

camp STARFISH

2025 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, binging/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, most taking place in our main camp cabins. 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

Teen Weeks

Treetops

LARP Week

August Bonus Week

Year-Round Weekenders

Family Camp

Starfish Day Out

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.



Summer 2025 Dates and Rates

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 20 - July 3	14 Days \$5,200	14 Days \$5,200		
LITE	1:1	July 6 - July 10			5 Days \$1,995	
2	1:1	July 13 - July 26	14 Days \$5,200	14 Days \$5,200		
Havvago/ LITE 2	1:1	July 28 - Aug 1			5 Days \$1,995	5 Days \$1,995
3	1:1	Aug 4 - Aug 17	14 Days \$5,200	14 Days \$5,200		

Specialty 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	June 20 - July 3	\$4,950
Sibling Camp	A fun camp experience for youth living with a Starfish sibling or child with similar needs	Ages 6-14	1:4	5 Days	July 6 - July 10	\$1,000
Treetops	Camp for youth and respite for families experiencing housing or food instability	Ages 6-14	1:4	5 Days	July 6 - July 10	Free to families (Grant funded)
Teen Weeks	Thrill Seekers: 5 days of thrilling adventures including an amusement park and a trampoline park.	Teenagers Ages 14+	1:3	5 Days	July 14 - July 18	\$1,995**
	Survival Quest: 5 days of nature-based programming with survival skills acquisition and outdoor adventures.	Teenagers Ages 14+	1:3	5 Days	July 21 - July 25	\$1,800**
	Creative Week: A week of artistic endeavors. Participate in crafts on camp and attend community art classes.	Teenagers Ages 14+	1:3	5 Days	Aug 4 - Aug 8	\$1,800**
LARP Week	A thrilling week of activities that use live-action role-play based in Crescent Lodge.	Ages 13+	1:3	5 Days	Aug 11- Aug 15	\$1,800**
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	\$1,995

** Participants in Teen Thrill Seekers may elect to stay the bridge weekend into Teen Survival Quest for an additional cost of \$650. Similarly, participants in Teen Creative Week may elect to stay the bridge weekend into LARP Week for an additional cost of \$650.



Dates and Rates

2025 Year-Round Programs

Weekenders

Year-round respite and reconnection in a safe and familiar setting. Participants live in the Crescent Lodge, which is insulated and heated for chilly weekends. Drop-off typically takes place between 4:30-6:30 on Fridays and pickup is 1:00-3:00 on Sundays. Tuition includes field trip admission and transportation on Saturday. *Please inquire with our office about transportation to/from the Alewife T-Station for Weekenders.*

Season	Ages	Ratio	Length	Dates	Cost
Winter/ Spring	Ages 13+	1:3	2.5 Days	Jan 17 - Jan 19 Feb 7 - Feb 9 March 14 - March 16	\$650 per weekend
Fall	Ages 13+	1:3	2.5 Days	Sep 26 - Sep 28 Oct 17 - Oct 19 Nov 7 - Nov 9	\$650 per weekend

Family Camp

A fun-filled weekend for the whole family! Families live in our main camp cabins, eat meals in our dining hall, and participate in fun camp activities throughout the weekend. The base cost for the overnight program is \$450, which covers a family group of 4. Please inquire with our office about payment for additional participants. The day program rate is \$25 per person per day; day participants can choose between attending only Saturday, only Sunday, or both days.

Program Type	Enrollment	Ratio	Length	Dates	Cost
Overnight	First-time and Returning Camper Families	N/A	2.5 Days	Sep 5 - Sep 7	\$450 per 4-person family
Day	First-time and Returning Camper Families	N/A	2.5 Days	Sep 6 And/Or Sep 7	\$25 per person, per day

Starfish Day Out

Fun-filled respite in a different setting. "Starfish Day Out" takes place in Boston and provides parents with an opportunity to enjoy a day of respite while knowing campers are having fun in the city with the Starfish staff they know and love. Drop-off will take place mid-morning at an agreed-upon location in the city, and pickup will take place late afternoon. *Transportation to/from Camp in Rindge, or at the Alewife T-station is available, please inquire with our office.*

Season	Ages & Enrollment	Ratio	Length	Date	Cost
Spring	Returning Campers Ages 12+	1:3	1 Day	April 26	\$200
Winter	Returning Campers Ages 12+	1:3	1 Day	December 6	\$200



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. Youth with ASD may choose to participate in other Starfish programs - please connect with a member of our enrollment team to discuss best fit for your camper.

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 live in the Crescent Lodge, which is complete with electricity, AC, and its own kitchen and eating area, and travel with their bunkmates and 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.

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 Havvago 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 and Crescent Beach. 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 in our specialty and respite programs (excluding August Bonus Week, Family Camp, and Starfish Day Out) 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.



Each of our Specialty Programs is designed to appeal to campers working on growing their skills in one specific area. For example, campers in Teen Creative Week spend 5 days participating in arts-based activities with staff who already have skills and experience with art instruction. While pre-requisite experience in these areas is not required for participation in Specialty Programs, campers should expect that most of the activities they do during their week of programming will revolve around a specific theme, rather than fluctuating each day.



