



FLYING DEER NATURE CENTER COUNSELOR HANDBOOK

Introduction

Counselors play a pivotal role in the mentoring FDNC provides to our students. Our instructors act as mentors to the counselors, who in turn help guide the students. Spanning the age distance between campers and instructors, counselors naturally grow from experienced students to new and energetic teachers. This handbook should answer any questions about the process of becoming a counselor and what an incoming counselor should expect at Flying Deer.

Qualifications

- A counselor must have attended an FDNC program (homeschool program, school program, summer camp, or rites-of-passage program).
- A counselor must be at least 12 years old to staff homeschool programs. 12-year-olds, as well as counselors who are new to FDNC, will generally start counseling in a Forest Kindergarten program.
- A counselor must be at least 13 years old to staff summer camp.
- Prospective counselors must meet the age requirements before the week or semester of camp begins.
- Please note, it may not be possible to assign a counselor to a program if there isn't enough of an age difference between the counselor and campers.

How to Apply

To be considered for becoming a counselor, complete an application through our website [here](https://www.flyingdeernaturecenter.org). You should also send an email to info@flyingdeernaturecenter.org, informing us of your interest and letting us know you've applied. If you have already been a counselor at Flying Deer **you still need to apply for the next half-year of programs** (summer and year-round).

Modeling

Remember that children watch everything we do, especially when they look up to us. Show enthusiasm and engagement in activities and games! Model positivity and eagerness to explore new things in nature, ask lots of questions and share from your own experience. Keep conversation appropriate and respectful. Even when you think students are not around, ask yourself, would I say this if students could hear me? Check in before discussing video games or any type of media, politics, religion, or philosophy. In order to maintain as tech-free an environment as possible, use cell phones only in an emergency.

Safety

If a child falls or has any minor incident, you should always report it to your instructor. By camp policy, no staff member can be alone (out of sight, or out of earshot) with a child at any time, and this policy includes counselors. All staff should stay within sight of the group as much as possible when accompanying a child.

Materials and Supplies

All materials owned by Flying Deer Nature Center should be used with care. If you're unsure how to properly use a tool or piece of equipment, check with your instructor or director. If anything breaks, your lead instructor or director should be informed. All efforts should be made to keep campsites and storage spaces clean and organized. Any materials taken out of storage should be promptly replaced once the program day is over.

Expectations

These are the basic expectations for Flying Deer counselors. All counselors are of course encouraged to go beyond the basics.

- Attend all applicable staff training.
- Arrive on time.
- Have a functional timepiece other than a cell phone.
- Dress appropriately for all kinds of weather and bring a healthy snack, lunch, and water.
- Attend staff meetings and participate in structured feedback sessions and direction at these times.
- Keep head counts within groups.
- Assist students with simple needs (e.g. keeping track of belongings, following instructors' directions).
- Assist the instructors with lessons, games, and circles.
- Counselors are encouraged to lead at least one simple game, song or activity/lesson each day of camp.
- Receive information regarding the next day, so you can know what to expect and show up fully prepared.
- Role-model the 3 Rs at work and in the world: Respect for the Earth, Others, and Self.
- Wear a Flying Deer staff shirt on the first and last day of each summer camp week (shirt to be provided by FDNC).
- Connect with the students!

Learning Opportunities

- Learn by doing, watching, and teaching. Modeling wilderness skills for others brings a new depth to your own knowledge.
- Mentors will work with you on your skills and lesson plans, and give you ideas so you can learn to research on your own as well. Flying Deer uses a structured feedback process, and allows for all to grow as teachers and people.
- Practice kindness, patience, and respect for people of all sorts.
- Gain experience through direct, apprentice-style learning. This work experience is transferable to other wilderness schools, should you choose to stay on this path.
- Sing, love, laugh, and make friends, including other teens in the counselor program. Help strengthen a community that cares about you!

