



**Big City
Day Camp
Parent Handbook
Summer 2026**



Welcome to JCYS Big City Day Camp Summer 2026!

We have planned a great summer for your camper, full of fun, interesting, exciting activities and new adventures! We will be spending most of our time outdoors, exploring both urban and natural environments.

This handbook will be a guide to prepare you and your camper for a summer to remember. We have recently reviewed, edited and updated the information so please read it carefully.

In this handbook you will find answers to frequently asked questions, a basic sample of daily activities, and the most effective ways to communicate with the camp administrative team. Open and constant communication with our camp families is something we strive for here at Big City Day Camp.

The handbook, along with weekly emails should keep you up to date on your child's daily activities; but, as always, never hesitate to call the office if you ever need anything.

How to Reach Us

Call the office at (773) 281-2533 or reach out via email:

Elizabeth (Liz) Kazarian, Big City Day Camp Director
ekazarian@jcys.org

Lane Hussey, Business Manager (payments)
312-726-8891 x 112
lhsussey@jcys.org

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Big City Day Camp our campers establish roots and develop skills to last a lifetime. This all happens in a wholesome, positive environment.

MISSION, PURPOSE, AND GOALS

JCYS Mission

Guided by Jewish values and culture, Jewish Council for Youth Services provides educational and recreational programs for Chicagoland's children and through board service, develops the next generation of Jewish civic leaders.

Purpose

To provide programs that cultivate experiences that intentionally develop children's values, curiosity, and respect for the world around them.

Big City Day Camp Goals

Goal 1: To provide a safe and nurturing environment JCYS will:

- a. Review all policies and procedures on an annual basis.
- b. Hire and train only the highest quality staff.
- c. Treat all campers fairly and respectfully.
- d. Provide activities which utilize the unique natural setting of its camp and promote stewardship.

Goal 2: To stimulate curiosity and learning in camp's unique environment JCYS will:

- a. Provide diverse activities that facilitate learning in any environment.
- b. Provide activities which utilize the unique setting of camp and foster an understanding of sustainability.
- c. Emphasize an awareness of nature, respecting it as one would a friend.

Goal 3: To instill the values of JCYS Day Camps. The values are:

- a. Integrity
- b. Empathy
- c. Respect
- d. Stewardship
- e. Equality
- f. Tikkun Olam

Big City Day Camp instills these values in its participants by:

- Believing that people are more important than possessions.
- Emphasizing self-discovery and interpersonal relationships.
- Believing that trying is more important than winning.
- Promoting stewardship which cultivates appreciation of the natural environment.
- Adhering to, and promoting, the principles of Tikkun Olam.

Big City Day Camp demonstrates a commitment to people over possessions by:

- Investing in the hiring, training, and development of qualified staff.
- Managing behaviors in a caring manner that engages both the camp and the camper family.

Big City Day Camp emphasizes self-discovery and interpersonal relationships by:

- Implementing its PLAY FAIR Philosophy for campers and staff.
- Providing weekly time for reflection and sharing during Shabbat.
- Providing campers with choices for programming that engages individual interests.

Big City Day Camp demonstrates a belief that trying is more important than doing by:

- Providing competitive activities that require the cooperation of the group versus showcasing individual skills.
- Teaching the importance of winning and losing with grace.
- Encouraging campers to challenge themselves and take safe and meaningful risks.

Big City Day Camp promotes stewardship which cultivates an appreciation of the natural environment by:

- Providing activities that focus on learning about the natural world and our place in it.
- Encouraging daily cleanup of litter around the building/grounds.
- Creating a camp schedule that emphasizes Outdoor Living Skills as well as environmental education.

Big City Day Camp promotes the principles of Tikkun Olam by:

- Providing opportunities for service learning.
- Providing time for group discussion for conflict resolution.
- Teaching the importance of environmental stewardship.
- Celebrating good deeds.

BEFORE CAMP BEGINS

Please make sure we have all your enrollment forms before camp begins. They provide our staff with information that allows us to best meet your campers' needs.

