

Bluff Lake Nature Center Small Group Summer Camp Update and FAQ

Last updated 5-14-2020



We have heard your thoughts and concerns, talked to our licensing team, and decided that Bluff Lake will be switching to a small group camp format for summer 2020. This new format will allow for increased safety for our staff and campers as well as provide campers a unique small group team experience! Please read the following FAQ for more info about what this means and how it will impact you. If you have additional questions, please reach out to Bluff Lake's Director of Operations, Maggie Willden, by email at maggie@blufflake.org.

What is a small group camp?

To decrease the risk of exposure and provide plenty of adult oversight for campers' hygiene practices, we will be having primary group sizes no larger than 4 campers per 1 counselor. The 4 campers + 1 counselor will be the same individuals throughout the week. To add additional opportunities for campers, and to maximize campers' access to favorite site areas, each group of 4 campers + 1 counselor will have a partner group. At times, these two groups may participate in shared activities. The partner groups will remain consistent throughout the week, and physical distancing practices will still be maintained. Camp itself will look very similar to our regular Bluff Lake camp. A day will be filled with crafts, crawdad hunting, nature walks, and games. However these small groups will not be sharing the same space at the same time. We plan to use a lot of new spaces at Bluff Lake including our updated onsite building, additional new shaded spaces, and our exciting new nature play areas. We plan to cap weekly registration at 28 kids (7 groups).

How will you break up the small groups?

Our plan is to group students by age as much as possible. This will allow our educators to tailor activities and content in a fun, age appropriate way. We will try to accommodate special requests as best we can. If your camper wants to be in the same small group as someone else, please let us know. If you have enrolled siblings and you would like them to stay together, please let us know.

Is the cost of camp still the same?

Because of the smaller staff to camper ratio, we have increased the price of a week of camp to \$400 (previously \$315). This increase will cover the additional staff costs, as well as costs associated with providing the safest camp possible for your child. This includes but is not limited to purchasing thermometers, cleaning supplies, shade units, and additional materials so that the students do not need to share. Pre and post care will still cost the same amount. We have added an \$85 charge to your ACTIVE account (you will receive an email from ACTIVE when this occurs). You will need to go into your account and pay the additional fee in order to secure your camper's registration. If this cost increase will prevent your child from attending camp, please reach out to maggie@blufflake.org to discuss scholarship options! We are also offering a \$25 coupon code to campers whose primary care givers (one or both) are essential workers. Please contact maggie@blufflake.org to receive the code!

What happens to my existing camp registration?

It is still active! If you decide you would like to continue your enrollment in camp you will need to pay the additional fee that has been added to your ACTIVE account. If you are interested in cancelling your registration, you can do so following the instructions listed below.

Where will I drop my camper off each morning?

All pickup and drop offs will be at Bluff Lake Nature Center. This is a change from previous years when we have used Isabella Bird Community School for pickup and drop off. Denver Public Schools has closed all of their facilities this summer, so we are unable to use their site. When you arrive in the Bluff Lake Parking lot on the first day, a staff member will meet you before you get out of your car to tell you which group your camper is in and where (in the parking lot) you will drop them off each morning.

What are you doing to ensure the health and safety of my child due to COVID-19?

We have been busy researching and preparing ways that we can make camp safe for staff and campers. We have also communicated with our state licensing specialist who has given us some guidance. Here are some of the changes we are implementing.

GROUP SIZE

- Campers will be in small groups of 4 for the full week. Each group will have a designated leader. The groups will all do the same activities, but will rotate throughout the day.

SHADE

- We plan to supplement the shaded areas at Bluff Lake with either semi-permanent tents or sun tarps to provide additional, separate shaded areas for the groups to be.

HEALTH

- Drop off and pickup will be contact-less; parents will not be required to leave their car
- Parents will answer a brief question each morning to confirm that their child is not showing symptoms and has not had known exposure before their child is allowed to attend camp. All staff will answer the same questions each day, and we will additionally take their temperature to ensure they do not have a fever.
- Staff and campers will be asked to wear face coverings (we will follow state guidance on if this is required)
- We will have regular, required hand washing breaks, and adult leaders will ensure the campers are thorough when washing their hands.
- We will try our best to practice safe social distancing policies within small groups, but will make decisions based on immediate safety of kids.

MATERIALS

- We will sanitize all materials before and after use, or ensure that the same student is using the material each time.
- Each camper will get their own "materials bag" which will include scissors, glue sticks, pencils, and markers. They will keep these bags with them in their backpacks and return them at the end of each week. We will be purchasing additional materials when necessary to ensure kids are sharing less.

OTHER

- Campers will not be allowed to share food.
- Staff will wear gloves if helping a camper to apply sunscreen lotion (sunscreen spray is strongly encouraged!).

What's the deal with pre and post care?

Pre and post care will be held at the Bluff Lake site this year. Last summer we remodeled our onsite building, and it now has electricity to power a fan and have a refrigerator. Pre and post care campers will have the option to be inside the building or outside under the overhang playing with games, toys, and each other. If you are registered for pre and/or post care you will drop your camper off and pick them up right in front of the building. All the same safety, sanitization, and social distancing procedures will be continued during pre and post care.

What about JCs?

