



**Fish and Explore, LLC**  
**Parent Handbook**

Hello Anglers and Explorers,

Welcome to the Fish and Explore Family!

We hope you are getting excited for your upcoming Fish and Explore Camp. We believe that the best approach to nature is to jump in with both feet. Teaching campers to appreciate the natural world and be stewards of the land does more than just preserve today, it builds values that will impact tomorrow.

We are a travel camp. Nature is more than one pond or one forest. Our programs travel to different locations each day to provide a diverse and unique camp experience for your child.

We practice Wildlife CPR (Catch, Photograph, and Release) with all of our outdoor encounters. We want to build lasting memories for your child and a keener understanding and appreciation of how local ecosystems work. Our programs are designed to be safe and fun as well as to excite children about nature, while teaching them self-confidence and respect for others while learning how to sustain the great outdoors for their future appreciation.

As always, safety is our top priority. By keeping our groups small and the camper to counselor ratio low we are able to let your child explore freely, while still providing the supervision and support they need. Camp leaders and senior counselors are trained in CPR and First Aid and travel with first aid equipment at all times.

We are excited for another great summer. Thank you for allowing us to be your fishing and nature guides. We want to teach everyone to enjoy the wonders of the outdoors.

If you need to contact us for any reason please call 703-215-1066 or email [info@fishandexplore.com](mailto:info@fishandexplore.com) with additional questions.

Thank you for choosing us and being part of our happy nature friendly family.

Matt Helfinstein

Fish and Explore, Camp Director

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## Camp Parent Handbook

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to read the camp parent handbook prior to the start of camp and to contact Fish and Explore if any policies or camp requirements are unclear, or if you have questions.

## Transportation, Drivers and Destinations

We travel in small groups in 15 Passenger vans or buses. For safety reasons, all campers must wear a seatbelt. The parent or guardian is responsible for providing a booster seat if your child requires one. Campers will be expected to be best behavior while in the camp vehicles.

All Fish and Explore drivers have clean driving records and previous experience driving vans, buses, or like vehicles.

One of the most unique things about Fish and Explore Camps is our travel program and flexible itineraries. All of our camps are day travel camps. We drive to a new location each day. Each location is selected based on the following criteria:

- Location will enhance the overall outdoor experience for the campers (i.e. going to a private lake to ensure a successful fishing trip or picking a location with superior views for photography).
- Location will be safe and easily accessible for medical assistance.
- Location has been visited by Lead Counselor previously.
- Location is within a reasonable drive from the pick-up and drop-off point.

Fish and Explore will provide parents with the planned itinerary prior to the start of camp, or on the morning of each day of camp. The Camp Director or Lead Counselor may change the daily itinerary or location based on weather and safety conditions. Please contact Matt Helfinstein, Camp Director with any additional questions.

## Before Camp Checklist

As you prepare your child for a Fish and Explore camp, there are a few things that we ask that you do **by the first day of camp**:

**Complete all forms attached to the welcome email. If you signed up for camps directly through the Fish and Explore website, you will have filled in all forms at the time of registration.**

If you have not already submitted all the forms with your registration, then please complete and sign whichever forms are still due, and bring them with you on the first day of camp.

When you enroll your child in a Fish and Explore camp through one of our business partners (i.e. Fairfax Parktakes, Arlington County), they will have their own requirements to complete certain forms. While there may be some duplication with the information you are asked to provide, we ask that you complete our forms as well.

**Please ensure that all Parent/Guardian and Emergency Contact information is legible (especially phone #s). This information is critical if we need to reach you.**

**Pay any final balance** before arrival at camp.

**Pack asthma inhaler or epi-pens in their original containers** where easily accessible when your child arrives at camp. Always pack two (2) epi-pens. Fish and Explore counselors are not allowed to dispense any prescription medications. The *only* exceptions to this rule are asthma inhalers and epi-pens.

**If your child has any special needs for his or her week of camp, please let us know beforehand.** We want to make sure we are informed of any allergies or other special needs.

## What to Bring to Camp Every Day

### Sunscreen and Bug Spray Policy

Fish and Explore camps are outdoor camps where campers will spend each day outside. To protect campers from the elements and help keep them comfortable during the day, it is required that campers apply sunscreen during the day, once in the morning before coming to camp, and one or more times in the afternoon while at camp. Campers may also wear bug spray if they choose to do so, but it is not required.

