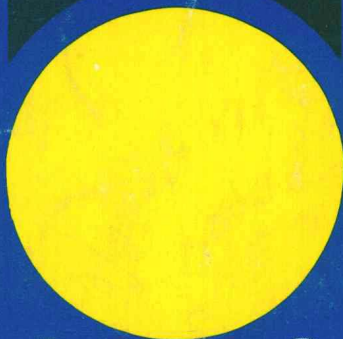
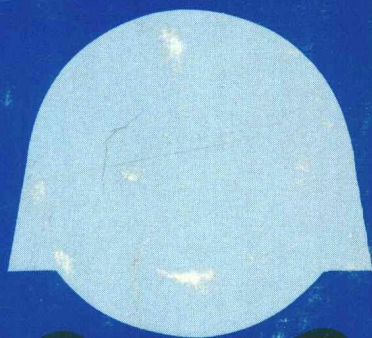
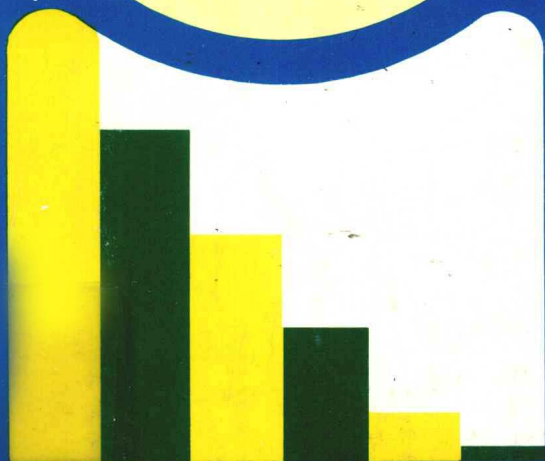


# Basic Camp

# Management

Revised 3rd Edition

Armand & Beverly Ball



An Introduction to Camp Administration

# Basic Camp Management

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An Introduction to Camp Administration

American Camping Association

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Dedicated to

Kathy and Robin,  
who found a love of people  
and of the world outdoors  
while growing up at camp.

The Staff of YMCA Camp Widjiwagan,  
St. Paul, Minnesota,  
1963-1974,  
who will always  
be a part of our lives.

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# Introduction

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The idea of the first edition of *Basic Camp Management* was to provide a manual for the very new camp director and to keep the volume short and simple. Two factors have influenced us in this third edition to expand the topics and material covered. One has been the growing complexity of the management of camps and conference centers. The second has been the continued use of the book as a text in college courses, where additional information needs to be provided. Hence, this volume is not quite as short and simple as we would like it to be.

In writing the book, we have used terms and forms that may not be as clear to the readers as to the authors. Here are some brief explanations.

The term, **camp**, has been used throughout as the comprehensive term describing all types of operations and can also be interpreted as a camp, conference center, or environmental education program. It may be a program utilizing a rented site, a site which rents facilities, or a site which encompasses its own program.

The term, **director**, is used to refer to the administrator of the camp, conference center, or program who is present on the site the majority of the time. (Although there are some organizations which operate multiple camps and may have an administrator in the central office who supervises several directors, this is not the most common pattern.)

The term, **operator or owner**, is used to designate the entity (whether an individual, a partnership, or an organization) which owns the operation. In some cases, the ownership involves the property and site, as well as the program operated on the site. In other cases, it involves only the program operated on a rented site.

