

Parent Handbook 2019



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Camp Hours:

9:00am – 4:00pm
Monday – Thursday
9:00am – 3:30pm
Friday

Camp Location:

VINS Nature Center
149 Natures Way
Quechee, VT 05059

Dear VINS Nature Camp Families,

Thank you for choosing VINS Nature Camp. Preparations are well underway for another summer of adventure and discovery.

This handbook is designed to help you plan for camp. It contains information about our policies, drop-off and pick-up, a packing list and much more.

At VINS Nature Camp, our mission is to help young people develop the life skills necessary to be a positive force for their community and the natural world. In order to be successful in our mission, we need the help of both campers and parents/guardians. The most significant way you can help is by becoming familiar with our rules and policies and by talking with your child about our camp values and behavior code before their first day of camp.

As you prepare for camp, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions. We look forward to sharing the wonders of the natural world with your child.

Warm regards,

Sarah Strew
Lead Nature Camp

Contact Information

Address: Vermont Institute of Natural Science
149 Natures Way
PO Box 1281
Quechee, VT 05059

Phone: 802-359-5000
Fax: 802-359-5001
Email: camps@vinsweb.org
Website: www.vinsweb.org/nature-camp
Tax ID#: 03-0231665

Staff: Sarah Strew, Lead Nature Camp
[sstrew@vinsweb.org](mailto:ssstrew@vinsweb.org)
802-359-5000 x245

Julie Kozak, Nature Camp Assistant
jkozak@vinsweb.org
802-359-5000 x245
(May – August)

Required Forms

The VINS Nature Camp Health and Emergency Care Form must to be completed and returned at least **two weeks prior** to your child's first day of camp. This important information helps us prepare to welcome your child to camp.

A link to this form is included in your registration confirmation or can be downloaded from the Camp Forms page on our website at <https://vinsweb.org/nature-camp/forms/>. Without these forms, your child may not attend camp.

Drop-off & Pick-up

Camper drop-off and pick-up is located at the east end of the VINS Nature Center parking lot.

Important: As you enter and exit our camp locations there is a set speed limit of 10 mph to ensure the safety of campers, visitors, and wildlife.

Drop-off Time: 9:00 am Monday – Friday.

Pick-up Time: 4:00 pm Monday –Thursday, **3:30 pm Friday**.

On the VINS Nature Camp Health and Emergency Care Form, please designate all adults who are authorized to pick up your child **INCLUDING** yourself. At pick-up, a valid ID **MUST** be presented or our staff cannot release your child.

If your camper will be arriving late or leaving early, please notify us at least one day prior so staff can plan accordingly. Contact the Lead Nature Camp at 802-359-5000 x245 or email camps@vinsweb.org.

Extended Day

VINS Nature Camp offers an extended day option from the end of regular camp day until 5:30 pm, Monday – Friday. You may register your child for this option on a weekly basis for \$50 per camper. This option is not offered each week at all camp locations. If you would like your child to participate in our extended day program and to learn more about availability, please call the Lead Nature Camp at 802-359-5000 x245.

Packing List

Your child should come to camp each day dressed in casual, comfortable clothes, ready to hike, run, and likely get wet and dirty. Your camper should be dressed for the weather and be prepared to spend most of the day outdoors. S/he should bring the following every day:

- Day pack to carry belongings
- Lunch (refrigeration is not available)
- One or two snacks
- Water bottle (water is available for refills)
- Complete change of clothes
- Sturdy walking shoes (ex. sneakers or closed-toed sandals)
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Baseball cap or sun hat
- Sweatshirt or lightweight jacket
- Raincoat
- Rain boots/shoes, if desired
- Empty plastic bag for bringing home wet clothes
- Medications (medication permission form must be filled out in VINS Nature Camp Health and Emergency Form)
- Bathing suit and towel¹
- Water shoes, if desired (ex. aqua socks, water sandals, or old sneakers)

¹ Not all camps have a swimming facility; however, there are options for water play on hot days.

What NOT to Pack/Wear

- Video games, iPods, cell phones or any other electronic toys or devices
- Personal items or toys unless otherwise requested by an instructor for a share time
- Flip flops or open-toed sandals
- Nice clothing that should not get wet or soiled
- Prescription or over-the-counter medications not listed in [VINS Nature Camp Health and Emergency Form](#)

Please be sure to label all of your child's belongings. At the end of the camp season, all unclaimed lost and found items will be donated.

Health Care

Medication: If your camper will be taking any prescribed or over-the-counter medications while at VINS Nature Camp you must notify camp staff by completing the Camper Medication Information, Permission, and Waiver section in the [VINS Nature Camp Health and Emergency Care Form](#). Camp staff is not permitted to administer any medications; however, we will remind and/or assist your child in taking his or her medicine according to your instructions.

