Self-Direction Competency
Ohio 4-H Camp Counselor Core Competencies

Hannah K. Epley
Extension Specialist, 4-H Camping and Older Youth

Camp counselors contribute to a quality camping experience and therefore it is important to understand factors that influence their successful performance. Because counselors work directly with campers, they have a great impact on the learning environment. Across the country, 4-H is known for its use of teens as camp counselors. 4-H camp counselors need to know how to perform their multi-faceted role, and the 4-H professionals who train them need to be able to evaluate their competencies. A competency model was developed to support 4-H camp counselor selection, training, and evaluation.

This list of Ohio 4-H Camp Counselor Core Competencies was developed by using a variety of internal and external sources. Ohio 4-H professionals were involved in a mixed-method research design including a review of literature, interviews, modified nominal group technique, focus groups, and a survey. The process included data gathering, analysis, integration, and peer debriefing in four phases: (a) review of literature, document review, and idea generation; (b) new model development; (c) model validation; and (d) final refinement and confirmation.

Core competencies are the demonstrated capacities that form a foundation for high-quality performance in the workplace. For the purpose of this information, this workplace may include campsites or camping programs in Ohio. Definitions are also presented, which is a term and associated description of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and observable behaviors that represent the competency identified. Key actions, or general descriptions of behaviors that illustrate a competency, are given for each competency on subsequent fact sheets in this series.

These competencies are what 4-H camp professionals should focus on when selecting, training, and evaluating camp counselors. For related resources on these and other topics, refer to the Ohio 4-H Camping Curriculum. The additional fourteen competencies and their key actions may be found on subsequent fact sheets in this series.

Competency: Self-Direction

Definition: Takes initiative and does things from start to finish with all the details and without being asked; works unsupervised; admits and recognizes mistakes when they are made.

Key actions

- Identifies what needs to be accomplished and takes action before being asked; looks into the future to prepare the setting.
- Takes initiative to generate ideas or play games during transition or down time; includes teachable moments as they arise.
- Is prepared to lead an activity but changes plans if needed.
- Performs with minimal supervision or direction and follows through on assignments or tasks without being reminded.
- Is willing to take ownership for successes and failures; works toward achieving group (and not individuals’) success.