Parents should send their child with sunscreen and bug spray that they can apply themselves. **Fish and Explore counselors are not allowed to apply sunscreen on campers. There is no exception to this policy.**

### What to Wear

(label all items)

- Swim suit / clothes that can get wet
- Sun shirt or shirt that can get wet and dry quickly
- Sunglasses with croakies to keep the glasses from falling off and getting lost
- Hat
- Old sneakers, closed toe River Shoes/Sandals (like Salomon Salamanders or Keens). **Campers must wear closed toe shoes. No crocs, flip flops, soft floppy water shoes or open toe shoes.**

### What to Bring in a Backpack

(label all items, including backpack)

- Lunch and snacks. **No nuts, no Gatorade, no Juice or other sugary drinks**
- Change of clothes
- Full water bottle. **Fish and Explore will have water for refills**
- Towel

- Sunblock. Should be a stick or a kind that the camper can apply on their own. Bullfrog 'Mosquito Coast' is both a bug repellent and sun block. **Fish and Explore counselors are not allowed to apply sunblock on campers. No exceptions.**
- Bug spray (optional)

## What NOT to Bring

- Electronic devices of any kind
- Weapons of any kind (knives, sling shots, etc.)
- Large amounts of money. Campers are not allowed to make purchases during camp

**Fish and Explore is not responsible for any lost or damaged items.**

## Food and Drink at Camp

Fish and Explore encourages campers to bring a big healthy lunch and plenty of snacks for the camp day. We are very active and your child will burn a lot of energy – please provide enough fuel for them. A small cooler is provided by the counselors; nonetheless, try to pack non-perishable food if possible.

**PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SENDING A FULL WATER BOTTLE WITH THEIR CHILD EVERY DAY**

**Nut products at Camp:** Due to the increase in frequency of campers' having serious nut allergies, Fish and Explore asks parents to be nut-free when packing their child's lunch and snacks.

**Drinks:** Send your child with a **full refillable water bottle every day.** Fish and Explore will have an insulated water jug to provide refills for water bottles throughout the day. Counselors will also remind campers to drink water throughout the day.

## Medical information

Campers may not attend any Fish and Explore camp without having an up-to-date medical form on file. If you registered for camp directly through our website, you filled in the medical form at that time.

Fish and Explore counselors are not allowed to dispense any prescription medications to campers. **The only exceptions to this rule are Inhalers and Epi-pens.** Inhalers and epi-pens will be kept in the camp first aid kit, which is carried by counselors at all times. Always provide two (2) epi-pens.

All Fish and Explore counselors are CPR/First Aid certified and will call the parent or guardian if there is a medical care need with your child. All insurance is the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

## Inclement Weather Procedures

**Rain Policy:** Campers will participate in outdoor activities even while it's raining, unless the weather is deemed unsafe by the Fish and Explore Counselor in Charge (i.e. a heavy downpour). In case of lightning or thunder, Fish and Explore Counselors are **required** to seek shelter for all campers, either indoors or in vehicles. The campers will remain in shelter for the duration of the inclement weather and for **fifteen (15) minutes after the last visual lightning or audible thunder**.

**Heat Policy:** On days that the health department issues a Code Red Heat Advisory, the Fish and Explore Camp Director will consult with parents and partner recreation centers to determine if the camp activities planned for the day need to be cancelled. Generally, cancellations have been rare. During every camp day, Fish and Explore Counselors regularly require campers to consume water. Parents should also instruct their child on the importance of regular water consumption during outdoor activities to avoid dehydration.

## Discipline Policy

Our youth behavior policies emphasize **safety as a first and top priority**. At the beginning of each camp, campers are informed of the camp rules as well as key elements of safety with respect to the specific activity involved. For example, in a fishing camp, campers are instructed on how to safely handle the equipment so as not to endanger themselves or others.

If the behavior of a student endangers anyone, including themselves, the student will receive a verbal warning; a second offense will require the student to sit out of activities for fifteen (15) minutes. If there is a third offense, the student will not be allowed to participate in activities for the remainder of the day, and the parents/guardians will be notified. Safety of all our students is paramount, so if a student repeatedly exhibits unsafe behavior, then the counselor in charge can recommend that the student be dismissed from the remainder of the camp session, with no refund or credit provided. The counselor is required to provide a written incident report to the camp director and parents/guardians.

## What to Do Every Day after Camp

We spend every day of camp outside, and outdoor fun comes with its share of precautions. After a day spent outside, we recommend that parents and campers do the following:

- Do a thorough tick check
- Check for any signs of poison ivy
- Camper should shower every day and clothing should be laundered. This will help to remove or minimize any poison ivy oil if it is on skin and clothing.
- Check for any signs of sunburn and treat accordingly

## Arrival, Departure, Late Pick-up Policy

### Arrival

The start time for each camp varies by both camp type and by location. Please check the start time for the camp that your child is signed up for. The Fish and Explore counselors are not available to supervise campers who arrive early. Campers should arrive **on time** for each day of camp.

In order to ensure a full day's program, the Fish and Explore van will leave promptly ten (10) minutes after the Drop-off time (start) of camp. If you will be running late, please contact the Counselor in Charge of your camp, or Matt Helfinstein, the Fish and Explore Camp Director to let them know.

