



HOLSTON CENTER'S 2027 SUMMER CAMP HANDBOOK

Sharing the Love of Christ, Living in God's Creation

For Day Camp and Overnight Camp Families

Welcome to Holston Center

Dear Camp Families,

Thank you for choosing Holston Camp & Retreat Center. Whether this is your child's very first camp experience or Holston Center already feels a little like home, we are honored that you've trusted us with such an important part of their summer.

At Holston Center, we believe camp is about much more than games, crafts, campfires, and s'mores, although we love those things too! Camp is about **belonging**. It's about creating a community where children connect with one another, learn to work together, try new things, solve problems, and discover what it feels like to be an important part of a group.

Our faith is woven into that community. We believe God loves every one of us just as we are. We welcome campers who are hearing about Jesus for the first time, campers who have grown up in church, campers with questions and doubts, and campers who can recite Bible verses like nursery rhymes. Wherever they are in their faith journey, there is room for them here. We hope every camper leaves knowing that **God loves them, we love them, and there is nothing they can ever do to change that.**

We also believe camp should be fun, really fun. Sometimes that means doing something wonderfully silly that was never written on the schedule. If the campers want to sing Christmas songs in June, have a rainy dance party, or invent a ridiculous new camp tradition, and it's safe, kind, and doesn't hurt anyone or anything, we're probably going to say, "Why not?"

Our counselors, summer staff, and year-round team care deeply about every child we welcome to Holston Center. We don't want your child to simply attend camp. We want them to build friendships, grow in confidence, experience God's creation, laugh until their stomach hurts, and become part of this community.

Thank you for sharing your camper with us. We can't wait to welcome them to Holston Center!

Madeline Chandler

Madeline Chandler

Executive Director

Holston Camp & Retreat Center

Why Holston Center?

There are many wonderful summer camps, and each has something unique to offer. Holston Center isn't the camp with the giant new recreation building or screens around every corner. We're a small, adventure-based, outdoor faith camp that believes some of the best things happen when you take camping back to its roots: **God's people in God's creation.**

Our size is one of our greatest strengths. Rather than passing campers from one activity facilitator to another all day, our counselors adventure alongside their campers. They eat together, play together, worship together, laugh together, and work through challenges together. We're small enough to **know your child**, while still being big enough for some pretty great group games!

We work hard to keep campers outside. We hike in the woods, swim in the lake, sing around campfires, play in the mud, and keep adventuring when it rains. Campers learn that they can be uncomfortable for a moment and still have fun, that they can solve problems instead of immediately having someone solve them for them, and that being part of a community means both receiving care and contributing to the people around them.

And through all of it, we make room for joy. We want campers to be silly. We want to hear the giggles coming from cabins and songs being shouted across camp. We believe God is present in our worship and Bible studies, but we also believe God giggles with us during rainy dance parties and silly camp songs.

That balance of **community, faith, outdoor adventure, relationships, and joy** is what makes Holston Center feel like Holston Center.

Find Your Camp

One of the fun things about growing up at Holston Center is that camp grows with you. Whether your camper joins us for a day, a week, or an overnight adventure, they'll find opportunities to explore, build friendships, grow in faith, and become part of the Holston Center community.

Day Camp | Rising 1st–8th Grade

Day Camp is a Monday through Friday program running from **8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** Campers enjoy a full day of outdoor adventure, worship, Bible study, games, swimming, crafts, and time with friends before returning home each afternoon.

Each week features a different theme, bringing new activities, games, crafts, and opportunities for imagination and creativity. While the theme changes, the heart of Day Camp stays the same: helping campers build friendships, grow in confidence, explore God's creation, and have a whole lot of fun.

Day Campers participate in many of the same activities as our overnight campers, with adjustments based on age and developmental readiness. Campers spend their mornings rotating through adventures like archery, rock climbing, team building, crafts, and zip lining, while afternoons are dedicated to water activities such as swimming, creek stomping, kayaking, canoeing, and slip-n-slide.

One of the highlights of Day Camp is **Wednesday's adventure to Rustic and Lake Lyons**, where campers get a little taste of overnight camp life. Every Friday, campers also gather for campfire songs and s'mores to celebrate another wonderful week together.

Overnight Camp | Rising 2nd–12th Grade

Overnight campers experience Holston Center through age-based groups and specialty sessions. Campers stay in Main Camp cabins or our Rustic camping area, depending on their program, and spend their days building community through shared meals, worship, outdoor adventures, and the traditions that make Holston Center special.

Overnight Camper Groups

Camper Group	Rising Grade	Camp Options
Discovery	2nd–3rd	Celebrate Summer
Ventures	3rd–5th*	Water Chihuahua, Celebrate Summer, View Finders

Explorers	6th–8th	Night Owl, Water Chihuahua, Celebrate Summer, View Finders, Cruisers
Wilderness	9th–10th	Night Owl, Water Chihuahua, Cruisers, View Finders
Wildcats	11th–12th	Cruisers, Counselor-in-Training, Night Owl

During Celebrate Summer, Discovery includes rising 2nd–3rd graders and Ventures includes rising 4th–5th graders.

Night Owl | Explorers, Wilderness, & Wildcats

It's everything you love about Holston Center, just later! Night Owl campers enjoy our traditional camp activities with a heavy dose of nighttime fun, including night games and **glow-stick nighttime zip lining**. Night Owl campers stay at Rustic, where they work together to prepare breakfast and dinner in the cook shelters.

