

# Camping Standards

April 2022



The United Church of Canada • L'Église Unie du Canada

Camping Standards (April 2022)



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## **MISSION&SERVICE**

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## About This Resource

In 2021, a group of five members representing camps, regional councils, and camp accreditors came together to review the existing United Church camping standards and process. The last review and revision of the standards had been in 2014. A trial of virtual visits was implemented in 2018 but did not result in a positive outcome.

Since the start of the accreditation program in 2004, camps have identified the issue of duplication between the provincial camping standards and the United Church standards. Preparing for accreditation visits and the actual visits took time and resources. And the question continually asked was “Why do we need to do both?”

In 2019, with the United Church restructuring, presbyteries were lost. Many camps felt disconnected from the larger church. They no longer had a place to connect directly with congregations (formerly at presbytery meetings), and their connection with the regional council was yet to be defined.

Both of these factors were part of the discussions and contributed to these new standards. The existing United Church standards, the provincial standards, and the related processes were reviewed and compared extensively. The goal was to have a process that was meaningful for all parties, reduce duplication, and provide a mechanism that would renew and maintain relationships with the regional council. This manual is intended to meet these goals.

Camping Standards 2022 are now in effect. The first visits will occur in 2023.

## Theological Rationale

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

The opening words from the United Church's New Creed remind us that God is present in the world and in our lives; God's activity and loving hand is made known to us through the beauty of creation and through the people around us. Church camping ministry is a unique way in which our church can share and celebrate God's presence in the world.

...to live with respect in Creation...

At camp, people of various ages and stages gather to share in Christian community. They eat together, cook and clean together, work and learn together, disagree and laugh together. They swim in lakes and seas, gather around fires, walk in woods, and gaze at stars. In the faces of those around them, in the stillness of quiet moments alone, and in the struggles and joys of community, people meet God.

...to love and serve others...

United Church camping is a ministry that touches the lives of thousands of children, teens, young adults, adults, and seniors every year. It is a ministry the church celebrates and supports. If camp is to be a place of ministry and meeting God, campers, volunteers, staff, and camp boards must feel nurtured, valued, and safe.

...to seek justice and resist evil...

The church is obligated to ensure that camp facilities meet reasonable and recognized safety standards, and that the staff is trained and able to care for campers responsibly and lovingly.

...to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

The church is committed to offering quality Christian education programs, consistent with United Church culture and tradition. Camps provide an environment of safety, love, respect, and community, where Christ's loving presence can be celebrated and shared.

## Standards and Criteria

All standards listed in this handbook are mandatory. The camp needs to meet all the standards to continue as a recognized United Church outdoor ministry.

In evaluating whether a standard has been met, visitor observation and discussion supplement the written documentation.

### A. Provincial Camping Association

#### Standards

1. The camp is an accredited member of the provincial camping association.
2. Provincial accreditation: date and decision of last visit are recorded.

#### How to Meet the Standards

1. Indication that membership has been renewed annually
2. Copy of accreditation status from the provincial camping association

### B. Mission Statement and Theological Values

#### Standards

1. The camp has a mission statement that is available to staff, volunteers, campers, and families in written form or publicly posted (property, website, brochures).
2. The mission statement is reviewed, at minimum, every three years as documented in board minutes.
3. The camp mission statement is included as part of staff training.
4. The faith foundation of the camp is clearly reflected in the promotion of the camp (printed materials, website, mission statement).
5. The camp includes a Christian education/faith formation program that reflects the theology, practices, and beliefs of The United Church of Canada.
6. Staff receive training reflecting the Christian education curriculum, including United Church theology, practices, and beliefs and how these are lived out at camp.
7. The board ensures that staff have access to people and resources to assist them in providing a Christian community at camp.
8. Opportunities exist for campers to talk about their faith/spirituality and experiences.

