

camp STARFISH

2024 Guide to Programs

Structured, supportive, safe, fun, and individualized summer and year-round programs for participants ages 6-22 experiencing emotional, behavioral, social, and learning challenges.



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About Starfish: Our Campers



Starfish campers succeed when the structure, safety, and support systems are set up to enable that specific outcome.

A Partial List of the Challenges our Campers may Experience:

- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Anger Management
- Anxiety
- Bipolar Disorder
- Depression
- Developmental Delay
- Dysregulation
- Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD)
- Emotional/Behavioral Challenges
- Inflexible/Explosive Disorder
- Specific Learning Disability
- Nonverbal Learning Disability (NVLD)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) /Disinhibited Social Engagement
- Sensory Integration
- Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder (SPCD)
- Transition Challenges
- Trauma History
- And/or other challenges

Starfish was designed to provide a safe, fun, structured, skill-building, therapeutically-based camp experience to children who, for various reason(s), are unable to find success in more traditional environments. Many campers who attend Starfish have been asked to leave other summer or extra-curricular programs because the staff ratio, structure or program expectations did not set up children with extra needs for success.

Some Starfish campers attend public schools with IEPs, 504 accommodation plans, class aides, or similar services. Some attend private therapeutic schools with small classes and multiple teachers. Others attend alternative learning academies. Many receive out-of-class social skills instruction, OT, sensory breaks, speech therapy, and other similar interventions designed to help them succeed in the academic environment.

All Starfish campers are looking for a place where social interactions are appropriate and simplified, where they are not the "odd one out," and where they can feel at home. They have the ability to participate in a group living environment, even if they don't always do so appropriately. They may have one, multiple, or no clinical diagnoses. They or their caregivers may need the respite opportunity that camp provides, or they may simply be looking for a fun, enriching camp experience that will not result in early dismissal, but rather in success.

Our staff-to-camper ratios certainly set us apart in the industry. Not all campers at Starfish require so much staff attention, but it makes camp a place where they can feel comfortable and safe, know an adult is there to help them with little tasks or big issues and have a hand to hold. Parents, guardians, agency workers, teachers, therapists, and others who send children to Camp Starfish can relax knowing children are being well supervised and guided in their social/emotional development, actively practicing their social skills. And, while doing all this, they're also having the time of their lives!

About Starfish: Is it a Match?



Just like with any camp, it's important that you, your camper, and the camp all feel that there is potential to be a good match. While we serve a very diverse group of youth, Starfish, too, has guidelines for our camper population. We also work individually with each applicant's caregivers to determine fit.

In general, successful camper applicants are:

- **Self-feeding** (staff help with serving, portions, manners, etc.)
- **Capable of toileting and cleaning themselves after doing so** (staff will verbally prompt but not hand-over-hand help)
- **Free of restrictive medical conditions**, e.g. feeding tubes, colostomy bags, daily injections, or IV medications (our nurses are great, but care is basic, with no doctor on site)
- **Capable of managing daily living skills with verbal prompting** (Examples include independently putting on a bathing suit, remaining clothed in the company of others, and following the steps of taking a shower with only verbal prompts from staff)
- **Willing to attend** - or commit to trying - camp (we will not "force" campers to attend, but we will encourage them with all our powers to give camp a try)
- **Flexible to exploring group living** (bunking in a living space with others, verbally communicating during activities and bunk meetings, participating in give-and-take conversations with prompting, helping with bunk/village "cleanup" chores, able to remain with the group unless taking appropriate space)
- **Physically able to traverse camp** (hills, stairs, bunk beds, uneven grounds)* *Our camp was built in the 1940s and since we acquired it from the prior owner, we have made many upgrades to the accessibility. However, it is a long-term work in progress. So, while we welcome applications of all abilities, if a camper has mobility restrictions, we highly recommend that you please call and speak with us prior to submitting an application.

Youth are not appropriate for attendance at Starfish who:

- Are currently in the juvenile justice system (Starfish is not a "boot camp" or behavior modification program.)
- Exhibit a frequent pattern of violent acts or routine aggressive behaviors.
- Set fires/have been fire setters but have not completed remediation.
- Require routine, hands-on toileting assistance and/or incontinent during the day (bedwetting is fine).
- Routinely and actively self-injure as a means of emotional coping.
- Have active disordered eating which includes severely restricted intake, bingeing/purging, or requiring locked storage of food.
- Intentionally harm animals.
- Self-stimulate or self-soothe in public (self-touching at inappropriate times).
- Exhibit opportunistic sexualized behaviors (predatory interactions).

Camp Life Details: Activities

Campers have plenty of active, engaging, unique, creative, learning-based, and fun activities from which to choose. Not all campers will participate in all of these activities each session, but they will never be lacking in options!

