



Nature Camp Guidebook

for parents, guardians, and caregivers

The information within is the requirements, policies, and procedures of the City of Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department and Pioneers Park Nature Center.

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Contact Information

For questions and comments about:

Registration, tuition fees, payment schedules

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Discovery Camp

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Pioneers Park Nature Center is located on the western side of Pioneers Park. Enter Pioneers Park on S. Coddington Avenue or W. Van Dorn Street, then follow the signs west about 1.5 miles.

The headquarters of the Nature Center is located at 40.7745°N, 96.7767°W.

About the Pioneers Park Nature Center

The mission of Pioneers Park Nature Center (PPNC) is to interpret the natural history of Nebraska and the central Great Plains; to promote the enjoyment, appreciation and awareness of our natural environment; to practice and foster a conservation ethic; and to provide a sanctuary for wildlife and a peaceful retreat for people.

PPNC facilities are administered by the City of Lincoln's Parks & Recreation Department. The Nature Center was dedicated as a 40-acre preserve in 1963 and has since grown to 668 acres of woodland, wetland, and prairie habitats that we use as an outdoor classroom. It is home to two interpretive visitor centers with indoor exhibits and live animals. Outdoor areas include 8 miles of walking trails, a natural play area, several themed gardens, a small herd of bison and non-releasable raptors.

The *Chet Ager Building* is the original headquarters of the nature center. It houses live animal exhibits and is located in the woodland south of the park road, on the shore of Heron Pond.

The *Prairie Building* is a multipurpose building for preschool classes and camps, meeting space, interactive exhibits, and administrative offices. It is located prominently at the entrance to the Nature Center, at the south end of the Exploration Prairie.

Lynn Johnson Nature Education Building is home base for K-12 educational programs at the Nature Center, including field trips and day camps throughout the year. It is located on the bison viewing loop, up the hill from the Prairie Building.

Our teaching philosophy takes inspiration from several sources: the *principles of interpretation* articulated first by Freeman Tilden in his 1957 landmark publication, *Interpreting our Heritage; inquiry learning*, informed by Maria Montessori and Loris Malaguzzi; and *flow learning* by Joseph Cornell.

Our counselors are facilitators and discussion leaders, not lecturers. Rather than simply sharing facts, they direct exploration and inquiry towards specific objectives. Heightened awareness and curiosity, with improved investigative skills help attain new levels of thought and awareness about environmental concepts and stewardship. We believe this approach helps mold participants' attitudes because it builds on their own interests, perceptions, responses, and questions.

We seek to use an approach that is interpretive, activity-centered, and participatory. Hands-on materials and flow learning activities enable the students to directly experience the phenomena of nature in a joyful way. Our outdoor education is designed to inspire curiosity and build understanding of others and of their surroundings through guidance of caring staff, featuring the outdoors and natural wonder.

Camp Program Overview

We offer day camp experiences to three different age groups. For more information about each camp, refer to that program section on pages 6 and 7 in this guide.

Discovery Camp (p. 6) is a half-day camp for young children, ages 3–6, to learn about the world around them. Camp activities and experiences are planned around seasonal changes and happenings at the Nature Center. Campers have time to explore and investigate, play with other children in a social setting, and express themselves through arts and crafts. Come prepared to be outdoors, get dirty, and have fun!

Sessions are held from 9:00–11:30 a.m., Monday through Thursday. Discovery Camp is based in the preschool classrooms of the Prairie Building.

Explorers Camp (p. 7) is a full-day camp for children who have completed kindergarten but who have not yet entered 6th grade. Activities include hikes, creek exploration, pond investigations, archery, fishing, arts, and much more. Guest presenters and field trips to other local nature sites may also be incorporated.

Sessions are held from 8:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday in June and July, as well as during school breaks in Spring, Fall, and Winter. The Education Building is home base for this camp, but most of each day is spent outdoors.

Navigators Camp (p. 7) is a full-day camp for youth who have completed 6th grade but who have not yet entered 9th grade. The camp experience immerses youth in both outdoor recreation and outdoor education. They can participate in canoeing, archery, fishing, and hiking, as well as learn about various plants and animals, their habitats, and conservation and environmental issues facing them.

Sessions are held from 8:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday for one week in July. The Education Building is home base for this camp, but most of each day is spent outdoors.

