _____ Camp Name and Week _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Overall Comments:

Areas of improvement:

Areas of strength:

Is this volunteer recommended to return?

YES

NO

Assistant Director Name: _____

Signature and Date: _____

Volunteer Name: _____

Signature and Date: _____