- Swim Lessons
- Free Swim
- Canoeing
- Kayaking
- Corcl Boats
- Beach Time
- Gardening
- Arts and Crafts
- Learning Center
- Game Playce
- Creative Writing
- Fishing
- Music
- Instruments
- Rock Throwing Range
- Campfires
- Roasting S'Mores
- Group Games
- Special Events
- GaGa Ball
- Sports & Rec
- Field Games
- Dance
- Nature & Hiking
- Drawing/Painting
- Tie Dye
- Drama & Improvisation
- Small Animal Care
- Raft Building
- Hammocking
- Woodworking
- Tumbling
- Yoga
- Fort Starfish
- Martial Arts
- Basketball
- Book Nook
- Evening Programs
- Peace Games
- Gameshows
- Teambuilding
- Sensory Gym
- TagUp
- Slacklining
- Clay Sculptures
- Electives
- Playground
- Lego Building
- Sand Volleyball
- Blueberry Island
- Outdoor Cooking
- Shelter Building
- Bugs & Stuff
- Free Play
- High Ropes Course
- Low Ropes Course
- Carnival
- Service Projects
- Teen Chat
- **And much more!**



Choosing a Program



Starfish has differentiated many of our program offerings to ensure that camp continues to be supportive, challenging, and rewarding for all ages and interest levels. And, although it seems like there are finite differences between each program option, Starfish at its core is very much an individually-focused program. As you look through the programs, please think about the kind of experience you think your child is ready for. Just because a camper is 14 does not necessarily mean they are ready for the amount of choice included in older camper programs. Teens may be ready to expand their horizons and try a week of outdoor adventure, or they may not. No worries! We've got everyone covered, and we can adjust as necessary. If you're not sure what to pick based on where your camper's interest or readiness is, we're happy to help you sort through the different options.

1:1 Programs

Core to the mission of Camp Starfish are our 1:1 programs. Sessions vary in length from 5 to 14 days, but all 1:1 programs are overnight residential camps that take place on our main campgrounds. They encompass all of the fun of a traditional camp experience with the support of a 1:1 staff-to-camper ratio.

Navigators

OCP

Lite

Havvago

Sibling Camp
TIDES Vista
BeachCombers
Treetops

Teen Adventure Week

LARP Week

August Bonus Week

Year-Round Weekenders

Family Camp

Specialty & Respite Programs

Our Specialty & Respite programs are designed to provide participants with a safe, supported place to spend time, engaging with friends and continuing to build their skills.

Each specialty program uses a different staff-to-camper ratio, offers different activities, and has different age requirements while still staying true to the mission of Camp Starfish: learning and growing while having safe fun.



2024 Dates and Rates

1:1 Programs

1:1 Programs			Navigators		OCP		LITE		Havvago		
			Our core program: a traditional overnight camp experience for younger campers.		The Older Camper Program: An upgraded teen camp experience that keeps building skills.		The best elements of overnight camp at Starfish, condensed into a 5-day, 4-night program.		A 5-day, 4-night experience designed to support campers on the Autism spectrum.		
Session	Ratio	Dates	Ages 7-13+		First-Timers Age 14 & Returners 14-16+		First-Timers Ages 6-14 & Returners up to 15		First-Timers Ages 6-14 & Returners up to 16+		
1	1:1	June 23 - July 6	<div>14 Days</div>	\$4,975	<div>14 Days</div>	\$4,975	<div>5 Days</div> \$1,900				
LITE	1:1	July 8 - July 12									
2	1:1	July 14 - July 27	<div>14 Days</div>	\$4,975	<div>14 Days</div>	\$4,975					
3	1:1	July 29 - Aug 11	<div>14 Days</div>	\$4,975	<div>14 Days</div>	\$4,975					
Havvago/ LITE 2	1:1	Aug 13 - Aug 17					<div>5 Days</div>	\$1,900	<div>5 Days</div>	\$1,900	

Speciality & Respite Programs

Program	Description	Ages & Enrollment	Ratio	Length	Dates	Cost
TIDES Vista	Transitional life skills and respite in a fun and supportive camp environment	Young Adults Ages 17-22	1:3	14 Days	Vista 1: June 23 - July 6 Vista 2: July 14 - July 27	\$4,750
Sibling Camp	The perfect opportunity to have their own friends and make friends with others who "just get it"	Ages 6-14 Living w/ or close relation to a Starfish camper or child with similar needs	1:4	5 Days	July 8 - July 12	\$995
BeachCombers	An outdoor adventure full of campfires, hiking, boating, and active fun	First-Timers Age 14 & Returners 14-16+	1:2	5 Days	July 29 - Aug 2	\$1,725
Treetops	Camp for youth and respite for families experiencing housing or food instability	Ages 6-14 Housing unstable, food insecure, or in geographical crisis	1:4	5 Days	July 8 - July 12	Free to families (Grant funded)
Teen Adventure Week	A fun summer week of respite-style programming for teenagers	Teenagers Ages 14+	1:3	5 Days	Aug 5 - Aug 9	\$1,695
LARP Week	A thrilling week of activities that use live-action role-play based in Crescent Lodge.	Ages 13+	1:3	5 Days	Aug 13 - Aug 17	\$1,695
August Bonus Week	A fun week of respite at the end of the summer with camp staff & a 1:1 ratio	Returning Campers up to 15	1:1	5 Days	Aug 19 - Aug 23	\$1,900
Year-Round Weekenders	Year-round respite and reconnection in a safe, familiar camp setting	Returning campers ages 13+	1:3	2.5 Days Drop-off Fridays 4:30-6:30pm Pick-up Sundays 1-3pm	Winter/Spring: Jan 5-7, Feb 2-4, Mar 1-3, Apr 5-7 Fall: Sep 27-29, Oct 25-27, Nov 15-17	Winter/Spring: \$2,600 Fall: \$1,950 or Inquire to pay per weekend.
Family Camp	A fun-filled fall weekend for the whole family!	Returning camper families	N/A	2.5 Days	Oct 4 - Oct 6	\$450