DAILY CAMP PREPARATIONS

- Label everything with your camper's name
- Be sure your camper is ready for camp on time
- Pack a sturdy backpack your camper can carry comfortably filled with the following essentials:
 - Extra set of lightweight clothing
 - Filled water bottle, frozen for cool water daily
 - Extra healthy snacks (JCYS Family Centers are peanut and tree nut free, allergy aware centers) and lunch (JCYS Family Centers are peanut and tree nut free, allergy aware centers) needed daily, except for Tuesdays when JCYS provides lunch
 - Sunscreen
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Walking shoes & socks, even on swim days
 - Quart sized Ziploc for trash
 - Gallon sized Ziploc for wet clothing
 - Rain jacket or poncho.
 - Swim Days:
 - water shoes or slides
 - small quick dry towel
 - bag for wet clothing
 - goggles, optional
 - floaties, optional
- Dress your child in comfortable clothing that can get dirty
- Campers should wear their bathing suits to camp on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (underneath their clothing). This makes it easy for them to be ready to swim right away
- Please do not send your child with any valuable personal items. JCYS Lincoln Square is a screen-free environment and electronics with screens are prohibited. See page 7 for additional information on cell phones at camp
- Water stations will be available at camp, and we encourage campers to stay hydrated throughout the day. If your child does not bring a water bottle, we will give them one. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO**

SEND A WATER BOTTLE EVERY DAY!

MEDICAL REPORT AND REQUIRED IMMUNIZATION POLICY

DCFS licensing standards require that the parent or legal guardian of each child enrolled in JCYS programming submit a [medical form](#) from their pediatrician, signed by both the physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), indicating that the child has received the immunizations required by the Illinois Department of Public Health in its rules (77 Ill. Adm. Code 695, Immunization Code) prior to the first day of programming. If the physical condition of the child is such that any one or more of the immunizing agents should not be administered, the examining physician, advanced practice nurse, or physician assistant responsible for the performance of the health examination shall endorse that fact upon the health examination form. No other exceptions to scheduled immunizations are permitted within JCYS programming. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to update their file when the health records change.

ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCE

JCYS Family Center's are peanut and tree nut free, allergy aware centers.

JCYS strives to provide a safe haven for all students by maintaining a food allergy-sensitive environment. JCYS and families of allergic children acknowledge that despite our best efforts, we cannot guarantee an absolutely allergen-free environment, but we can reduce the risk to children who have life-threatening food allergies. If your child has severe allergies and/or an emergent condition, you must have your physician complete the [Medical Emergency Treatment Plan](#) each summer.

MEDICATIONS AT CAMP

If your child is going to require medication at camp, please follow these guidelines:

- For the safety of all campers, no camper will be allowed to keep medication in their possession. Exceptions will be made for inhalers/epi-pens and life-saving medications.
- A [Confidential Medication Administration Form](#) signed by the parent and the doctor must be on file at camp. Verbal permission from parents is not sufficient.
- Call to alert the camp administrative staff that the medication is coming.
- Give the medication in the original packaging and [Confidential Medication Administration Form](#) to the director at check-in; Medications are dispensed by our administrative staff and are kept in locked storage.
- **Please note:** We do not administer medications if they are required 2x/day.

PAYMENT

Please review our detailed financial policies on our [website](#) and in your Enrollment Packet.

REFUND/CANCELLATION POLICY

Requests for withdrawal less 45 days before the end of summer programming will not be eligible for any refunds and any balance due must be paid. Reductions, refunds, and switching of days are not granted for absences, including illness, vacation, holidays, weather, or any other event or emergency that requires full or part-day closings. Refunds are not given to campers dismissed for disciplinary issues. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the camp in writing of their child's withdrawal from the program. Therefore, if the camp is not informed of termination the parent is still responsible for payment.

FEDERAL CHILDCARE ID

The federal tax ID number for JCYS is 36-2193616.

