

Summer Staff Frequently Asked Questions

Camp is a summer experience unlike any other. In addition to the joy of working outside and creatively, it also provides real-life, hands-on opportunities to develop the skills employers are looking for now: complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, group management, emotional intelligence, negotiation, judgment and decision making, cognitive flexibility... all that, and the knowledge that you are changing the lives of the campers you are serving. What more could you ask for in a summer job or internship?

Staff Roles

West River offers both overnight and day camp programs for campers entering grades 1-12. We have five summer staff roles:

- Day Camp Staff spend all day (9am-5pm) with one group of campers, leading some activities and building relationships with them.
- In-Cabin Staff stay in the cabins with one group of campers all week (Sun-Fri), leading them in bible studies, cabin games, and assisting Program Staff with running their group's scheduled activities
- Program Staff facilitate activities such as high ropes, large group games, worship, crafts, and kayaking for all groups on site.
- Kitchen Aides help keep camp moving by serving meals, washing dishes, and supporting the work of the chef.
- Lifeguards keep the pool safe and running for camp and weekend groups throughout the summer, as well as occasionally helping with activities on the river

Contracts

All staff contracts include paid, mandatory staff training. Training requirements vary by position. Most contracts are June through mid-August but contract dates vary by position.

Scheduling/Time Off

- Program staff work Sunday through Friday including overnights. Time off most weekends from Friday around 7pm to Sunday at noon.
- Day camp staff work Monday to Friday 8am-5:30pm. (Day Camp staff who live on site help with check in on Sunday afternoons)
- Lifeguards are assigned shifts by the Aquatics Coordinator in conjunction with the Assistant Director
- Kitchen Aides sign up for which shifts during the week they will work.

Dates

Program Staff, Day Camp, and In Cabin Counselors begin training the Tuesday after Memorial Day and camp officially begins on Father's Day each year. We run 7 weeks of programming and generally end in the first few days of August. There are possibilities for most positions to work during the year as well.

Lifeguard training is Memorial Day weekend and is encouraged for all staff. There is flexibility for those wishing to come early or stay longer.

Pay Details

- For program, day camp, and in-cabin staff, pay starts at \$600/week. Benefits include room & board, training & certifications.
- Hourly staff (lifeguard, kitchen aide) start at \$15/hour.
- For all staff, bonuses and pay bumps are available for extra qualifications, specialized positions, and experienced staff.
- Staff are paid biweekly.

Housing

West River has 2 staff cabins- Baker and Kahlert houses. Each house has AC/heat, living space, and kitchen or kitchenette.

- Depending on staff numbers, staff might share a room with 1 or 2 other staff members.
- Staff members must be at least 18 years old, or a high school graduate turning 18 in the calendar year, to live on-site.
- Staff are expected to keep a tidy, livable space for all. Staff cabins do not receive housekeeping and are to be kept clean by the staff occupying them.
- Visitors are permitted on weekends only, but you should warn your roommates before a guest's arrival.
- Smoking products, drugs, and alcohol in the house are not permitted under any circumstances, even on weekends when campers are not present.

Do I have any free time?

- On-site program and day camp staff typically have on-site free time after worship ends at 8:45pm, but are expected to stay on site and help cabin counselors when necessary.
- In-cabin Counselors are to coordinate on-site breaks with their co-counselors during the day/throughout the week when appropriate.
- Year-round staff work to give at least an hour/ hour and a half activity block off for each staff each day.
- Lifeguards and kitchen aides have 15 minute breaks throughout their shifts.

If you have prior commitments during the summer, notice needs to be given to your supervisor by the end of staff training unless an unforeseeable circumstance arises such as a funeral.

Will I be fed?

Of course! Meals are provided throughout the week, and staff have access to food on weekends. The dining hall serves up a variety of meals, with healthy options provided. Special dietary needs can often be accommodated if we are notified in advance.

What is your electronics policy?

One of the best things about camp is the fact that you can unplug and enjoy nature. Campers are not permitted to bring any electronics with them (and counselors are expected to confiscate any items that are found during the week). Staff are expected to have their phones with them for emergency communications, taking pictures, and participating in the weekly staff and volunteer group message system; however, staff serve as role models and should be an example of the "unplugged lifestyle" for campers by using their phones only as needed for camp.

Is there a uniform?

On opening day, staff are expected to wear the West River polo provided to them by camp. The rest of the week, you may wear casual clothes professionally appropriate to your job.

A dress code is enforced for practicality and professionalism. Staff are to dress in a manner appropriate to the work which they are doing. Staff should wear clothes that will keep them safe and prepared for whatever activities they are doing; this means having appropriate sun protection, wearing closed-toe shoes in the kitchen or while running a ropes activity, and having a swimsuit appropriate for athletic water-related activities. The full dress code is in the staff manual.

What about laundry?

West River has a few washers and dryers around camp. Staff can use the facilities in the maintenance shop, or in the dining hall/ Retreat Center if there are no guests in those buildings.

What else should I bring to camp?

In addition to clothes you can be active and comfortable in, like t-shirts and shorts, it's good to have a pair of long pants for when you need to belay. Water shoes, athletic shoes, bathing suits, towels, toiletries, bedding (for international staff, we can provide this), sunglasses, hat, water bottle, sunscreen, bug spray, and a backpack are all very useful and/or necessary. Sweatshirts and sweatpants for lounging in the cabin's AC or

going to campfires at night may also be wanted. There is a kitchenette or kitchen in each staff cabin if you want to bring particular snacks/drinks to store there.

How do staff maintain physical and mental health at camp?

Staff need to stay physically and mentally healthy: the summer is not a sprint; it's a marathon! On top of that, it's important to model these things for our campers. Personal hygiene, balanced eating, and good sleep habits are essential parts of maintaining your health. If staff are feeling physically or mentally unwell, it's encouraged and expected that you let your supervisor know. There will be a camp nurse on site each week, and the director can also provide access to a mental health professional throughout the summer. You can't care for others if you aren't caring for yourself, and there are resources available to help staff with self care.

Can I receive packages and letters at camp?

Yes! The camp's address is 5100 Chalk Point Rd. West River, MD 20778. International staff or staff who otherwise live far frequently have their packages sent to camp.

What else do I need to know if I want to work at camp?

Every staff role also includes kind and empathetic communication/engagement with children and youth. This presents itself in a multitude of ways such as:

- Setting clear boundaries by teaching and enforcing camp rules and procedures
- Working cooperatively with fellow staff
- Being willing to look and act a little silly sometimes (like by dressing up for theme activities and singing goofy kids' songs, for example)
- Taking care of oneself in order to care for others
- Contributing to the overall mission by sometimes doing tasks that aren't explicitly listed in your job description
 - This happens most often when we are short on staff or someone is caught up with other tasks, and is necessary to keep camp running like the well-oiled machine it is. Being a team player goes a long way!

Working in any close environment for a prolonged period of strenuous work has the potential to build stress and tension. To work at camp, it is important to understand why you are there and how you can be a team player. A staff that is eager to effectively and compassionately solve problems with each other will create the positive work climate that West River strives for.

- Hold yourself and others accountable, but do so kindly. Even experienced staff make mistakes. If you are unsure if something is being done correctly, don't be afraid to ask!

West River is an inclusive and affirming community - we do not discriminate based on race, gender, sexual identity, national origin or church affiliation. While we don't require staff to identify as Christian, we expect enthusiastic and open-minded participation in all aspects of our Christian community. We serve campers, hire staff, and host volunteers who come from all different backgrounds, races, sexual orientations, political affiliations, and socio-economic status.

One last thing

Always say hello to Chef David :)