

Earthplace Summer Camp

Parent Handbook

Updated May 2026

Dear Earthplace Summer Camp Families,

Summer is a great time for nature exploration and discovery at Earthplace!

At Earthplace Summer Camp, we welcome campers of all abilities from ages 2-15 to enjoy an unspoiled, natural setting – on the trails, by the pond, in the fields, or under the shade of our pine grove. Our goal is to be immersed in nature and exploration!

Our staff is trained to ensure a safe and fun summer filled with exploration, friendships, and plenty of fresh air. With engaged staff and a plethora of rotating nature-based activities and adventures, each week is sure to be a new and exciting experience for even the most frequent camper. We can't wait to get outside, explore, discover, laugh, reunite with old friends, and of course make some new ones too. We look forward to meeting you soon!

Sincerely,



Emily Nuzzo, M.Ed.
Summer Camp Coordinator



Amanda Ciardi, M.S. Ed.
Preschool Director



Amee Borys, M.S. Ed.
Executive Director



Earthplace

Earthplace is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. EIN# 06-0740523

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Toddlers & Preschool Campers

Our Summer Camp programs for toddlers and preschool-age children feature weekly nature-based themes, around which our Early Childhood Educators and trained Summer Camp Staff develop immersive play and learning experiences. A typical day at Earthplace Summer Camp for toddlers and preschoolers includes:

Indoor Free Play: dramatic play, building toys, science and sensory exploration, and themed art projects to support broad-spectrum learning and development.

Morning Meeting: greetings and introductions, music and movement, discussion of daily schedule, and group games to support social skills and building relationships.

Outdoor Exploration & Adventure: trailwalks throughout the Earthplace Sanctuary, climbing at Big Rock Junction, net-dipping at Frog Hollow Pond, and running through the Playscape obstacle course.

Water Play: wading in the pond, stream walks through the Stony Brook, and sprinklers on the Playground.

Animal Encounters: twice weekly, hands-on visits from an Earthplace Naturalist Educator with one of our many Animal Ambassadors.

Snack & Lunch Times: packed from home and often enjoyed outdoors in the Picnic Grove.

Elementary Campers

Our Summer Camp programs for elementary school-age children feature a variety of hands-on learning experiences and engaging nature exploration linked to our weekly nature-based themes. A typical day at Earthplace Summer Camp for elementary school-age children includes:

Organized Games & Art Activities: time at the group's home-base tent with card games, soccer and softball, nature journaling, and team-building activities.

Outdoor Exploration & Adventure: trailwalks throughout the Earthplace Sanctuary, climbing at Big Rock Junction, net-dipping at Frog Hollow Pond, fort-building, and tree-climbing.

Indoor Cool-Down Play: Legos, Magna-Tiles, board games, free-expression art, and visits to Natureplace and Animal Hall.

Water Play: wading in the pond, stream walks through the Stony Brook, mud play, sprinklers, and slip-n-slides.

Animal Encounters: twice weekly, hands-on visits from an Earthplace Naturalist Educator with one of our many Animal Ambassadors.

Snack & Lunch Times: packed from home and enjoyed picnic-style outdoors.



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Middle School Campers

Our Summer Camp programs for middle school-age children are all about adventures, with campers enjoying a variety of activities exploring and appreciating nature both on-site throughout the Earthplace Sanctuary and off-site on a wide variety of field trips. Weekly activities and destinations are selected based on weather forecast and camper input, including the option of participating in weekly overnight camp-outs at Earthplace!

Mondays & Thursdays On-Site at the Sanctuary: exploring trails, climbing trees, net-dipping in Frog Hollow Pond, letterboxing and nature crafts, card and board games, and stewardship projects led by Earthplace Naturalist Educator.

Tuesdays & Wednesdays Off-Site Field Adventures: field trips to local museums, hiking spots, and more - past favorites include Sherwood Island, Devil's Den, Stamford Museum and Nature Center, and the Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Thursdays Overnight Camp-Out: pitching tents, outdoor cooking, nocturnal animal sightings, and campfire s'mores. *Optional late-night pick-up at 8pm.*

Fridays On-Site: breakfast and pick-up by gam.

