



Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions for Youth Camps during the COVID-19 Pandemic

May 18, 2021

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is committed to ensuring the safe operation of youth camps and programs during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

MDH Order [No. 2021-05-14-01](#) directs all youth camp operators to follow all applicable federal guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on this subject and, where applicable, the [Maryland School Reopening Guidance](#) from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and MDH (updated January 2021). This order also includes face covering requirements for youth camps. All previous MDH Orders are rescinded.

Please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) below, as well as MDH's website on [youth camps](#). If you have any additional questions about youth camps, please visit [MD Youth Camp and Swimming Pool Questions](#).

Who this guidance is for: This guidance applies to all youth camps regulated by the State of Maryland under the Youth Camps Act (Annotated Code of Maryland, Health-General §§14-401—411, and Code of Maryland Regulations 10.16.06 and 10.16.07).

Other youth programs not regulated as youth camps are encouraged to follow this guidance.

NEW! Household cohorts are allowed in residential camps, including relaxed face covering and social distancing requirements in certain circumstances. See [What are the physical distancing requirements for youth camps?](#) for more information.

NEW! Out of state campers are allowed in Maryland camps. See [Can children from out of state attend Maryland camps in 2021?](#) for more information.

NEW! Field trips are allowed with proper precautions. See [Are camp field trips allowed?](#) for more information.

NEW! Children aged 12 and above can now [get vaccinated](#). At this time, MDH and CDC's guidelines apply to vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

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What guidelines are youth camps required to follow?

Youth Camps should refer to the CDC's [Guidance for Operating Youth and Summer Camps During COVID-19](#), as amended. In particular, follow the guidance for:

Prevention Strategies that Reduce the Spread of COVID -19

- o Masks
- o Physical Distancing
- o Screening and Symptom Monitoring

Maintaining Healthy Environments

- o Food Service

Maintaining Healthy Operations

- o Modify Camp Activities

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Additional Guidance for Overnight Camps

Camps also need to follow any orders from local jurisdictions on camp operation, group size, etc.

The following questions and answers are provided as additional guidance to youth camps. If you have additional questions, please contact the [MDH Youth Camps Program](#).

Do youth camps need to document their COVID-19 procedures and policies?

Youth camps should create an addendum for COVID-19 procedures in the camp's Health Program, which is required under COMAR 10.16.07 and reviewed by the youth camp's Health Supervisor.

When do face coverings need to be worn?

MDH Order [No. 2021-05-14-01](#) requires that all persons over the age of five wear a face covering when they are indoors at any youth camp. MDH strongly recommends that non-vaccinated individuals over the age of 2 years continue to wear face coverings in all indoor settings outside of their homes and in outdoor settings when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

MDH recommends that staff, visitors and campers wear face coverings outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

What precautions should cafeterias and other foodservice establishments at youth camps follow?

Youth camps that provide food service should follow the CDC guidance for food service, listed under [Maintaining Healthy Environments](#). No additional MDH orders are in effect regarding foodservice establishments. For additional information, see MDH's [COVID-19 Food Safety](#) page, including the FAQs. How should youth camps cohort or group campers? How large can a group be?

Campers should be grouped into cohorts or “pods” in order to keep campers together with the same people to minimize exposure to other people while at camp. If an outbreak occurs, smaller cohorts will limit the potential exposure to fewer people compared to larger cohorts. Cohorting is **not** a substitution for other basic prevention control measures, including physical distancing and use of face coverings.

The group size will be determined by camper supervision requirements (COMAR 10.16.06.54) and the smallest practicable group that the camp can maintain to ensure campers are with the same group throughout the day, every day per CDC guidance. There can be more than one group on a field or in a gymnasium, so long as they are sufficiently separated to avoid mixing. Groups must be at least 6 feet from another group. For more, see the CDC’s guidance on [Maintaining Healthy Environments](#), Communal Spaces.

For residential (overnight) youth camps, group campers and staff by sleeping area. For more information, see [What are the physical distancing requirements for youth camps?](#).

Can staff, instructors, and other visitors rotate through cohorts?

