



# Outdoor Education Parent's Manual



Camp Chief Hector YMCA  
Outdoor Education  
2024/2025

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## Welcome

For over thirty years, Camp Chief Hector YMCA has been running overnight outdoor school experiences that provide unique opportunities for enhancing curriculum objectives, building communication and cooperative group skills, and providing a shared experience for students of different backgrounds. All of our programs are centered on the four core values of the YMCA: Caring, Honesty, Responsibility, and Respect.

We have worked with many school groups over the years, and are aware of the challenges involved in planning an Outdoor School experience. However, we are also reminded daily of the long-term benefits that result from getting kids back into nature. We look forward to working with you and your students.

Take care,

Outdoor Schools Manager and Team

## CONTACTS

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## LOGISTICS

### Location

Camp Chief Hector YMCA is located approximately one hour west of Calgary, in Bow Valley Provincial Park. Our programs emphasize community and values-based education, outdoor challenge, fun, individual growth, environmental stewardship, leadership development and service excellence. Operating year-round, Camp Chief Hector YMCA is a unique camping and outdoor education branch that focuses on youth but offers programs for everyone through Summer Camps, Outdoor Education, weekend programs for adults and families, and meeting and event facilities

### Accommodations & Meals

Camp Chief Hector YMCA has indoor accommodations for students attending Eco School in the fall and winter, and Outdoor Experiential School in the spring. Our indoor accommodations have washrooms and showers, and counsellors provide overnight supervision. Students attending ECO-School in the spring, live yurts nestled in the forest close to our main Lodges. Fires provide light and warmth in the yurts for a cozy atmosphere. Yurts are closed from the elements, and are quite comfortable even in rain or snow. Shower facilities are provided for all clients (though students will likely only shower once during their stay), and there are outhouses and indoor washrooms located in various locations around our site. Students eat meals (served family-style) in one of our lodges. Camp provides three meals per day as well as a nutritious snack in the evening during campfire. Students with birthdays during the program celebrate with a treat from the kitchen!

### Fees

Outdoor School fees are subject to GST. Families pay the school and the school pays Camp. Fees include counsellors, meals, accommodations, activities and busing (if you are within the Calgary city limits). Due to food and staffing costs, we cannot offer refunds or reduced fees for students who must arrive late or leave early for any reason.

### Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is available to those who apply through YMCA Calgary's Let Raise Campaign. An application can be obtained from your teacher coordinator. Proof of financial need is required and should be discussed with your classroom teacher.

Some families may also wish to contribute funds to families in need. Visit [ymcacalgary.org](http://ymcacalgary.org) to donate.

### Transportation

Camp Chief Hector YMCA will be providing bussing transportation for overnight programs. The bus will pick up and drop off your child at their school at a designated time to be determined closer to their Outdoor Schools Trip. Typically, students are picked up around 10:00am - 10:30am on their date of departure, and return to the school around 1:45pm - 2:15pm on the date of arrival back in Calgary.



## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

### **Student Care**

The first priority of our staff is ensuring the physical and emotional safety of our young clients. Student care is a collaborative effort between YMCA staff, teachers, parents/guardians, and the students themselves. Like at school, teachers act in loco parentis (in the place of a parent) and are ultimately responsible for their students while they are attending Outdoor School. YMCA staff, who have a duty to care for clients at Outdoor School, will consult with your child's teacher about any concerns. Similarly, you should keep the school and the YMCA informed of any changing circumstances in regards to your child.

### **YMCA Staff Requirements**

All YMCA staff are required to have current Standard First Aid and CPR certification. We provide a full week of staff training at the beginning of every Outdoor School season and we continue to work on staff and program development throughout the season. In order to be employed by YMCA Calgary, all staff also need a clean and current criminal record check including a vulnerable sector search.

### **First Aid**

YMCA staff are trained in emergency procedures and will act in the case of a first-aid situation or other incident. Teachers will be asked to coordinate non-emergency decisions such as transportation, and to handle communication to principals and parent/guardians. YMCA Coordinators, and Managers will draw on their experience to support teachers if the need arises. Our goal is for students to return to program whenever possible. We do not have a nurse or doctor employed on site. YMCA Staff members carry first aid kits, and we have an automatic external defibrillator, thermometers, and ice packs on site.

### **Illness**

We try our best to accommodate the physical needs of students who are feeling unwell or who have limited mobility. The best decisions and plans are made between parents, physicians, and teachers. In cases of student illness, it is most often best for students to recover at home.

