



Henry S. Jacobs Camp  
Family Handbook  
2024

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## Introduction

### Who We Are

Since 1970, Jacobs Camp has provided a caring Jewish community that has become a second home for our campers, staff and families. Children from URJ congregations across the Deep South, along with those from around the country who have family roots in the Deep South, come together each summer to experience the fun and magic of Jewish camping.

Our caring and committed staff members, many of whom were campers themselves, strive to enrich our campers' experience by helping build lasting friendships. These relationships lay the foundation for our summer community, providing encouragement, love, and support. Our intimate camp environment allows campers to embrace the challenge of learning new skills in athletics, aquatics, the arts, adventure, and the outdoors.

Camp creates opportunities for campers to fully immerse themselves in a wide range of innovative, engaging Jewish programming and creative spiritual experiences. Jacobs Camp provides campers with the roots they need to grow their Jewish identities.

Every camper who spends a summer at Jacobs Camp returns home a little wiser, a little more self-confident, a little more independent, and a lot more connected to the Jewish community. A summer at Jacobs Camp is more than a summer of fun—it is an impactful experience that lasts a lifetime!

### **STATEMENT OF BELONGING, URJ CAMPS AND IMMERSIVE PROGRAMS**

*URJ Camps and Immersive Programs are safe spaces where we welcome and affirm every person for their whole self. There is no place here for discrimination against any person based on their religion or religious practice, citizenship or nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, race, age, neurodiversity, appearance, disability or impairment, social class, or any other aspect of what makes them the unique and irreplaceable human being they are. Our vision and deepest aspiration is to create and foster communities in which Judaism enables all people to experience peace and wholeness (shalom), justice and equity (tzedek), and belonging and joy (shayachut and simcha).*

## Our Responsibility

When it comes to taking care of your children, we take our responsibility very seriously. As you know, raising a child requires a great deal of energy and effort, and the willingness to send your child to camp for the summer requires a great deal of trust and confidence.

We consider ourselves to be your partners in raising your child. When your children are at camp, you can be assured they will be safe and secure, and we work hard to meet their social, emotional, spiritual & developmental needs. While at camp, we hope your child will develop a wide range of skills and abilities, and we hope camp will instill in them a greater level of personal independence and self-sufficiency. When your child returns home, we hope you will find them to be more self-aware, self-confident, and better able to navigate their way in the world.

We work closely with a team of medical experts, including infectious disease doctors, to guide our decisions and revamp our protocols and procedures each year to keep everyone safe and healthy. We are also working in close coordination with the American Camp Association and Foundation for Jewish Camp to develop the best practices for a safe summer in relation to the pandemic. We will continue to share these policies as they are finalized.

## Our Counselors

We believe that every moment at camp has the potential to be a Jewish teachable moment. Hiring counselors who are positive Jewish role models is central to our mission. We train our counselors to use cabin time in a meaningful way to reflect on what it means to be part of a Jewish community, especially with regard to how campers relate to one another. Facilitating rest hour discussions, late night “cabin prayers,” Shabbat cabin programming, and camper conflict resolution are all important elements of our Jewish message. We are committed to fully engaging and empowering our cabin counselors and our entire staff to be role models of Jewish behaviors and values. We know the future of our Jewish community is in the hands of our youth, and we strive to instill the joys of Jewish living, learning, and community in our campers with that in mind.

## Communication

### Contacting Camp

Parents are welcome to call camp during the summer to find out how their campers are doing – our staff is happy to speak with you! **However, campers will not be allowed to use the phone or receive phone calls** . After we receive your call, the Camp Director or Associate Director will return your call. Camp is a very busy place, so please bear with us if a response is not immediate. Calls will not be returned after 10:00 PM or during Shabbat, unless it is an emergency.