1:1 Programs



Camp Life Details: About 1:1 Programs

1:1 Programs is where it all started for Starfish! These sessions continue to be the backbone of our summer offerings, and while we keep the traditional aspects the same, each year we spice things up with new special events, activity areas, and evening programs. These camps most closely mirror a “traditional” summer camp experience, with scaffolding, structure, extensive supervision, and plenty of 1:1 support built in to ensure success.



Campers live in rustic but clean cabins with electricity, screened doors and windows, smoke detectors, and fans for ventilation. All campers sleep on a bottom bunk with a staff member on the top bunk above them. Cubbies provide storage for their belongings with a bin under the bed for extra items. A centrally located washhouse offers individual showers with private changing areas, toilets, and sinks. Cabins hold between 5-7 campers and the same number of staff. Several cabins together create a village.



During 14-day sessions, campers in 1:1 programs choose their activities and earn Tags (like merit badges) in 3-day “bundles” from over 30 choices each session. Daily swim lessons are provided. During 5-day sessions, campers have the opportunity to try a large selection of the activities available. Each day also includes two Free Play blocks, an elective period (where campers choose a one-time activity that isn’t typically available during bundles), and a special event or all-camp program such as a campfire, talent show, game show, or dance party.



In 1:1 programs, each camper works daily with their counselor Goals Buddy on up to three specific, individualized goals at a time. Prior to camp, parents/guardians choose the initial set of goals their camper will work toward (with input from their camper as appropriate) from 10 different areas of focus and over 100 specific goals. Campers put lots of effort into earning their rewards and are recognized for their achievements along the way with special Milestone celebrations.

1:1 Programs: *Navigators*



Our core overnight experience for younger campers.

As our traditional camp program for younger campers, Navigators is where it all started!

Many campers spend the initial years of their Starfish experience as a Navigator. We call our core campers “Navigators” because, with the help of staff, they choose their activities in several-day bundles, allowing them to discover their interests and “navigate” the world around them. First-time and younger campers are strongly encouraged to choose from a wide variety of options. As they progress through the program, most begin spending more time in areas of interest to them and undertaking multiday or even multi-bundle projects in those areas. All Navigators earn tags and “level up” through our Tag-Up program, which recognizes progressive skill achievement in activities.

All Navigators are scheduled for a daily instructional swim lesson until they reach a basic stroke and water safety proficiency level, at which time they may opt out of lessons or choose to continue expanding their skills. Navigators experience daily all-camp programs, which often introduce them to the traditions of Starfish including the camper talent show, the counselor fashion show, and the Peace Games. All Navigators also participate in a daily elective where they choose a one-time activity that isn’t offered as part of the typical program options. AM and PM Free-Plays, cabin clean-up, goals meetings, and special events round out the program day.

This program offers our highest level of structure and a 1:1 ratio of staff to campers. Bunking for this age group is generally based on social and chronological age, emotional and behavioral factors, camper/staff matching, and many other factors.

Ages 7-13+

14
Days

1:1
Ratio



“He slept away from home for the first time and had a great time! He adapted really quickly to the routines at camp and was full of happiness and energy when we came to see him.”

-Camper Parent

1:1 Programs:

Older Camper Program



An upgraded teen camp experience that keeps building skills.

First-Timers Age 14
& Returners 14-16+

14
Days

1:1
Ratio



"I definitely learn a lot every year. This place changes my life in a really good way."

-OCP Camper

The Older Camper Program (OCP) is similar to Navigators, yet provides opportunities for teens to practice safe decision-making skills with the support of staff. It is intentionally designed with a slightly more "relaxed" feel to the structure as appropriate for older campers. The staff-to-camper ratio is still 1:1.

Many of the Navigators program elements very intentionally carry over into OCP. Teens continue to choose their activities from 3-day bundles, have a daily instructional swim lesson (until they reach a basic stroke and water safety proficiency level, at which time they may opt out of lessons or choose to continue expanding their skills), participate in the daily elective, twice-daily Free Plays, cabin cleanup, and daily goals meetings. They continue to earn Tags in program areas and enjoy special activities and all-camp programs.

