

# Considerations for Choosing a Sensory Friendly Summer Camp

## What to Look for in a Camp for Your Child

### Size

- Total number of campers
- Camper to staff ratio
- How many children will be in one space at a time



### Staff

- Consider who the staff are, what experience and qualifications the program requires, and what training they receive
- Look into what role the staff plays throughout a typical day, consider whether they are directly facilitating activities or if they take on more of a supervision role

### Structure

- Daily camp routine
- Look into if everyone does the same activities or if there is range of choices to choose from
- Consider whether there is built in free time and what that looks like, particularly if it is an overnight program

### Duration

- Time commitment (days/weeks; hours per day)
- If overnights, access to communication with family



### Meals

- Check out if meals or snacks are provided
- Consider whether there is choice in what foods are offered, where meals are eaten, and at what time they occur
- Look into flexibility in and accommodations related to eating



### Environmental Considerations

- **Indoor:** Consider what type of lighting, seating, sounds and visuals will be in the environment
- **Outdoor:** Consider what type of environment the camp will be held on (pavement, grass, woods, etc.), how the program accommodates for weather, and other potential visual and auditory inputs that may be distracting or over-stimulating
- Accessibility of physical environment

### Other Considerations

- Look into if a tour of the facility/grounds are offered and if there is opportunity to talk with a program representative
- Camp/staff capacity to accommodate new and existing sensory diets
- Consider the program cost and if there are opportunities for scholarships or a sliding scale payment system
- Reach out to family and friends who may be familiar with or recommend a program

### Social Support

- Opportunities for parallel and joint play
- Consider how activities are structured
- Availability and ability of staff to provide support in facilitating social interaction



# Specific Profiles

*The profiles below provide further assistance in identifying specific areas to consider related to sensory processing, as well as suggestions on how to inquire about potential accommodations for your child as a camper.*

## Sensory Defensive

- Camps that offers a 'challenge by choice' approach to allow the child to find the best fit for their needs
- Consider whether there are areas that provide a quiet, cozy, and comfortable space for when children are feeling over-stimulated
- What activities are built into the day that promote organization, such as art, music, and oral motor activities

### Suggestions for Accommodations:

- Request a private 'cozy space' such as a small tented area or a book nook that your child can retreat to if needed
- Inform the camp of your child's needs around their sensory diet and request that times be built into the day for a staff member to complete those activities with your child



## Sensory Seeking

- Consistent opportunities for physical activities, both structured and unstructured
- May benefit from outdoor camps
- May benefit from additional opportunities during free time
- May benefit from accommodations during times that call for "calm bodies"

### Suggestions for Accommodations:

- Delegate additional tasks or jobs to the child that provide opportunities for input
- Offer alternative seating options, fidgets, chewables, and movement breaks
- Inform the camp of your child's needs regarding their sensory diet and request that times be built into the day for a staff member to complete those activities with your child

## Praxis Challenges

- Small staff to child ratio
- Staff that are actively facilitating activities and providing support for kids during completion of activities
- Offer schedule that is consistent and structured, with the same general routine every day
- Repeated activities that will be familiar and to enhance skill development

### Suggestions for Accommodations:

- Implementing a daily visual schedule that is on display in common areas or can be carried throughout the day by the camper or staff
- Offering a familiar activity that has been 'mastered' by the camper to return to when new activities are challenging