

PROJECT IDEA STARTER

Camp Counseling

by Jill Stechschulte, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development, Fulton County 4-H Camp Director



Do you like working with children and playing games? Do you love nature and being outdoors? You can combine these interests into one experience. 4-H camps look for teens who are willing to learn about children, leadership, camping, games, crafts and personal development. Eventually, we would like you to share your experiences by volunteering to become a camp counselor in your local program.

The supportive atmosphere at 4-H camps provides kids with opportunities to learn how to live, work and play through hands-on activities in the natural world. Success is within every camper's grasp through activities such as arts and crafts, tennis, archery, canoeing and team building/challenge courses. Campers learn to live away from home and make their own decisions. The counselor's role is to guide campers through this wide variety of experiences and to make it fun for everyone.

Objectives of 4-H Camping

1. To have educational, recreational and social experiences in outdoor living away from home.
2. To provide opportunities to meet and learn to get along with other people by living together and participating in a camping experience.
3. To provide opportunities for youth to learn to take responsibility for their own decisions and actions, and to learn to meet group responsibilities.
4. To teach youth about citizenship and the importance of being a responsible citizen.
5. To offer new experiences for youth by exploring new interests, or by exposing them to new approaches to old interests, such as nature, aquatics, music and other life skills that cannot be provided as effectively outside of camp.
6. To discover and provide opportunities for developing leadership skills.
7. To discover special talents among campers and teen leaders and provide opportunities for developing these talents.
8. To enrich the ongoing 4-H club program and to involve youth in unit 4-H clubs.
9. To have fun.
10. To be inspired to practice better 4-H club membership.

PLAN YOUR PROJECT

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as the starting place for your 4-H self-determined project. The *Self-Determined Project Guide* is available from your county OSU Extension office or on the Web at ohio4h.org/selfdetermined. You may choose to do a little or a lot depending on your level of interest. Be sure to register your project with your county OSU Extension office.

AREAS OF INTEREST AND THINGS TO DO

Every self-determined 4-H project can be broken down into areas of interest. These are the specific things members want to address during their project adventures. Using 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide*, identify at least three areas of interest with at least three activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the list below or make up your own.

Planning Your Adventure (Reference: 4-H 997 *4-H Camp Counselor's Handbook*)

- Develop and write your own 4-H camp philosophy.
- Make arrangements with an Extension educator to observe one day at camp.
- Volunteer two hours at the Extension office to help with 4-H camp preparations.
- Make a list of 10 questions from pages 6–7, “The 3R’s of Camp Counseling,” and use the list to interview a counselor with two or more years of experience.
- Create a portfolio or binder for your counseling information and activities.

Understand the Ages and Stages of Children from 8 to 15 Years Old

- Enroll in and complete a baby-sitting class.
- Enroll in and complete a basic first aid class.
- Observe third-graders on a playground for a half hour and

summarize your observations of the characteristics of 9 to 10-year-olds.

- Volunteer or observe at a day care center, day camp, vacation Bible school or church day care to gain experience with younger children.

Enhance Counseling Skills and Personal Qualities

- Start a binder or file for camp games, crafts, activities and resources.
- Find and teach to your 4-H club, five get-acquainted name games or ice-breaker activities.
- Choose three group game activities, skills or crafts to teach and make with your 4-H club or another youth group.
- Complete the counselor self-rating scale on pages 17–19 to assess your skills before your camp experience.

Camper Behavior Management

- Write goals for you and your campers to achieve at 4-H camp.
- Make arrangements to visit, shadow and observe an experienced counselor for one day at another 4-H camp.
- Write about what it means to “Live by Words and Deed.”

Leadership/Citizenship Activities

- Assist in setting up and/or cleaning up for camp.
- Help someone with a child care, first aid, creative arts or leadership project.

- Arrange a tour of 4-H camp for members of your club.
- Encourage a friend to join 4-H and take a self-determined camp counselor project.
- Teach someone something you learned about 4-H or another topic.
- Invite someone to talk to your club about being a counselor or going to camp.
- Prepare and exhibit a display promoting 4-H, 4-H camp or your topic.
- Use a county camp flier to promote 4-H camp to your 4-H club or to the local library.
- Interview the county Extension educator about counselor opportunities and requirements.

RELATED RESOURCES

Ohio State University Extension
4-H camping information,
ohio4h.org/4-h-camps

American Camp Association,
acacamps.org

The Future of Children,
futureofchildren.org

National Association for the
Education of Young Children,
naeyc.org

JoAnn Fabric and Crafts Stores,
joann.com

ohio4h.org/selfdetermined