While the 1:1 ratio is core to the mission of Camp Starfish, we recognize that for many, especially our older campers who have grown up in 1:1 programs, that level of support is no longer necessary. In Specialty and Respite programs, campers are able to apply the skills they have learned in previous 1:1 programs with a higher degree of independence, and generalize them to a new program structure. Please read the "Is it a Match?" section to determine if this ratio is right for your camper.



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:

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 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 assisting camp program staff). 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 petting zoo, weather dependent.

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

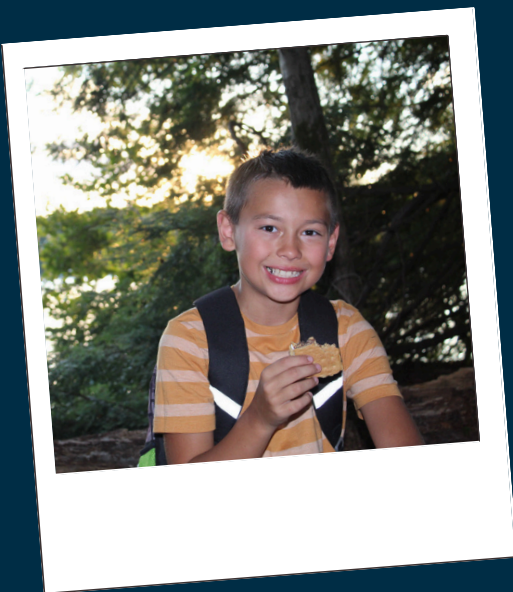


Camp for youth and respite for families experiencing housing or food instability.

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 petting zoo, weather dependent.

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:

Teen Thrill Seekers



A fun summer week of thrilling adventures for teenagers.

Teen Thrill Seekers 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 Thrill Seekers campers will go on daily off-site field trips to thrilling locations like an adventure course, a zoo, and an amusement park. Field trip transportation and admission is included in the cost of the program. Offsite trips are subject to change based on availability and weather. The program is housed in the Crescent Lodge, which offers dorm-style accommodations, dining and kitchen space, and a recreation room. Campers may occasionally join the main side of camp for “freeplay” blocks. Teen Thrill Seekers participants will have limited, supervised time to use their electronics (no cell phones) during daily optional “technology time” in the evenings. Technology will be stored in staff-only spaces during the day.

Teen Thrill Seekers 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 Thrill Seekers 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.

**Participants interested in Teen Survival Quest may elect to stay the “bridge weekend” between the two programs for an additional cost. Campers join our main camp programming during this time.

Plus optional Bridge Weekend!**

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

Specialty Programs:

Teen Survival Quest



A week of outdoor living skills education and active fun in nature.

Plus optional Bridge Weekend!**

Ages 14+

5
Days

1:3
Ratio



To participate successfully in Survival Quest, 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.
- Be understanding that each day is structured differently than the others, and the schedule is always susceptible to changes in weather.

Is your teen ready to fine-tune their survival skills? Teen Survival Quest is about being willing to try new things and learning from staff experienced in survival.

Teens do not need to be outdoor-savvy to participate in Teen Survival Quest, but they do need to be willing to try new things. Campers will learn essential outdoor survival techniques, including shelter building, fire-making, and navigation. Through hands-on experiences and challenges, participants will build confidence and resilience while bonding with fellow adventurers. Participants will also have the opportunity to complete the Red Cross Wilderness First Aid course, with qualified candidates gaining certification at the end of the week.

Teen Survival Quest campers reside in the Crescent Lodge, which is complete with electricity and AC, but campers spend the majority of their day outside in nature. The program includes offsite trips to local hiking trails and state parks, weather and availability dependent.

The Teen Survival Quest program travels off-site, which requires campers to be able to safely travel, hike, and participate in community experiences. For that reason, campers must be able to meet the behavioral expectations outlined for specialty programming. Teens may bring electronics such as tablets and personal gaming devices (no cell phones) for use during structured technology time in the evenings.

**Participants interested in Teen Thrill Seekers may elect to stay the “bridge weekend” between the two programs for an additional cost. Campers join our main camp programming during this time.

Specialty Programs: *Teen Creative Week*



A week of activities that inspire artistic expression for teens.

Teen Creative Week is a 5-day, 4-night program designed to provide teens an opportunity to express themselves through their creations in a collaborative and uplifting environment. Staff in Teen Creative Week are skilled in crafting and creating and teach campers how to use various materials to create while still allowing for individualized expression. All the while, they encourage campers to share their ideas with each other and create group projects throughout the week, naturally working on social and communication skills along the way.

In addition to on-site art projects, campers in Teen Creative Week participate in some community art classes such as painting and pottery. Field trip transportation and admission is included in the price of the program. Offsite trips are subject to change based on availability and weather. Because Teen Creative Week campers travel offsite, they must be able to behave safely and appropriately within the behavioral expectations and guidelines outlined for specialty and respite programs.