Group Names, Capacity, & Ages

Chickadees: up to 8 campers, 2 years of age by session start date

Meadowlarks: up to 18 campers, 3 years of age by session start date

Blue Jays: up to 18 campers, 4 years of age by session start date

Barn Owls: up to 15 campers, 5 years of age by session start date

Hawks: up to 20 campers, rising 1st and 2nd graders

Eagles: up to 20 campers, rising 3rd and 4th graders

Ospreys: pilot integrated group for up to 15 campers, rising 1st through 4th graders with diverse support needs

Ravens: up to 20 campers, rising 5th and 6th graders

Trekkers: up to 6 campers, rising 7th, 8th, and 9th, graders

Drop-Off Procedures

Drop-off will take place at the following locations:

Chickadees: 9:00am, exterior classroom door

Meadowlarks: 9:00am, exterior classroom door

Blue Jays: 9:00am, exterior classroom door

Barn Owls: 9:00am, exterior classroom door

Hawks: 9:00am, home base tent at Picnic Grove

Eagles: 9:00am, home base tent at Picnic Grove

Ospreys: 9:00am, benches by the main entrance

Ravens: 9:00am, home base tent at Picnic Grove

Trekkers: 9:00am, benches by the main entrance



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Health Check

Upon arrival, your child's Lead Counselor will make a brief visual inspection of your child for signs of illness. Some of the symptoms that would indicate to us that a child could be contagious or does not feel well enough to remain at Summer Camp would be:

- fever 100.3 degrees or higher
- severe and persistent cough
- difficulty breathing
- unexplained rash or sores
- lethargy or extreme fatigue

Parents are required to keep children home when they have any of these symptoms and also **must** consult with their healthcare provider. Please see the full Health and Wellness Policies attached for more information about health-related exclusion from Summer Camp.

Pick-Up Procedures

Pick-up will take place at the end of your child's camp day at the following location:

Chickadees: 1:00pm, exterior classroom door

Meadowlarks: 3:00pm, exterior classroom door

Blue Jays: 3:00pm, Picnic Grove clearing to the left of the building

Barn Owls: 3:00pm, Pine Grove clearing to the right of the building

Hawks: 3:00pm, home base tent at Picnic Grove

Eagles: 3:00pm, home base tent at Picnic Grove

Ospreys: 3:00pm, benches by the main entrance

Ravens: 3:00pm, home base tent at Picnic Grove

Trekkers: 4:00pm, benches by the main entrance door

Pick-Up Authorizations

A child may be picked up by their parents, or by other adults authorized in your child's CampDoc account. If an individual will be picking up your child for the first time, please be sure they bring a photo ID for your child's Lead Counselor to verify.

In an emergency, you may call the Summer Camp Office and authorize an alternate pick-up over the phone. We will then update their account for you and alert your child's Lead Counselor.

CampDoc

CampDoc is our online registration and administrative portal. All required documentation can be easily uploaded using the CampDoc website. Please ensure your child's CampDoc account is completed, at 100%, at least two weeks before your child's start date. If you have any questions or issues using CampDoc please email summercamp@earthplace.org.



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Inclusion of Children With Diverse Support Needs

Earthplace has a long history of including children with diverse educational, developmental, and specialized healthcare needs in all of our programs.

At Earthplace, children with diverse support needs are included in all programs. The key to a successful experience is transparent communication with families. During the registration process and prior to your child's summer camp start date, please schedule a meeting with our Summer Camp team so that we can plan for a successful camp experience.

This year, Earthplace Summer Camp is excited to introduce a new **Integrated Camp Group**, piloting for five exclusive weeks. This intentionally planned and thoughtfully staffed program is designed to provide a safe, equitable, engaging, and joyful camp experience for children with a wide range of support needs.

Rooted in Earthplace's long history of inclusive programming, this group welcomes both neurodivergent and neurotypical rising first through fourth graders to learn, explore, and grow together in a supportive, nature-based environment. Each week features a unique theme that guides hands-on learning and discovery, with activities that may include up-close animal encounters, collaborative group games, creative art projects, and engaging, hands-on materials that spark curiosity and exploration.

Campers will enjoy the outdoor adventures Earthplace is known for - hiking, wildlife exploration, and environmental discovery - while also benefiting from additional structure, smaller group support, and increased time for guided indoor play and sensory-friendly activities. A typical day looks a bit different than traditional camp, blending nature-based experiences with predictable routines and structured programming to help every child feel comfortable and successful.

The group is supported by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs), a certified Special Educator, and specially trained counselors who provide individualized strategies, social and emotional support, and accommodations tailored to each camper's needs.

This program may be an especially good fit for children with IEPs, ISPs, 504 plans, or other school-based accommodations who do not qualify for Extended School Year services but would benefit from a more supportive camp setting.

At Earthplace, every child belongs, and this integrated group ensures that more campers can experience the wonder, connection, and joy of summer in nature together.