Campers sleep later, eat breakfast later, stay up way too late, and finish the week with the traditional Night Owl all-nighter. Everyone is invited to try, although, not everyone makes it!

Water Chihuahua | Ventures, Explorers & Wilderness

Take traditional Holston Center camp and add more water! Campers still experience their favorite camp activities, with extra water adventures mixed throughout the week.

Explorers typically take a day trip to Upper Creek Falls with a picnic lunch. Wilderness campers take an overnight paddling adventure. When conditions allow, we aim to canoe the New River; if river levels or conditions aren't appropriate, Watauga Lake provides another beautiful place to paddle and camp.

Outdoor adventure requires flexibility, so destinations may change based on conditions. **The adventure may change. Safety doesn't.**

Celebrate Summer | Discovery, Ventures & Explorers

Celebrate Summer is our shorter **Wednesday through Friday** session and a great opportunity for campers who want to try overnight camp before committing to a full week.

There are no extra field trips or specialty programs. Instead, campers get a little taste of everything that makes Holston Center special: activities, lake time, worship, meals together, campfire, songs, cabin community, and plenty of fun.

View Finders | Ventures, Explorers, & Wilderness

View Finders is our hiking-focused camp, but we aren't measuring success by how many miles campers can complete.

Instead, we want to help campers fall in love with hiking. We head to approachable trails like Beacon Heights and encourage campers to slow down enough to notice what's around them. Look at the flowers. Notice the rocks and roots. Find the tiny creatures along the trail. Stop and journal. And when you find the view, take the time to enjoy it.

Holston Center provides our young hikers with a small backpack, binoculars, and hiking essentials.

Sometimes the view along the way is more important than reaching the finish line.

Cruisers | Explorers, Wilderness & Wildcats

Cruisers experience camp on two wheels! Campers stay at Main Camp, and enjoy many of our traditional activities throughout the week.

The highlight is a day trip to the **Virginia Creeper Trail**, complete with a picnic lunch and an ice cream stop along the ride. Holston Center provides bikes and helmets for every camper, although campers are welcome to bring their own if they prefer.

Like View Finders, Cruisers isn't about forcing campers to prove they can complete something. We ride together, encourage each other, enjoy the scenery, and stop for ice cream, because that's important too.

Counselor-in-Training | Wildcats

CIT gives our oldest campers an opportunity to experience what happens on the other side of summer camp.

CITs spend the first portion of their experience training alongside our counselors, learning about camper leadership, activity facilitation, group management, and the behind-the-scenes work that creates a great camp experience.

One highlight is planning and executing their own two-night off-site trip. Staff accompany them, but the CITs lead. If they arrive and realize they forgot something, we give them space to problem-solve rather than immediately fixing it for them. If safety becomes a concern, that's when staff step in.

CIT is a safe place to experience real responsibility, make manageable mistakes, practice leadership, and discover what it means to care for a group. Eligible campers may participate in CIT **up to two years**, although many feel fulfilled after one experience.

Before You Arrive

Approximately **two weeks before your camper's session**, families receive a Welcome Email with session-specific information, reminders, contact numbers, and any special instructions. Overnight Camp families will also receive information about their session's chaplain.

Please read this email carefully, as details may occasionally vary by session.

Day Camp Drop-Off & Pickup

Day Camp runs **Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Morning drop-off takes place between **8:00 and 8:30 a.m.**, and afternoon pickup takes place between **4:30 and 5:00 p.m.**

Both drop-off and pickup take place at **Director's Hall**, located immediately to the right when entering Holston Center.

Families should remain in their vehicles and follow the designated drop-off and pickup line. Please stay in one line and follow staff directions to help us keep traffic moving safely.

Monday morning drop-off may take a little longer as staff verify allergies, authorized pickup persons, emergency contacts, and other important registration information. We appreciate your patience as we work to ensure every camper has a safe experience.

Campers are released only to authorized pickup persons. If your pickup arrangements change during the week, please notify camp leadership in advance and in writing.

Wednesday Pickup at Lake Lyons

Wednesday is a special day for Day Camp!

Campers begin their morning at Main Camp as usual before hiking to Rustic, where they'll roast hot dogs for lunch. From there, they'll continue to Lake Lyons for an afternoon of swimming and outdoor fun.

Wednesday morning drop-off takes place at Director's Hall as usual, but Wednesday afternoon pickup takes place at Lake Lyons.

Pickup remains between **4:30 and 5:00 p.m.**

To reach Lake Lyons, continue past Holston Center's main entrance for approximately one mile on Hickory Nut Gap Road until you see a brown fence and the "Lake Lyons" sign on your right.

Late Pickup

Day Camp concludes at 5:00 p.m. each day, and we ask families to make arrangements to pick up their campers on time. If you anticipate being late, please contact the camp office or designated camp contact as soon as possible.

We understand that unexpected delays happen. However, families who arrive more than 15 minutes late on multiple occasions may be charged a \$15 late pickup fee, with an additional \$5 charged for each minute beginning at 5:16 p.m.

If a camper has not been picked up and we are unable to reach their parent, guardian, or authorized emergency contacts for more than one hour, Holston Center will contact the appropriate local child protective services agency for guidance.

Overnight Camp Check-In & Pickup

Most overnight sessions check in **Sunday from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Dining Hall**. Celebrate Summer & CIT checks on **Wednesday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Some specialty sessions may have different arrival arrangements. Your session's Welcome Email will confirm the correct date and time.

