



Mott Poll Report

May 23, 2022
Volume 41
Issue 1

Considering Camp? Don't Overlook Health and Safety

When school is out for the summer, many parents look for camps as a source of fun, enrichment and supervision for their kids. The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents about factors influencing their decisions about summer camps for their children 6-12 years of age.

Nearly half of parents are considering overnight camp (13%) and/or day (39%) camp for their child. Parents expect their child's camp participation to range from a few days (23%), a few weeks (56%), to most of the summer (21%).

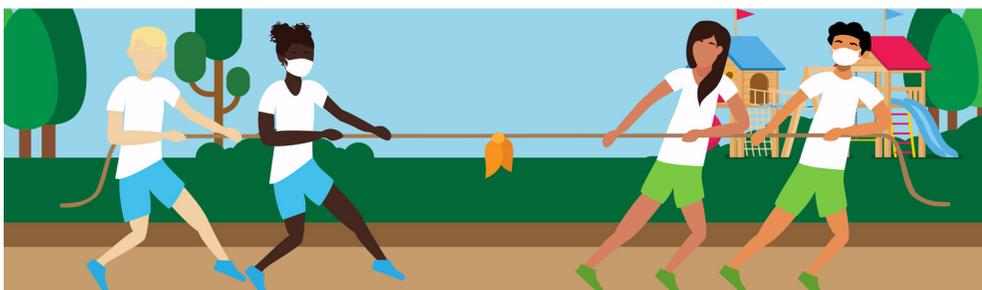
Parents considering summer camps most often rate logistics as factors that are essential to their camp decision, including location and hours (47%) and cost (46%). The content or focus of the camp is essential to many parents, including the type of activities offered (43%), limits on electronics/social media (28%), and being outdoors (15%). Some parents also rate general safety policies (43%) or accreditation (30%) as essential to their camp decision. Among parents who rate type of activities as essential, 54% want a variety of activities, 29% want their child to try new activities, and 18% want their child to get better at a specific skill or interest.

In exploring summer camp options, parents say they look for information on the ratio of staff to children (74%), whether staff have first aid training (64%), camp inspections or safety ratings (64%), and emergency preparedness plans (57%). Most parents believe that if a camp is accredited, it has been inspected in the last 1-2 years (86%) and staff have received safety training (90%).

Eight percent of parents report their child has a specific health issue that a summer camp would need to accommodate, including allergies, medication need, physical disability, or mental health concerns. Relatively few parents say policies related to COVID vaccination (13%) or masking (10%) are essential to their camp decisions. Among this group, three-quarters favor masks and vaccines to be required for campers and staff, while one-quarter prefer no vaccine or mask requirements.

Half of parents (50%) are very confident they can tell if a summer camp is safe and healthy for their child. Only one-third (31%) say they are able to find summer camps that have the features they want.

1 in 10 parents say COVID masking and vaccination requirements are essential to their decisions about summer camp for 2022



Report Highlights

Less than half of parents rate general safety policies as essential to their camp decision.

1 in 12 parents report that a summer camp would need to accommodate their child's health issue.

Only half of parents feel very confident they can tell if a summer camp is safe and healthy for their child.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in April 2022 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 3-18 years living in their household (n=2,002). Adults were selected from Ipsos's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 59% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 1,020 parents with at least one child age 6-12. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±2 to 9 percentage points.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, and the University of Michigan Susan B. Meister Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

Findings from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health do not represent the opinions of the University of Michigan. The University of Michigan reserves all rights over this material.

C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Co-Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Co-Director: Susan J. Woolford, MD, MPH
Contributing Editor: Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH
Poll Manager: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Acham Gebremariam, MS
Publication Designer: Sara L. Schultz, MPS



**SUSAN B. MEISTER
CHILD HEALTH EVALUATION
AND RESEARCH CENTER**
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

Implications

What children will do over the summer is a big decision for parents. Some parents need child supervision while they work; others want their child to have fun. Day camps offered through schools, recreation departments, community agencies or private childcare providers may present a range of options. However, it is challenging for parents to find a camp that matches their needs, their budget, and their child's interests.

Many parents may need to limit day camp options due to practical considerations, such as location, hours and cost. After those essential elements, many parents focus on the type of activities offered at the day camp. Generally, children 6-12 years should be trying many activities and developing a range of interests, rather than focusing in just one area. They can do this in at least a couple of ways. Some day camps are general in nature. Other parents may choose a variety of camps over the course of the summer with each one focusing on a different thing (e.g., soccer, theater, science).

Only half of parents in this Mott Poll were very confident they could tell if a summer camp would be safe and healthy for their child. It can be difficult to find information about camp details, and in many cases camp personnel are not available year-round to answer questions. Many parents appear to use camp accreditation as a marker for safety, assuming that inspections and staff safety training are incorporated into camp accreditation. This may not be true in all cases, particularly when staff are hired late in the year. Moreover, the requirements for accreditation vary from state to state.

In thinking about safety, parents will want to consider both the type of activities and the setting of the camp. For camps involving sports or other physical activities, parents may want to verify that staff have basic first aid training and will have supplies readily available. If activities include swimming, parents should ask whether a certified lifeguard will be present. If campers will be in a remote area such as a lake or forest, parents might ask about the camp's inclement weather policy and if safe shelter is available near the camp location.

Among parents considering camp, 8% noted a health issue for their child. Parents should talk with the camp director to ensure the camp will be able to meet their child's health needs. Parents cannot assume health-related information on their child's camp registration form will be communicated to staff who work directly with campers. At the start of camp, parents may want to meet the staff who will supervise their child, to answer any questions and make sure the staff have the parent's emergency contact information readily available. If the child has a food or other allergy, parents should ensure that emergency treatment (e.g., Epi-pen) will be available and that staff have been trained in its use.

One in 10 parents cited COVID vaccination or masking policies as essential to their decision about summer camps. For these parents, most preferred mandatory vaccination and masking; such policies may minimize disruptions to camp activities in the event of a COVID outbreak, as well as limit the risk of campers passing COVID to other family members.

Safety and health considerations should be heightened when considering overnight camp. For a child's first overnight camp experience, parents should assess the child's readiness to be away from home. Parents may have the child practice with sleepovers at a friend or relative's home. If their child still seems anxious, parents might arrange for them to talk with a previous camper or family friend who can share their experiences. Parents should check the camp rules and let their child know in advance how and when they will communicate during camp.

Many camps require a health form and/or camp physical. If possible, parents should schedule the camp physical with the child's usual health care provider. In addition to completing required forms, the provider can ensure the child is up-to-date on vaccines, and ask about the child's mental health.