BEFORE CAMP CARE

We offer Before Camp Care at JCYS Lincoln Square. You may drop your child off between 7:30 – 9:00 am. **Before Camp Care is FREE but you must be registered so we can properly account for all campers.**

AFTER CAMP CARE

After Camp-Care is offered at JCYS Lincoln Square. During After Camp Care your child will be able to continue to enjoy camp activities. After Camp Care runs 3:00 – 5:30 pm. **After Camp Care is FREE but you must be registered so we can properly account for all campers.**

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Big City Day Camp operates rain or shine. We have indoor programs designed to keep your camper engaged in case of inclement weather.

In the case of severe weather, we will follow our emergency weather action plan and escort all campers to the appropriate locations. These locations are all inside the Family Center unless we are at the pool or on a field trip. We will remain in the building until the National Weather Service has indicated, on the weather radio, that the danger has passed. Regular programming will resume at the discretion of camp leadership. Emergency locations for field trips are determined prior to attending the venue.

CAMPER ABSENCES

If your camper is going to be absent from camp, please call the office at (773) 281-2533. If no one is available, please leave a message, or you can email Elizabeth (Liz) Kazarian at ekazarian@jcys.org.

DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP YOUR CHILD FROM CAMP

Before Camp drop off is from 7:30 - 9:00 am. Regular camp drop off is at 9:00 am. Regular camp pick up is at 3:00 pm. Children enrolled in our After Camp program must be picked up by 5:30 pm. Drop-off and pick-up for Big City Day Camp is on the second floor.

When using the front intercom / door release to the center, do not put your hands on the door. Ring the bell and then wait until you hear the click indicating that the door has been unlocked. Please do not hold doors open for others. It may seem rude not to hold the door open for another family, but we want to assure you that they will appreciate you keeping everyone safe.

If you will be picking up your child from camp early, please let us know ahead of time. This way we can have them ready for you when you arrive. We suggest you use email or call the office. When you arrive at Big City Day Camp come to the front door to let us know you have arrived.

WHAT IF A CHILD BECOMES SICK WHILE AT JCYS?

Children will be isolated from camp with a staff member until picked up within a one-hour time frame. The child will have to remain at home until they are healthy and for the time specified in the JCYS Sick Policy.

YOUR CAMPER'S HEALTH

As stated in the JCYS Sick Policy, JCYS will follow all procedures and guidelines set forth by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). **All contagious illnesses (COVID-19, chickenpox, strep, pink eye, lice, etc.) must be reported immediately to JCYS.**

Please note: JCYS's Sick Policy will supersede doctor notes allowing children to return to school or camp.

HEALTH SERVICES

Administrative staff certified in First Aid and CPR will attend to minor scratches, cuts, and bruises. In the case of minor illness, we will make your child comfortable and call you to arrange pick-up within one hour. If emergency care is needed, campers will be taken to Swedish Hospital or other CFD designated hospital via ambulance unless we are away from camp. In this case we will utilize the nearest facility if an emergency arises. You will be notified any time your child visits the Health Center. Camp does not provide transportation to the hospital in

personal or agency vehicles.

THE SUN

It is a big change for your child to go from being inside a school to being outdoors all day. While we are diligent about having campers reapply sunscreen, sunburn can still occur. You can help us with sunburn protection by making sure your child has sunscreen on before they arrive at camp and by discussing the importance of sunscreen usage with them. As well as showing proper application.

We also encourage our campers to:

- Wear a hat!
- Wear protective clothing (light colored, loose)
- Wear waterproof sunscreen, minimum SPF 15, and apply 30- 60 minutes before exposure.
- Reapply sunscreen regularly.
- Stay hydrated – drink a lot of water.

CUSTODY

In the case of divorce or separation, we must provide equal access to both natural parents, custodial and non-custodial, unless there is a legally binding document that specifically removes a parent's rights. A legally binding document is a certified court order or other legal paper that prohibits the parent's access to the child. A certified court order is also required if restrictions are placed on when and where a parent might contact, visit, or pick up a child. A handwritten note, a telephone call, or comments on the registration form are not legally acceptable. We must have a copy of certified court orders noting the restrictions. This information is confidential and is shared on a limited basis with those camp staff responsible for your child's welfare.