There are also many great ways to keep up with camp online including:

On our website: <http://jacobscamp.org>

On Facebook: URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp Page – [www.facebook.com/urjacobscamp](http://www.facebook.com/urjacobscamp)

Through our Blog: <http://jacobscamp.org/blog/>

On Instagram: Follow @URJJacobsCamp

If you have ANY questions or concerns, please reach out to us!

## How to Reach our Leadership Team

### You can reach us anytime via email:

Anna Herman, Director – [aherman@urj.org](mailto:aherman@urj.org)

Carolyn Harari, Associate Director - [CHarari@urj.org](mailto:CHarari@urj.org)

Ben Cohen, Assistant Director – [bcohen@urj.org](mailto:bcohen@urj.org)

Elijah Thompson, Assistant Director – [ethompson@urj.org](mailto:ethompson@urj.org)

Tori East, Community Care Director – [hsjcare@urj.org](mailto:hsjcare@urj.org)

**Or by Phone** at 601-885-6042

## Communicating with Your Camper

Parents are encouraged to write to their campers at least every couple of days. Receiving mail helps keep spirits high! There are multiple ways you can stay in touch throughout the summer.

### By Mail

Please address mail to your camper as follows:

*Name of Camper*

*Cabin Number\**

*URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp*

*3863 Morrison Road*

*Utica, MS 39175*

***\*You will receive your child's cabin number on opening day***

Mail tips:

- You may want to send some mail a few days before the session begins so that your child receives a note from you right away.
- We encourage you to use our camper email system (details below) to help communications arrive in a more timely manner.
- Any letters received after the end of camp will not be forwarded.
- We are not able to accept faxes for campers
- Please do not bring mail on Opening Day to be distributed to your camper later in the session. With such a high daily volume of mail, it is difficult for our mail staff to keep up with it.
- We do not accept packages for campers. We will only accept up to a standard #10 size business envelope (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") or a standard greeting card. Please see full policy below.

### By Email

You can use your [CampInTouch](#) account to send your camper email for a small fee. This service also provides you access to daily photos from camp. Information about this service can be found in your [CampInTouch](#) Account. You can also access this email system on your phone using the Companion App, which you can download from your phone's app store and log in using the same credentials as the CampInTouch website.

If there is ever information you need to get to your child quickly, please call our Camp Office at 601-885-6042. We appreciate your patience and cooperation!

### Communication from Your Child

We know you will be missing your child while he or she is at camp, and we have developed a system to ensure you hear from your camper on a regular basis. Campers will be required to write home on days that we call "Letter Days." Letter days are Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

In addition to letters from your child directly, you will receive an update from camp and your child's counselors to report on their activities and progress during the summer.

Here are a few tips from veteran parents:

- Send your child with pre-addressed envelopes and postcards as they are more likely to make their way home to you.
- Stamps and envelopes last better in our summer humidity if they are sent in a zip-lock bag.

### No Package Policy

We have a [No Package Policy](#) that mirrors the values of our camp community. **We do not accept packages at camp**, including boxes or large mailing envelopes of any size. Camp will only accept up to a standard #10 size business envelope (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") or a standard greeting card.

Of course, we understand that sometimes sending items to camp will be necessary. If your camper has forgotten something (such as a teddy bear they need to feel comfortable to fall asleep) or needs something to be replaced (such as running shoes or more sunscreen), you will be able to mail these necessary items to camp. To do so, you **must** email us at [jacobstemp@urj.org](mailto:jacobstemp@urj.org).

**Please Note:** We will only accept packages on a case-by-case basis; all packages received at camp must be communicated to us via email *prior* to its arrival. If we do not know a package is coming, we will not accept it. Campers are not allowed to receive gum, candy, or any other food items. These items will be disposed of if they are included in a camper package.