#### How to Meet the Standards

1. Copy of the mission statement, link on website
2. Date of board minutes
3. Review of agenda
4. Review of brochures, website
5. Discussion about the program, observation of delivery of program

6. Review agenda
7. Chaplain on site, board member
8. Observation of programs

## **C. Governance and Accountability**

### **Standards**

1. The camp has a governing body (board/council/committee) that is responsible for the administration and running of the camp and has a relationship with the regional council.
2. The board ensures that the camp has completed and submitted the annual reporting requirements to the regional council and the General Council.
3. The governing body ensures that the camp adheres to all relevant legislation at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels as they pertain to camp operations.
4. The board ensures that the camp adheres to all relevant legislation at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels for employment/labour and human rights.
5. The board ensures that the camp adheres to the health and safety procedures required by municipal/regional/provincial/territorial statutes and regulations for the jurisdiction in which the camp is situated, including all required testing, training, and licensing.
6. The board ensures that all required inspections are requested and completed each season before camp starts—i.e., public health, fire, water, challenge courses, equipment/playground.
7. The board ensures that the camp meets all camp staffing standards as required by the provincial camping association.
8. The camp has a policy in place to meet mandated legislation and that is comparable to The United Church of Canada Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy, adapted to the camp context, for investigating and taking appropriate follow-up action for complaints of sexual misconduct against lay staff and volunteers. Ministry personnel employed by the camp are accountable under The United Church of Canada Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures.
9. The board has in place policies that meet mandated provincial legislation in relation to the following specific areas: workplace discrimination and harassment, accessibility/inclusion, privacy (including use of personal information collected), copyright. These policies are compatible with and meet or exceed related United Church policies.
10. The board has a policy for accessing staff, volunteer, and camp records that restricts access to those who need this information during camp and during the off-season. This includes but is not limited to camper/personnel (staff and volunteer) files, including medical history, medical/emergency first aid records, incident reports.
11. The board has a policy in place to address any issues related to staff reporting directly to them.

12. The board regularly reviews all policies and revises them to reflect changes in legislation and camp practices. This should be reflected in board minutes.

### **How to Meet the Standards**

1. Organization structure chart
2. Confirmation that the following have been received by the regional council: annual report, board membership, financial statements, insurance policy; received by the General Council Office: camp stats and annual compliance form
3. Policies, inspection/test results, licences to operate, including special programs such as ropes courses
4. Review of financial records to ensure that CPP, UI, and other mandated deductions have been made and submitted as required  
Policies related to hiring, discipline, and termination practices.
5. Copies of licences, evidence of training certificates, evidence of test results
6. Copies of requests for inspections and results
7. Policies for recruitment, hiring, discipline, and termination; job descriptions (paid and volunteer positions); screening policy and evidence of completing; policy re: behaviour standards of staff/volunteers on and off property
8. Review of policy, looking for specific procedures for investigating and handling complaints
9. Actual copies of the policy and review in relation to United Church policies; consider: policy addresses how the use of personal information collected is communicated to relevant parties; signed consent form/release for the use of photos/videos or similar
10. Policy and demonstration/narrative regarding storage of camp records during camp, off season and historical
11. Policies related to handling staff-related issues; may include policies re: complaints about staff (from parents, other staff/volunteers), discipline
12. Review of board minutes, whether camp has a review schedule

## **D. Recordkeeping/Record Retention**

### **Standards**

1. The board ensures that the following records are kept for a minimum of seven years:
  - camper files
  - personnel files (staff and volunteer)
  - medical/emergency first-aid records, including medication dispensing records
  - incident reports
  - public health reports, including inspections, water test results (where applicable)
  - health and safety inspections, including maintenance requests/logs, fire inspection results and follow-up



2. The board ensures that all insurance policies, including expired policies, and records of insurance coverage are kept in perpetuity.
3. The board keeps records of its annual reports, including financial records, in perpetuity for archival purposes.

#### **How to Meet the Standards**

1. Record retention policy or schedule that outlines the requirements
2. Confirmation of how records are kept, where, and who has access: paper, electronic, backups
3. Copies of policies showing dates and coverage; may be hard or soft copies
4. Copies of reports, hard or soft copies

## **E. Leadership Training and Staff Manual**

### **Standards**

1. The camp holds pre-camp training sessions for camp staff that meet the provincial camping association requirements.
2. Camp directors participate in camp staff training.
3. All camp staff have received/have access to and have received training on
  - staff behavioural expectations
  - sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and child abuse policies, including the duty to report
  - appropriate camper discipline
  - staff responsibilities, including camp health policies
  - safety procedures
  - emergency procedures, including fire, waterfront/waterfront searches, land searches, evacuation, severe weather
  - program delivery standards, including any additional specialized training for specific populations at camp
4. Camp staff are required to sign an acknowledgement of having received and read the information noted above. One copy of this document is kept in each staff member's personnel file.