COMMUNICATION

Should you need to ask a question, please feel free to email us or call the office. You will also receive weekly communication from the camp administrative staff. It is imperative that you read each email from the camp as there is important information about upcoming trips, schedules, and special events/theme days.

CAMPER/STAFF COMMUNICATION

We recognize that campers and staff will develop close, trusting relationships during the summer. These relationships are healthy, wholesome, and beneficial to campers and staff. We also recognize that it is natural for campers to want to keep in touch with their favorite counselors after camp.

As a camp, we do not encourage or sanction the exchange of contact information between campers and staff, nor do we take responsibility for what may occur as the result of such contact.

Therefore, it is our policy to forbid the exchange of contact information of any kind between campers and staff, whether paid or volunteer. This includes, but is not limited to, phone numbers, emails, addresses, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or other social media.

If a parent or legal guardian wishes their child to exchange such information with a camp staff member, the parent or legal guardian assumes responsibility for whatever may occur as a result.

BRINGING YOUR CHILD TO CAMP

If you will be dropping off your child at camp late, please call the main office. The office staff will contact a member of the administrative team to come pick up your child. If we are not at JCYS Lincoln Square, it is the parent's responsibility to bring the child to the location where the camp is. When you contact the office, they can give you the address for the drop off and the name of the staff person you will meet to drop your child off.

CELL PHONES/MOBILE DEVICES AT CAMP

JCYS Lincoln Square is a screen free environment. We understand that allowing your child to have a cell phone/mobile device in case of an emergency is all too relevant considering current events. To be sensitive to this we have enacted the following interpretation of our screen free policy. Parents who choose to send their

child to camp with a mobile device should be aware of the following guidelines. We encourage you to review these guidelines with your camper.

- Phones will be collected at the start of every day.
- At no time during the camp day are campers allowed to be using their cell phones/mobile devices.
- Campers who are found to be using their cell phones/mobile devices while at camp will have them confiscated. Devices will be returned directly to parents when the camper is picked up.
- Multiple violations of this policy may result in additional consequences.
- Campers are not allowed to take pictures of other children or to post any photos of other children on any social media pages or websites.
- Inappropriate usage of cell phones/mobile devices, including accessing/sharing age-restricted content, may result in dismissal from the camp program.
- JCYS Lincoln Square is not responsible for lost, damaged or stolen phones/devices.

LEAVE EXTRA ITEMS AT HOME

All campers want to bring items from home but the more stuff in their bags the heavier it is for them to carry. We are practicing independence and therefore expect your child to carry their own bag. We want our bags clutter-free. Please do not allow your child to bring toys, games, trading cards, show and tell items, jewelry, or electronics.

We are not responsible for belongings that are lost or mixed up. Phones will be collected at the start of every day and returned at the end of every day. Your child should not bring a phone with them to camp unless they need it because they are walking to and/or from camp by themselves. Staff can always be reached for an emergency. We want your child engaged with their peers at camp and not connected to technology this summer.

SWIM

Our program is thoughtfully designed to meet each child at their current swimming level, fostering confidence and skill development at a pace that feels comfortable for them. While our swim lessons aim to build strength and technique, it's important to note that a child who begins the program without prior swimming experience may not leave as a strong swimmer just yet. This summer, we're hoping to improve communication by providing more frequent updates on your child's progress, along with tips for skills to practice outside of camp—perfect for those poolside moments together.

Campers will swim multiple times per week. On Mondays, we will have swimming lessons at Goldfish Swim School in Evanston. On Wednesdays and Fridays, we will have recreational swim at Skokie Water Playground. at Formula Fitness Club Lakeview. Campers be transported via school bus to the facilities.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS WHILE ON THE BUS

Keeping your children safe is our number one priority. To ensure a safe ride, we must be firm about behavior during transportation. If a camper is misbehaving on the bus (i.e. foul language, inappropriate behavior, disturbing fellow campers, and/or not following bus rules) the following steps will be taken:

- A verbal warning.
- A note and/or phone call to the parents.
- Suspension from camp the following day.
- Expelled from camp for the remainder of the session/summer.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

At JCYS Lincoln Square, staff and children interact as a team to promote the development of self-esteem, creativity and fun. Because of the outdoor setting and types of activities offered, children are expected to behave in a manner that does not:

- Decrease the enjoyment of the other children.
- Cause harm to themselves, other children or staff.