Child Health & Safety

Health and safety of the children in our care is our first priority. All of our counselors are trained in first aid and CPR and we have a two-deep leadership policy: two or more adults will always be present to teach and supervise each group of campers, giving a 10:1 supervision ratio. In our outdoor setting, we face daily hazards, but we do everything we can to avoid and mitigate the risks they pose.

Weather

Most of the time at Nature Camp will be spent in various outdoor activities. Dressing appropriately for the weather, drinking plenty of water, and avoiding over-exertion are the first line of defense. We will move indoors if heat index temperatures exceed 100°F, wind chill drops below -10°F, the Health Department issues an Air Quality Advisory, or if lightning or thunder is observed. Outdoor activities can resume 30 minutes after the last-observed lightning or thunder. Counselors carry radios and so remain informed about developing weather hazards. Storm shelters are never very far away at the Prairie and Education Buildings.

Bites and Stings

Tick and mosquito bites are the most common injury at nature camp, but they don't need to be. Please apply insect repellent to your child each morning, and instruct them to reapply throughout the day.

Counselors can assist your child with this if you indicate that's okay on the waiver form. Find the repellent that is right for you at [epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you](https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you).

For more info about these pests and diseases they can spread, see [cdc.gov/mosquitos](https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitos) and [cdc.gov/ticks](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks).

Sunburn

The second-most common injury at camp is sunburn, but it is easily prevented by wearing clothing such as long sleeves and brimmed hat, and/or regularly applying sunscreen. Please apply sunscreen to your child each morning, and instruct them to reapply throughout the day. Counselors can assist your child with this if you indicate that's okay on the waiver form. We highly recommend using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF15 or higher.

Learn more about sun safety at [cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm).

Snacks

Every camp program includes a healthy snack daily. We are responsive to the dietary needs of our campers, but parents or guardians are responsible for alerting camp staff of any food allergies or restrictions. Please help your child be prepared to meet the physical demands of long days at camp by providing a refreshing and healthy lunch each day.

Footwear

We require closed-toed shoes with hard rubber soles during outdoor activities away from the buildings. Even our wood-chipped trails may have locust thorns or poison ivy alongside, which can inflict serious injury. Creek beds may harbor broken glass and other debris. Footwear such as Crocs, flip-flops, or sandals do not provide the protection and traction needed during our outdoor excursions.

Illness

Refer to our *Illness Exclusion Policy* on page 11 for information about when to keep your child home. Please notify us as soon as possible if your child will be absent.

Other Hazards

We follow the *Standard Response Protocol* of Lockout, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter.

Drop-off and Pick-Up

For your convenience, our counselors are available before and after formal camp activities. See camp-specific schedules on pages 6 and 7. *Please drop off and pick up your child on time!*

Late Pick-Up

Fees will be assessed at the rate of \$5 for every 5 minutes the camper remains at the program after closing time (see camp-specific schedules on pages 6 and 7).

Late Drop-Off/Early Pick-Up

Due to the nature of our camp, campers and counselors are often away from the camp buildings during the days. You must make arrangements with the Camp Director for early pick-up or late drop-off, with as much advance notice as possible.

Approved Adults

Campers will be released only to the adults listed on the program registration form. A parent/guardian needs to provide notice of permission for alternate pickup arrangements. If staff members do not recognize the person picking up a camper, they will check photo IDs against names on the form.

Communication

You can expect timely and transparent information from us about camp programs for which your child is registered. Watch for camp preview emails before each week of camp begins that will include the upcoming schedule and announcements about special events. We'll also send camp review emails recapping the week and requesting feedback. We appreciate any input you can provide to help us continually improve our programs. If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, we'd love to hear from you. See page 2 for contact information.

Counselors carry radios with them throughout the day. If it becomes necessary to communicate with your child, you can reach them through the Camp Director or by leaving a message at the Nature Center. Counselors carry radios and have constant contact with the Nature Center administration.

Camp Names

It is a long-standing camp tradition that counselors adopt a "nature name" at camp. Campers typically have fun referring to their counselors with their aliases, and sometimes trying to discover their true names. This is meant to be fun and playful, adding to the theme of nature camp, not to obscure identities or backgrounds of camp leaders. Contact the Camp Director if you have any questions about our camp staff.