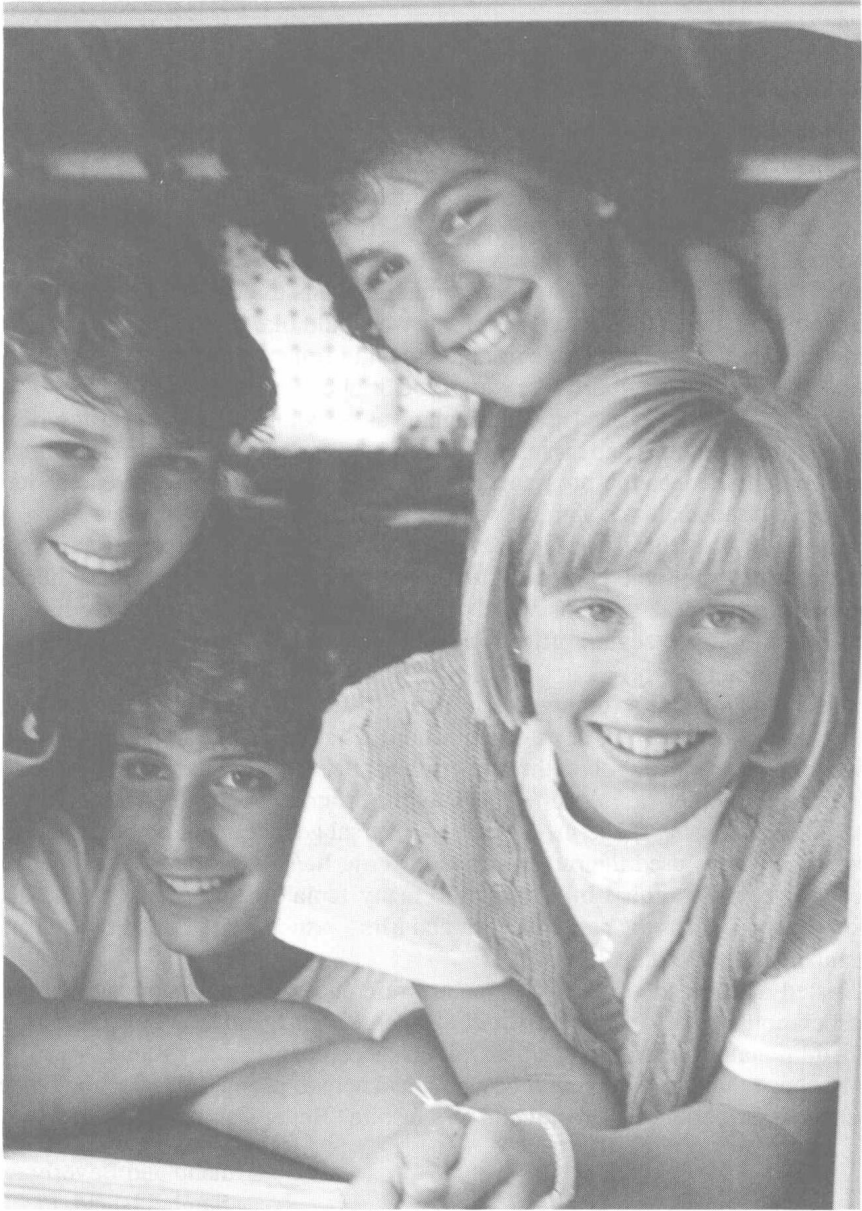
Rather than using the term, **he**, as the universal gender denoting both male and female, we have used the rather awkward form, **he/she** (in the tradition of John Ledlie), to assure equal billing for the many female camp directors and staff members, as well as the numerous Mr. and Mrs. partnerships of directors and staff members in the field.

Listed at the end of each chapter are references to the American Camping Association's *Standards for Day and Resident Camps*, and the "Self Assessment of Additional Professional Practices" which accompanies that volume.

We hope that this edition will be a practical help to persons entering the field as well as the experienced director and will inspire "Better Camping For All."

Armand and Beverly Ball  
Sanibel Island, Florida  
May, 1990

CAMP EMERSON, MASS.



*"... that a camp provides a group living experience with trained leaders who utilize that group and community experience and the outdoor surroundings to accomplish mental, physical, social, and spiritual goals . . ."*

# The Tradition of Camping 1

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*"Camping is young and we must keep the experimental spirit of youth. We must grow and learn to grow . . . Let us be imaginative . . . Camping needs the imaginative, the picturesque, the romantic; needs it for its own attractiveness and for the sake of young America, for whom the imaginative will be the only enduring type of play . . . The . . . camp, if it is worthy, is one of the greatest socializing, humanizing, civilizing factors which can enter the life of a boy or girl."*

Bernard S. Mason<sup>1</sup>

Organized camping began in the United States of America; and, as Reynold Carlson has often said, it is one of the two unique contributions the United States of America has made to the rest of the world (the other being the concept of a national park system). To gain a better understanding of the growth of the organized camping movement during its first one hundred years, one should read Eleanor Eells' *History of Organized Camping: The First 100 Years*. But, it may be helpful to offer a brief summary of that history here as a background to the person who may be new to the field.

## Historical Overview

### The Beginnings

The first recorded organized camping experience occurred in 1861, when Frederick William Gunn, the headmaster of the Gunnery School for Boys, Washington, Connecticut, led a group of students on a forty mile trek to Milford on the Long Island Sound. After the two-day hike there, the boys camped out for ten days and then hiked back to the school. This experience was stimulated by the interest of youth at that time in the Civil War, and the encampments and campfires common to the soldiers of that day. A plaque commemorates that camp at Welch's Point near Milford. Mr. Gunn continued to offer such camping experiences until 1879.