All OCP teens also participate daily in the OCP Chat, a discussion- and project-based activity that focuses on issues in their lives such as safe choices, healthy friendships, peer pressure, navigating drama, social appropriateness, and similar topics. By participating in Chat and following the OCP expectations, teens move through the OCP Levels, earning additional responsibilities and privileges.

Participation in the daily Chat and an ability to follow the basic Starfish expectations for safety are required for campers to maintain Level status and therefore earn the privileges that come along with OCP, such as 100% choice in activities and having access to special teen-only events like teen hangout in the evenings and beach parties. If being in Chat and earning privileges is not of interest, teens should be signed up for the Navigator program even if they are technically old enough to be in OCP.

OCP teens are bunked together, and may also bunk with older Navigators, depending on teen enrollment, emotional/social/behavioral needs, camper/staff matching, and similar factors.

1:1 Programs: LITE



The best elements of overnight camp at Starfish, condensed into a 5-day, 4-night program.

Our LITE program introduces campers to the Starfish experience, including the Starfish Tools (coping skills) and Keys (social skills). This specialized program is an integral part of the Camp Starfish community, offering a safe and nurturing environment where campers can thrive, grow, and build lasting memories. The emphasis is on trying new things, being part of a group, and having fun.

LITE campers travel with their bunkmates and cabin staff through a carefully planned calendar of activities, allowing them to try many of the activities that camp has to offer at least once. Throughout the session, campers will be able to participate in single-block activities that mirror those offered in longer sessions; Arts & crafts, athletics, activate (sensory gym), boating, discovery (woodworking), music, drama, dance, challenge (team-building), and small animals are among the top-rated LITE program areas. They have the option to swim at least once each day, go boating on the lake, experience a campfire (with s'mores, of course!), and sample special events including the counselor fashion show, scavenger hunts, and more.

It is not required that campers first do a LITE session when starting at Starfish. Many of our first-time campers go straight into the Navigators program. However, for campers who do not yet feel ready to be away from home for a traditional two-week session, LITE is a great option! By traveling around with their bunk group throughout the day, campers form a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar environment; they spend an increased amount of time with the staff in their cabin compared to 14-day sessions, which allows the adults working most closely with them to attune to their needs and provide an individualized experience.

First-Timers Ages 6-14 & Returners up to 15

5
Days

1:1
Ratio



“He’s having his best school year yet, and when I asked him what made such a difference, he said, ‘honestly, Mom, it was camp.’ Need I say more?”

-Camper Parent

1:1 Programs: *Havvago*



A 5-day, 4-night experience designed to support campers on the Autism Spectrum.

First-Timers Ages 6-14
& Returners up to 16+

5
Days

1:1
Ratio



“They were so happy to connect with peers. This was a huge hope of theirs and to see it fulfilled was amazing for them.”

-Camper Parent

The Havvago program is specifically designed to support the needs of campers on the Autism Spectrum. Youth ages 6-14 are invited to “have a go” at experiencing the excitement and fun of overnight camp in a structured, safe, and nurturing environment designed to set children on the spectrum up for success.

For 5 days and 4 nights, campers will enjoy all the fun of camp - swimming, boating, crafts, nature exploration, campfires, cabin life, and much, much more - while building their social skills, independence, and self-confidence. Campers in the Havvago program travel with their bunkmates and cabin staff through a carefully planned calendar of activities, allowing them to try many of the activities that camp has to offer at least once.

Throughout the day, campers are presented with natural opportunities to work on social and communication skills. Additionally, they sit down each evening with their “goals buddy,” a staff member in their bunk, to discuss ways they worked on their skills during their daily activities, and ways that they could try to improve their skills the following day.

Staff in the Havvago program are specifically trained on how to best support campers with Autism; they are knowledgeable about the characteristics of Autism including sensory needs, communication challenges, and social difficulties. With the 1:1 staff-to-camper ratio, campers are always able to take a sensory break when they are overstimulated. Likewise, having a staff-buddy by their side allows campers to form meaningful relationships with peers; staff encourage campers to introduce themselves to others and hold give-and-take conversations that include the interests of both campers. Lastly, Starfish staff are specifically trained on de-escalation techniques and how to support campers through challenging situations.

When determining whether the Havvago program is a match for your camper, please refer to the “Is it a Match?” section on page 4 of this guide.



Specialty & Respite Programs





Camp Life Details: About Specialty and Respite Programs

Many of our specialty and respite programs are based out of the Crescent side of camp which is home to the Crescent Lodge, Crescent Beach, and The Grove. Though different in their lengths, age requirements, activities, and staff-to-participant ratios, each of these programs offers a structured, safe, and fun camp experience.



