



A CAMPING TRADITION SINCE 1936 IN ALGONQUIN PARK, ONTARIO

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## **SENIOR COUNSELOR JOB DESCRIPTION**

To understand **YOUR** mission as a Senior Counselor, it helps to first understand the **CAMP'S** mission. Tamakwa stresses the communal living experience. Of all the skills children learn at camp, the most useful throughout their lives are the social skills of dealing with people. These they learn in the cabin group.

The cabin group is the basic unit of camp organization around which most camp activity is built. The sharing, the give-and-take, the respect for one another and the bonding all come from the cabin. It is a little "family" and you are the "parent".

### **IN GENERAL**

Your job is to see that your campers get all that camp has to offer and promises to provide. Ensuring 24-hour supervision, you look after their health, safety, hygiene, enjoyment and their general interests toward getting the most out of the camp program. You provide them with the comfort needed most by children who are miles from their home: the feeling of being cared for. You build camaraderie and esprit-de-corps within the cabin. At all times, you are their adult role model. By example, you show them positive life values like enthusiasm, energy, tolerance, flexibility, sportsmanship and fun.

### **SPECIFICALLY**

**HEALTH & HYGIENE:** Ensure daily showering or bathing, brushing teeth, washing hair, care for nails, general hygiene of your campers and their living areas (bedding and shelves). Ensure that they receive first aid and medical treatment when necessary.

**CLOTHING:** Ensure they are wearing weather appropriate apparel. Actively HELP them: keep track of clothing and other belongings, retrieve items from Lost and Found and maintain clean supply of clothing through the camp laundry service.

**EATING:** Be aware of their eating habits and ensure they are getting the most out of camp's program of daily nutrition: three meals, fruit and snacks.

**WAKE-UP:** Ensure everyone in the cabin wakes up when the bell rings, dresses appropriately for the weather and arrives on time for breakfast. The Counselor is the last one out of the cabin.

**DINING HALL:** Counselors are to ensure that campers are prompt, clean and courteous at all meals. Cabin groups eat family style. Counselors eat at the heads of the table. The campers are served first, staff second. Help maintain order at meals. Spirit is a big deal at Tamakwa, so cheering and singing are encouraged, but only at the end of the meal.

**CABIN CLEAN-UP:** Every morning after breakfast, each cabin group cleans its cabin. Individuals are responsible for his/her bed, shelves and area. You are actively involved in showing campers how to do it and making this a team effort.

**REST HOUR:** After lunch, campers and staff are in cabins to rest. Generally, campers should be lying on their beds resting, sleeping, writing letters, playing games, reading or anything of a restful nature and not loud and rowdy. Warm active summer days are draining: kids (and adults) need rest.

**MORNING ACTIVITIES:** The morning periods are individual choice, so your campers may be dispersed to different areas of camp. Depending on your expertise or camp's needs, you are assigned to work at an activity. For that part of the day, you become part of that activity staff.

**AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES:** The afternoon periods are mostly cabin group oriented. For these activity periods the cabin will go together. You will travel with the group as their leader, becoming a full participant yourself, helping to teach if necessary and ensuring cooperation with the Activity Leader.

**FREE PLAY:** Free play periods for campers are before and after dinner. Though campers can generally do what they want, some structured events – like general swim, tournaments, rehearsals, etc. – do go on. To supervise those and other such situations, you may be delegated at any time.

**EVENING PROGRAM:** Whether the evening program is organized in small groups or is an all-camp activity, your role is to participate with your campers; your place is right beside them. You will have the opportunity to plan evening programs for your section as well as for the entire camp.

**BEDTIME:** Nighttime requires particularly effective counseling. You settle your campers in for the night, ensuring they are ready for bed and maintaining quiet in the cabin. Spend a moment with each camper to either reflect on the achievements of that day or to generally comfort any fears, homesickness or insecurities.

**STAFF REC:** The staff usually has a couple of hours of free time for recreation after the campers have gone to bed. A snack and some activity are available in the Staff Rec. Hall. While this is generally your time to relax, duty may call from time to time with regard to your campers.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** The camp routinely is sometimes interrupted for a special program. You will have a specific role and will not only be involved as a participant, but will ensure that your campers are actively involved and getting the most out of the program.

**COOKOUTS:** Cabin outings build group unity. For one day almost every week, all cabins go on cookouts, but you are encouraged to schedule an additional cookout for your cabin any day of the week. You, your co-counselors and your campers canoe or hike to one of the many nearby campsites.

## **CANOE TRIPS**

Canoe tripping, more than any other camp activity, embodies the Tamakwa values of group unity, adventure and resourcefulness. Together with the tripper, who guides the trip and teaches outdoor skills, you help provide the leadership and supervision. You must always be prepared to go with a positive attitude, sometimes at a moment's notice in some rare unavoidable situations. You should not sign a Tamakwa contract if you are unable to live up to this or any part of this job description.