Due to our limited capacity as the result of switching to a small group size camp model, we unfortunately will no longer be able to offer JCs multiple weeks of camp at the fully discounted rate. The cost will be \$100 for the first week of JC work, and \$300 for each additional week. JCs will be assigned to help lead an individual group, and may also help counselors with general preparation work and other daily tasks. This year, each JC will receive more detailed, written feedback about their leadership skills after each week for which they are registered. In addition, all JCs will be invited to attend an optional wrap-up Zoom conference during August to talk further with counselors and each other about the lessons learned during camp and how to continue developing as leaders.

Who are your counselors this year?

Our counselors are so excited to work with your students this summer! Each counselor has passed a Colorado background check, participated in CPR and First Aid training, and all other trainings required by the state. We will be posting a page on our website that will include bios and photos of each of the counselors!

Has anything else changed?

Because we have decided to operate with a 4:1 camper to staff ratio, we are now categorized as a license exempt camp. The state licensing board still has oversight over our camp and we will still be following all requirements we previously had in terms of child safety, staff training, and more. The small group size model as designed is allowed to operate as an essential service under the current Colorado policies. We specifically designed the new offerings to minimize the potential that we would have to cancel programs once we enter the summer season. However, in the event that the local, state, or federal government implements any future orders that would require Bluff Lake to cancel camp, we will provide a 100% refund to families. Our previous license limited us to campers aged 6 and up. THIS SUMMER ONLY we will be allowing 5 year olds to participate in camp, based on feedback we have heard from parents about an increased need for childcare and camp opportunities.

What happens if I want to cancel my child's registration?

We have a variety of options for you if you choose to cancel your child's camp registration. If you are financially able, we encourage you to consider donating your registration fee or switching your camp registration to 2021. As a small nonprofit, we rely on the income we make each year at summer camp to maintain our education programs throughout the entire year, including paying for our education staff, providing free field trips to Title 1 schools, providing over 30 free family programs a year, and more. If you would like your registration fee returned, we are happy to do so as long as the cancellation occurs before June 1, 2020 (as per our regular cancellation policy). We are also happy to do a combination of multiple options if that is what works best for you (ex: donate one week's registration, refund one week's registration). If we are forced to cancel camp for any reason, families will receive a 100% refund. If a camper is diagnosed with COVID-19 or has any symptoms as defined within current public health guidelines pertaining to COVID-10 for day care centers or camps that require the camper not to attend camp, families will receive a 100% credit for the unused portion of the camp to be used through Summer 2021, or a 50% refund.

1. Switch camp registration to a later week in 2020

- a. If you would feel more comfortable having your camper in a later week of camp, we are happy to work with you to find a different week that might work! This year the last week of camp is August 10-14.

2. Switch camp registration to 2021

- a. If you know you'd like to send your camper to BLNC summer camp in 2020, we can save your registration fees and credit you next year. We will send you an email in early January before registration opens giving you a code to use which will make your registration free.
- b. Why does this help Bluff Lake? Every year, the summer camp registration funds we receive in the spring help us pay for all of the free programming we offer to schools and families throughout that year. It also makes it possible to employ a full-time Education Manager, which gives us the full year to prepare for the following summer's camp, and helps ensure the quality and consistency of our camp programming. If we are unable to have camp in 2020, Bluff Lake will have a hard time providing these opportunities. However if we can spread the financial impact over both 2020 and 2021, it will allow us to keep operations at a normal level!

3. Donate your registration fees to Bluff Lake

- a. We know that COVID-19 has impacted families in a major way and this may not be financially feasible for your family. If you are in a position where this might be possible, we have a donor who has offered to match all donated summer camp registrations at 50%! So your \$315 registration would then turn into a tax deductible donation, and would be matched by an additional \$157.50 donation from our donor!
- b. Why does this help Bluff Lake? As a small nonprofit, we rely on the income we make each year at summer camp to maintain our education programs throughout the entire year, including paying for our education staff, providing free field trips to Title 1 schools, providing over 30 free family programs a year, keeping the site open, and more.

4. Donate your registration fees to our summer camp scholarship fund

- a. Want to help another camper experience Bluff Lake camp this year? Every year we provide 20+ free summer camp registrations for low-income families. If you donate your registration fee, it will allow us to continue to provide these scholarship slots this year and for years to come!

5. Have your registration refunded back to you

- a. No problem! We will process this in the system, and ACTIVE will refund the account that paid for the registration (minus any processing fees).
- b. Any camp registration cancelled after June 1, 2020 will not qualify for a refund.

If you have any questions or would like to pursue one of the above options, please contact Maggie Willden at maggie@blufflake.org

Why should I send my kids to Bluff Lake camp this summer?

Times are uncertain right now, but we are still optimistic that we can be a source of critical relief in getting youth safely into the outdoors and active this upcoming summer. We believe it is extremely important that even in the midst of safety precautions and physical distancing, children still have as many opportunities as possible to move, play, learn, and connect with others. We fully anticipate that this unique, small-group camp experience will provide as many exciting, meaningful experiences as our camps of previous years. We are privileged to be able to offer this slice of relative normalcy for kids and families that have already undergone so many recent changes, and hope that it will be as beneficial to your mental health as it is to ours. We will be staying updated from the CDC and will plan accordingly to make sure we are using all recommended cleanliness practice throughout camp.

We will continue to provide updates on the Summer Camp page of our website, and will notify enrolled parents directly of any significant changes in our policies or schedule. If you have additional questions please reach out to Bluff Lake's Director of Operations, Maggie Willden, by email at maggie@blufflake.org.