Campers and participants in our TIDES Vista, Sibling Camp, Treetops, LARP Week, and Teen Adventure Week programs live in our Crescent Lodge. This beautiful and modern onsite conference and retreat center was completed in 2017. It has dorm-style accommodations, bathrooms with plenty of privacy, and its own play/rec rooms, dining hall, and kitchen. The building is fully equipped with fans for ventilation, screened windows, an individual exit to the porch in each room, and smoke/CO2 detectors. Each dorm room has several bunk beds and plenty of cubbies for personal item storage.



BeachCombers participants live in the Grove, where their accommodations are rustic and simple weatherproof platform tents fitted with comfy cots ready for sleeping bags. Mosquito netting and the ability to roll up the sides of the tent on warm days keep things comfortable. The Grove has a covered outdoor cooking/eating area, and a nearby washhouse offers toilets, showers, and running hot/cold water. During inclement weather, BeachCombers participants sleep in the Crescent Lodge.



Each specialty/respite program includes different activities based on the goals of that particular program. The Crescent side of camp is complete with a full beach and waterfront with swimming and boating areas, a field, playground, GaGa pit, indoor rec space for rainy days, and a beautiful campfire circle/gathering area. Participants in specialty/respite programs also have access to specialized activity areas on the main side of camp like the ropes course, rock-throwing range, and basketball/tennis court.



Specialty & Respite Programs: Is it a Match?

Starfish is proud to be a program where campers with diverse needs can find success and have safe fun. If you aren't sure whether the Respite style of Starfish programming is going to be right for your camper, we encourage you to talk with a member of our year-round team. In addition to the expectations for participants in our 1:1 programs, the following criteria help us determine whether a camper is ready for specialty programs at Starfish.

In general, successful specialty/respite participants:

- **Want to be at Starfish.** Respite is not the place to push being away from home as an "experience" in the way camp can be designed to be. It is not a testing ground for independence. Kids enjoy Respite most when they are engaged and having a good time with staff and friends.
- **Are able to go out in the community safely, behaving inside appropriately defined boundaries.** Respite participants go on field trips which include car, van, or bus rides, brown-bag lunches (that they make themselves with staff help), time at a public playground, and activities at public places like aquariums, parks, bowling alleys, museums, farms, etc. Participants need to be able to stay with assigned staff, be flexible if plans change a little (with coaching and support from staff), and be able to follow directions. Due to our staffing structure and ratios, we are not able to leave campers behind at camp during field trips.
- **Have minimal aggressive, intense, high-attention, or high-need behaviors/incidents.** While at camp during our 1:1 summer programs we are prepared and equipped to deal with more consistently intense or high-attention behaviors, our Respite program is not appropriate for campers who are actively engaging in more intensive behaviors on a routine basis. We do have certified intervention staff on our Respite crew; in addition, all of our Respite staff are part of our extensively trained summer teams, and at least one year-round director is always present. We certainly expect challenges from time to time, and we do not disallow participants who have infrequently occurring higher needs. In general, however, we are not set up for the constant greater than-1:3 staffing that persistent heightened behaviors require.
- **Are ready for a great time...without a lot of screen time.** Staff make sure that there is lots to do during Respite programs, and we're mostly unplugged just like at summer camp. During Weekenders programs, which begin at the end of a long week of school, we often watch part of a movie on Friday night. Participants may listen to music or use tablets for reading, but otherwise, there's no hanging out in front of the TV or immersing oneself in video games for hours - it's all live, person-to-person interactions, just like at summer camp. It's not the way most respite programs work - but we like to be different.

Specialty Programs:

BeachCombers



An outdoor adventure full of campfires, hiking, boating, and active fun.

Is your teen ready to experience the great outdoors in the BeachCombers Grove? BeachCombers is about being willing to try new things, working together on camp life (wood collecting, food prep, fire building, etc.), and engaging in outdoor pursuits including canoeing, hiking, camping, and whitewater rafting.

Teens do not need to be outdoor-savvy to participate in Beachcombers, but they do need to be active and willing participants in the program. While living in platform tents and taking part in basic camp chores, participants quickly learn the importance of pitching in and keeping their camp tidy. BeachCombers cook at least one meal outdoors daily; the others are eaten in the dining hall or on the trail. Cooking one's own meals is a learning experience like no other, as with staff support and careful supervision, campers are responsible for helping with all parts of preparation, cooking, and cleanup.

Beachcombers also follow a different schedule to the rest of camp, swimming and canoeing on Lake Monomonac, challenging themselves on the high ropes course, hiking up a local mountain, and experiencing a full-day whitewater rafting trip. Scheduled downtime allows for plenty of opportunities to play cards and games, rest, and relax, too.

The Beachcombers program travels off-site, which requires campers to be able to safely travel, hike, and participate in community experiences. For that reason, a behavioral agreement we call the Waterways is in place that outlines the behavior expected of BeachCombers participants. Beachcombers teens and their parents/guardians must each sign a Waterways Agreement before arrival at camp.