## **GUIDANCE**

**GETTING ALONG:** Communal living is an important theme in the cabin. When there is a problem between campers, the Tamakwa bias is always toward learning to be tolerant to others and mending differences. You set that tone and make that happen.

**INDIVIDUAL CHOICE:** Campers choose their own activities for part of their daily schedules, but they need guidance. As in all cases, you are actively involved in their choices to ensure a well-rounded activity schedule.

**BEING AWARE:** Constantly be alert to homesickness, scapegoating, bullying, pressures and any kind of difficulties for your campers individually or as a group and actively seek help from your Section Head whenever necessary.

**SCAPEGOATING:** Kids need allies and sometimes find security in ganging up on one easy target, known in the camp world as the "scapegoat", the one they blame for all the problems, choose last when picking up teams, tease and ridicule. You must sense these situations and work hard to prevent them.

**KNOWING YOUR CAMPERS:** To do your job, you must know each camper as an individual: interests, achievement award levels, medical conditions and treatments, strengths, weaknesses, sensitivities, activity choices, best friends, rapport with each of the other campers, etc. You are the first line of defense to ensure that each child has a fulfilling summer.

**TRYING NEW THINGS:** Parents send their kids to camp to give them exposure to new experiences. By both example and guidance, you must constantly impart an open-minded attitude of trying new things, stepping out of their comfort zone.

**YOUR ACTIVITY SKILLS:** As both a role model for kids and as activity staff, you should pick two camp activities in which to strive for advanced awards. It also enhances your profile for rehire in following summers.

**LETTER WRITING:** Ensure that campers write home regularly. Wednesdays and Sundays are when campers need to bring a letter written home to dinner.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**NIGHT DUTY:** You will be called upon periodically to take turns doing Night Duty; routine rounds of camper cabins during staff free time. Keeping in mind camp's mandate to give 24-hour supervision, Night Duty means entering each cabin on your route every 15 minutes. Before your rounds, you check in with a supervisor and afterwards, you check out. Details provided at Pre-Camp.

**TOWER DUTY:** You may be assigned to stand watch over the lakefront activities from our main camp tower. With binoculars and an air horn, you spot and bring attention to any problems. Details provided at Pre-Camp.

**SPECIAL PROGRAMS:** In spare time outside your counseling duties, you may help in planning and presenting evening or all-day creative programs.

**CAMPER LETTERS:** Each month, Senior Counselors write a 1-2 page letter to each of his/her campers' parents about their progress at camp. Camper letters demonstrate how well our counselors know their campers. You will report things like the camper's social adjustment in the cabin, strengths and achievements, activity choices, problems, how original goals are being met, etc. They point out how much fun their campers are having, what activities they love the most, details about their canoe trip, and much more. Counselors will get instructions about writing camper letters at camp.

**PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PRACTICES:** By signing a contract you have agreed to live by all the rules and policies of camp. Many are outlined in your contract and the rest are explained during Pre-Camp training.

## **“FOR THE KEEDS”**

It's an old Tamakwa expression signifying that everything we do is for the kids. They are the reason we are at camp. At meals the kids are served first **before** the staff, whether in camp or out at a campsite. The kids come first when taking turns for an activity. They should never feel they are at our service, to wait our table, paddle our canoe, do our work, etc. Their interests come first in every situation at camp. That is the Tamakwa way.

## **THE EFFECTIVE COUNSELOR**

Supervision in the Tamakwa sense means **more** than simply being physically present with the campers during their daily routine. It means being what we call an **EFFECTIVE** counselor... someone who makes a difference in their lives. An effective counselor is an **INVOLVED** counselor. Whether it's cabin clean-up, a swim lesson, or a volleyball game, you do not observe and shout instructions from the sidelines. You are **IN** there doing it with them. Even if it is something you don't particularly enjoy, you are involved. You are a role model; you are showing the virtue of being open minded, trying new things and stepping out of their comfort zone.

## **YOUR SUPERVISOR**

For issues relating to the CABIN COUNSELING part of your job, you are responsible to your Section Head. That is the person who will supervise your section, hold section staff meetings, enlist your help in planning special events and give you feedback on your performance through periodic evaluations.

In your capacity as an ACTIVITY STAFF, you are responsible to your Activity Leader. This person will train you, make you part of the activity staff, assign you specific tasks each period and evaluate your performance with periodic feedback.

## **CONCLUSION**

**Like every staff member at Tamakwa, as a Senior Counselor you are hired with the hope that you will have a positive and enjoyable personal summer experience. But mostly you are hired to put the campers and the needs of the camp above all other priorities. Usually, it is through that priority – and the satisfaction that you have given to your campers some positive quality of yourself –you will find the greatest reward and most fun in your summer at Tamakwa in beautiful Algonquin Park.**

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