Keep the same staff with a group of campers throughout the camp session. If a camper/staff group has an instructor/visitor, increase the distance between the group and the new individual, and follow [face covering requirements](#). For more information, see the CDC guidance on [Maintaining Healthy Operations](#).

What are the physical distancing requirements for youth camps?

In both indoor and outdoor spaces, maintain at least 3 feet of physical distancing among campers in the same cohort, and at least 6 feet of physical distancing among campers and staff, between cohort groups, and between staff. For cohorts that include children under age 5, maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between campers, campers and staff.

Whenever face coverings cannot be worn (such as while eating or drinking), maintain 6 feet of physical distancing between campers.

NOTE: **Residential** camps and programs may create a “household cohort” of both campers and staff who share a sleeping space by following all of the guidance in the CDC’s [Additional Guidance for Overnight Camps](#). This household cohort may then participate in activities (indoors or outdoors) without wearing face coverings or maintaining physical distancing when there are no non-household cohort individuals nearby. Face coverings must still be worn in any situation in which the cohort is mixing with other non-cohort members, either indoors or outdoors, as specified in the **Interim Update on Facial Coverings for Child Care, Schools and Youth Camps**. Household cohort members must maintain physical distancing from non-cohort individuals per the above guidance.

What should a youth camp do if a staff member or camper gets sick?

- See the MDH/MSDE [Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Laboratory Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools, Child Care Programs, and Youth Camps](#). Fully vaccinated individuals with no COVID-19-like symptoms do not need to quarantine following an exposure.
- Follow CDC guidelines, including [Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick](#), [Case Identification and Contact Tracing at Overnight Camps](#), and [Cleaning and Disinfecting Facilities](#).
- Notify parents and/or guardians and the local health department.

Can children from out of state attend Maryland camps in 2021?

Yes, children who reside outside of Maryland may attend Maryland youth camps per MDH Order [No. 2021-05-14-01](#). However, please check with your local jurisdiction for any other applicable orders.

Camps that allow campers from farther away can mitigate the increase in risk by requiring campers and their families to obtain screening tests and follow quarantine and exposure precautions. Consult with your Health Supervisor to develop appropriate procedures and communicate procedures to campers' parents and/or guardians and staff.

Do campers need to be tested or self-quarantine if they travel outside of the State before starting camp?

MDH strongly recommends that individuals traveling to Maryland get a COVID-19 test upon arriving in Maryland or within 72 hours before travel to Maryland. A second test within 72 hours of arrival is also recommended. For more information, see the [MDH Order No. 2021-04-28-02](#). Staff that commute daily in/out of the state are exempt from the quarantine recommendation.

Do camps have to screen all staff and campers daily for symptoms of COVID-19?

See the CDC's section on Screening and Symptom Monitoring, under [Prevention Strategies That Reduce the Spread of COVID-19](#).

How can programs safely transport participants?

All individuals are required to wear a face covering, and non-household members (including members of residential camp household cohorts - see [What are the physical distancing requirements for youth camps?](#)) are required to maintain at least 6 feet of physical distancing. Open windows to increase ventilation as much as possible, and clean the vehicle after use.

Are camp field trips allowed?

Camps may include field trips with safe transportation, use of face coverings, and no mixing with individuals outside the camper/staff group. Trips to outdoor areas are safer, and trips to an indoor location must include procedures to maintain physical distancing from other individuals.

MDH recommends that staff, essential visitors, and all children aged 2 years and above wear face coverings outdoors at a child care program, school, youth day camp, or summer day program and while engaged in outdoor offsite activities (e.g. field trips) when physical distancing cannot be maintained (MDH Order [No. 2021-05-14-01](#)).

Can participants share equipment, including sports equipment like baseballs and basketballs and art supplies?

See CDC guidance: [Guidance for Operating Youth and Summer Camps During COVID-19 - Maintaining Healthy Environments](#)

Provide individual equipment or supplies for each participant if possible. If equipment is shared, reinforce healthy hygiene and wash hands immediately after using equipment. Use equipment and supplies that can easily be cleaned between uses.