### Pick-Up and Departure

The end time for each camp varies by both camp type and by location. Please check the end time for the camp that your child is signed up for. **A photo id must be presented every day by the authorized adult that is picking up the camper. There will be No Exception to this policy. Please note that Campers, regardless of age, are not allowed to walk or bike home from camp by themselves.**

**Pick up by someone other than parent or guardian:** If another adult, or older sibling (must have a valid ID) other than the primary parent or guardian will be picking up your child during the camp week, fill out the 'Authorized Pick Up List' form found in the back of this parent packet. Please speak with Matt Helfinstein, the Fish and Explore Camp Director, or the Counselor in Charge of your camp if you need to amend this list during the camp week.

**Aftercare:** Fish and Explore does not provide aftercare. If you have enrolled your child in our camp through one of our business partners (i.e. Fairfax Parktakes, McLean Community Center), and your child is enrolled in one of their aftercare programs, then we will follow their procedure for ensuring that your child is transitioned to their aftercare program after our camp day is over.

### Late Pick-up Policy

There will be a ten (10) minute grace period allowed each day. If you are more than 10 minutes late picking up your child, the following will apply:

- After the first ten minutes, a \$15 late charge will apply for every 10 minutes that an authorized adult is late in picking up the child. This charge applies at the start of each 10 minute unit (example: 0 – 10 free; 11 -20 is a \$15 charge; 21 -30 is a \$30 charge).



## Cancellation and Refund Policy

Fish and Explore will provide a full credit or refund for a camp if the camp is cancelled by Fish and Explore or upon request when schedule or location changes made by Fish and Explore prohibit or limit an individual's ability to attend a camp.

**Please Note:** If you have enrolled your child in a Fish and Explore camp through one of our business partners (i.e Fairfax Parktakes, McLean Community Center), then their Cancellation and Refund Policy supersedes the Fish and Explore policy.

For any reason other than those noted above, the following refund policy applies:

- Requests for a **refund** made at least two weeks (14 calendar days) before the start of camp will be granted, less a 15% processing fee.
- Requests for a **refund** made less than two weeks (13 or fewer calendar days) before camp starts will only be granted for medical reasons (doctor's note required) or for relocation of more than 25 miles away from camp location. The refund will be provided less a 15% processing fee.
- There are no refunds for missed days due to changed work or vacation schedules, sick days, or other non-emergency reasons.
- Requests for a **credit** made at least two weeks (14 calendar days) before the start of camp will be granted, less a 5% processing fee.
- Requests for **credit** made less than two weeks (13 or fewer days) before camp starts will be granted, less a 15% processing fee.
- Credit can be applied to any Fish and Explore program, event, or private lesson.
- Credit must be applied the same calendar year it is issued.

If a medical emergency occurs during the camp session, a doctor's written verification will be needed within 24 hours for a pro-rated refund. Requests received after the camp session ends will not be granted.

## Code of Conduct

**Campers and parents should review this required document together**

### Campers:

- Seatbelts must be worn properly and as instructed.
- Should not pull, touch or unlatch any other camper's seatbelt.
- Should not unlatch their seatbelt while our camp vehicle's motor is running, or the vehicle is moving.

- Should be able to maintain personal care (toileting, changing) without staff support.
- Stay with the assigned group at all times.
- Teasing and bullying are not permitted.
- Campers should report all incidents of bullying or safety violations immediately to their counselor.
- Listen to camp counselors and follow directions.
- Use appropriate language.
- Keep hands to oneself and maintain self-control.
- Take care of their own belongings.
- Use equipment and supplies in a safe and appropriate manner.

**Parents:**

- Complete and submit all appropriate paperwork.
- Be on time to sign camper(s) in and out of the program.
- Contact the Camp Director or Camp Leader immediately when issues arise.
- Adhere to the camp refund and transfer policy as outlined in the parent handbook.

**Possible Grounds for Immediate Dismissal (no refund given):**

Depending on the severity and other assessed factors, Fish and Explore reserves the right to terminate part or all of a camper's enrollment in Fish and Explore programs if:

- A camper intentionally harms or threatens to harm themselves or others.
- A camper violates any of our seatbelt safety rules.
- A camper causes injury to another camper or staff member.
- A camper displays repeated inappropriate behavior.
- A camper fails to comply with the Code of Conduct.

**Management of Behavior**

Staff will manage disruptive or inappropriate behavior by addressing it with the camper and discussing what is appropriate behavior as well as redirecting behavior when possible. If necessary, staff may remove a camper from an activity until the camper exhibits appropriate self-control. Staff will address problem behaviors with parents to strategize possible solutions. In situations where inappropriate or disruptive behavior persists, the camper's enrollment in Fish and Explore programs may be terminated. Staff strive to meet the needs of campers by using proactive approaches and planning age/ability appropriate activities.