## Preparing for a Summer at Camp

### Getting Ready for Camp

Prior to the summer, you have the opportunity to help prepare your child for the camp experience! Here are our tips help set your camper up for a great summer:

- **Have a positive attitude about camp!** This is key to an easy adjustment to camp, and that starts with you! This is true not only for new campers, but for veteran campers as well.
- **Talk with your camper about their upcoming camp experience.** Filling out forms together with your camper can be a great way to open up discussion about the upcoming summer. It is normal to feel a little nervous and talking through what the summer will be like is a great way to help prepare and reassure your child. You can also visit our website to [watch these videos](#) together to get excited!

- **Join our webinars!** Watch your emails for invitations to our returning and new camper webinars.
- **Join our HSJ Parents Facebook group.** This is a great place to ask questions of veteran parents on any topic!
- **Share any important information about your camper that will help the Camp Leadership create a successful camp experience for them.** We ask that you please be as *open and honest* as you can with our Senior Leadership Team so that we can provide individualized care and support for your child. We assure you that any sensitive information will be treated as such. Having advanced knowledge of areas that may be difficult for your child will help us better understand his or her actions and create a supportive camp community for them. Please don't hesitate to contact us directly to discuss any additional information you think we should have!

### Packing Information

The Suggested Packing List and the Packing Tips and Tricks will be available in your [CampInTouch](#) account in April. Our amazing staff will be there to help move your camper's belongings into their cabin. All belongings must be packed inside luggage. Please do NOT bring loose items, as camper luggage is transported directly from your car to the cabin. All belongings should be easily transportable in as few pieces of luggage as possible. Campers should have enough clothing with them to last at least 10 days, so they have enough until laundry day. Campers shower every day before dinner and will change clothes after a full day of activities, so this can often mean two outfits per day.

### Dress Code

Camp is a place to have fun, which often means getting wet and messy. With that in mind, please do not buy all new clothes before camp! We spend a lot of time outdoors, so lightweight, comfortable clothing is best. The most useful types of clothing are casual shorts, t-shirts and tank tops.

Items that are NOT useful at camp include: high-heeled shoes, designer clothes and expensive jewelry.

Clothing that is NOT allowed in camp includes: any item that is intentionally tight or revealing, or anything that promotes or references alcohol or drugs. If your camper is dressed inappropriately, they will be asked to change. Parents, please help us by making sure all clothing sent to camp is appropriate, both for the weather and for our community.

### Shabbat Attire

Shabbat at Jacobs camp is a very special time. It is camp tradition for everyone to wear white on Friday evenings. White tops paired with khaki bottoms are also permitted.

### Valuables

Please do NOT send your child with any item of monetary or sentimental value, as belongings may get damaged or lost while at camp. There is no need for jewelry, cash, leather jackets, laptops, cell phones, etc., at camp and we do not assume any responsibility for items that are lost, stolen or broken while at camp.

Necessary valuables that are brought to camp for campers traveling by plane will be collected and stored safely in the camp office until departure.

## Electronic Devices

We feel it is crucial for children and teens to have a chance to “unplug” from electronics, and camp is an incredible place to do that! The only electronics that are permitted include: digital cameras and music-playing devices that **do not** have WiFi connectivity and do not have a touch-screen.

Electronics that are NOT permitted include: Gameboys, PSP’s, Nintendo DS’s, laptops, netbooks, iPads, smart watches, Kindles, Nooks, or cell phones.

For an in-depth explanation, please read our [Electronics Policy](#) in detail and discuss these rules with your child.

## Labeling Your Camper’s Belongings

All clothing and personal belongings must be clearly marked with indelible ink or with iron-on or sewn-on labels. Names should be printed in full, initials, or even last names are not sufficient.

Our counselors will make every effort to help campers keep track of their clothing, but a major goal of camp is to help campers assume the responsibility for their own belongings

## In-Cabin Storage

Each camper is assigned a set of cubbies inside their cabin for storing personal items and hanging clothes, a cubby near their bed, and a cubby in the bathroom for toiletries. Please see the packing guide in your CampinTouch account for a diagram of camper storage cubbies.