During check-in, we'll verify allergies and dietary needs, emergency contacts, authorized pickup persons, photo permissions, and T-shirt size.

Families may help campers take their belongings to their cabin and get settled, or counselors are happy to help. Rustic campers can leave the heavy lifting to us; counselors will load luggage into the camp truck and help campers set up at Rustic.

Overnight sessions conclude Friday at 11:00 a.m. at the Dining Hall. Families are invited to stay for a short parent program, usually ending around 11:15 a.m., where campers may share songs, skits, or another glimpse into their week.

Campers are released only to authorized adults, and we currently verify pickup using **photo identification**. If your pickup plans change, please contact us before Friday.

If you'll be late for drop-off or pickup, contact the camp number provided in your Welcome Email so we know when to expect you.

Finding Holston Center

Please use **Holston Camp & Retreat Center's physical street address** in your GPS rather than simply searching "Holston." There are other Holston conference centers, and we'd much rather you arrive at camp than accidentally begin an entirely different adventure!

6993 Hickory Nut Gap Rd. Banner Elk, NC 28604

Directions from Johnson City, TN:

- From I -26 in Johnson City, take exit 24 for US 321 North to Elizabethton. Travel 5 miles on US 321 N .
- Turn RIGHT onto Hwy 362/Mary Patton Hwy . Continue on Hwy 361/Gap Creek Rd. for 8 miles to 19E. (T-intersection)
- Turn RIGHT on 19E toward Roan Mountain. Travel 17 miles through Roan Mountain, TN and Elk Park, NC.
- 1 mile outside Elk Park , turn LEFT at the Elk River Depot onto Hwy 194/Banner Elk Hwy. Drive 7 mi. to the light in Banner Elk.
- At the light , turn RIGHT on Hwy 184 South and drive a half mile.
- Turn RIGHT onto Hickory Nut Gap Road crossing a small bridge. There is no street sign, so be aware . (There will be a small mill pond on the right.)
- Drive 1 mile to the camp entrance gate on the right.
- Drive to the end parking lot by the Dining Hall.

Directions from Hickory, NC:

- Take Hwy 321 North toward Blowing Rock and Boone. Stay on Hwy 321 North until you come to the Hwy 105 /221/321/421 intersection in Boone.
- Turn LEFT onto Hwy 105 South and travel approx. 12 miles to the intersection of Hwy 105 and Hwy 184 at Grandfather Mountain .
- Turn RIGHT onto Hwy 184 towards Banner Elk. Drive 3.8 miles to Hickory Nut Gap Road.
- Turn LEFT across the small bridge . There is no street sign, so be aware . (There will be a small mill pond on the left .)
- Drive 1 mile to the camp entrance gate on the right.
- Drive to the end parking lot by the Dining Hall.

Life at Camp

No two camp days look exactly alike, but our days are built around time outside, shared experiences, growing relationships, faith, and plenty of fun.

A Typical Day at Day Camp

Day Camp begins with supervised play while families arrive. Campers might spend this time playing on the field, enjoying the playground, or climbing on our climbing wall before gathering for the morning huddle.

During the morning huddle, we take attendance, enjoy a snack, and prepare for the day ahead. Campers then join our overnight campers for worship before gathering as one Day Camp community for Bible study.

After a bathroom break and a chance to refill water bottles, campers head into their morning adventures. Groups rotate through activities such as archery, team building, crafts, rock climbing, and zip lining, with activities adjusted appropriately for different ages.

After lunch, campers enjoy **FOB, or Flat on Back**, an old camp term we've held onto even though we no longer require campers to actually lie flat on their backs! Weather permitting, campers spend this time outdoors exploring the woods, playing cards, writing in journals, making friendship bracelets, reading, or enjoying other quieter activities. We recognize that most of the camp day is filled with high-energy adventures, so FOB provides an intentional opportunity for campers to slow down, recharge, and enjoy a little less stimulation before diving back into the excitement of the afternoon.

Afternoons are all about water! Campers rotate through swimming, canoeing, kayaking, creek stomping, slip-n-slide, and other water adventures.

At the end of the day, campers gather for afternoon huddle and snack, change out of their swimsuits, pack their belongings, and enjoy supervised play until pickup.

Typical Day Camp Schedule

Time	Activity
8:00–8:30 a.m.	Drop-off and supervised play
8:30–9:15 a.m.	Morning huddle, attendance, and snack
9:15–9:45 a.m.	Worship
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Bible study
10:15–10:30 a.m.	Bathroom break and water bottle refills
10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Morning adventures
12:30–1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00–2:00 p.m.	FOB (quiet time)
2:00–4:00 p.m.	Afternoon water activities

4:00–4:30 p.m.	Afternoon huddle, snack, and changing
4:30–5:00 p.m.	Supervised play and pickup

Schedules may change based on weather, programming, and camper safety needs. Wednesday's Rustic and Lake Lyons adventure follows a modified schedule.

A Typical Day at Overnight Camp

A regular overnight camp day begins with breakfast, followed by morning chores, Bible study, and worship. From there, campers might head to a water activity like swimming, canoeing, creek stomping, or slip-n-slide before returning to their cabin to change for lunch.

After lunch comes **FOB, or Flat on Back**. Despite the old-fashioned name, we no longer make campers lie silently in their beds! FOB is quiet time for resting, reading, writing letters, playing cards, making friendship bracelets, practicing skits, or simply taking a break.