Discovery Camp Information

This is a half-day camp for young children, ages 3–6, to learn about the world around them. Camp activities and experiences are planned around seasonal changes and happenings at the Nature Center. Campers have time to explore and investigate, play with other children in a social setting, and express themselves through arts and crafts.

Discovery Camp is based in the preschool classrooms of the Prairie Building.

Packing List

- Hat or cap with a front-facing brim
- Extra set of clothes, socks, and shoes, in a plastic bag labeled with camper's name

Your child should arrive wearing play clothes that can get dirty during outdoor activities, and *closed-toe shoes*. No sandals, flip-flops, or Crocs. Apply sunscreen and insect repellent each day prior to dropoff. (See *Bites and Stings*, p. 5.)

Timeframes for Discovery Camp

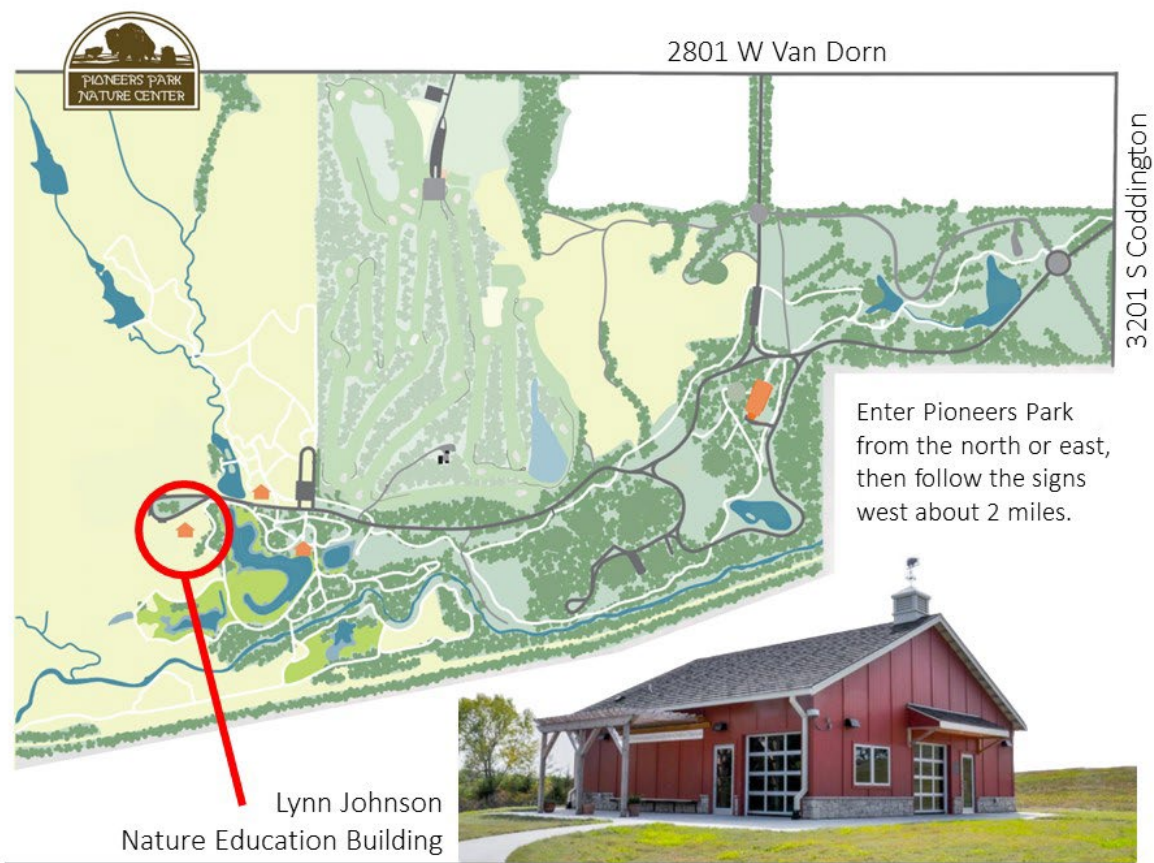
9:00 a.m.	Drop off and greeting
9:30 a.m.	Outdoor time; dropping off after this time needs special arrangement.
10:30 a.m.	Indoor time with snack
11:30 a.m.	Camp closes. Late pick-up fees are assessed after this time (p. 5).