### **How to Meet the Standards**

1. Evidence that pre-camp training sessions have occurred: agendas, attendance confirmations
2. Evidence that camp directors have participated in training sessions: agendas, attendance confirmations
3. Staff manual, training agenda
4. Sample acknowledgement form

## **F. Health and Safety**

### **Standards**

1. The camp health policies are reviewed annually and updated as required by the camp health personnel (i.e., camp nurse, first-aider, or board designate). The health policies are implemented by the camp health personnel.
2. A health plan is developed and implemented by the camp health personnel for any camper or staff member where the medical history deems it necessary.

### **How to Meet the Standards**

1. Documentation in board or committee minutes
2. Discussion of how medical needs of campers/staff are addressed

## **G. Leadership Standards for Off-Site Activities and Adventure Camping**

*Note: This applies only to camps that offer off-site or adventure camping activities.*

Refer to the [Glossary](#) for definition of off-site adventure camping. This includes activities that occur on camp property but apart from regular camp activities.

### **Standards**

1. Groups are under the supervision of at least two leaders, one of whom is an adult person as defined by the legislation of the jurisdiction in which the camp is situated.
2. Leadership that accompanies or supervises off-site or adventure camping reflects the gender diversity of the participants.

### **How to Meet the Standards**

1. Review of policy and/or program description for off-site or adventure camping
2. Review of policy and/or program description for off-site or adventure camping

## Accreditation Process

One objective of this process is to ensure relationships continue to be fostered between the camps and the church at the regional level. As we move forward, the regional council and the General Council Office will work together to complete the accreditation process. The steps involved and those who will implement them are outlined in the process that follows.

1. The regional council identifies a person/team (to be determined by each region) who will visit camps within the region.
2. Training is provided to the visitors/team, facilitated by the Duty of Care Program Coordinator.
3. The Site Visit Tool includes columns for response (Yes/No) and a notes area for additional information that may be needed.
4. Visits are on a three-year schedule. A camp is visited once every three years unless there is some specific need for a visit to occur before the three years elapse.
5. The regional council is responsible for scheduling visits. The visit is to be conducted while camp is in session and at a mutually agreed upon time. Ideally, visit dates are established early in the spring to allow time for the camp to compile the required information.
6. The regional council provides the Duty of Care Program Coordinator with a list of camps to be visited each year and the dates of the visits.
7. The Duty of Care Program Coordinator confirms with the regional council the status of annual reporting information that has been received or is outstanding.
8. Once the on-site visit and site tool have been completed, a brief summary report is prepared and submitted to both the regional council and the General Council Office.
9. All information is reviewed by the Duty of Care Program Coordinator, who will decide whether the camp has met all the requirements or not.
10. If a camp fails to meet all the standards or has not submitted all the required annual reporting requirements, they will be given the opportunity to address any outstanding items, with a time limit, before the final decision is determined.
11. The failure of a camp to meet all the standards will result in further action being taken by the regional council. This may include conversations, a follow-up visit the following year, and other supportive steps. If the issue cannot be resolved, the potential final action would be loss of status as a United Church camp.

### **Camps without a Provincial Association or Program**

A small number of camps are unable to participate in a provincial camping program. This may be due to the fact that a provincial association does not exist. Where a provincial association does exist, it may not have an accreditation program or the camp may not meet the requirements of the provincial association to be accredited. Under these circumstances, additional requirements will be added to the identified standards included in this manual. Camps affected will be contacted and provided with the additional standards.

## Glossary

### **adventure camping**

Activities in the countryside, forest, or mountains; on lakes, rivers, or the sea; in or through remote, isolated areas; and away from communities or established camps. Adventure camping may involve camping in tents, shelters, or in the open and travelling by foot, horseback, canoe, boat, skis, snowshoes, bicycles, and so on. Adventure camping may take place on or off camp property.

### **camp board**

See governing body.

### **camp director**

Adult on the camp property who has ultimate responsibility for summer camp programs and is responsible to the board of directors.

### **camp staff**

Paid or unpaid people in the service of the camp who have ongoing responsibility for one or more aspects of camp life. Camp staff are accountable to the camp board through a supervisor named by the camp board. Camp staff sign a contract detailing the terms of their service to the camp. Camp staff positions include positions such as camp director, assistant director, counsellors, camp health personnel, waterfront staff, and program staff.