Afternoons bring adventure activities like rock climbing, zip lining, archery, crafts, or team building. Then comes dinner, evening vespers, Camp Store, campfire, games, and whatever evening adventure the day holds.

Schedules vary by age group and session, especially during specialty weeks like Night Owl, Water Chihuahua, View Finders, Cruisers, and CIT.

Activities & Water Safety

We encourage campers to try new things, but we don't believe growth requires forcing participation. A camper who doesn't want to participate in an activity must remain with their group but can choose a quiet alternative such as reading, drawing, or making friendship bracelets.

Campers participate in activities appropriate for their age and developmental readiness.

Day Campers entering first or second grade do not participate in zip lining or climbing Rock of Ages, although they may enjoy our climbing wall and other age-appropriate adventures.

All campers entering first or second grade are required to wear a life jacket during swimming activities, regardless of swimming ability.

Beginning with campers entering third grade, campers may complete a swim test to determine whether they may swim without a life jacket in designated swimming areas.

Everyone wears a life jacket while canoeing, kayaking, or paddleboarding, regardless of swimming ability, and a lifeguard is always on duty when campers are in the water.

Sometimes success means climbing all the way to the top. Sometimes it means putting on the harness and trying. **We celebrate both.**

Overnight Camp Accommodations

Main Camp Cabins

Main Camp campers sleep in cabins separated by gender, with most cabins housing up to 12 campers. Each cabin has bunk beds, two private shower rooms, two private toilet rooms, shared sinks and counter space, and 16 individual cubbies for toiletries and towels.

Two staff members are assigned to each cabin and sleep in staff rooms separate from the campers.

Families are welcome to request cabin buddies. We do our best to honor cabinmate requests, but we don't reserve specific rooms, beds, or bunks. If two campers are hoping to share a particular bunk, arriving near the beginning of check-in gives them the best opportunity to choose one together.

The Heart of Camping: Life at Rustic

If Main Camp is where much of the action happens, **Rustic is where camp slows down.**

Tucked into the woods, Rustic may look simple at first: open-air shelters, hammocks, cook shelters, campfires, and a bathhouse. But spend a little time there and you'll quickly discover that Rustic is filled with heart.

There's something special about waking up while the morning fog is still lifting and watching sunlight filter through the trees as campfire smoke rises from the cook shelter chimney. Rustic campers still zip line, enjoy the lake, and participate in activities, but life there moves at a slower pace, with a smaller community, a little more independence, and a lot more working together.

Campers prepare meals together, cook together, and clean together. They take turns tending their campsite fire, while campsites share responsibility for keeping the larger Rustic community fire going. Sometimes one campsite realizes they need syrup and runs to borrow some. Someone else needs aluminum foil. Another group has the seasoning everyone forgot. Before long, separate campsites begin to feel like one little neighborhood in the woods.

That's Rustic.

Campers sleep in hammocks in open-air shelters, and Holston Center provides the hammocks. Campers should bring a sleeping bag and pillow; sleeping pads are also available. If a camper gives hammock sleeping a fair try and discovers it simply isn't working for them, we'll help them find a more comfortable solution, including bringing a mattress to the shelter when needed.

Rustic also has a bathhouse with hot showers, toilets, and sinks.

Rustic may be bare bones, but it is overflowing with heart.

Faith at Holston Center

Campers arrive at Holston Center from many different places in their faith journeys. Some are hearing about Jesus for the first time. Some have grown up in church. Some arrive with questions or uncertainty about faith or organized religion, while others could probably recite Bible verses to us all day.

There is room for all of them here.

Our Bible studies and worship reflect our Presbyterian tradition while creating space for campers to learn, ask questions, wonder, and grow.

During the summer, Day Camp and Overnight Camp come together for morning worship, generally led by volunteer chaplains, many of whom serve churches throughout Holston Presbytery.

Day Campers participate in Bible study together as one large Day Camp community, while Overnight Campers participate in counselor-led Bible studies using our shared curriculum.

Campers remain with their group during worship, but active participation is not forced. A camper who doesn't wish to participate is welcome to sit quietly and respectfully with their group.

We believe God is present in worship, but we also believe God is present in the woods, around the dinner table, when we forgive each other, during rainy dance parties, and in the giggles echoing across camp.

Food, Camp Store & Holston Center Traditions

What's for Lunch?

Food is a big deal at Holston Center! Our kitchen prepares fresh, delicious meals for campers and staff throughout the summer, and we know that good food can make a big difference in a camper's experience.

Day Camp Meals

Day Campers receive **morning snack, a hot lunch, and afternoon snack** each day.

Lunch is served at 12:30 p.m. in the Dining Hall, except on Wednesday, when campers roast hot dogs at Rustic as part of their special adventure day.

Families are welcome to send a packed lunch if preferred. If you send lunch from home, please let your camper's counselor know at morning drop-off.

Overnight Camp Meals

Overnight Campers receive **three hot meals each full day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner**, freshly prepared by our kitchen team.

Most sessions begin with Sunday dinner and conclude after Friday breakfast. Celebrate Summer begins with Wednesday lunch.

The only time we generally serve a bag lunch is for an off-site adventure.

Food Allergies, Dietary Needs & Picky Eaters

We serve fruits and vegetables alongside camp favorites and fun meals like walking tacos and pancake bars with more toppings than you knew pancakes needed.

We also know that food can bring comfort, especially when a camper is away from home.

