



Point Bonita YMCA Outdoor Education Chaperone Manual

Thank you for taking on the incredibly important role as a chaperone for Point Bonita YMCA's Outdoor Education program! This manual is designed to help you understand your role and help your trip go as smoothly as possible. Your efforts are essential to our program's success. Before coming to our campus, it is important that you read this over thoroughly and understand the information below so that you can actively participate and help keep students safe and engaged while learning and having fun!

CHAPERONE RESPONSIBILITIES

Chaperones are with their students almost 24 hours a day. As a chaperone, you will support naturalists during their activities and supervise a separate group of students during mealtimes, afternoon Recreation Time, and in the dorms at night. The most successful chaperones are actively involved in their role. You can prevent, solve and address many of the issues that arise by being visible and present for your students. It is your responsibility to enforce YMCA policies, demonstrate a positive attitude and model inclusive behavior.

Please note: It is Point Bonita YMCA policy that parents not be placed in the same group as their child, unless it is necessary for the child's health—this helps ensure the best experience for every student. Teachers assign students to both the naturalist trail groups and dorm rooms.

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

- **Be prepared to hike:** While our program focuses on hands-on science and community building, often strenuous hiking is required to reach our educational locales. Chaperones need to be in strong enough physical condition to hike steep mountain trails at elevations up to 900ft. Most days groups will cover between 2-5 miles, with some longer challenge hike days up to 8 miles
- **Bring proper footwear** and comfortable daypack for both you and your child. Do not plan on sharing with your child. Please refer to the packing list in the Student and Family Handbook for a full list of everything you need to bring.
- Complete and turn in all required forms for both your child and yourself to your school representative in a timely manner—make sure to include all dietary requests and special needs so we can best serve your family's needs.

ORIENTATION

- Participate in the Arrival Day orientation meeting with a YMCA staff member to go over the program, schedule, and expectations.
- Your Naturalist will discuss your role in the trail learning group during your first meeting on arrival day.
- If you arrive at an alternate time you must meet with Y staff for an orientation.

BEFORE TRAIL (7:00a.m.-9:15 a.m.)

- **Breakfast:** Walk with your students to the dining hall at 7:55a.m for breakfast and supervise them in the Dining Hall, ensure their dishes are organized and bussed by the hoppers. Return with students to their dorms.

- **Prep for Trail:** Please ensure that students are on time to the morning meeting with close-toed shoes and daypacks ready to go with a full water bottle, sun protection, extra layers, rain gear, journal & pen or pencil and any emergency medications (inhalers, epi-pens).
- Meet your naturalist at the assigned location for 9:15 a.m. meeting.

MEALS (8:00a.m., 12:00p.m., 6:00p.m.)

The first dining hall meal is typically dinner. Chaperones, teachers and students need to pack their lunch on the first day. All breakfasts and dinners are served in our dining hall. Most lunches are packed in the morning and eaten in the field.

- **Sit with students during meals:** encourage a calm noise level and help keep order in the Dining Hall.
- Remind hoppers of their responsibilities.
- Help prepare sandwiches and pass out snack and lunch items on field days.

ON TRAIL (9:15 a.m.-3:45/4:15p.m.)

- Model positive behavior for students by demonstrating compassion for all students, respect for the natural world and an enthusiasm for learning.
- Help students follow safety guidelines, e.g. such as staying on the trail or within designated boundaries and at least one chaperone needs to be the caboose at the back of the trail group.
- Educational Objectives in the field:
 - Your naturalist decides on the day's destination based on the Pre-trip planning questionnaire provided by your school's teachers, fitness of students as a whole, weather and other objective hazards and logistical constraints.
 - Please work with your Naturalist to support their plan without letting your personal goals interfere with the program.
- Cell Phones may be used to take pictures while on trail and should only be used for calls or texting in the event of an emergency while with a group.
- You will return to campus each day by 3:45 on first day, 4:15 p.m. on subsequent hiking days.

AFTERNOON RECREATION TIME / FREE TIME and SNACK

Each full day of the program, students will have at least an hour of free choice time, called Recreation Time, which includes a snack. Chaperones are responsible for supervising students during this time.