If you believe your child's support needs would make them a good fit for the ICG, please reach out to summercamp@earthplace.org with the following:

- a completed Earthplace Summer Camp ICG Intake Form - available at earthplace.org/summer-camp/icg/
- your child's most recent IEP, ISP, 504 plan, or similar
- your child's most recent Behavior Support Plans (if applicable)



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Refund Policy

Please register carefully, as we do not issue refunds for cancelled sessions of Summer Camp. However, you are able to purchase a Protection Plan from Travel Insured through CampDoc when you register, and we strongly encourage you to do so.

Severe Weather Dismissal or Closure

In the event of severe weather it may become necessary to close our programs or dismiss the campers early, in which case parents will be notified by phone and by email. The information will also be posted on our website and on News Channel 12. *In the event we must close due to causes beyond our reasonable control, including but not limited to: power outages, fire, pandemics, epidemics, or government action, refunds will not be issued.*

Communication

Important Summer Camp information is shared with families via email or phone call. To stay up to date on everything happening at Summer Camp, be sure that Earthplace has your correct email address and phone number, and that your child's CampDoc account is completely accurate up to date.

If you have any questions concerning your child or the policies of Earthplace Summer Camp, please speak with your child's Lead Counselor or the Summer Camp Coordinator. Always feel free to contact us with any questions you may have - we assure you that your emails and phone calls will be returned as soon as possible.

Clothes & Shoes

Yes, sneakers and socks! No, sandals or Crocs.

We want your children to have a fun, safe summer! We will be outside on a variety of terrains every day - please choose clothes for your child with this in mind. Sneakers worn with socks are the safest footwear for our program. *Please note: Crocs or sturdy, closed-toe sandals are a good option for water play or stream exploration - feel free to pack them in your child's bag each day as a back-up option.*

Extra Clothing

Expect your child to get dirty and wet at Earthplace Summer Camp!

Please send in an extra outfit and towel in a clear zip-lock bag **labeled** with your child's name and Camp Group. It will remain with us for use as needed, and it will be returned at the end of your child's Session(s).

Toileting & Diapering

On your child's first day of Camp, children in pull-ups or diapers should bring a full pack, along with wipes and diaper cream if needed, to be kept in the classroom for the duration of their time at Earthplace Summer Camp. If diaper cream is sent, be sure to fill out the appropriate Non-Prescription Topical Medication Authorization in your child's CampDoc profile.



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Rain Gear

Campers will continue outdoor activities during rainy days - please send campers with appropriate raincoats and boots, but note that umbrellas are not permitted to remain at Camp. If you choose to use an umbrella during drop-off, please take it home and bring it back at dismissal time if needed.

Items from Home

Toys or electronics from home are not permitted at Earthplace Summer Camp. Earthplace is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

Sunscreens & Insect Repellents

We ask that any lotions, insect repellents, sunscreens, lip balms, etc., be applied by parents prior to arriving at camp each day. Please note that insect repellents should be applied sparingly and to clothes rather than to skin, and never to the face. Camp Staff may apply parent-provided sunscreen and/or insect repellents to campers with permission noted in their CampDoc Health Profile.

Reusable Water Bottles

Children in all groups must bring a reusable water bottle **labeled** with their name to Camp each day. Water bottles will be kept accessible to the children at all times. When outdoors, the child must carry their own water bottle.

Lunch & Snack

Please send your child to Camp each day with 2 snacks* and a lunch, packed in separate bags that are both labeled with your child's name. Snacks and lunches must be nonperishable or be in insulated bags with an ice pack. **For campers in the Chickadee camp group, only one snack is required.* **Peanut and tree-nut products of any kind are not permitted at Earthplace.** This includes trail mixes, granola bars, and other prepared items that include nuts, such as peanut butter, almond butter, and Nutella. Suggested popular nut butter alternatives include sunflower seed butter, soy butter, and oat butter. If you send in a nut butter alternative, please label it so our camp counselors can verify that it is safe to serve



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Environmental Allergies, Food Allergies, & Food Intolerances

The Earthplace Summer Camp team will be in contact with all parents who have indicated that their children have environmental allergies, food allergies, or food intolerances. Please review the medical forms that your doctor fills out to be sure that **all allergies** are listed. Although all Lead Counselors will be informed of the children in their group who have allergies, please remind them on your child's first day of camp.

Medication Policy & Forms

At Earthplace Summer Camp, we only administer medications that aid in life-saving situations.