Cubby dimensions are as follows:

Personal Cubbies:

- (1) 23”W x 17”D x 10”H
- (2) 19”W x 16”D x 40”H w/hanging rod
- (3) 19”W x 16”D x 11”H
- (4) 19”W x 16”D x 11”H
- (5) 19”W x 16”D x 11”H

Bedside Cubby

- (6) 19”W x 16”D x 13”H

Bathroom Cubby

- 11”W x 11”D x 11”H

## Toiletries

Campers should bring enough personal toiletry items to last their entire session. If your child runs out of something, you will receive a call from the camp office asking you to send that item. We will provide deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, and soap until your package arrives.

## Specialty Equipment

During the course of the session, your child will have many opportunities to learn and develop new skills. In almost all cases, camp will supply the necessary equipment and materials to participate. In some instances, where your child is seeking mastery of an activity, he or she may desire their own special equipment such as a musical instrument, art supplies, sports equipment, etc. We ask that you please be



selective in what you send with your child and remember that camp is not responsible for the loss or damage of personal items.

### Fans

Please do not send plug-in fans to camp with your child, as they are potentially hazardous. The cabins are equipped with air conditioning to keep everyone cool while they are in the bunks.

### Bed Linens

Campers should bring 2 sets of twin-sized sheets, a blanket, pillow and pillowcases. Campers may not sleep in sleeping bags except on campouts.

### Facebook Group for Jacobs Camp Parents

When it comes to getting ready for camp, it is often helpful to speak with experienced camp parents. Please join us on the [Jacobs Camp Parents Facebook group](#)! This is a great space to post questions and hear feedback from experienced Jacobs Camp parents.

While we are excited to offer this opportunity to build a community of camp parents, **this is not an effective way to reach the Jacobs Camp Leadership Team**. As always, if you have questions or concerns specific to your child, please contact camp directly at 601-885-6042 or email one of us directly.

### Laundry

Campers should have enough clothing with them to last at least 10 days. Many campers change at least once a day, so please keep this in mind as you are packing. At least once every 10 days, cabins will have a scheduled laundry day. Our laundry staff will pick-up laundry bags from the cabins, wash and dry the contents, and return the clean clothes and linens at the end of the day. All laundry will be done in cold water. To prevent laundry mix-ups, all clothes sent to camp must be marked with your child's full name.

### Camp T-Shirt

Every camper will receive a camp t-shirt during their session.

### Camp Code of Conduct

Our goal is to create a fun and safe environment for everyone at camp. **Parents are encouraged to discuss the camper code conduct and anti-bullying pledge that all campers must sign before coming to camp.**

Camp rules are as follows:

- I will follow the directions of the adults and staff at camp
- I will communicate my needs and feelings to the best of my ability using respectful and kind words.
- I will take care of myself by eating, staying hydrated, and practicing good hygiene while at camp.
- I will abide by the established unit curfew
- I will not possess or chew gum at camp
- I will not change my physical appearance while at camp
- I will not wear clothing that promotes liquor or drugs, contains inappropriate language.
- I will not harm myself or others, physically or verbally

- I will be sharing my living space with other campers. I will be respectful of their feelings and their right to express themselves. I will respect their personal space and property.
- I will respect the camp policy that campers are not allowed in the cabins or living areas of those of the opposite sex.
- I will participate in all programs and activities.
- I will not leave campgrounds or wander away from or leave groups or activities without a staff member.
- I will treat camp property with respect. I understand that graffiti is not allowed, and that willful destruction of camp property will not be tolerated. My family will be held financially responsible for any damages.
- I will not bring any type of personal cell phone, computer, hand-held game device, tablet, etc. to camp. If I arrive at camp with these objects, I will turn them into the camp office where they'll be kept in a safe and then returned to me when I return home.
- I understand that alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco products or any kind, matches, fireworks, and weapons have no place at camp and that possession of any of these items is forbidden.
- I will not participate in any form of cyber bullying after camp by using my computer or cell phone to threaten, insult, or harass any of my fellow campers or staff.