- Most teachers complete a Recreation Assignment sheet that indicates each chaperone's responsibilities during recreation time. Check in with your teacher if you are uncertain of where you should be during this time.
- If you have any needs or concerns about students or the program, please check in with a Point Bonita staff person at the beginning of recreation time.
- At least one chaperone is required to supervise snack, including distributing snacks to students and putting materials away at the end of snack.

EVENING PROGRAMS/ NIGHT TIME

- Each night there will be an organized, naturalist-led activity that may include hiking, activity stations, skits, or songs. We ask that you help supervise the students during the evening program. You may be asked to lead a group station activity. And, of course, participate and have fun.
- Facilitate students getting in bed and quiet by 9:45p.m. to support everyone getting a good night's sleep.

SAFETY

Group safety is the primary responsibility of the Educators on trail. *You are a crucial source of support should an accident or emergency occur.* Our educators are all certified in First Aid and CPR with AED, carry first-aid kits and two-way radios, and are trained to respond in emergency situations.

- For situations during the night, a designated staff person in the park is available by phone.
- For emergency situations, National Park Service and Southern Marin Fire Protection District emergency personnel are on duty 24/7 and can be reached by calling 911.
- In the case of sickness, injury or extreme discipline problems on trail, chaperones may be asked to accompany students back to the YMCA campus. We ask that all school groups bring one personal vehicle to act as a transport for students or chaperones in need of medical care.
- Students who become sick or injured remain under the care and supervision of the group's leader and adult chaperones, who will call to confer with the parent/guardian.

STUDENT MEDICATIONS

It is each school's responsibility to work with chaperones to ensure that student medications are properly administered while at Point Bonita YMCA. Only emergency medications should remain in the student's possession during the program. YMCA personnel cannot provide and/or distribute medication; this includes sunscreen, over-the-counter, and prescription medications.

CHILD SAFE PRACTICES

The safety of youth is the first priority of the YMCA. YMCA staff are trained to ensure a child safe environment, and naturalists receive specialized training in Youth Development Principles and Child Abuse Prevention. As childcare providers and educators, we are **mandated reporters to Child Protective Services**. If you suspect a child is being abused you must **immediately report it to your classroom teacher and a YMCA Director**. This includes if you see any bruises or marks or hear statements that concern you.

To protect both adults and students, adults must follow these guidelines:

- Never spend one-on-one time with a student, e.g., when bringing students to the bathroom, use the rule of "Three plus me"—three students with one adult, to prevent one-on-one situations.
- No students should be in your car, except when arriving and leaving Point Bonita YMCA or if being transported back to campus for an injury, illness, or discipline issue.
- Do not shower when students are in the restrooms: Shower before the students are awake or after they are in bed (generally 10 PM-7AM).
- Do not tell inappropriate jokes or use flirtatious behavior with students.
- **Corporal punishment is never acceptable.** This includes threatening students, screaming at or speaking angrily with students, touching or shaking, or anything that makes a child feel physically or emotionally uncomfortable. Examples include: push-ups, cleaning toilets as a punishment, and name calling.

Point Bonita YMCA retains the right to excuse an adult from the program if we feel they jeopardize the safety and well-being of the students.

POINT BONITA YMCA COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Students will be reminded of our Point Bonita YMCA expectations upon arrival. Please assist us in enforcing these rules to ensure a positive experience for everyone. We are all asked to follow the YMCA Core Values: Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility. Please review the guidelines set forth in the Student & Family Handbook.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

We strive to prevent behavior problems by using proactive methods to engage students and redirect behaviors. When necessary, we use the restorative justice model to resolve conflict, which we will discuss during Arrival Day orientation. Although behavior issues are ultimately the responsibility of teachers and YMCA naturalists, you play an important part in keeping students safe—if students are having behavior issues, please inform the naturalists, teachers, or staff.

CELL PHONES and OTHER SCREENS

- Point Bonita YMCA has a “no student cell phone” policy.
- Cell Phones may be used to take pictures while on trail and should only be used for calls or texting in the event of an emergency while with a group.
- We recommend that students use disposable or inexpensive cameras.
- The YMCA is not responsible for any lost or stolen electronic devices.

GRATITUDE

On behalf of the Point Bonita YMCA staff, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude to you for sharing your valuable time and energy in support of our environmental education programs! We truly could not run our programs without you. We are here to support you during your stay—if you have any needs, questions, or concerns please check in with any of our staff so that they can be addressed promptly. Again, thank you for all you do!