For picky eaters, familiar alternatives like PB&J, grilled cheese, or a ham sandwich are available. And if none of those work, we'll keep looking. Sometimes success is a beautifully balanced plate; sometimes it's graham crackers and applesauce.

A fed camper is better than a hungry camper.

Allergies and dietary restrictions are verified at check-in. Our kitchen works to provide an accommodation that matches the meal being served as closely as possible so campers can share the same meal experience as their group.

Camp Store

Day Camp

The Camp Store opens every Friday from **4:30 to 5:30 p.m. near the Dining Hall**.

Families are welcome to shop for Holston Center shirts, sweatshirts, hats, water bottles, snacks, and other camp merchandise. We accept cash, cards, checks, and Venmo.

Overnight Camp

Camp Store is included in the cost of Overnight Camp! Campers don't need spending money or a prepaid account.

Each day, Overnight Campers may choose one ice cream or candy and one drink.

The Camp Store also opens for family purchases during Friday pickup, with Holston Center gear like sweatshirts, water bottles, patches, Croc charms, including glow-in-the-dark ones, and more.

A Few Holston Center Traditions

Day Camp: Wednesday at Rustic & Lake Lyons

Wednesday is one of the highlights of Day Camp!

Campers hike to Rustic, where they'll get a taste of overnight camp life while roasting hot dogs for lunch. Afterward, they'll continue to Lake Lyons for an afternoon of swimming, outdoor fun, and time with friends.

It's a wonderful opportunity for Day Campers to explore another part of Holston Center and experience some of the adventures that make overnight camp special.

Day Camp: Friday S'mores & Campfire Songs

Every Friday, Day Campers gather for s'mores and campfire songs during afternoon snack.

It's our way of celebrating another week of friendships, adventures, and memories together. There may be sticky fingers, off-key singing, and more than a few marshmallow-covered smiles!

Overnight Camp: Tie-Dye

Every Overnight Camper receives a Holston Center camp T-shirt to tie-dye during their session.

For most full-week sessions, tie-dye takes place on Sunday. We wash the shirts during the week and return them in time for everyone to wear their creation at Friday pickup.

Overnight Camp: Thursday Dance Night

Every overnight session spends its final full night dancing!

Our DJ brings music and fun lighting, and campers wear their silliest, wackiest attire. There's no need to buy a costume. If someone forgets crazy garb, counselors are experts at turning ordinary clothes into something wonderfully ridiculous.

The goal is simply for everyone to feel **confidently silly** enough to join the fun.

Dance Night is usually outside, but rain has never stopped us. We simply move the party indoors.

Birthdays at Holston Center

If your camper has a birthday during camp, we're going to celebrate!

They'll get a special treat with a candle and an enthusiastic rendition of "Happy Birthday." We often challenge everyone to sing opera-style, creating a loud, off-key, dramatically terrible performance, which is exactly how we like it.

Caring for Your Camper

Sending your child to camp requires trust, and we don't take that lightly. Our goal is to keep campers safe while giving them room to grow, try new things, make manageable mistakes, and become more independent.

Health & Medications

Holston Center designates trained staff to oversee camper health needs during each session. Because staffing and program needs vary, the individual filling this role may change from week to week.

All summer staff receive First Aid, CPR, and AED training, and Holston Center maintains two Wilderness First Responders during summer camp, with one remaining onsite and one accompanying off-site trips.

All camper medications, including over-the-counter medications, must be turned in to designated camp staff rather than kept in a camper's luggage or backpack.

Holston Center maintains commonly needed over-the-counter medications and checks the permissions families provided during registration before administering them.

Minor bumps and scrapes are part of an active week outdoors. Staff may provide basic first aid such as bandages, ice packs, or supportive wrapping, with medication and topical-treatment permissions checked against the camper's health forms.

Day Camp Medication Check-In

Day Camp families may choose to check in medication each morning and collect it during afternoon pickup, or leave medication with Holston Center for the entire week and collect it on Friday.

Families will complete a medication sign-in and sign-out form documenting their preference.

Medications will be kept in designated staff care and administered according to the camper's health information and the permissions provided during registration.

Overnight Camp Medication Check-In

All Overnight Camp medications must be checked in with designated staff during arrival.

Please do not pack medications in your camper's luggage, including extra Tylenol or other over-the-counter medications "just in case."

Medications will be managed by designated camp staff throughout the session and returned to the authorized adult at pickup.

If Your Camper Gets Sick

If your camper becomes sick during camp, **when appropriate, we will contact you and keep you informed.** A phone call does not necessarily mean you need to come pick them up. Often, a camper needs some rest, appropriate medication, fluids, and a little time before they're ready to jump back into activities.

We never want you to arrive at the end of your camper's session and discover for the first time that your child experienced a significant illness during camp. When appropriate, we'll let you

know what's happening and how your camper is doing, and you can also tell us if you would prefer additional intervention or want to pick them up.

Parents are contacted for more significant concerns, including fever or vomiting. If a camper needs off-site medical evaluation, we'll contact the parent or guardian when practical and, when circumstances allow, discuss whether the family wants to transport the camper, have Holston Center transport them, or have emergency services respond.

In a life-threatening emergency, we will contact emergency services first and notify the parent or guardian as quickly as possible afterward.

Whether an illness requires a camper to leave is determined case by case. Whenever we can safely manage the camper's condition and they are still able to enjoy their camp experience, we want to help them stay.

