



Henry S. Jacobs Camp Family Handbook 2026

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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, and 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

Hiring counselors who are positive role models is central to our mission at camp. We train our counselors to use cabin time in a meaningful way, and to help our campers live out what it means to be part of a Jewish community. Our counselors do everything from facilitating rest hour discussions, leading late night “cabin prayers,” planning thoughtful cabin programming, and managing camper conflict resolution. We are committed to fully engaging and empowering our cabin counselors and our entire staff to be role models of Jewish behaviors and values.

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>

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

On Facebook: URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp Page – www.facebook.com/urjjacobscamp

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

Matt Dreffin, Associate Director – mdreffin@urj.org

Sarah Bate, Assistant Director – sbate@urj.org

Zoe Cole, Assistant Director – zcole@urj.org

You can also reach out to us by phone at 601-885-6042.

Communicating with Your Camper

Parents are encouraged to write to their campers 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 more quickly
- Any letters received after the end of camp will not be forwarded.
- We cannot accept faxes for campers.
- Please do not bring mail on Opening Day to be distributed to your camper later in the session. We receive a high daily volume of mail, and everything will be delivered as it arrives.
- We do not accept packages for campers. We will only accept up to a standard #10 size business envelope (4 ½" x 9 ½") or a standard greeting card. Please see the full "no package" policy below.

By Email

You can use your [CampInTouch](#) account to send email to your camper for a small fee. These emails are printed at our office and distributed to campers each day with the mail. Information about this service can be found in your [CampInTouch](#) Account. You can also access this email system on your phone using the [Campanion App](#), which you can download from your phone's app store and log in using the same credentials as the CampInTouch website. This is the same app that provides you access to daily photos from camp.

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

To ensure that each parent hears from their child, campers are required to write home every "Letter Day" which is every Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

In addition to letters from your child, you will also 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](#) ☒ **We do not accept packages at camp.** This includes 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.

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 beforehand at jacobstemp@urj.org.

ALL packages received at camp must be approved by us via email *prior* to arrival. If we do not know that a package is coming, we will not accept it. Campers are not allowed to receive gum, candy, or any other food items.

Preparing for a Summer at Camp

Getting Ready for Camp

Prior to the summer, parents have the opportunity to help prepare their children 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 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 discussions 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 [HSJ Parents Facebook group](#).** This is a great place to ask veteran parents questions 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 staff 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

Packing Lists along with a document of 'Packing Tips and Tricks' will be available in your [CampInTouch](#) account in April. When you arrive at camp, our staff will transport your camper's belongings to their cabin. Camper belongings **MUST** be easily transportable in as few pieces of luggage as possible. All items must be in your camper's luggage, as loose items cannot be transported. Campers should have enough clothing to last at least 10 days. Campers will shower before dinner and 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 clothing 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 at camp includes: any item that is intentionally tight or revealing, or anything that promotes / references alcohol or drugs, or contains inappropriate language. 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 a 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.

For campers traveling home on their own by plane, necessary valuables such as a phone, will be collected and stored safely in the camp office until departure. Please note that we do not store phones for campers to use on the bus home.

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 Wi-Fi connectivity and do not have a touchscreen.

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

For a more 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 permanent ink or labels. Names should be printed in full—initials, or even last names are not sufficient. You can order labels from Mabels Labels using this link and 20% of every purchase will be given back to Jacobs Camp:

<https://mabelslabels.com/fundraising/support>.

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.

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. Special note: please do not send a fishing pole with your camper.

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 during camp-outs.

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 so happy to have this space 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 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. Each cabin will have a scheduled laundry day at least once every 10 days. 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 of conduct and anti-bullying pledge that all campers must sign before coming to camp.**

Our 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, drugs, or contains inappropriate language. I will wear clothing that is safe and practical for the activities at camp.
- I will not harm myself or others, physically or verbally.
- I will not engage in aggressive actions intended to harm, threaten, or intimidate another person, whether or not contact occurs.
- 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 cabins or living areas where they don't live.
- I will participate in all programs and activities.
- I will participate in restorative conversations to reach a resolution if my actions or words harm another member of the camp community.
- 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, handheld game device, tablet, etc. to camp.
- 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. If brought to camp, I will be sent home immediately.
- 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.

Housing & Cabin Assignments

Camper Cabins

A camper cabin sleeps no more than 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, and 6 toilets. All top bunks are equipped with bed rails. Each cabin is equipped with smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. All 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 do our best to put each camper in a cabin where they will be most successful at camp, taking into consideration many factors including: their age and grade, where they are from, whether they are a new or returning camper, any medical concerns, and friend requests.

Each camper will have the opportunity to request two cabinmates via the bunk request form in your CampIntouch account. We will do our best to accommodate each camper's request. Campers may not list campers that they don't want to be placed with. In line with the Jewish values of inclusion and tolerance, we do expect that our campers will treat one another with care and respect. **Bunk requests are due May 1.**

You will receive your camper's cabin assignment when you check in on Opening Day. No cabin changes will be made at that time. When your child arrives at their cabin, they will find their nametag hung on a their assigned bunk bed. We are able to assign a bottom bunk to any child that has a medical need that requires one. Our counselors assign beds to foster meaningful friendships with their cabinmates. This system ensures a fair and positive start for all our campers from the first moment they walk into the cabin. We ask that parents encourage their campers to arrive with a positive attitude, open mind and a sense of cooperation.

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. Jacobs Camp has a range of systems in place to manage any health care issues that may arise and maintains written health care policies and procedures developed by a team of medical professionals. 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 at camp every day. Campers can 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

All medication will be administered by the Health Care providers working in our on-campus Health Center. The Health Center stocks a wide variety of over-the-counter medications for minor aches, pains, rashes, fevers, etc. Unless your child needs something specific, there is no need to send things like Advil, Tylenol, Benadryl, etc. Our medical staff are available to dispense medication four times throughout the day: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and just before bedtime. Campers who need medication from home, whether for daily or as-needed use, will need to [follow the guidelines linked here](#).

“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 medications 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 are 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 will 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 snacks are included in 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 the 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

At Jacobs Camp, our top priority is creating a safe environment for our campers, staff and community for our campers to have fun and enjoy the summer. We are increasing our security measures significantly this year as we continue to implement sophisticated strategies in consultation with partner organizations, and provide extensive training for our staff.

We have deep, long term relationships with partner organizations which include a security firm that works with all Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) camps, the Foundation for Jewish Camp, the Secure Community Network, and our regional Jewish Federations. We have extremely strong relationships with our local police, fire, and emergency response teams, and our own Nadav Herman currently serves as Deputy Fire Chief of Utica. We also receive funding from the Department of Homeland Security to maintain and upgrade our security cameras, lighting, and other security equipment.

While many of the security updates we make from year to year are behind the scenes, this year you may notice that we have a new perimeter fence installed, and we have hired a new security firm which will allow us to have an increased number of security guards on duty, and we are exclusively using off-duty law enforcement officers.

Here are some key elements of our protocols and procedures at camp:

- A thorough pre-summer review of all security and safety systems and plans that take into consideration current events and best practices
- Work with an on-site security company that works with Jewish institutions throughout the country including **24-hour security on-site at all times**

- Pre-summer meetings and ongoing coordination with the Hinds County Sheriff Police & emergency services, including a direct line of communication to law enforcement officials
- Nighttime supervision (in addition to professional security staff) of all camper residential areas, supplemented by members of the Summer Leadership Team
- Professional Staff member on-duty to monitor all security and safety systems every evening and available for emergency response and calls
- Various systems for communications on-site and with families, as needed, throughout the summer

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.