Explorers and Navigators Camp Information

Explorers is a full-day camp for children who have completed kindergarten but who have not yet entered 6th grade. **Navigators** is a full-day camp for youth who have completed 6th grade but who have not yet entered 9th grade.

Both camps feature extensive outdoor activities like hikes, creek exploration, pond investigations, archery, fishing, arts, and much more. Guest presenters and field trips to other local nature sites may also be incorporated. The **Navigators** experience goes further to include more intensive outdoor learning and leadership-building experiences.

The *Lynn Johnson Nature Education Building* is home base for both of these camps, but most of each day is spent outdoors.



Our Camp Pledge:

"I promise to protect plants and animals, to keep the park clean, to be safe and follow the rules, to be nice to my fellow campers, and to HAVE FUN!!!"

Packing List

Campers should bring the following items to camp **each day**, in a backpack or bag of some kind. *All personal items should be labeled* with name or other identifying information. Each camper is assigned a small crate or hook cubby to store items during the week.

- Extra change of clothes, socks, and shoes, in a plastic bag labeled with camper’s name
- Reusable water bottle that can easily be carried on hikes by your child
Water is readily available at camp for refilling throughout the day. A capacity of 16–24 ounces is sufficient. A wide-mouthed bottle is recommended if adding ice is desired.
- Sunscreen and insect repellent to reapply throughout the day (See *Bites and Stings*, p. 5.)
- A healthy and substantial lunch. Refrigeration is not available, so we recommend cold packs in insulated containers. Please be mindful of food allergies and preferences.

Campers should NOT bring cell phones or other electronic devices. If it becomes necessary to communicate with your child, you can reach them through the Camp Director or by leaving a message at the Nature Center. Counselors carry radios and have constant contact with the Nature Center.

Campers should NOT bring money or other valuables. We have a gift shop on site, but if your child would like to purchase souvenirs or other items, they need to do so with you present.

Timeframes for Explorers and Navigators Camp

8:00 a.m.	Doors open for drop-off. Campers must not be dropped off prior to this time.
9:00 a.m.	Program activities begin.
9:30 a.m.	Late drop-off ends. Dropping off after this time needs special arrangement with Camp Director.
11:30 a.m.	Lunchtime. Exact time may vary by day’s activities and travel time.
3:00 p.m.	Snack time. May vary by day’s activities and travel time.
4:30 p.m.	Early pickup begins. Pickup prior to this time requires special arrangement with Camp Director.
5:00 p.m.	Program activities conclude.
5:30 p.m.	Camp closes. Late pick-up fees are assessed after this time.

Creeking

Campers should come to camp every day wearing clothes that can get dirty during outdoor activities. But one day of the week is set aside for getting *really* dirty. Haines Branch Creek runs through the southern portion of the Nature Center, and presents a unique opportunity to wade and splash in the water, play in the mud, and explore a riparian habitat with its resident plants and animals. In a word, creeking.

On the designated creeking day, campers should arrive wearing old clothes and closed-toe shoes, or have other closed-toe shoes they can change into specifically for creeking. Clothes and shoes get *very* wet, muddy, smelly, and stained. It’s especially important to bring a change of clothes and closed-toe shoes on creeking day. After creeking, campers will rinse off at the Education Building and change into the clean, dry clothes and shoes for the rest of the day’s activities.

- Closed-toe shoes must be worn in the creek to protect against such hazards as broken glass and other garbage that makes its way into public waterways. Slip-on water shoes can get sucked off in the mud, so please have your child wear closed-toe shoes that attach to feet securely. An old pair of sneakers with laces work the best.

- The water is safe to play in, but not to drink. To avoid getting the water and sediment in their eyes, nose, and mouth, counselors tell the campers to not submerge their heads in the water, especially while it is stirred up. Please encourage your child to heed this advice.

Registration

Registration for day camp programs is a **three-step process**. *Registration is not final until enrollment is submitted, payment is made, and forms are complete.*

1. **Enroll**

Search “Nature Center Camps” at the parks.lincoln.ne.gov website. Click *Online Enrollment* to go to the Parks & Recreation registration system (a *MyInterlinc* account is required). Navigate to the program for which you wish to register.

2. **Pay**

Only a \$25 deposit is required at the time of registration. *Full payment of the balance must be made by the deadline* (see *Payment Schedule* on page 9). You can return to the registration system and pay through MyInterlinc, or you can pay at the Nature Center in person or by phone.