In order to create and maintain an inclusive Jewish Community at camp, we encourage our campers to leave all Body Talk outside the gates of camp. By Body Talk we mean any mention of another's clothes, hair, weight, or height – negative *or* positive. Avoiding such language creates an environment of comfort and acceptance by all and for all. When campers feel they are not being judged by their peers, they can relax and be themselves. This is when real personal growth takes place and campers' self-esteem flourish. As we eliminate Body Talk in our cabins, it is remarkable to see how easily our campers spread the message of simple self-acceptance.

We are committed to providing a safe camp community where our campers can develop self-esteem, independence, and a sense of comfort in expressing their innermost selves. Sometimes though, we reach the limit of our ability to do that when a child's mode of expression crosses a certain threshold. If your camper demonstrates self-harming behaviors or expresses thoughts about engaging in self-harming behaviors to a staff member or other campers, the Camp Director, in consultation with the Community Care Team, will assess whether your child can remain at camp. Self-harming behaviors may include—but are not limited to—things such as cutting, withholding/restricting food intake, excessive scratching, or thoughts or expressions of suicide.

When a camper's behavior endangers the positive experience of others, it is our responsibility to intervene. We will attempt to change the behavior through discussions and other behavior modification strategies. If these are not successful, we will contact you, the parent(s), for advice and suggestions.

## Housing & Cabin Assignments

### Camper Cabins

A camper cabin sleeps up to 13 campers and 2-3 staff members. Ample storage space is provided for every camper. Two cabins share a bathroom; each bathroom has 7 sinks, 7 showers, & 6 toilets. All top bunks are equipped with bed rails. Each cabin is equipped with smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. All of our camper cabins are air-conditioned.

## How Cabins Are Assigned

Our year-round team works hard to determine cabin and bunk assignments in a thoughtful way. We take a lot of factors into consideration: the age and grade of each camper, where he or she is from, whether a child is a new or returning camper, medical concerns, and the friends they have requested to be with. Juggling all this information and making everyone happy is quite a challenge!

As part of your online forms, you will complete a bunk request form. We will use this information to accommodate your camper's request as best we can. We do not accept negative bunk requests ("Please do not place my child with...."). This is counter to the values of inclusion and tolerance that we teach at Jacobs Camp. *V'ahavta L'rayacha Kamocha*, Love Your Neighbor as Yourself, is a Jewish value that we embrace. At camp, as in life, we do not all have to be best friends, but we must get along and treat one another with care and respect. We will not accept any bunk requests after May 1.

You will learn your camper's cabin assignment when you check into camp on Opening Day. We will not make any cabin assignment changes at that time. When your child arrives at their cabin, they will find their nametag hung on a bunk that we have assigned for them. We reserve bottom bunks for campers with medical needs, and our counselors assign campers throughout the cabin in a way that will allow them to create and sustain meaningful friendships with their cabin-mates. This system ensures a fair and positive start for all of our campers from the first moment they walk into the cabin. We ask that parents discuss the positivity and cooperation needed to be successful in a shared living space with their campers before the summer.

## Health & Medical Care

It is our hope that every camper will remain healthy and fully able to participate in all aspects of camp all summer long. However, Jacobs Camp has a range of systems in place to manage any health care issues that may arise. Developed by a team of medical professionals, Jacobs Camp maintains written health care policies and procedures. If you have any questions prior to the summer, please contact the Camp Director.

## Opening Day Health Screening

Upon arrival at camp, every camper goes through a health screening to ensure they have arrived healthy and ready for camp! We will share Opening Day protocols as we get closer so that we can give you the most up to date information about protocols.

## Health Care Professionals on-call at Camp

Our health center is staffed by medical professionals all summer long. We have a volunteer and/or staff doctor and nurse in camp every day. Campers are able to visit the health center each day during sick call, and our doctor and nurse are on-call 24/7 for emergency medical needs.

