



SUMMER CAMP: CHOOSE SAFETY
(adapted from a publication by the Georgia Child Care Association)

Thoughts of summertime generally conjure up images of sun-filled days. But, when it comes to finding a summer camp for school-aged children or toddlers, some parents are overcome by anxiety. Often, parents unknowingly make the assumption that all camps are regulated and operating by safety guidelines to protect their children. Unfortunately, many in Georgia are not. Additionally, we know from experience that summertime can hold the biggest risk and highest injury rates. It stands to reason that the more active children are, the more vulnerable they are to bumps and bruises. That's why we believe that parents should be aware that **not all** camps are licensed child care programs which adhere to state-mandated rules for health, safety, and supervision. Hundreds of camps across the state operate without any state oversight by the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) or accreditation from the American Camping Association (ACA).

Look for the following minimum standards in a licensed camp for your child's safety:

- Background checks, fingerprinting are required; no person with a criminal history is employed
- A lead teacher/counselor must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate credential or Technical Certificate of Credit in Early Childhood Education
- Teachers/counselors must be at least 18 years of age
- At least half of the staff is CPR/First Aid Certified. (*Bells Ferry Learning Center exceeds this state regulation by requiring 100% staff certification*)
- The maximum adult:child ratio for children age 6 and older is 1:25; lower ratios are met for swimming activities
- Meals and snacks must meet USDA nutritional guidelines and children and staff are required to use proper hand-washing and sanitary practices
- Equipment and toys are inspected to be safe, clean, and must be free from hazards
- Bus drivers must be at least 18-years-old, be CPR/First Aid Certified and all vehicles undergo annual safety inspections and are equipped with proper safety restraints (*Bells Ferry Summer Camp exceeds this state regulation by requiring drivers to be at least 21-years-old*)
- Emergency medical information is required on every camper
- Licensed programs are subject to unannounced visits by state inspectors at least twice each year