These include EpiPens, Benadryl, and inhalers. If your child has allergies or asthma that would require these medications, you **must** complete and submit all applicable forms in the Health Profile section of your child's CampDoc profile, at least two weeks prior to your child's first day of camp. **Your child will not be allowed to join their group until all medications and forms are in place.**

Medication Policy & Forms, continued

In each Camp group, there is at least one individual who has been trained in medication administration. Prior to your child's first day of camp, please bring in the medications listed on your previously submitted forms. All medications must be unopened and sealed with the appropriate utensil for dispensing. Prescription medications must also have a pharmacy label containing your child's name, the appropriate dosage, and the medication's expiration date. All medications will be sent home at the end of your child's last session.

Health Assessment Record

A valid Health Assessment Record is required for all children attending Earthplace Summer Camp. Your child's Health Assessment Record is valid for 24 months from the date of exam. Please make sure that the dates of the physical and the immunizations are all noted.

First Aid

If your child requires first aid while at Summer Camp, parents will be notified and will receive an injury report detailing how the injury occurred, how the injury was treated, and by whom. In most cases, this will be the Summer Camp Nurse or trained Lead Counselor.

Tick Procedure

Please Do a Daily Tick-Check

Throughout the day, Earthplace Summer Camp staff will perform brief, visual tick-checks on all campers. If a child has a tick that has not embedded itself, we will brush it off. If it is embedded, our nurse will remove it, save it, and give it to you should you choose to have it tested. We strongly recommend that you perform a comprehensive tick-check when your child comes home each day.

Heat & Ventilation-Related Concerns

Each Camp group's schedule alternates between indoor and outdoor activities throughout the day to take advantage of our air-conditioned facility and our 62-acre campus.



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Weekly Nature-Based Themes

Session 1	June 8 - June 12	Scales & Tales
Session 2	June 15 - June 18*	Fun in the Forest
Session 3	June 22 - June 26	Not-So-Creepy Crawlers
Session 4	June 29 - July 2*	Just Beachy
Session 5	July 6 - July 10	Up All Night
Session 6	July 13 - July 17	Cool Climbers
Session 7	July 20 - July 24	Flying Friends
Session 8	July 27 - July 31	Super Swimmers
Session 9	August 3 - August 7	Earth Day Every Day

**no Summer Camp on Friday June 19th in observance of Juneteenth*

**no Summer Camp on Friday July 3rd in observance of Independence Day*

Field Trips (Trekkers group only)

Permission slips for field trips will be provided to each family and must be signed and returned by pick-up on Monday of the session in question. Field trip details and instructions will accompany the permission slip. Field trip departure times cannot be changed to accommodate campers arriving late. Campers are scheduled to return to camp by the regular dismissal time. Campers will be transported in one of two Earthplace minivans by a licensed Earthplace Summer Camp staff member.

Overnight Camp-Outs (Trekkers group only)

Overnight camp-outs will again be an option for Trekkers participating in Sessions 3 through 7! Those with permission to camp-out will be fed dinner, participate in an evening campfire, and stay overnight in a camping tent. We encourage families to bring their own tents, sleeping bags, and sleeping pads.

Inflatable mattresses are prohibited. Earthplace will have some tents that can be used, but our supply is limited. Campers will be fed breakfast the next morning, followed by pick-up promptly at 9am. Overnight camp-outs tents will take place on Thursdays each week, with the exception of Session 4 (June 30 - July 3), when the overnight camp-out will take place on Wednesday (June 2) due to Summer Camp closure for Independence Day. *Please note, there is no Camp for Trekkers the day following the overnight camp-out each week.*

Parents are not permitted to attend the overnight camp-outs, but campers will be closely monitored by 3-4 experienced, co-ed Counselors. Campers attending the overnight camp-outs will sleep in tents with other campers of the same general age and gender, unless requested otherwise and approved by both campers' parents and Earthplace Summer Camp staff.

For parents who would rather their Trekker not take part in the overnight camp-outs, there is a "late-night option" for an 8pm pick-up, including dinner and a campfire, before overnight campers are sent to their tents for lights out.



