

Working at Liberty Lake with Your Kids in Camp

Dear _____,

You are an important and valued member of our camp staff, and we absolutely LOVE that your actual FAMILY is intertwined with our camp family during the summer season. At Liberty Lake, our goal is for children of staff to be treated exactly the same as all the other campers. They get same perks- like slushie parties on their birthdays, and they get the same challenges- like not always getting what they want. I typed up my thoughts below, based on years of experience dealing with unintended issues, and consulting with some camp parents, so we can all work together to create the best environment possible for all.

- **When you see your child(ren) in passing, you can absolutely give them a quick hug.** But please refrain from kissing, as other kids and staff may not know that you are their parent, which can cause confusion and alarm.
- **If you see or hear about your child experiencing challenges, please refrain from jumping in and getting immediately involved.** Do what any other Liberty Lake parent would do- Talk to the division leader, in private. This helps avoid any unnecessary stress for our frontline staff.
- **Similarly, we also tell our division leaders and frontline staff not to bother YOU about your children during the camp day, unless it's an emergency.** This is very important- We don't want to stress you unnecessarily during the camp day. Long time Liberty Lake staffer Danielle Fudala used to literally tell her kids' division leaders, "Call my husband" if/when it happened.
- **Staff parents should not eat lunch with their kids, get them special snacks or drinks, and give them preferential treatment.** Liberty Lake is a wonderful place for kids, and part of the beauty of that experience is that we've created a mini-society in which everyone has the same rights and privileges- none more, none less. So, please explain this to your kids, who may assume otherwise. **If they do actually need anything special to support them, then let the support/inclusion team know,** and special snacks and drinks can be left in the appropriate locations- like the Health Center, or Snack Shack, as we would do with any other campers or staff who require additional support or dietary needs.
 - **One privilege that we do allow,** is staff parents/campers getting their picture taken with their kids on picture day with a professional photographer- but you, the adult, need to show up to the photography area when your child's group is getting their picture taken- not pull them out of their group, unless absolutely necessary.
- This is a big one- You are a super integral part of our staff, and if you are not at camp, it puts a strain upon the rest of our staff, and presents possible safety issues for the campers (as it would for any other important staff being out.) You are not easily replaceable, and many people are relying upon you- so PLEASE- have a backup plan in place for when your child is sick. **We hire staff under the assumption that if their child is sick, arrangements get made, and the staff is able to come to work.** If you need to go to a doctor appointment or such with your child- that is understandable. But not staying home the entire day due to lack of coverage. Emergencies happen, we understand, and we will be as flexible as we can, but I just want to outline the standard expectations.
- The last thing is that staff kids take up valuable spots in camp groups- spots that we've turned away countless other campers for the past 9 months. So, **the expectation is that our staff families adhere to the same cancellation rules as all families, which is- no cancellations after April 1.** By April, the vast majority of families on our wait lists have found alternate plans for their kids, which is why we have this policy in place. If your child doesn't come to camp for a week, we can't refund you that week into your salary, because we can't recoup that lost spot.

Once again, it brings us great joy to have parents and their kids at camp- it's been one of our secret sauces at Liberty Lake since we started up in 2002. Unfortunately, it's been a long time since we've communicated the guidelines we expect from the situation we create- we've made assumptions, and I apologize for that. We also realize that unique situations arise, and we'll do our best to work with you and your family when they do. I just wanted to lay out some expectations to make sure that we are all starting on the same page

Please feel free to discuss any of the above with me at your convenience.

And most importantly- please discuss the above with your children, to best set expectations for them as well.

Sincerely,
Andy Pritikin
Liberty Lake