Homesickness

Missing home is normal, especially for campers experiencing their first time away from family. This can happen during Day Camp or Overnight Camp, although it may look a little different depending on the program.

Our counselors receive training each summer on supporting homesick campers, and we begin by validating what the camper is feeling rather than telling them they shouldn't be sad.

Sometimes we ask, "What do you miss most about home?" If it's a song Mom sings at bedtime, maybe we can sing it too. We have stuffed animals campers can borrow as snuggle buddies and night-lights we can add to overnight cabin rooms.

Then we help them look toward the things they're enjoying: What has been your favorite activity? Who have you met? What are you excited about tomorrow?

We may encourage an Overnight Camper to write home and tell their family about the things they're enjoying. Our goal isn't to convince a child that they shouldn't miss home. It's to help them discover that **they can miss home and still have a wonderful time at camp.**

Can My Camper Call Me?

Campers do not make phone calls home during camp. Years of experience have shown us that calls home generally intensify homesickness rather than helping campers work through it.

If your camper is struggling significantly, **we will call you.** You can share insight with our leadership team, and together we can determine the best way to support your camper. Direct

camper-to-parent calls are reserved for unusual circumstances when camp leadership determines one is appropriate.

Before camp, be honest with your child about where they're going and what camp will be like. Tell them that something new can feel scary and that their counselors are there to help. Encourage them to speak up if they're nervous, uncomfortable, lonely, or being treated unkindly.

Most importantly, communicate confidence: **"I know you can do this, and there are people there who will help you."**

And please don't tell your child they're going to horse camp or space camp just to get them out of the car. We can solve a lot of problems at camp, but we can't turn Holston Center into space camp by Sunday afternoon!

Additional Support & Accommodations

We want every camper who comes to Holston Center to have the opportunity to feel welcomed, included, and part of our community. We also recognize that Holston Center's facilities, staffing, and adventure-based program mean we may not be able to safely or appropriately accommodate every camper's individual needs.

If your child has physical, developmental, behavioral, sensory, emotional, or other support needs that may affect their camp experience, **please contact us before registering or attending camp.** We would love to have an individual conversation about your camper, the support they need, and what a typical week at Holston Center looks like.

Together, we can determine whether Holston Center can safely and appropriately meet those needs while providing a positive camp experience for your child and the other campers in their community.

Our goal is never to make assumptions about what a camper can or cannot do. We would much rather learn about your child, answer questions honestly, and determine together whether Holston Center is the right fit.

A note about accessibility: Holston Center is a mountain camp with uneven terrain, trails, hills, and facilities that are not fully accessible. While we do have some accessible spaces, our overall property and summer camp program are not currently designed to provide full accessibility for campers with significant mobility needs. Please contact us to discuss your camper's specific needs before registration.

Staying Connected While Your Camper Is Here

During a normal camp week, **no news is good news!**

Families should not expect routine calls or emails from Holston Center while camp is in session. Our leadership team's priority is being hands-on with campers rather than sitting in the office sending updates.

If there is an illness, injury, significant behavioral concern, or another situation you need to know about, we will contact you.

Parents are welcome to reach out using the contact number provided in the Welcome Email. Please keep in mind that **messages may not receive an immediate response** because our team is often out working directly with campers and making camp happen.

Photos

We share photos **after the session ends**, rather than throughout the week.

Your end-of-week email will include the photo gallery link, our parent survey, and information about staying connected with Holston Center. Camp families will also receive information about contributing to our counselors' end-of-summer adventure fund.

Then you can look through the photos with your camper and let them tell you all the stories behind them!

Mail & Care Packages for Overnight Campers

Campers love getting mail, but mail service to Holston Center can be **slow**. We sometimes receive camper letters after the camper has already gone home!

Our recommendation is to write letters ahead of time, label them with your camper's name and the day you'd like them delivered, and **leave them with us at check-in**.

Families may also email letters to **info@holstoncenter.org**, and we'll print and deliver them. Please include your camper's name, session, and age group.

If you prefer traditional mail, send it **at least one week before your camper's session**:

Holston Center

Attn: Camper Name, Session, Age Group

**PO Box 428
Banner Elk, NC 28604**

We strongly encourage food-free care packages. Food in cabins can attract wildlife, including bears, and other campers may have food allergies. Letters, cards, stickers, friendship-bracelet supplies, puzzles, or small activities make great alternatives.

When writing letters to campers, ask about the fun. Ask about new friends and new adventures. Tell your camper you love them and can't wait to hear their stories.

We recommend avoiding letters focused heavily on how sad everyone is without them or sharing upsetting news from home while they're away whenever possible.

Unplugging at Camp

Part of the magic of camp is having the opportunity to disconnect from everyday distractions and be fully present with the people and creation around us.

We want campers to spend their days building friendships, having conversations, exploring the outdoors, and enjoying the adventures happening right in front of them rather than worrying about phones, screens, or notifications.

Cell phones, Apple Watches and other smart watches, tablets, Kindles/e-readers, gaming devices, MP3 players, and similar electronics should stay home.

Traditional watches are fine, and campers may bring cameras and non-electric musical instruments.

This policy applies to both Day Camp and Overnight Camp.

If a prohibited electronic device comes to camp, staff will collect and safely hold it until pickup.

Creating a Safe Camp Community

Belonging only works when everyone helps protect the community we're building.