In 1876, the first private independent camp was organized by a practicing physician in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, Dr. Joseph Rothrock. The camp was

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1. Mason, Bernard S. *Camping and Education*. New York, N.Y.: McCall Company, 1930. pp. 246-48.



designed to improve the health of children and there was emphasis on physical fitness and health; the camp was short lived. In 1880, Camp Chocorua for boys, twelve to sixteen, was organized on Asquam Lake, New Hampshire by Ernest Balch. This camp continued for eight years and centered around sports activities and the actual daily living chores of cooking, cleaning, and dish washing. A decided spiritual emphasis was given to the camp. In both of these camps, fees were charged to cover the costs. These fees were however not very realistic because both camps closed with deficits.

The first organizational camp was founded in 1885 by Sumner F. Dudley as a YMCA camp near Newburg, New York. The camp, which bears his name, later moved to Lake Champlain near Westport, New York, and is the oldest continuously operating camp in the United States. The oldest camp continuously operating on the same site is Keewaydin Camps, operated by the Keewaydin Foundation, and founded as a private camp in 1894.

All of these camps were camps for boys; and, it was not until 1892 that a private camp, called Camp Arey, reserved a summer session for girls. By 1902 three camps exclusively for girls began (Kehonka in New Hampshire, Wyonegonic Camps and Pinelands Camps in Maine). This delay in camping for girls was due to some degree to the Victorian attitudes toward the place of young women in terms of dress, decorum, movement, careers, and education.

During this same period, organizational camping was moving rapidly with the development of Fresh Air Camps, designed to serve inner city youth, and camps sprang up in Connecticut (1886), Wisconsin (1887), New York City (1892) and Life Camps (1887). The YWCA had opened a vacation camp (Asbury Park, NJ) in 1874. The settlement houses sprang up during this period and established camps related to their urban centers (1898-1908, Boston, Pittsburgh, New York City, Chicago). A camp for handicapped children began in Chicago in 1899-1900. National youth organizations came into being in the early 1900's with their own camping programs: Camp Fire (1911), Girl Scouts (1912), and Boy Scouts (1910).

The camping throughout this period of history primarily focused on getting young people out of the city into a healthy, rural environment and provided recreational activities. However, much of the experience was related to the activities necessary to daily living (cooking, cleaning). The emphasis in boys' camps tended to place value on rugged outdoor living. The emphasis in girls' camps also included hiking and aquatics, with a great strength in the creative arts. There was a strong spiritual emphasis, often with Bible study, in most of the camps of this era. Moral or character development was a key element. Camps were often small during this period, quite rustic, and with much emphasis placed on small group living.

The emergence of national youth organizations and local social service organizations and the continued growth and success of the private independent camps stimulated growth of camps in a number of areas. Camps began to spread westward, with camps springing up in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Illinois, Missouri and California. Local governments started camps in Los Angeles in 1914, Detroit in 1915, and Kansas City in 1920.

With the expansion of camps from around 1910 onward, a more open emphasis on the educational values of the camp experience is seen. Activities such as arts and crafts, music, and dancing were added to the curriculum. The progressive education movement began to make its philosophy felt during this period. The training of camp staff began to be accepted as a necessary part of camp planning. By the twenties, many camps were much more structured with greater emphasis on competition, awards, and scheduled activity. Teaching good character, spiritual attainment, and a good personality was stressed. Natural sciences became part of the instructional activities in many camps.

### **Professional Associations**

During this period, camp directors began to meet together to discuss common problems and to learn from each other. A professional association for directors of boys' camps was begun in 1912 (Camp Directors Association of America) and by 1916 an association of directors of girls' camps emerged (National Association of Girls' Private Camps). These merged in 1924 into the Camp Directors Association, and published a new journal, *Camping*, in 1926. Concerns around health and safety were emerging and camping began to be taken more seriously as a profession such as teaching or social work. Conventions or training conferences began for camp directors during this period. It was also during this period that the concept of organized camping began to spread to other countries in Europe, Asia, and South America.

The emphasis on structured or regimented education began to lessen in the thirties as the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, coming at the beginning of the Great Depression, focused camping's attention on youth and health. "One of the significant findings of that conference was the demand for an inclusive national organization to . . . articulate the needs and interests of the growing camping movement in the United States."<sup>2</sup> The next several years led to the reorganization of the Camp Director's Association (CDA) into the American Camping Association (ACA) with a representative structure involving locally operated sections based upon geographical boundaries. This organization began to evolve a set of health and safety standards. These health and safety standards eventually became the set of accreditation standards accepted throughout the United States. The American Camping Association remains today as the only professional organization for directors of all types of camps, and the nationally recognized accrediting body for all types of camps.