3. **Complete Forms**

Complete a *Participant Information and Waiver* online for each child you register for camp. A new form is required each calendar year. Simply follow the links from within the registration system. A paper version of the form is available by request.

Additional forms, such as the *Medical Treatment and Documentation* form (p. 12) may also be required. All forms must be completed, signed, and submitted before camp begins. It is important that we have all participant info to ensure a safe and positive experience for your child.

Contact us if you need assistance registering for our programs, completing forms, or making payments. See page 1 of this guide for contact information.

Payment Schedule

A non-refundable deposit (\$25/child/session) is due at registration.

Balance of fees for camps taking place in June is **due May 15**.

Balance of fees for camps taking place in July and August is **due June 15**.

City of Lincoln Payment Policy

- The City of Lincoln is dedicated to providing safe and supportive programming to the children and families served in our community while keeping program fees affordable.
- Payment is due in advance according to the schedule provided, unless a special payment plan is approved. You will not receive a bill.
- Fees are charged on the basis of full-time enrollment. The fee is the same even if a child is ill, out-of-town, suspended, or absent for any other reason.
- We accept cash, checks, credit and debit cards, and money orders.
- Receipts are provided upon request.
- If we receive a returned check, future payments must be paid by cash, credit card, or money order.

- Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable.
- Families with past due balance may face possible termination of services.
- Families with past due fees may be turned over to the City Attorney's Office. You will not be able to enroll in any Parks & Recreation program until payment is received or a payment plan is approved.
- If payment has not been made and cancellation is not received at least one week prior to program start date, you will be charged in full.

Payment Options

- Pay online. Go to parks.lincoln.ne.gov and click the green *ePay* button. Login to your MyInterlinc account and make your payment.
- Call the Nature Center to pay with credit or debit card over the phone.
- Mail payment to Pioneers Park Nature Center, 3201 S. Coddington Ave., Lincoln, NE, 68522.
- Pay in person at the Nature Center by visiting the Prairie Building.

Cancellation Policy

Fees are non-refundable if you cancel a camp registration less than one week before that camp session begins. If you have not paid your balance due and you cancel a camp registration less than one week before that camp session begins, you still owe the balance.

Cancellations received more than one week before the program begins are refundable, minus a \$10 processing fee. The \$25 deposit is always non-refundable.

Child Tax Credit

Statements for claiming child tax credits are available through MyInterlinc. Call us for assistance.

Scholarships

Need-based scholarships are available for up to 40% off one program session per child per year. Contact us to request an application.

Expectations for Parents/Guardians

The Parks & Recreation Department has put in place policies, procedures, waivers, and permission requests to help ensure the health and safety of all who participate in programs and the staff who work with your child. The goal is to create a safe and fun program for your child. By supporting and following the policies and procedures, you will help create a meaningful experience for your child and all who are involved in the program. We therefore expect that you will:

- fully and truthfully complete all forms.
- read, understand, follow, and support all written policies.
- ensure all contact information is current, including emergency contacts. You must provide us with a phone number where program staff can immediately contact someone in case of illness, injury, or other issue.
- send weather-appropriate footwear and clothing with your child daily for outdoor activities. Closed-toe shoes must be worn.
- provide a healthy, balanced, and substantial lunch for your child each day.

- sign in and sign out your child each day of camp, or arrange for another trusted adult to do so on your behalf.
- drop off and pick up your child on time each day.
- promptly respond to written and verbal communication from camp staff about issues regarding registration, payment, camp programs, and your child's welfare and participation in the camp program.

We reserve the right to discontinue enrollment at any time if we find parent/guardian behavior to be detrimental or disruptive to the program or staff during camp hours. If you no longer prefer the services of our program, or do not agree with how we facilitate them, you have the right to discontinue your child's participation at any time. Any discontinuation is subject to our Payment and Cancellation policies (see pages 9 and 11, respectively).

Expectations for Participants

Our expectations for behavior are simple: **Be safe. Be respectful. Be responsible.**

We use the *Standard Discipline Policy* of the Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department, which is as follows. Please review this policy with your child.