- Cause destruction, or loss, of JCYS property.

Behavior that is not tolerated in the groups includes:

- Swearing
- Fighting
- Hitting, kicking, or otherwise hurting children and/or staff.
- Being disrespectful to other children or to the program staff.
- Destruction/theft of JCYS equipment or personal property.
- Possession of knives or weapons of any kind will result in immediate suspension from the program.

Consequences that are utilized are:

- Warnings with redirection.
- A counseling session with a counselor and/or unit leader.
- A counseling session with the Camp Director.
- Phone call home by and/or meeting with Camp Director.
- Probation, suspension and/or termination from the program, depending on the extent of the situation.

Unit leaders are encouraged to discuss behavior issues with parents early on so we can work to keep severe consequences to a minimum.

PLAY FAIR

JCYS Big City Day Camp subscribes to a **PLAY FAIR** philosophy for all campers and staff. This philosophy is outlined in detail below. Each week staff will review this philosophy on the first day as well as use it for reflection on Fridays.

Participate to the best of your ability.

Leave your hands to yourself.

Accept others' differences.

You are responsible for your own actions.

Follow all the rules.

Ask for help if you need it.

Insist on being treated equally.

Respect yourself, others, staff, property, and the environment.

Participate to the best of your ability.

- Staff spend many hours preparing activities that are enjoyable for all campers. Please try every activity you encounter. Day camp is designed to be an active experience, not a time to sit around.

Leave your hands to yourself.

- Physical aggression is not tolerated at JCYS Big City Day Camp. Do not poke, tickle, squeeze, push, punch, slap, or grab ANY camper or staff member.
- Fighting, even play-fighting, will not be tolerated. All parties involved will be disciplined.

Accept others' differences.

- Everyone at day camp is unique, that is what makes it such a great place.
- Do not put others down because of the way they look, talk, or act.

You are responsible for your own actions.

- You have ultimate control over whether you decide to participate in something that will later involve you being disciplined.

- Think before you succumb to peer pressure.
- If someone is forcing you to participate in an activity that will result in you being disciplined you have a responsibility to approach a counselor and ask for help.

Follow all the rules.

- Rules at camp are in place to keep everyone safe and to ensure camps is enjoyed by all.
- There will be consequences for not following the rules, the consequences include:
 - Time-out/ Loss of privilege.
 - Behavioral note sent home.
 - Meeting with parent(s).
 - Suspension.
 - Dismissal.

Ask for help if you need it.

- It is acceptable to ask for assistance if you are having difficulty with an activity at camp.
- If another camper is calling you names, threatening to harm you, physically harming you, stealing from you, or forcing you into a situation you are uncomfortable with you must tell a staff member so they can get you the help you need. If you don't bring a problem to the attention of camp staff, it is more difficult to solve the problem.
- If you feel your friend is being bullied, you have a responsibility to tell the camp staff.

Insist on being treated equally.

- All campers deserve respect from camp staff.
- You have the right to be praised and disciplined in the same manner as everyone else.
- You deserve to be listened to when you have questions and concerns.

Respect yourself, others, staff, property, and the environment.

- Don't put yourself down, it just makes others think it's okay to do the same.
- Don't put others down, we are all unique and we all deserve to be treated fairly and with respect.
- Camp staff are here to help you be safe and have an enjoyable summer. They are giving their time to you, treat them with the same respect you would a teacher, principal, or parent.
- The natural environment, as well as camp equipment, supplies, and buildings, are here for everyone's enjoyment, when you intentionally misuse, abuse, or deface them everyone suffers.