

## Accommodating Youth: How can we best serve the ever increasing and various special needs of our campers?

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## Accommodating Youth:

Our journey to date:

- **A Little History**
- **Ever Increasing Number of Campers With Special Needs**
- **Our Research Into Other Camps**
- **Owning Our Limitations**
- **Obtaining Ongoing Guidance From the Experts**
- **Our Process Today**

## Accommodating Youth:

### A Little History

- Camping since 1952
- One week
- Serving as many as 285 campers, 86 staff, from over 30 parishes
- We are an Orthodox Summer Church Camp
- We are not a "Special Needs" Camp
- We have a strong desire to serve those that we can
- We served a limited number of campers with special needs over the years. Some unexpectedly, and some we shouldn't have....

## Accommodating Youth:

### Ever Increasing Number of Campers With Special Needs

- 1960's- perhaps 1/camp, had special needs
- Today- closer to 1/cabin, have special needs
- Many undiagnosed as yet
- Define "special needs"

## Accommodating Youth:

Special Needs: Wikipedia

In the United States, **special needs** is a term used in clinical diagnostic and functional development to describe individuals who require assistance for disabilities that may be medical, mental, or psychological.

## Accommodating Youth:

Special Needs include:

- Mental Health Diagnoses: i.e. Tourette's, ADHD, Aspergers, depression, OCD.
- Bee Sting allergies
- Food Allergies
- Death related allergies- anaphylaxis
- Bed wetting
- Anxieties
- Home sickness
- Diabetes
- Casts/Scoliosis
- Prosthesis
- Sleep issues

## Accommodating Youth:

### Our Research Into Other Camps

- Why reinvent the wheel?
- We could not find any other Orthodox Camps with a process for campers with Special Needs
- The camp RN would make the decision
- The secular camps had a professional staff

## Accommodating Youth:

### Owning Our Limitations

- Overwhelming
- No qualifications to even entertain the idea of accepting campers with Special Needs
- Legal issues
- How to accept some and not others?
- We needed help!

## Accommodating Youth:

### Obtaining Ongoing Guidance From the Experts

- We created a Special Needs Committee
- School Psychologist
- Behavioral Therapist
- Parents of children with various special needs
- The Special Needs committee has the final decision

## Accommodating Youth:

### Our Process Today

- Owning our limitations
- The intention is that we welcome all campers, based on the staffing skills that we have available. On a more limited basis.... consider welcoming a child with greater needs based on the staffing that the parents agree to provide, and that St Mary's Camp agrees to accept. We cannot serve all populations, but with a framework of mutual disclosure, we can more effectively serve the needs of all our campers.

## Accommodating Youth:

### Our Process Today

#### Handouts

- "Special Needs Process"
- "Special Needs Grid"
- "Special Needs Information/Consideration Form"

## Accommodating Youth:

### Our Process Today

#### Challenges:

- Reaching those Orthodox families who have children with Special Needs **early**.
- It's a new process
- Undiagnosed campers
- Sensitive subject matter
- Parents who are not forthcoming with the necessary information

## Accommodating Youth:

### **Our Process Today**

#### Blessings:

- It is a solid and ever improving process.
- We can defer the final decision to those most qualified.
- We can accommodate many of our children with Special Needs.
- We reap the fruit of ministering to, and being ministered by our children (and staff) with Special Needs.

## Accommodating Youth:

Questions?