Teen Creative Week is based out of Crescent Lodge, where campers live in dorm-style accommodations. While most programming is centered around the arts, campers will also have opportunities to participate in traditional camp activities including daily swim time, campfires, and more. Teen Creative Week campers may bring electronics such as tablets and personal gaming devices (no cell phones) for use during structured technology time in the evenings. Technology will be stored in staff-only spaces during the day.

**Participants interested in LARP Week may elect to stay the "bridge weekend" between the two programs for an additional cost. Campers join our main camp programming during this time.

*Plus optional Bridge Weekend!***

Ages 14+

5 Days

1:3 Ratio



"The warmth and nurturing environment at Camp Starfish was a wonderful thing to witness. She was bursting with excitement to show us around camp when we arrived to pick her up!"

-Camper Parent

Specialty Programs:

LARP Week



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

Plus optional Bridge Weekend!**

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

“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).

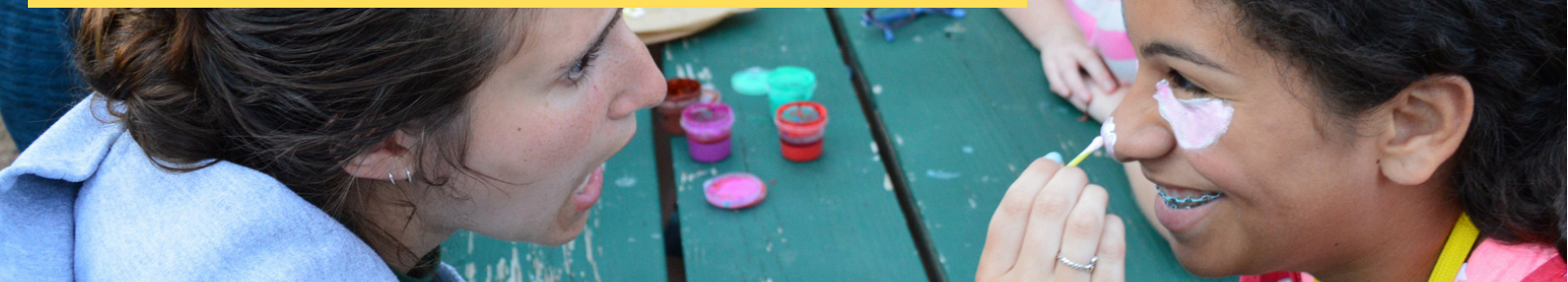
In addition to just being fun, LARP allows campers to naturally build upon skills that are central to the mission of Camp Starfish. Whether they are knights, wizards, explorers, or magical creatures, each camper becomes a vital part of the story, boosting their self-esteem and encouraging self-expression. 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 shortLARPs 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.

**Participants interested in Teen Creative Week may elect to stay the “bridge weekend” between the two programs for an additional cost. Campers join our main camp programming during this time.

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. The week is filled with exciting all-camp activities including a camp-wide Gold Rush, counselor fashion shows, bingo, and more. 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. Bonus week is a great option for families who want to reinforce the skills learned at camp right before school starts back up.

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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?” At Family Camp, 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. Unlike our other programs, which are designed to provide respite for families, family camp is intended to be a bonding experience. Families should not assume they will spend their weekend apart from Starfish campers and are ultimately responsible for all children in their party while in attendance.

Returning Camper Families

Over-Night

OR

Day-Only



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

-Camper Parent

Specialty Programs: *Starfish Day Out*



A day experience for caregiver respite and camper fun in the city.

Returning Campers Ages 13+

1
Day

1:3
Ratio



“To be in an environment with peers and be interacting similarly to other kids his age at other camps is an enormously therapeutic experience for our child.”

-Camper Parent

New for 2025, Starfish Day Out brings the fun and spirit of Weekenders to the Greater Boston area! This one-day program offers a refreshing day of respite for caregivers, while campers embark on exciting city-based adventures. It's the perfect way for returning Starfish campers to reconnect with peers and staff, all while exploring some of the best field trips Greater Boston has to offer.

Participants will pack a lunch and meet the Starfish staff mid-morning at a designated central location near the day's activities. (Transportation is also available from Camp in Rindge or the Alewife T-Station.)

In the winter, campers might enjoy ice skating at the Frog Pond in Boston Common followed by an IMAX movie at the New England Aquarium. In the spring, activities could include a Duck Tour and ferry trip to the Boston Harbor Islands. The specific itinerary will depend on the weather, and families will receive detailed information one month prior to each event. Regardless of the season, every Starfish Day Out will be filled with fun and connection, while providing much-needed respite for caregivers.

The staff-to-camper ratio for this program is 1:3, ensuring plenty of supervision and engagement. However, campers must be able to participate without continuous hand-over-hand assistance. Additionally, it's important to consider if Starfish Day Out is the right fit for your camper. Since the group will use public transportation (walking and the T) between activities, campers must be able to follow staff directions and stay with the group for safety reasons.

camp STARFISH

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