First-Timers Age 14 & Returners 14-16+

5
Days

1:2
Ratio



To participate successfully in Beachcombers, teens should:

- Have the ability and willingness to hike a one-mile uphill trail carrying a backpack similar to one they would use for school.
- Be willing to try camp food that is different from what is prepared in the dining hall.
- Be willing to get a little "dirtier" due to the outdoor nature of the experience. There will be bugs/dirt.
- Be understanding that each day is structured differently than the others, and the schedule is always susceptible to changes in weather.
- Be able to follow staff guidance surrounding safety and appropriate interactions.
- Be willing to sign/abide by the Waterways Agreement.

Specialty Programs:

TIDES Vista



Transitional life skills and respite in a supportive and fun camp environment.

Young Adults Ages 17-22

14
Days

1:3
Ratio



TIDES stands for Transitional Independence and Directed Experiential Summer. TIDES began in 2017 with its focus mainly on job skills and career readiness for 6 trainees, ages 17-19.

We debuted the Vista program under the TIDES umbrella in 2022, providing a summer respite opportunity for 24 young adults that blends the best elements of camp-style fun with life-skill building and the opportunity to build independent futures.

The TIDES Vista program has been specifically designed to address areas of transitional planning for young adults including independent living, community participation, interpersonal interactions, and self-advocacy. The program is aptly named as participants are looking out at the view of their future and setting their sights on new horizons.

We know that many young adults don't finish a traditional school experience at 18, and they are often still developing their social/emotional and daily living skills. They need a fun, supportive place during the summer to continue focusing on navigating social situations while building their independence and planning their future. During Vista, participants do this all while having fun and being active outdoors. Participants live in dorm-style accommodations with multiple roommates. Advisors are housed in the building, but not in the room, and are present to provide guidance, instruction, and supervision.

In addition to leading the daily life skills curriculum, Advisors also help participants build their daily schedule and encourage them to choose activities that offer a good balance of active, social, recreational, and new challenges (such as trying a day hike or joining a dance crew). All Vista participants have the opportunity to plan, shop for, and cook a community meal during the session.

Participants may bring electronics such as tablets and e-readers which may be accessed at specific times of day as appropriate. Young adults do not have to be prior attendees of Camp Starfish to enroll in Vista. However, they must be able and willing to: participate safely and appropriately within a 1:3 ratio, join in with group activities, communicate verbally, and tend to their own self-care for eating, toileting, showering, and dressing.

Specialty Programs:

Sibling Camp



The perfect opportunity to have their own fun and make friends with others who “just get it.”

As the brother, sister, cousin, or other relative of a Starfish camper, siblings sometimes feel left out or different themselves. They may need a break from their sometimes tough family role, and making friends who can relate to what they're going through allows siblings to feel less alone or different from their peers.

Sibling Camp emphasizes that every child is a valuable member of the community, and celebrates campers for who they are individually, without comparing them to others. We acknowledge that siblings of children with special needs may have their own set of feelings and challenges; Sibling Camp offers these children the opportunity to share these feelings and challenges with others who are going through the same thing.

During Sibling Camp, participants take part in activities that promote healthy social, coping, and empathy skills, with qualified staff and alongside peers who really “get” them. All the while, they are able to access and enjoy a traditional camp experience. During the 5-day, 4-night program, sibling campers travel as a group to sample various activities across camp including arts & crafts, athletics, small animals, boating, swimming, nature exploration, and more. Sibling Campers also go on an off-site trip to a local mountain and petting zoo.

The program intentionally has a staff-to-camper ratio of 1:4 or better, as our intent is for siblings to feel like they have their own place at Starfish—not that they are attending the 1:1 programs their brothers or sisters attend. Siblings who require higher supervision should consider other Starfish options.

Siblings do not need to attend camp during the same dates in order to participate.

Ages 6-14

Living with/close relation to a Starfish camper or to a child with similar needs

5
Days

1:4
Ratio



“It is obvious that all staff are invested in giving each camper a positive experience with camp. I feel very lucky that my camper was able to attend this year.”

-Camper Parent

Specialty Programs:

Treetops

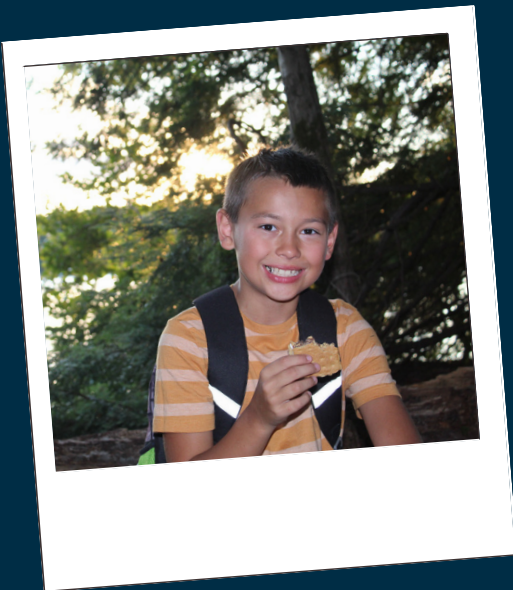


Camp for youth and respite for families experiencing housing or food instability.