### **child abuse**

Child abuse, in the context of these standards, means physical abuse and child sexual abuse, which includes sexual assault, sexual interference, invitation to touching, sexual exploitation, procurement, and indecent acts to a child as defined by law.

### **faith formation**

A lifelong process of growing in faith and in relationship with God, self, one another, and creation. Faith formation can happen in many ways, including worship, prayer, community life, service, relationship, and study.

### **governing body**

The body that provides guidance, direction, and oversight of the total camp operation. This body works with the various camp committees to ensure that all standards, policies, and regulations regarding camping (United Church policy, provincial legislation, and regulations and policies of provincial camping associations) are adhered to.

### **incident report**

A report written immediately following any accident involving injury or where serious violation of safety policy has occurred. Camps should have a standardized form for recording details of such incidents.

**off-site**

Property not owned by the camp, such as Crown land, lakes or rivers, public roads, or private property.

**screening**

A process designed to help organizations create and maintain safe environments by identifying any positions that may create risk to vulnerable individuals and selecting individuals to fill those positions using criteria determined to reduce risks.

**sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse, in the context of these standards, includes sexual harassment, pastoral sexual misconduct, and sexual assault. Sexual abuse is demeaning, exploitive behaviour of a sexual nature ranging from jokes, to unwanted touching, to forced sexual activities and/or threats of such behaviour. Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pastoral sexual misconduct are forms of sexual abuse that are often primarily acts of power by one individual over another.

**sexual harassment**

Any attempt to coerce an unwilling person into a sexual relationship, or to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention, or to punish a refusal to comply, or to reward compliance.

Sexual harassment may involve a wide range of behaviours, from verbal innuendo to overt demands to inappropriate contact of a sexual nature. It includes actions that contribute to an environment that is poisoned by persistent comments about sex, gender, appearance, marital status, or sexual orientation, and/or by the presence of pornographic materials.

## Appendix A: Annual Submission and Camp Stats Form



### Camping Standards: Annual Submission

As part of the accreditation process, each camp is required to submit the following information annually to the General Council Office of The United Church of Canada in addition to the camp's supervising regional council:

- A. Annual Camp Standards Compliance Form
- B. camp stats
- C. current annual report
- D. current board member list
- E. financial statement
- F. insurance statement for upcoming camping season indicating type and levels of coverage

**Please submit electronically to:**

[dutyofcare@united-church.ca](mailto:dutyofcare@united-church.ca)

**Please submit hardcopies to:**

Duty of Care Staff  
The United Church of Canada  
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200  
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4

### Explanations and Definitions

- All information refers to the summer season with regard to camp sessions, numbers, staff, etc.
- Number of resource staff: refers to programming type staff.
- Number of support staff: refers to kitchen, maintenance, and office/administrative staff.
- Number of camp sessions: refers to the number of camps offered (an easy way is to count the number of different sessions advertised in your brochure).
- Online: refers to virtual camp programs.
- Camp in a box: refers to programs delivered to campers at their homes or other sites.
- Camp usage – other: programs that may have been offered in an alternative setting, such as a congregational program.

- Avg. camp length (in days): look at your camp sessions and calculate the average number of days. For example, if you have 3 sessions that run 3 days, 7 sessions that run 5 days, and 4 sessions that run 10 days, the average is 6 days.
- Number of campers (season total): refers to the total number of campers who actually attended camp during the summer.
- Camp capacity (per season): refers to the number of campers the camp can accommodate.

Thank you!

### Camp Stats

Reporting Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Camp Stats Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Camp Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Camp staff	Volunteers under 18 years	Paid under 18 years	Volunteers over 18 years	Paid over 18 Years
Number of counsellors				
Number of resource staff				
Number of support staff				

Counsellors in training	14 years	15 years	16 years	Over 16 years
Number of CITs				

Camp usage	Number of sessions	Number of days	Fees per day	Capacity per session	Number of campers (season total)
Camp sessions (traditional camp)					
Online					
Camp in a box					
Other					
Other					

Facility use:     Summer     Spring     Fall     Year-round



<b>Rental type</b>	<b>Number of rentals</b>	<b>Rental type</b>	<b>Number of rentals</b>
Congregations		Youth groups	
Women's groups		Men's groups	
Regional council		Schools	
Community groups		Service clubs	
Family gathering		Other	

Please specify "Other": \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: United Church of Canada Annual Camp Standards Compliance Form

As a part of The United Church of Canada Camping network, the expectation is that every camp participates in the accreditation program for camps in addition to being a member (where possible) of the provincial camping association. Camps that participate and comply with the standards recognize the importance of creating a healthy and safe camping environment. By completing and signing this form, your camp demonstrates a recommitment to these principles.