### **Medication**

Organizing and dispensing medications is the responsibility of the teachers accompanying your child to Outdoor School. Students who carry inhalers or EpiPens should keep these on their person at all times. Due to school board regulations, we do not have any medications on-site available for student use. Medications that you are sending with your child must be in the original containers, inside a labelled ziplock bag. Hand these to the teacher-in-charge on the first day of Outdoor School.

### **Contact**

If you need to reach your child during Outdoor School, please call the school or the teacher's cell phone first. If homesickness or religious beliefs are a concern, it can be arranged for students to call home before bed to check-in or say good-night. We encourage a proactive approach to parent communication



and ask teachers to call home during Outdoor School to let parents know about any incidents such as injuries, bullying, fights or animal encounters.

### **Supervision**

Students are supervised by YMCA staff and teachers. If students need to move from one area to another, for example, from an activity area to the washroom, they travel in partners. At night, YMCA staff supervise our student dormitories. The remainder of the staff team and teachers are close-by and readily available in case of an overnight emergency. YMCA staff carry radios and/or cell phones to maintain contact with the Outdoor Education Coordinator and Manager as needed.

### **Activity Risks**

In general, injuries at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA are similar to the types of injuries that occur in elementary school gym classes, during recess and playing outside. Because our activities take place outside, there is a risk of falls, joint injury, and scrapes as students move from area to area or as they run during wide-games. Every year we have a few students who visit the hospital in Canmore for a few stitches or to assess an injured arm or leg. Some areas, such as the challenge course, have potential for short falls, so students are trained as spotters to support their peers under staff supervision. Staff carry first aid kits at all times when they are working with a group of students.

### **Environmental Risks**

The weather in the Bow Valley changes throughout the day. Students should dress in layers and be prepared for wind, snow, rain, and sunshine. Our outdoor activities continue in most weather conditions. We share our Bow Valley home with a number of wild creatures and there is the possibility that activity groups could encounter a bear, cougar, elk or coyote during their stay at Outdoor School. Students travel in groups when hiking and participating in activities and counsellors are trained to carry bear spray. We are very mindful of our waste management system and work closely with the local conservation officers to monitor animal activity on our site.

### **Parent Meeting**

Parent and guardians need to be informed on the nature of extended field trips such as an Outdoor School experience. A teacher, principal or member of the Camp Chief Hector YMCA team will share a presentation that highlights how the needs of students will be met, how risk is managed, and what activities they will complete during their stay. The meeting should take approximately 30-45 minutes, with a question period following.

### **Lost And Found**

We do our best to have students look at Lost and Found items before they depart and to send Lost and Found back to your school on the bus. If your child thinks they may have left something behind at Outdoor School, please have them take a look through your school's lost and found. Items that have not been claimed within two weeks are donated to a local shelter.



## PACKING LIST (STUDENTS)

<p><u>Outdoor Gear</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Raincoat/Rain pants</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Winter Jacket/Snow pants</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Warm Mittens</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Running shoes/hiking shoes</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Warm winter boots (lined)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Thermal long underwear bottoms and top</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Warm layer (i.e. fleece)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Warm socks (i.e. wool)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Toque/beanie</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Day pack and water bottle</li></ul> <p><u>Clothing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pajamas</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 Sweaters and Shirts</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 2 Pants</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 T-shirts</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 Pairs of socks</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 Underwear</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Slippers or indoor shoes for the lodges and dorms</li></ul>	<p><u>Personal Articles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Towel(s)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush &amp; Toothpaste</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Lip Balm</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Soap/Shampoo</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Deodorant</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Comb or Hair Brush</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag or sheets and a blanket</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pillow and pillow case</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Blanket</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight/Headlamp</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Personal Medications</li></ul> <p><u>Fun Stuff (optional)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Musical instrument</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Books/Journal</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Camera (that is only a camera)</li></ul>
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**Please leave the following items at home.**

- **Please try to not pack items in oversized bags, hockey bags, or garbage bags, as it makes loading and unloading the buses difficult**
- Money
- Knives, hatchets, matches and lighters
- **All electronics including cell phones, iPods, DSs, Switches and laptops/tablets**
- Food and snacks
- Make-up, curling irons/straighteners, perfumes, colognes, and body sprays (i.e. Axe)



YMCA CALGARY  
Camp Chief Hector YMCA

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