



Job Description

Job Title: Trips Counselor
Reports To: Program Director, Trips Coordinator
Position Status: Seasonal

POSITION SUMMARY:

Under the supervision of the Program Director, the Trips Counselor provides direct leadership, supervision, and mentorship to campers participating in multi-day backpacking trips throughout Northern Michigan. This position plays a vital role in creating safe, challenging, and transformative outdoor experiences. The Trips Counselor supports campers physically, emotionally, and socially while teaching foundational backcountry skills and implements program-specific activities that provide remarkable **experiences**, encourage lasting **connections**, and foster meaningful **growth**.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Provides active, continuous supervision and care of campers throughout the trip, including hiking, rest periods, meals, campsite routines, evening programming, and overnight hours.
- Assists campers with packing, carrying, organizing, and caring for personal and group gear while teaching appropriate techniques for managing a backpacking load.
- Leads campers on planned hiking routes and maintains appropriate group pace, spacing, communication, and accountability throughout the trip.
- Assists with establishing and maintaining daily group routines, including equitable rotation of camp chores and leadership responsibilities.
- Teaches and reinforces foundational backcountry skills, including campsite setup and breakdown, campcraft, hiking practices, navigation, outdoor cooking, personal hygiene, gear care, environmental awareness, and responsible wilderness practices appropriate to the trip.
- Takes an active leadership role in creating meaningful opportunities for campers to build confidence, independence, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and outdoor competence.
- Reviews Camper Narratives and other relevant camper information before the group's arrival and uses appropriate information to support camper safety, inclusion, and individual needs.
- Learns and uses all campers' names prior to dinner the first night.
- Builds a supportive, inclusive group environment that respects individual abilities, backgrounds, comfort levels, interests, and needs.
- Actively intervenes when physical, emotional, or verbal aggression, bullying, harassment, exclusion, unsafe behavior, or other inappropriate conduct occurs. (ACA HR-16)
- Monitors camper health and well-being throughout the trip, including hydration, nutrition, rest, hygiene, sun exposure, insect protection, illness, injury, skin concerns, fatigue, and other changes in condition. (ACA HW-13.1)
- Adjusts hiking plans, activities, routes, schedules, or campsite operations when environmental or participant conditions create a safety concern and communicates significant changes to the Program Director.
- Follows established procedures for camper accountability, emergency communication, transportation, check-ins, and contact with Camp Timbers while in the field.
- Maintains and carries required emergency, first aid, communication, navigation, and other trip equipment and ensures equipment is accessible and functional.
- Assists with preparation and organization of food, water, group equipment, and other supplies needed for the trip.
- Supports Leave No Trace principles and models responsible wilderness stewardship, including appropriate waste disposal, campsite practices, wildlife awareness, and protection of natural resources.
- Documents and promptly reports accidents, injuries, illnesses, behavioral concerns, missing-person situations, property damage, and other unusual incidents according to Camp Timbers procedures.
- Communicates daily with the Program Director regarding group progress, camper needs, safety concerns, environmental conditions, itinerary changes, and significant incidents.

- Collaborates with fellow trip staff, camp leadership, and other program staff to provide a consistent, safe, and high-quality camper experience.
- Maintain certifications and follow all YMCA Camp Timbers safety and emergency procedures.
- Performs other functions necessary to ensure the safety, quality, and success of the Trips Program and overall camper experience.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Age 21 or older
- Previous multi-day backpacking and backcountry camping experience required.
- Demonstrated ability to safely lead or participate in multi-day wilderness or backcountry trips.
- Strong knowledge of hiking, backpacking, campsite operations, outdoor cooking, personal and group gear, and wilderness safety.
- Ability to navigate and safely travel on backcountry trails appropriate to assigned trips.
- Ability to assess environmental conditions and make sound decisions regarding route, pace, activity, and group safety.
- Current Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification strongly preferred; current First Aid and CPR certification required at minimum
- Certified in CPR, First Aid (ACA HW-1A) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)
- Lifeguarding certification required or willingness to obtain prior to camp.
- Leadership ability and teamwork oriented
- Ability to work extended periods away from the main camp environment while maintaining professional judgment, appropriate boundaries, and consistent camper supervision.
- Valid driver's license required.
- A commitment to working with staff and camper population for the fulfillment of YMCA goals.

WORK ENVIRONMENT & PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

- Trips utilize rustic backcountry campsites with limited amenities.
- Staff sleep in shared backpacking tents and carry personal and group gear daily.
- Ability to hike 5–10+ miles per day over uneven terrain while carrying a 30–50 lb backpack.
- Ability to observe camper behavior, assess its appropriateness, enforce appropriate safety regulations and emergency procedures, and apply appropriate behavior-management techniques.
- Visual and auditory ability to identify and respond to environmental and other hazards related to the activity.
- Physical ability to respond appropriately to situations requiring first aid. Must be able to assist campers in an emergency (fire, evacuation, illness, or injury) and possess strength and mental endurance required to maintain constant supervision of campers.
- Physical ability to lift up to 50lbs.
- Work is performed in a fast-paced outdoor and office environment. Ability to communicate both orally and in writing is essential for this position. Visual acuity is required for reading computer screens and/or documents and making changes as necessary/required. Job requires high levels of alertness and concentration. Walking is frequent. Repetitive stooping and bending with frequent lifting of light to heavy objects is required. The ability to sit for long periods of time is required as well as, the ability to manipulate keyboards, telephone keypads, and writing and kitchen utensils. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly exposed to wet and/or humid conditions, outside weather elements, and extreme heat.

I have reviewed and understand this job description and I am able to perform the essential functions as outlined. I understand that my job may change on a temporary or regular basis according to the needs of YMCA Camp Timbers. I acknowledge that this job description is not to be construed as an express or implied contract of employment and does not alter my status as an employee at will.

SIGNATURE

DATE