Vouchers and Stipends

Stipend/Voucher Overview		
Program	Age	Amount
Homeschool	13-14	Age 13-14 returning counselors earn a \$100 program voucher at the conclusion of full year programs.
Homeschool	15+	Age 15+ returning counselors earn a \$200 stipend or \$200 voucher for Fall and Spring semesters and a \$100 stipend or \$100 voucher for Winter semesters.
Monthly Weekend Program	13+	Age 13+ returning counselors earn a \$150 stipend or \$150 program voucher at the conclusion of the program.
Vacation Camp	13+	Age 13+ returning counselors earn a \$100 stipend or \$100 program voucher per week.
Summer Camp	13-15	
Summer Camp	16-17	Age 16+ returning counselors earn a \$100 stipend a week for day camp or a \$160 stipend a week for overnight camp.

To be considered a returning counselor you must have counseled for one semester of a full-year program or the equivalent (28 days of counseling experience).

Vouchers expire after 1 year. Vouchers are non-transferable. A program's director has discretion to adjust stipends and voucher awards based on performance. Excluding certain emergencies, full attendance is required to earn stipends or vouchers.



Flying Deer Nature Center Core Values

Values

We value **EQUITY**, we honor the differences in our needs and strive to support one another

We value **COLLABORATION** for the gifts it brings to both process and product

We value **ACCOUNTABILITY** and **SELF-AWARENESS** of the effects of our actions, words, and thoughts

We value **DIVERSITY** and **INCLUSION** and strive to be **WELCOMING** for people from diverse backgrounds

We value **RELATIONSHIPS** and **CONNECTION** with people & the earth

In order to create a healthy community that lives these values

We ask all people to **UPLIFT** all others and treat them with **KINDNESS** at all times

We ask all people to **FOSTER TRUST** with peers, leaders, and students of all ages

We ask all people to **BELIEVE IN THE GOOD** in each other and seek to **SEE OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES**

We ask all people to work to **RESOLVE CONFLICTS DIRECTLY** and thoughtfully and to ask for help when needed

We ask all people to bring their **AUTHENTICITY** and share their perspectives respectfully

We ask all people to be open to **FEEDBACK** and **PERSONAL GROWTH**

We ask all people to root themselves in their **RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EARTH** and in **DEEP PEACE** in our bodies and minds

Sowing Seeds of Respect for Self, Others, and the Earth

122 Daley Road, East Chatham, NY 12060 518 392 6687 flyingdeernaturecenter.org



Flying Deer Nature Center Statement of Inclusivity

Flying Deer Nature Center (FDNC) is a nonprofit wilderness school and community dedicated to mentoring children, youth, adults, and families in deep connection to nature, self, and others.

FDNC is a community built on the strength of our diversity, the passion of our individuals, and our relationship with the whole ecosystem. We believe strongly that a mix of diverse ideas, viewpoints, experiences, and values is needed for our community to grow and thrive. We also carefully consider our impact on the land, and the natural communities that call it home. In the same way an ecosystem needs many types of plants and wildlife, an organization thrives when it includes a diversity of people and perspectives.

At Flying Deer, staff positions and programs are open to people of all histories, backgrounds, religions, genders, identities, and abilities. We celebrate the intersectionality of Flying Deer participants. As such, we strive to assist in the development of a Flying Deer experience where all participants can feel welcome, safe, respected, and free to participate as their authentic, whole selves. FDNC recognizes that diversity is multifaceted, and it is our responsibility as educators to understand, embrace, and celebrate the uniqueness of every individual and family we serve. FDNC welcomes and does not discriminate based on race, sex, gender identity, nationality, religion, or abilities.

To provide informed, authentic leadership for equity, FDNC strives to:

- See diversity, inclusion, and equity as connected to our mission and critical to ensuring the well-being of our staff, students and our larger community
- Acknowledge and dismantle any inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services
- Explore potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions that interfere with inclusiveness
- Advocate for and support board-level thinking about how systemic inequities impact FDNC's work, and how best to address that in a way that is consistent with our mission
- Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership within our board, staff and committees.

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