Ages 6-14

5
Days

1:4
Ratio



"I learned how to make friends without anxiety. My favorite thing about camp is that it helps me grow."

-Treetops Camper

The Treetops week of camp is designed to provide a fun week of traditional summer camp programming to children experiencing housing instability. During this 5-day, 4-night program, Treetops campers travel as a group to sample various activities across camp including arts & crafts, athletics, small animals, boating, swimming, nature exploration, and more. Treetops campers also go on an off-site trip to a local mountain and petting zoo.

Treetops campers reside in Crescent Lodge in dorm-style accommodations with bunkbeds and cubbies for storage. It also has its own dining room and kitchen, lounge, and rec room for play. While the Crescent side of camp has its own Gaga pit, waterfront, field, and firepit, Treetops participants will also join the main side of camp for many program areas during the day.

With specific grant funding through Philanthropy MA's Summer Fund, paired with Starfish camperships, we are able to offer the Treetops program free of charge to youth who are experiencing housing or food instability, who are living in a shelter, have been or are about to be geographically displaced, or who are in crisis. Clothing, transportation to camp, and additional supports may also be available. If you or someone you know can benefit from this opportunity, please speak with a director.

This week of camp utilizes a 1:4 staff-to-camper ratio. The Treetops program is not designed for campers who need 1:1 support for emotional and behavioral challenges; campers who require such support should instead apply for another program, such as the LITE program. Please speak with a director if you believe you may qualify for Treetops funding but your camper requires greater support than a 1:4 ratio.

Specialty Programs:

LARP Week



A thrilling week of activities that use live-action role-play based in Crescent Lodge.

"LARP Week" is a 5-day, 4-night program designed to unlock the inner adventure in every camper through the use of live-action role-play (LARP). Staff in LARP week believe that every camper has a "hero" within them, waiting to embark on a journey of self-discovery, friendship, and personal growth. They are specifically trained to encourage individuality in campers and grow their self-confidence.

In addition to just being fun, LARP allows campers to naturally build upon skills that are central to the mission of Camp Starfish. Whether they are knights, wizards, explorers, or magical creatures, each camper becomes a vital part of the story, boosting their self-esteem and encouraging self-expression. Through collaborative storytelling, campers work together to solve challenges, conquer quests, and build deep connections with their fellow adventurers. They learn to manage feelings, make choices, and adapt to changing situations, all while remaining in character. As campers interact with diverse characters and navigate the challenges of the storyline, they gain a greater understanding of different perspectives and develop empathy for their peers.

LARP Week is based out of Crescent Lodge, where campers live in dorm-style accommodations. During the day, campers participate in short LARPs during program blocks. However, they also have opportunities to take part in traditional camp activities through daily swim time, campfires, all-camp activities with the main side of camp, and more. LARP week participants may also travel off-site for an adventure, so it is important that campers can behave safely and appropriately within a 1:3 staff-to-camper ratio.

Ages 13+

5
Days

1:3
Ratio



"I'm glad that Camp Starfish can offer the camp experience for kids who don't fit with the traditional camp mold. Thank you to Camp Starfish for understanding my son and giving him a great experience!"

-Camper Parent

Specialty Programs:

Teen Adventure Week



A fun summer week of respite-style programming for teenagers

Ages 14+

5
Days

1:3
Ratio



“He came home saying, ‘You know when something or someone is bothering me, I can just walk away and ignore it.’ That felt like an accomplishment.”

-Camper Parent

Teen Adventure Week is an opportunity for teen-aged campers to experience all of the fun of a traditional Starfish experience in addition to daily offsite adventures! The waterfront will be open all week for swimming, boating, and beach fun, and campers will also have opportunities to participate in other camp activities like arts and crafts, sports, and campfires.

Additionally, Teen Adventure Week campers will go on daily off-site field trips to fun locations like an adventure course, a zoo, and an amusement park. The program is housed in the Crescent Lodge, which offers dorm-style accommodations, dining and kitchen space, and a recreation room. Campers occasionally join the main side of camp for “free-play” blocks, but they should expect to spend the majority of their time with other Teen Adventure Week participants and staff.

There is an intentional focus on keeping the structure and expectations familiar and on par with our other respite programs. To that end, Teen Adventure Week participants will have limited, supervised time to use their electronics (no cell phones) during daily optional “technology time” in the evenings. Electronics are stored in staff-only areas during the day and distributed to campers during technology time.

Teen Adventure Week is limited to 12 participants. To be enrolled, campers must be able to meet the behavioral expectations specific to Starfish respite programming. The ratio for Teen Adventure Week is 1:3, which is plenty of staff for engagement and supervision, though campers do also need to be able to participate safely and appropriately within camp expectations and boundaries without consistent 1:1 support.