1. When there is an infraction of rules, we issue warnings and encourage participants to continue playing when the behavior is corrected.
2. If disruptive behavior continues after one warning, the participant is given a second warning then can resume play, if the behavior is corrected.
3. If disruptive behavior continues after two warnings (or refusal to listen), the participant may be suspended for the following program day.
4. A staff member contacts parents to inform them of a suspension.

The above process will be used again if there is a second incident of continued disruptive behavior. If a second suspension is necessary, it will again be for the following program day. If a third incident occurs and suspension is necessary, it will be for one week (seven consecutive program days). A fourth incident and suspension will again be for one week. A fifth suspension is for a minimum of 30 program days. A sixth suspension will be a minimum of one year.

For more serious incidents, we may need to move through these steps more quickly than outlined above.

Physical aggression is taken very seriously and may result in automatic suspension without warning.

Lost and Found

Please check with staff if your child has misplaced a personal item. Lost items will be taken to the Lost and Found at Pioneers Park Nature Center Prairie Building. Any items left unclaimed at the end of camp will be donated to a local charity.

Lincoln Parks & Recreation is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Illness and Exclusion Policy

Lincoln Parks & Recreation is committed to keeping the spread of illness to a minimum, and we take the following steps to do so:

- Adhere to the *Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department Guidance for Preventing COVID-19 in Childcare Facilities* and the *Child Care and Staff Exclusion, Isolation, and Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19*.
- Participants and staff wash hands upon entering and regularly throughout the day.
- Bathrooms, high touch surfaces, and equipment is cleaned and/or disinfected/sanitized on a regular basis.
- Parents are notified of any communicable disease outbreak at the program.
- Strict and consistence enforcement of our criteria for excluding participants due to illness.

Please do not send your child to camp if they cannot participate in regular daily activities or if signs of possible contagious illness are present.

Participants who exhibit signs of possible contagious illness will be excluded. A parent/guardian will be asked to pick up the participant. Due to the additional care needed when a camper is ill, we request pick-up within 30 minutes of the notification call.

Participants with the following symptoms must be excluded from the program.

- Symptoms consistent with COVID-19, including: fever (above 100.4° F), new onset of dry cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new onset of loss of taste or smell' or two of the following: Chills longer than two hours, congestion and/or runny nose, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, nausea, diarrhea, or vomiting.
- Fever, temperature above 100° F and behavior change or other illness symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.).
- Vomiting two or more times in the past 24 hours.
- Diarrhea, when water stool causes "an accident" or if the frequency of water stools exceeds two stools in the past 24 hours.
- Mouth sores with drooling.
- Rash with fever or behavior change; until a physician has determined the illness is not contagious.
- Head lice or ring worm – exclusion until after the first treatment.
- Chickenpox – exclusion until all lesions have dried or crusted.
- Impetigo – blisters/sores on face, neck, and/or hands – exclusion until 24 hours after treatment has been started.
- Any child determined by the Health Department to be contributing to the transmission of illness during an outbreak.
- Any participant who requires more care than can be given by staff in a group setting or a camper who is unable to participate in regular daily activities.

Returning to the program

Following exclusion, participants will be readmitted to the program when they are able to participate in regular daily activities and have been on appropriate medication or symptom-free without medication

for at least 24 hours. There may be times when it is necessary to present a doctor's note to indicate an illness is not infectious. Staff may recommend or request that you consult with your child's physician. The final decision on whether to exclude a camper is made by the Camp Director or Nature Center Coordinator.

Staff members will follow the same exclusion criteria as participants and not come to work or will leave if these symptoms develop.

**Illness and Exclusion Policy may change based on requirements and guidance provided by the Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department.*

Medical Treatment and Documentation Form

If your child needs to take medication (either prescription or over the counter) while at camp, you must provide us with a hard copy of a completed and signed *Medical Treatment and Documentation* form. All medications are kept secured in a designated location and must be checked in with a staff member. It is against city policy for children to carry and self-administer medications while at camp.

- All medication brought on-site must be in its original container, with instructions.
- Medications that are used on an "as needed" basis (or "PRN") require a note from a medical professional describing the indicated symptom(s) and appropriate dosage.
- Inhalers and epi-pens will be carried by the staff members accompanying your child.
- The staff member dispensing medication to your child will log dosage and times on the form.
- Medications must be checked out to a parent or guardian at the conclusion of camp. Unused medications not picked up will be disposed of according to EPA guidelines.