At Holston Center, we believe deeply in grace, forgiveness, and second chances. Campers are learning, and they're going to make mistakes. Our first response to ordinary mistakes is to help

campers understand what happened, repair relationships when possible, and make a better choice next time.

Grace, however, does not mean ignoring behavior that harms another person.

Every camper deserves to feel physically and emotionally safe at Holston Center. Day Campers, Overnight Campers, and their parents or guardians will be asked to review and agree to our **Camper Behavior Covenant** before attending camp.

Camper Behavior Covenant

As a Holston Center camper, I will:

- Follow camp rules and staff instructions.
- Treat campers and staff with kindness and respect.
- Help create a community where others feel welcomed and included.
- Stay with my group and follow camp supervision expectations.
- Use language and gestures appropriate for camp.
- Refrain from bullying, threatening, intimidating, or deliberately excluding others.
- Keep my hands, feet, and objects to myself and refrain from intentionally harming another camper or staff member.
- Respect camp property and the belongings of others.
- Only enter cabins, buildings, and program areas when I have permission.
- Participate safely and responsibly in camp activities.
- Understand that romantic or sexual behavior is not appropriate at camp.
- Tell a counselor or staff member when I feel unsafe or see behavior that may hurt someone else.
- Take responsibility for my choices and work with staff to repair harm when mistakes happen.
- Do my part to make camp safe, welcoming, and fun for everyone.

If the Covenant Isn't Followed

Our response depends on the behavior, its severity, the camper's age, and the circumstances.

Responses may include a counselor conversation, intervention from camp leadership and a plan for better choices, parent or guardian contact, removal from an activity or another appropriate consequence, or dismissal from the camp session.

These are not required sequential steps. Serious behavior, particularly behavior that threatens the physical or emotional safety of another camper or staff member, may require immediate parent contact or dismissal.

Our commitment to grace does not require another camper to remain unsafe.

If a camper is dismissed, they will remain with leadership staff in the Camp Office until an authorized adult arrives.

Once the decision has been made that the camper needs to leave, they will not return to regular camp activities while waiting for pickup.

We understand that families may need time to arrange transportation to Banner Elk and will work with you while those arrangements are made.

Safety at Holston Center

Holston Center conducts background checks for full-time staff, summer staff, and volunteers. All summer staff receive First Aid, CPR, and AED training, and our Wilderness First Responders provide additional coverage onsite and during off-site adventures.

Trained lifeguards supervise swimming and water activities.

Our staff also work to create a culture where campers know they can **say something**.

If something doesn't feel right, another camper is hurting them, they're worried about a friend, or they simply need help, we want them to find a counselor or another trusted staff member and tell us.

Keeping campers safe is something we do together.

Payment, Cancellation & Early Departure

A non-refundable deposit is required at registration and is applied toward the total camp balance.

Day Camp Deposit: \$25 per camper, per session

Overnight Camp Deposit: \$50 per camper, per session

Families may pay in full at registration or select one of the available payment plan options.

All balances must be **paid in full at least 14 days before the session begins**.

Registrations with an unpaid balance within 14 days of the session start date will be canceled, and the camper's spot may be offered to a family on the waiting list. Campers offered a spot from a waiting list must pay in full at enrollment.

Families who cancel **14 or more days before camp** are eligible for a refund of payments made minus the non-refundable deposit.

Cancellations within 14 days of the session are not eligible for a refund.

Please submit registration changes and cancellations in writing to **info@holstoncenter.org**.

Leaving Camp Early

Camp fees are not refunded or prorated when a camper leaves a session early, whether because of illness, homesickness, behavior, or a family's decision.

Registration reserves your camper's spot for the entire session. Once the session begins, we are unable to offer that space to another camper, and the costs associated with preparing for their participation have already been committed.

Packing for Day Camp

Day Campers should arrive each morning prepared for a full day of outdoor adventure!

Because we spend most of our time outside, rain or shine, please make sure your camper has everything they need to stay comfortable throughout the day.

Please Send Each Day

- **Labeled refillable water bottle**
- **Backpack or day bag**
- **Closed-toe athletic shoes** for climbing, hiking, zip lining, and other adventure activities
- **Water shoes** for creek stomping, slip-n-slide, and lake activities
- **Swimsuit**
- **Towel**
- **Change of clothes**
- **Rain jacket**
- **Spray sunscreen**
- **Bug spray**
- **Sunglasses**

- Personal hand sanitizer (optional)

We prefer spray sunscreen because it makes it easier for our staff to help campers reapply sunscreen throughout the day.

Please label everything with your camper's first and last name. We collect an impressive amount of Lost and Found each week!

Please Leave These at Home

These items are often lost, damaged, or distracting at camp:

- Phones, tablets, smart watches, and other electronics
- Toys and stuffed animals
- Pokémon cards and other trading cards
- Expensive or sentimental belongings
- Food or snacks, unless needed for a specific dietary accommodation or packed lunch

Campers do not need to bring breakfast, lunch, or snacks unless their family prefers to send a packed lunch.

Packing for Overnight Camp

Here's the most important packing advice we can give you:

Send clothes that can get dirty!

Holston Center sits at approximately 4,000 feet in elevation. Even in June and July, nights can dip into the 50s, and rain is a normal part of summer in the mountains.

Plan for your camper to get wet, muddy, sweaty, and possibly all three at the same time.

Bedding

Main Camp: Twin sheets or sleeping bag, blanket, and pillow.

Rustic: Sleeping bag and pillow. Holston Center provides hammocks and has sleeping pads available.