Specialty Programs:

August Bonus Week



A fun week of respite at the end of the summer with camp staff & 1:1 ratio.

Looking for some extra camp at the end of the summer? Our August Bonus Week is a great chance to have s'more fun with the summer staff and friends from summer sessions! Bonus week is chock full of activities, fun, and friends.

We maintain our focus on using the Tools and Keys, and our staff-to-camper ratio remains 1:1, though our structure is slightly more relaxed compared with our typical summer camp day. Just like at camp, there are no electronics and the focus is on spending time with others, enjoying the opportunity to be outdoors, and having fun at camp.

During August Bonus Week, we do not have formalized instruction (such as swim lessons or TagUp). Campers choose activities in real-time based on what they feel like trying next, as opposed to selecting "bundles" of activities to create their weekly schedule. Plenty of free swim and beach time is on the schedule, as is a trip to Canobie Lake Park for a day of rides and waterslides. Campers may choose to go off-camp on hikes, enjoy motorboat rides on the lake, kayak out to Blueberry Island, and even search for treasure in our full-camp Goldrush. Campers may also choose quieter pursuits like crafts, Book Nook time, or cards. During Bonus Week, we encourage campers to participate and enjoy themselves, and there are always plenty of alternative activities or low-key relaxation choices available. This is a great way to end the summer!

Bonus Week campers live in Fish Village cabins on the main side of our campsite. They eat all of their meals in the main dining hall and have access to its activities and amenities. Discounts are available for campers who attend any summer session and Bonus Week.

First-Timers Ages 7-13 & Returners up to 15

5
Days

1:1
Ratio



"He is always needing encouragement to try new things and stick with something if it isn't a preferred activity. He's definitely shown more tolerance for less-preferred things (like school) and more flexibility in his thinking."

-Camper Parent

Specialty Programs:

Weekenders



Year-round respite and reconnection in a safe, familiar camp setting.

Ages 13+

2.5
Days

1:3
Ratio



“The respite is crucial. It provides the opportunity for us to renew our energy, helps us focus on her positive attributes, and appreciate her return home. And gives me time alone with my husband, with no guilt.”

-Camper Parent

Weekenders offers a chance for campers to reconnect with camp and change their scenery for a few days during the school year, and gives parents/guardians much-needed respite. Our respite has a very Starfish flavor - though limited electronics use is allowed at specific times, participants spend the majority of their time engaging with others in camp activities, reconnecting with friends, and continuing to work on their Tools and Keys.

The ratio for Weekenders is 1:3, which is plenty of staff for engagement and supervision, though campers do also need to be able to participate without consistent hand-over-hand support. Additionally, it's important to determine if Weekenders is the right kind of respite opportunity for your camper. While our summer camp programs are highly structured and tightly scheduled, Weekenders is significantly more low-key. At Weekenders, our day has a schedule that is forecasted and previewed for campers, but activity periods are more loosely organized. Transitions feel different because we come back together as a group after each activity to review options and determine where everyone is going next. Some activities differ from those at camp (like baking apple pies after returning from an apple picking field trip!) and others - like GaGa or Free Play - will feel very familiar. Staff encourage active participation in planned activities, however, campers may choose how to spend their time so long as they are able to remain safely with the group (for example, choosing to read or relax on the sidelines of the kickball game).

Each Weekend also includes a Saturday field trip which consists of a picnic lunch and special activity. Apple/pumpkin picking, bowling, mini-golf, local fairs, indoor water parks, and more are some favorites.

Specialty Programs:

Family Camp



A fun-filled fall weekend for the whole family.

One of our most commonly asked questions by parents/guardians during the enrollment process is, “Can I come to camp?” In 2024, parents, grandparents, siblings, and your camper can attend Camp Starfish together!

Family camp is a fall weekend designed to provide structured fun for all ages. Experience meals in the Starfish dining hall, campfires at Gathering, and other traditional camp activities! Family Camp participants are housed in our main camp cabins; your family will be housed together in one cabin. Bathhouses are communal (with private stalls) and are located adjacent to the cabins in the village. 4 participants are included in the cost of the program, though additional participants may be added for an extra cost if you inquire at the time of your application.

The schedule for family camp is more loosely structured than a typical summer program at Camp Starfish. Our goal is that families are able to experience camp activities together; because of this, a schedule will be provided for the weekend that includes a rotation of activities, including some big-group activities (ex., a soccer game on the field or a scavenger hunt across the campsite) and some small-group activities (ex. tie-dye, kayaking, and the high ropes course.)

Please note that, unlike our summer sessions, staff at Family Camp are there to lead games and activities, ensure families have access to materials as needed, and act as guides as you explore the fun that is planned during your stay. Though there may be periods during the day when campers do activities independently from adults, families should not assume they will spend the majority of their weekend apart from Starfish campers and are ultimately responsible for all children in their party while in attendance.

Returning Camper Families

2.5
Days



“Breathing and being able to remove himself to calm has worked wonders for our family after camp.”

-Camper Parent

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