Earthplace Summer Camp Health & Wellness Policies

Earthplace Summer Camp staff members are knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of childhood illnesses, and they are responsible for the initial observation of each child upon arrival and continued observation throughout the day. If an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities or creates a greater need for care than the Staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, or if a child's condition is suspected to be contagious and requires exclusion as identified by public health authorities, then the child is made comfortable in the Summer Camp Office, where new individuals will not be exposed, and is supervised by a familiar Staff Member or the Summer Camp Nurse. We will immediately attempt to notify the parent or legal guardian when a child has any sign or symptom that requires exclusion from the program. If the parent or legal guardian cannot be reached within 15 minutes, then the authorized emergency contacts will be notified to pick up the child. **We expect a designated adult listed to pick up the child within 30 minutes of our phone call.**

Symptoms requiring immediate exclusion from the program:

- fever 100.3 degrees or higher
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- sore throat
- severe and persistent cough
- difficulty breathing
- unexplained rash or sores
- loss of taste or smell
- lethargy or extreme fatigue

Staying Home Until Well Policy

Children who have had a fever of 100.3 degrees or higher **must** remain home until they have been fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication after one full day at home, and have been cleared by a healthcare provider with a note sent in to Earthplace Summer Camp. (Example: your child is sent home on Monday with a fever. They must remain home the duration of Monday, as well as Tuesday, and be fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to camp on Wednesday at the earliest, so long as they have been cleared by a healthcare provider.)

If your child is vomiting or has diarrhea - defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics as an illness in which an individual develops more watery or more frequent stools than is typical for that person - the child must remain at home until their symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours after one full day at home, but they do not need to be cleared by a healthcare provider. (Example: your child is sent home on Monday after vomiting. They must remain home the duration of Monday, as well as Tuesday, and have not vomited for at least 24 hours before returning to camp on Wednesday at the earliest.)

Many other contagious illnesses also require a child to be excluded from Earthplace Summer Camp and be cleared, in writing, by a doctor before returning.



The following list details the exclusion period and return policy for children with a contagious illness or condition, based on recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

All exclusion and return guidelines are subject to change.

- **Chickenpox (Varicella):* until all sores have dried and crusted (usually six days)
- **Conjunctivitis:* after three treatments with medication prescribed by a physician for this occurrence and completely asymptomatic for 24 hours
- **COVID-19:* until fever-free without fever-reducing medication after one at least full day at home **and** has significantly improved additional symptoms
- *Diarrhea:* until 24 hours have passed with no diarrhea **and** the child has spent at least one full day at home
- **Diphtheria:* until two negative cultures collected 24 hours after completion of medication
- **Difficult or rapid breathing:* until cleared by health care provider in writing
- **Fever 100.3° F:* until fever-free without fever-reducing medication after one full day at home
- **Fungus or ringworm:* when certified by health care provider that patient is under adequate treatment and no longer infectious
- **Hepatitis A:* until one week after onset of illness, jaundice, or as directed by the health department when passive immunoprophylaxis has been administered to appropriate children and staff
- **Impetigo:* until 24 hours after treatment began
- **Influenza:* until fever-free without fever-reducing medication after at least one full day at home **and** has significantly improved additional symptoms
- **Measles:* four days after rash appears and child is well
- **Meningitis (all forms):* until certified by a physician as cured and not infectious
- *Mumps:* until nine days after onset of parotid gland swelling
- *Pediculosis (Head Lice):* after first treatment
- **Pertussis (Whooping Cough):* after five days of appropriate antibiotic therapy
- *Poison Ivy, Oak, Sumac:* no exclusion required
- **Poliomyelitis:* ten days from onset and certified as not infectious by physician
- **Rash:* until diagnosed by a physician plus certification that patient is under adequate treatment or is not infectious



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- **Rubella (German Measles):* until six days after onset of rash
- **Scabies:* until certified by a health care provider that adequate treatment has been given to prevent transmission
- **Strep Throat or other strep infections:* until 24 hours after initial antibiotic therapy and cessation of fever without fever suppressant medications for 24 hours
- **Tuberculosis (active):* until a healthcare provider states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend child care.
- *Vomiting:* until 24 hours have passed with no vomiting **and** the child has spent at least one full day at home

**** These illnesses require a doctor's note in order for your child to come back to school.***

If your child does not see a healthcare provider after exhibiting symptoms for which our policies require it, then the child **must** stay home for 3 full days from when symptoms first appeared and be fever-free with any and all other symptoms improved significantly before returning to Earthplace Summer Camp on day 4.

Missing Camp

Please email your child's Lead Counselor and the Earthplace Summer Camp Team at summercamp@earthplace.org when your child will not be coming to camp, letting us know the reason for your child's absence. We are then able to share information about possible exposures to any contagions while always maintaining confidentiality.

Exposure to a Contagious Illness

When your child has been exposed to a contagious disease at Earthplace Summer Camp we will send an email to let you know the name of the disease and its signs and symptoms, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at school and that families should implement at home.