Every camp is asked to review and complete this Annual Camp Standards Compliance Form. By signing the form, you are also demonstrating the camp's recommitment to adhere to the standards in its daily operations. The form is to be signed by at least one member of the board or governing body with responsibility for the camp operation.

Name of camp (as it will appear on the United Church website under [Find a Location](#)):

---

Legal name of camp (if different from above):

---

Winter mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Contact telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Campsite address: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Contact telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternative telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Summer mailing address (if different from campsite address): \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of camp board chair: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

We are a provincially accredited camp:  Yes  No

Date of last accreditation: \_\_\_\_\_

In No, please explain why: \_\_\_\_\_

## Membership Agreement

Please sign below to confirm the following statements on behalf of the camp:

- The information I/we have provided in this Compliance Form is accurate and true as of the date indicated below.
- I/We confirm that the camp is an accredited member in good standing with our provincial camping association.
- OR**
- I/We confirm that the camp is unable to participate in a provincial accreditation program. (Please indicate why.)
- I/We have reviewed The United Church of Canada Standards as outlined in the [Camping Standards Manual](#) (united-church.ca, search “administrative standards”).
- The camp agrees to adhere to these standards.
- The camp has valid insurance coverage that includes naming The United Church of Canada as Additional Insured.
- The camp has a sexual abuse and harassment policy and process in place.
- The camp adheres to all health and safety legislation as it applies to the camp setting.
- The camp adheres to all local and provincial legislation related to the camp operation including, but not limited to, health inspections, water testing, fire safety, etc.
- The camp agrees to allow an accreditation visit in accordance with the United Church Accreditation program.
- I/We are authorized to sign this Membership Agreement on behalf of the camp.

Authorized signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Provincial Camping Associations

### **British Columbia Camps Association**

Box 1808 – 2020 Massey Drive

Prince George, BC V2L 4V7

236-531-5090

[info@bccamping.org](mailto:info@bccamping.org)

[bccamping.org](http://bccamping.org)

### **Alberta Camping Association**

11759 Groat Rd. NW

Edmonton, AB T5M 3K6

403-703-2013

[info@albertacamping.com](mailto:info@albertacamping.com)

[albertacamping.com](http://albertacamping.com)

### **Saskatchewan Camps Association**

Box 8862

Saskatoon, SK S7K 6S6

306-232-0190

[info@saskcamps.ca](mailto:info@saskcamps.ca)

[saskcamps.ca](http://saskcamps.ca)

### **Manitoba Camping Association**

Unit F - 1215 Henderson Hwy

Winnipeg, MB R2G 1L8

204-784-1130

[kimscherger@manitobacamping.ca](mailto:kimscherger@manitobacamping.ca)

[mbcamping.ca](http://mbcamping.ca)

### **Ontario Camps Association**

70 Martin Ross Ave.

Toronto, ON M3J 2L4

416-485-0425; 1-844-485-0425

[info@ontariocamps.ca](mailto:info@ontariocamps.ca)

[ontariocamps.ca](http://ontariocamps.ca)

### **Association des camps du Québec**

4545, avenue Pierre-De Coubertin

Montréal, QC H1V 0B2

514-252-3113; 1-800-361-3586

[info@camps.qc.ca](mailto:info@camps.qc.ca)

[campsquebec.com](http://campsquebec.com)

**New Brunswick Camping Association**

506-853-3507

[john@campcentennial.ca](mailto:john@campcentennial.ca)

[nbcamping.ca](http://nbcamping.ca)

**Camping Association of NS & PEI**

c/o Sports Nova Scotia

4th Floor, 5516 Spring Garden Road

Halifax, NS B3J 1G6

902-220-3280

[info@canspei.ca](mailto:info@canspei.ca)

[campingns.ca](http://campingns.ca)

**Newfoundland and Labrador Camping Association**

27 Earle Drive

Pasadena, NL A0L 1K0

709-686-2363

[killdeveil.camp@gmail.com](mailto:killdeveil.camp@gmail.com)