



On May 11, 2023, the US declared the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency signifying an end to certain federal policies and data collection. However, coronavirus remains a public health priority as camps begin our fourth summer with lower, albeit continued, infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. Both day and overnight summer camps have closely followed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local public health guidelines from strict prevention to mitigation and containment, endeavoring to protect individuals and the communities we serve from serious illness. Over the last four summers, the camp community has successfully pivoted and transitioned at each turn of the pandemic, striving to balance the seriousness of the pandemic with the joy and benefits of the camp experience. Collectively we enter another summer where camps must create communicable disease plans without clear guidance. In response, the American Camp Association (ACA) and the Alliance for Camp Health (ACH) determined the best course of action is to write this letter to the camp community, informed by our conversations with the CDC.

First and foremost, camps must seek local and state public health guidelines and regulations as they determine their [communicable disease plan](#) for the summer.

Second, it's important to highlight that the end of the public health emergency has not yet changed CDC recommendations on isolation and post-exposure testing. However, in recent correspondence with ACA and ACH, the CDC highlights that these are recommendations and not requirements.

Third, we would like to stress that COVID-19 is one of a multitude of respiratory viruses that may be present at camp this year, the vast majority of which are mild, self-limited, and do not require testing to change the treatment or trajectory of the illness in healthy children. As camps consider their communicable disease plans, they should discuss balancing respiratory disease management focused on [preventing moderate/severe disease outcomes](#), while also striving for balance within the continuity of camp programming.

Camps now have experience and access to a variety of actions to prevent the spread of infectious disease including [vaccination](#), staying home (or in the health center) when sick, maximizing outdoor programming, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and cleaning measures to sanitize. When respiratory diseases are spreading in camp, extra measures may be considered, including masking and testing. In their recent correspondence, the CDC writes *“When deciding which prevention measures to implement, camps should consider the local context and balance the risks of infectious disease with the educational, social, and mental health outcomes.”*

Finally, all camps are strongly encouraged to communicate clearly with families, campers, and staff about their summer communicable disease plan and its rationale. Setting expectations for how camps will handle mild illness symptoms, how they will respond to respiratory disease spread in camp, and how/if they will employ testing for any viral suspects is essential to ensure families and staff can make informed personal health choices.

Our shared mission is to support healthy camping experiences as part of a larger healing process for youth and their families as they grow and thrive in a life disrupted by the pandemic. We are here to support you in this collective endeavor. Wishing you all a safe, happy, and healthy summer season!

Tom Rosenberg
President/CEO — ACA

Tracey Gaslin, PhD
CEO — ACH

Laura Blaisdell, MD/MPH, FAAP
Medical Advisor to ACA/ACH