



4-H Overnight Camps

Overview

This document provides guidance for 4-H overnight camps. When planning a camp, it is important to know when licensing is required through the [Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential \(MiLEAP\)](#):

- For overnight camps, a residential camp site or program license is generally required if the camp program is 5 or more days in length.
- For day camps, a day camp license is required if care is provided for more than 4 hours per day for 5 or more days within a 14-day period.

Staff should be aware of these thresholds relative to program length and plan their program accordingly. This document applies to non-licensed camps that fall below this threshold. Staff wanting to pursue a camp license should discuss this with their supervisor. Staff should also keep in mind that camp licensing rules occasionally change and ensure they are referencing current rules when planning.

Camps and the 4-H Overnight Housing Policy

The Michigan 4-H Overnight Housing Policy applies to 4-H Overnight Camps, although some aspects are applied differently in a camp setting. When planning a 4-H Overnight Camp, consider these camp-specific guidelines:

- **Gender:** Youth should be assigned to sleeping quarters according to their gender identity.
- **Separate sleeping area:** All youth must have their own bunk/bed. The number of people in a cabin should not exceed the cabin's capacity.
- **4-H Member Ages:** 18- and 19-year-old youth participants may be in cabins/halls with younger 4-H members with the [written consent](#) of a parent or legal guardian.
 - 18- and 19-year-olds must be screened through Volunteer Central. Screening includes criminal history check and one reference check.
- **Youth Counselors:** Youth counselors should be utilized in cabins, and it is recommended that two youth counselors are assigned to each cabin. This allows counselors to properly assist campers when they have nighttime needs (for example: visiting the Health Officer).
 - Youth counselors must never be in a 1:1 situation with a camper.
 - It is recommended that youth counselors be at least two years older than camper age.
- **Adults:** Adult participants aged 20 or older must be in a separate room within the youth cabin/hall or in a neighboring cabin within earshot. Adults will not share the same cabin with youth participants unless

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one of the few exceptions outlined in the Overnight Housing Policy applies and a written request for an exception is submitted to the appropriate staff person and approved.

- In situations where medical care is being provided to a camper, the camper may lodge with the Health Officer and an additional screened adult with documented parent approval.
- When cabin-type housing is used with more than one youth, and adults must be housed with youth, more than one adult must be placed in that cabin.
- Adults must never be in a 1:1 situation with campers or youth counselors.

- **Bathrooms:** There must be separate bathroom facilities designated as adult use only. Adults will not share bathroom facilities with youth. Shower facilities must provide privacy for youth. Staff or adult chaperones should remain close enough to hear activity around the bath house, without entering it, whenever multiple youth are using the space, to ensure their safety.
- [The Overnight Housing Permission Form](#) needs to be signed by parents/guardians of youth participants.
- **Other policies that apply:**
 - Michigan 4-H Chaperone Training – any adults who attend a 4-H overnight camp must be GOLD level volunteers and must complete the Chaperone Module in Volunteer Central.
 - [Michigan 4-H Medication Administration Policy](#)

Overnight Best Practices

- Consider assigning staff or volunteers to monitor the lodging area overnight in shifts.
- Have a plan for inclement weather and communicate it to campers. Include any nearby shelter that could be used and procedures to follow during a storm. Monitor weather conditions that may affect campers, including heat or poor air quality alerts, and adjust programming as needed. If your camp is located at a licensed facility, refer to their emergency procedures for guidance.

Additional 4-H Outdoor Education Resources:

Depending on your plans, you may want to reference additional Risk Management checklists when planning a 4-H Overnight Camp. These include:

- [4-H General Risk Management Checklist](#) (for all outdoor recreation activities)
- [Trip Plan](#) (for overnight activities)
- Other activity-specific checklists as necessary found [here](#).

Support:

Please reach out to the Outdoor Education and Risk Management Educators with any questions as you plan your camping experience. We are happy to help you plan an enjoyable, safe experience for your group.

For more information contact:

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