Illness and Minor Injury: Please do not send your child to camp if s/he is ill. If your child becomes ill during camp, you will be called to pick him/her up. If your child becomes upset or injured during the day, a camp staff member will contact you in order to determine whether s/he should remain at camp for the rest of the day.

Emergencies: All VINS camp staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR and are trained to respond to emergencies. In the event of a health emergency, you will be contacted immediately. If camp staff are unable to reach you, your emergency contact will be notified.

If necessary, your child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest appropriate medical facility. Camp participants will never be transported in a VINS staff member's personal vehicle. A camp staff member will remain with your child until you or your designated emergency contact arrives.

Behavior Policies

VINS Nature Camp is committed to providing each camp participant, whether a camper, Leader-In-Training, or staff member, with a safe, nurturing camp experience that accommodates individual needs and learning styles.

In order to maintain the safety and quality of our camp program, we expect that everyone understand and adhere to our VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code. Please review the VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code with your child prior to their first day of camp.

VINS Nature Camp staff are trained in behavior management techniques and work with campers to resolve issues with their conduct. However, certain behaviors are deemed unacceptable at VINS Nature Camp; including, but not limited to, intentionally harming others, using abusive language, disobeying camp rules established at the start of the camp week.

In the event of unacceptable behavior, staff may issue the camper a 'Strike'. VINS Nature Camp operates on a three-strike policy when dealing with discipline issues:

1st Strike – Parent or guardian will be notified of the behavior and ensuing 'Strike' at the end of the camp day. VINS Nature Camp staff will discuss with parents and the camper how to avoid the behavior in the future.

2nd Strike – Parent or guardian will be notified during camp hours of the behavior and ensuing 'Strike'. VINS Nature Camp staff will continue to work with parents and the camper to avoid the behavior in the future.

3rd Strike – Parent or guardian will be notified to pick up the camper immediately. The child will be removed from camp for the remainder of the week. No refund will be given in the event of an expulsion.

VINS NATURE CAMP BEHAVIOR CODE

VINS' Nature Camp Behavior Code is based on the Five Finger Contract used by many adventure and challenge-by-choice programs. In our behavior code, we embrace five values, represented by each of the five fingers, which direct how we conduct ourselves at VINS Nature Camp.



- The **Pinky Finger** is the smallest and easiest to hurt which is why it represents **Safety** in our behavior code. When we look at our pinky, it reminds us to look out for the emotional and physical safety of others and ourselves, by following safety rules, using kind language, and keeping our hands to ourselves.
- People traditionally wear wedding bands on their **Ring Finger** to represent their **Commitment** to each other. VINS Nature Camp expects participants commit themselves to the camp experience by participating in the activities of the day, being willing to try new things, and being open to facing challenges. This allows campers to get the most out of their camp experience.
- At VINS Nature Camp, the **Middle Finger** represents **Respect** for each other, ourselves, and the world around us. Camp participants practice working with others and seeing the capacity for good in everyone. While at camp participants are also encouraged to give compliments and praise for jobs well done, and to think about ways to respect our camp environment.
- The **Pointer Finger** points; people often use it to point at others; at VINS Nature Camp we point this finger at ourselves. This finger reminds everyone about their **Responsibility** as part of a group. Everyone gets to choose how he or she behave. At VINS Nature Camp, children are taught to make their own choices and to take responsibility for their actions.
- “**Thumbs up**” is a universal gesture of approval. At VINS Nature Camp, the thumb reminds us to keep a positive attitude, encourage others and **HAVE FUN**. VINS Nature Camp curricula are designed so that campers will have fun while exploring nature and through those experiences build a better understanding of and appreciation for the natural world.

If you have any questions about our VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code or our policies regarding discipline or expulsion, please contact Lead Nature Camp, at 802-359-5000 x245.

Cancellation Policy

Cancellations are discouraged. If you must cancel your child's registration, please be aware of our refund policy outlined below. Refunds may be subject to a \$35 non-refundable processing fee and will be given according to the following schedule:

- If requested at least one month before the first day of camp, you will receive a full refund (less a \$35 processing fee).
- If requested one month - two weeks before the first day of camp, you will receive a 50% refund.
- If requested less than two weeks before the first day of camp, there will be no refund.
- VINS will not provide refunds if a child misses one or more days of camp due to dismissal, illness, unexpected family obligations, or any other unforeseen factor.

VINS reserves the right to cancel camp programs due to low enrollment. In the event that a camp is cancelled due to low enrollment, VINS will work to place campers in other camps or refund the entire camp fee.