## Administration of Medication

Our medical staff are available to dispense medication at four times throughout the day: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and just before bedtime. This is when your child can receive all pre-planned medication that you send to camp with them. Please review the detailed medication administration forms in your [CampInTouch](#) account. Detailed information regarding medication packing will be available in April.

## **“Medication Vacation” Policy**

Please review the “URJ Camps Medication Vacation Policy” on our website. The URJ Camping system requires that parents fully disclose all medication that their child has been taking within the last six months on the camper medication form. If you plan to keep your child off certain routine medication for the summer – especially during their time at camp – we require that this be disclosed as well.

## **Vaccine Requirements**

Please review the “URJ Camps Vaccination Policy” in your [CampInTouch](#) Account

## **When We Will Contact a Camper’s Family**

There are five basic circumstances when the health center staff will contact you regarding your child’s health::

1. If our medical team recommends that a camper stay in the health center overnight, which is required any time a camper has a fever of 100.8 or higher
2. If our medical team feels that a camper’s health needs require the services of physicians outside camp
3. If our medical team recommends that a camper start a prescription medication (i.e. antibiotic)
4. If your child is experiencing any medical problems outside the norm of camp-life
5. If there is a true emergency regarding your child

## **Food at Camp**

### **Meals**

While Jacobs Camp is not a kosher facility, we do not serve pork or shellfish, or products containing them. Whenever meat is served, a vegetarian option is offered, and a non-dairy dessert is made available. In addition to the hot food that is served daily - At breakfast there is always a yogurt bar available with fruit, granola, hard boiled eggs, and other cereals. During lunch and dinner sunbutter and jelly is offered along with a full salad bar.

### **Allergies & Special Dietary Needs**

Any special dietary restrictions or food allergies must be communicated with the Associate Director prior to the summer. We will do all we can to plan for and support your child’s dietary concerns.

### **Snacks**

At least two snacks are served every day. We also have fruit available for our campers during the day.

### **Canteen**

On most days, campers get to visit the Canteen where they can select one item from an assortment of healthy snack foods. Three times a week, on letter day they can get a special treat after they write a letter home.

No merchandise is sold at the canteen and all canteen snacks are already included in camp tuition.

## Birthdays

We love celebrating birthdays at camp! Our staff goes above and beyond to make birthdays special for our campers. If your child will celebrate their birthday at camp, it will be specially marked on their cabin calendar. We will also serve cake at dinner, and the whole camp will sing happy birthday while the camper is lifted in “the chair.” It is a very special day! Please note that we will not make exceptions to our Package Policy for camp birthdays.

## Safety & Security

All of the URJ Camps are dedicated to providing safe and secure environments for our campers and staff. To this end, each camp has conducted a safety and security review and evaluation with professional consultation. Camp staff members receive extensive pre-camp training, and a guard is on duty 24 hours a day. The health and welfare of our community will always be our top concern.

## Lost & Found

Jacobs Camp assumes no responsibility for lost or damaged items. During camp, all misplaced items are brought to Lost-and-Found. Lost-and-Found is regularly sorted, and every attempt is made to return items to campers. Make sure your child’s full name is on every piece of clothing and personal belonging they bring to camp—initials and last names are not enough as we have many duplicate names and initials. After summer, all unclaimed items are donated.

## No-Tipping Policy

There is no tipping at camp. Our salary structure adequately compensates our staff and they have been instructed that it is against the policy of the Union for Reform Judaism to accept gratuities.

## Visitation

**It is our policy that parents and other visitors are NOT allowed to visit camp during the session.** We believe this policy allows our campers to adjust to camp life successfully and has proved to reduce homesickness in campers. Parents will be able to bring their child to camp on opening day and pick them up at the end of the session. Please inform grandparents, other relatives, and friends of this policy.