Covid & Summer Camp Guidelines

February 2021

*Please note that these protocols are subject to change as we continue to get updates on mandates and best practices.*

**Contact Information:**

Please put the numbers listed below in your cell phone. Texting is the best way to reach us during program days in case you need to communicate any changes in attendance or for urgent situations. Please call anytime outside these hours or in the event of an urgency.

**Sassafras/Vanderhoop landline 508 645 2008**

**Saskia Vanderhoop cell 774 563 0628**

**David Vanderhoop cell 508 560 2969**

**Audrey van der Krogt cell 508 560 8433**

**Location:**

Sassafras Earth Education, 5 Church Street, Aquinnah, MA 02535

**Sassafras Summer Camp**

Summer Camp will be open for 6 weeks  from July 5 – Aug 13, weeks run from M – F, 9am – 3pm, with weekly themes. As in the past, Sassafras offers Repair Funding Awards for BIPOC families as a means of repair, without making assumptions on wealth distribution. Sassafras offers Financial Aid for anyone and we believe that this is most important, given the current economic challenges for many families.

**What’s different in 2021**

* Registration will open on Feb 15th and this year we will operate at 66% of our normal capacity (or less depending on developments around the pandemic). As soon as a week fills for 50%, we will close registration for that week, and mark that week as “FULL” on the website. Then, on April 15th we will re-open registration for more spaces, provided that developments around covid, remain as they are now, or improve.
* Youth will be in small, consistent groups or pods of approximately 6 participants (or a maximum of 6 different families or contact pods per group). Each group will have consistent staff mentors for the week. Groups will be spread out on the land, with their own hand washing stations.
* Sassafras will not be offering water weeks, as this is posing too many challenges with transportation. Sassafras will not offer any shuttle transportation whatsoever this year. We are planning to walk to the beach once a week, and abide by local BOH beach visitor policies. As always, we will have at least one experienced lifeguard present at all times.

**Registration**

* Everyone participating and present on the land needs to be scheduled in advance and arrive and leave at the agreed upon time. All participating need to register by submitting a registration form and completing financial obligations in advance. Registration and payments in full need to be completed online before the end of April, unless other arrangements have been made.
* All need to be familiar with our Covid Guidelines and sign and date our Covid liability waiver.

**Come Prepared to Program**

* Clothing: Everyone participating and present on the land needs to be dressed for a full day outside in the weather. In summer that means protective clothing against ticks, briars, sun and rain. We highly recommend participants wear long pants (no shorts or capris), sturdy shoes (no flip flops) and socks, and that they tuck pants in socks, and shirt in pants to prevent tick bites. In the event of (forecasted) rain, participants need to have rain gear.
* Backpacks: All coming to the program need to have a backpack/daypack with lunch, snack, and sufficient water for the day (no shopping bags). Do not bring candy, electronics, games, toys, cards, or watches please. Youth is welcome to bring the following: fieldguides, bandana, nature’s crafts, and a knife.
* Knives need to be approved non-folding knives that will be carried inside backpacks and never clipped onto a belt.
* Masks: Everyone needs to bring a mask in their backpacks (more on masks below).

**Drop off & Pick up:**

* Parking is either in the parking lot (marked), or on the shoulder of church street. Parents, grandparents and caregivers are asked to either stay in their cars, or step out in the parking lot, and to not come onto the land past the parking lot.
* Drop-off: Clear, swift and timely drop off and pick up strategies are essential especially now. Youth will walk over to the picnic table and check in with one of our staff (the one with clipboard). Youth will continue to walk to the playing field - or their respective group location - right away with all their gear.
* Forgotten gear: In the event parents need to drop off additional gear, please leave this on the picnic table in the parking lot and text us that they did.
* Opening & Closing Circle: Youth and staff will sit in circle on spaced out pillows to physically distance. Circles will take place either in the playing field, or in assigned group locations.
* Drivers: Please assure that your family has consistent drivers or co-drivers. Email or text Saskia any additional people that are allowed to drop off or pick up your youth.

**During Program**

* All participating in programs will be encouraged to physically distance and to avoid “close contact”. Youth will be directed not to touch each other, hug, exchange food or snacks, share equipment or other items.
* Participants and staff will wash hands or use hand sanitizer frequently during the program day, ex. before eating, after using the bathroom, and anytime deemed necessary by our staff.
* Equipment will be disinfected after use, or after the end of the program day.

**Masks**

* Masks are not required outside when we are able to physically distance, however everyone is required to bring a mask inside their backpack.
* Masks are worn by all inside the tipi, or in close quarters due to a weather or other emergency, ex. sitting under a tarp, helping a distressed camper, or while providing first aid.
* Anyone choosing to wear a mask will be supported by our staff.

**Covid Symptoms or Illness**

* Do not come to camp if you or your family members experience symptoms, and inform us immediately if you suspect covid. Please contact our staff to let them know that your child is staying home.
* If anyone attending camp is diagnosed with covid during, or within 2 weeks of camp, Sassafras will follow the Covid Protocols of the MV Schools, including contact tracing of close contacts.
* If someone develops covid related symptoms during the camp day, a lead instructor will take charge of them, making sure they are comfortable yet separated and observed from a safe distance (10') until the parent or guardian can pick them up. We will ask a child to wear a mask if they are coughing or sneezing.

**Travel & Quarantine**

* When arriving on island after travel, we ask everyone participating in programs to quarantine for the required amount of time of 14 days, prior to rejoining programs, or provide negative test results.

**Cancellations and Refunds**

The following covid specific policies are in force during this time:

* In the event a program week or day is canceled due to any covid related reason by Sassafras or any governing body ***before*** summer camp begins, registrants may receive a full program credit or a refund to their credit card minus paypal processing fees.
* If a program is canceled ***after*** camp has already begun, Sassafras is committed to compensating our staff in full for their commitment, and we will not be able to offer a program credit or refund for the remainder of the program.

**Explanation, Research & Approach**

* Leaning on the data of the last months, it can be stated with certainty that children under the age of 18 are at very low risk of contracting, or being harmed by covid. There is also very little real data to support the notion of children being asymptomatic spreaders of the virus.
* Physical distancing is something we try to achieve, in actual reality it does not always work with children, especially young ones. We therefore do our best, but will not turn into ‘social distancing police’ since that does not align with our connection modeling approach.
* We maintain that a constant physical reminder of an invisible threat that could harm you or cause you to harm someone else, has the potential to be psychologically damaging. Being in constant fear is a recipe for disease in and of itself.
* Prolonged mask use can lead to significant negative health consequences and psychological impacts. We believe that this is especially true for children who are more sensitive and are still in development.
* We believe that continuing to run Sassafras programs during this time is essential. Children are experiencing so many negative effects from being in lock-down, not being able to socialize in sport, clubs or schools. Lock downs have many serious health and social consequences, especially for children and we may not clearly see the effects until a later date.
* The current Massachusetts Covid 19 order #55 requiring face coverings in public places states several exceptions, including exemption for medical reasons. The only requirement for qualifying for this exemption is to claim it, and it is unlawful for any business to require people to produce documentation to verify their reasons.
* For these reasons Sassafras makes an ethical decision to not require masks in programs, and to apply physical distancing, while letting children be children.
* We maintain that it is of utmost importance for children to have space in nature to fully connect sensory and socio-emotionally, and to build up their natural immunity by being outside. At the same time, we respect that there are families with higher risk factors, that do require masks, and our staff will accommodate and support that.

Please contact Saskia, David and Audrey with questions. Thank you for your patience and understanding and we look forward to seeing your youth at Sassafras!

The Sassafras Team