Clothing

- T-shirts
- Shorts and long pants
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Underwear and plenty of socks
- Pajamas
- Sweatshirt, hoodie, fleece, or light jacket
- Rain jacket or poncho
- Swimsuit
- Something silly for Dance Night

Please send clothing appropriate for an active camp environment and nothing you'd be devastated to see covered in mud.

Shoes

Campers should bring **water shoes** that can get wet and muddy and a pair of **closed-toe athletic or hiking shoes** with good support and traction for walking, climbing, and zip lining.

Old tennis shoes, Chacos, and Tevas work well for many water activities. Shower shoes are optional, and supportive hiking shoes are strongly encouraged for hiking-focused programs.

Toiletries

Pack a toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner, soap or body wash, hairbrush or comb, deodorant, personal hygiene products, contact lens supplies if needed, sunscreen, non-aerosol insect repellent, a bath towel and washcloth, and a **separate lake towel**.

Camp Gear

Every camper needs a **refillable water bottle**. Honestly, bringing two isn't a bad idea!

Water refill opportunities are available throughout the day, and bottles should be clearly labeled with your camper's first and last name.

Also pack a small backpack or daypack, flashlight or headlamp, extra batteries, laundry bag, notebook and pencils, and a Bible if your camper has one. We can provide access to a Bible if they don't.

Optional items include a camera, non-electric musical instrument, stationery and stamps, journal, books, friendship-bracelet supplies, cards or another quiet FOB activity, and silly accessories for Dance Night.

Special Program Notes

Cruisers: Holston Center provides bikes and helmets. Campers may bring their own if they prefer, but this is completely optional.

View Finders: Comfortable, supportive hiking shoes are the most important item. Holston Center provides a small hiking backpack, binoculars, and hiking essentials. Campers may bring a hydration backpack or CamelBak if they have one.

Overnight Adventures: CIT campers and the Wilderness Water Chihuahua group currently participate in overnight adventures. Families will receive any additional packing information they need before the session.

When in doubt, don't go shopping! If your camper needs something beyond our regular packing list, we'll let you know.

What Should Stay Home?

For the safety and comfort of everyone at Holston Center, please do not send:

- Cell phones, smart watches, tablets, e-readers, gaming devices, or similar electronics
- Alcohol, tobacco or nicotine products, vapes, or illegal drugs
- Weapons, including knives
- Fireworks
- Food or snacks for overnight cabins
- Pokémon or other trading cards
- Expensive, sentimental, or irreplaceable belongings

Trading cards may seem harmless, but lost cards, trades, questions about ownership, and differences in value can quickly create conflict. We've found that camp community works better when they stay home for the week.

And remember: **medication never goes in camper luggage or backpacks.** All medication must be checked in with designated camp staff.

Packing Tips From People Who Have Done This Before

Pack with your camper. They should know what's actually inside their bag! Packing together also gives you an opportunity to talk about camp and build excitement.

Label everything. Seriously. Water bottles, towels, jackets, bedding, luggage, if you want to see it again, put your camper's first and last name on it.

Don't buy a brand-new camp wardrobe. Camp clothes are supposed to get dirty. Send the T-shirt that can survive a mud hike.

Pack for mountain weather. A warm afternoon can quickly become a chilly evening. Layers and rain gear matter at 4,000 feet.

Use this list twice. Overnight Campers can use it again when packing to come home.

Laundry & Lost and Found

Routine camper laundry is not available, so please pack enough clothing for the session.

Of course, if bedding needs washing after an accident or another situation arises where laundry is necessary for a camper's comfort, we'll take care of it.

We collect an impressive amount of Lost and Found!

Please check the shelves on the Dining Hall front porch during Friday pickup. Unclaimed items are kept through the end of summer and donated approximately **two weeks after our final camp session**.

We can't promise every sock will make it home.

But labeling everything dramatically improves the odds.

What We Hope Every Camper Takes Home

By Friday afternoon, your Day Camper may be coming home with muddy shoes, a damp towel, and a backpack full of things that definitely weren't packed quite that way on Monday.

By Friday morning, your Overnight Camper may be coming home with dirty clothes, tired eyes, a tie-dyed T-shirt, and more stories than you can get out of them on the car ride home.

But those aren't the things we hope matter most.

We hope they come home with a new friend and a few new songs. We hope they tried something that made them nervous and discovered they could do it. We hope they learned how to work with people who are different from them, how to contribute to a community, and how to ask for help when they need it.

We hope they remember swimming in the lake, roasting a s'more, singing the Holston Center Song, getting a little muddy, laughing with friends, worshiping in God's creation, and trying something new.

We hope they come home a little more independent, a little more confident, and maybe already asking when they can come back.

Most of all, we hope they leave knowing three things:

God loves them.

They have something valuable to contribute to a community.

And there is a place at Holston Center where they belong.

We'll See You at Camp

While you're getting backpacks ready, labeling water bottles, checking swimsuits, and figuring out how many pairs of socks one child can possibly need, we'll be getting ready too.

We'll be preparing cabins and cook shelters, checking adventure equipment, getting the lakes ready, planning worship, stocking the Camp Store, preparing meals, and getting ready for another summer filled with muddy shoes, campfire smoke, silly songs, new friendships, and a whole lot of laughter.

Most importantly, we'll be getting ready to welcome another group of campers into this community.

We can't wait to see your camper at Holston Center.