### **Camps Increase**

Following World War II, there was a rapid expansion of camping paralleling the increased population of youth in the country. There was wide acceptance of camping as the appropriate summer experience for youth. The numbers of camps and campers expanded rapidly. As Nelson Wieters, then of George Williams

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2. Eells, Eleanor, *History of Organized Camping: The First 100 Years*, Martinsville, Ind.: American Camping Association, 1986, p. 111.

College, pointed out, many camps began because of that broad acceptance and a ready marketplace, with generally global objectives while other camps began for very specific purposes, either philosophical or instructional in nature.<sup>3</sup> The latter objective led to the specialty camp boom in the sixties. More and more questions were raised by parents and educators about the specific impact of the camping experience — in terms of character development, improvement of physical skills or spiritual growth.

School camping or outdoor education began to come into its own in the early forties, large programs were begun in Michigan under the auspices of the Kellogg Foundation, and in Tyler, Texas, and in San Diego. Though early efforts began in the early thirties, it was not until the fifties that rapid growth came about. Colleges and universities began teacher education programs in this field. The Outdoor Education Council of the American Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAPHERD) began during this period and gave leadership to much of the professional development in this field.

Camping for very specific spiritual objectives grew beyond camps sponsored by church bodies to interdenominational and non-denominational camps and conference settings, many privately operated. Out of this growing segment of camping, emerged Christian Camping International (CCI) in 1963, which initially required the signing of a statement of personal Christian faith for membership. The organization has expanded to include a variety of camping professionals and has its national offices in Wheaton, Illinois.

In the past twenty years, there has been a growth of experientially based outdoor education, primarily of an adventure and stress activity nature. The program accelerated greatly with the establishment of Outward Bound, an adventure program which began in England and spread to the United States and other countries. Variations of the outward bound methods have spread to use in many settings including work with youth-at-risk, adjudicated youth, and even business executives. In 1972, the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) began as a professional organization to bring together persons interested in this discipline.

Meanwhile, camping has spread around the world. It has been adopted by many governments as a device to serve youth. The Soviet Union boasts the largest number of camps of any one country and provides camping experiences for upwards of 45% of its youth on a partially subsidized basis. Soviet camps are sponsored by a variety of trade unions as well as the government's Young Pioneers, and are primarily recreational in nature. France provides a nationally subsidized program of camping for its youth. There are camping associations in at least eight countries; and, under the auspices of the Canadian Camping Association and the American Camping Association, three international events have been held. In 1987, an International Camping Fellowship was organized to provide information sharing among individuals interested in international education and exchange.

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3. Ibid, pp. 122-123

## Types of Camps

Camps are almost as varied as people; but, basically, there are two types of camps: day and resident. The day camp operates only during a portion of the day, typically morning and afternoon, usually for five successive days of the week, Monday through Friday. However, there are day camps which operate only three days a week, others which operate in the evening hours, and many which include at least one overnight residential experience as part of their camp period. Resident camps are those which bring participants to a setting in which housing is provided for a period of days. The typical resident camp provides meals, lodging, and recreational facilities, with some resident staff. However, the resident camp experience may also take the form of travel or trip camping, in which the housing may be tents, shelters, or hotels and motels and the campers move every day. The camp period may extend from three to sixty days.

Camps may be operated with paid or volunteer staff, or a combination thereof. Camps may operate twelve months a year, involving not only a more typical summer camp experience, but school camping, conference groups, retreat groups, and adult education groups. Camps may be a program operated only by a given group for one or two weeks a year. Camps may serve youth, adults, senior adults, or families.

Camps are generally recognized as for-profit or not-for-profit. The for-profit camp, more often called a private independent camp, may be operated by an individual, partners, or a corporation to return a profit to the owner, including some return on the capital investment made in property and facilities. The private independent camp has most often offered longer sessions (three to eight weeks) than the not-for-profit camp, though many have changed to shorter sessions in recent years.

The not-for-profit camp may be operated by an organization such as the YMCA, Girl Scouts, a settlement house, a health-related association, a religious entity, or government body, such as park and recreation department or 4-H, or by a private tax exempt corporation. In all of these cases, the camp has a tax exemption under article 501 (c) (3) of the federal tax code or is operated by a governmental body. In the last two decades, a number of private independent camps have organized a not-for-profit corporation, secured 501 (c) (3) status from the federal government, and turned the property and operation over to the corporation in order to preserve the camp for the future. Not-for-profit camps have tended to have shorter sessions (one or two weeks) than have private independent camps, though there are such camps which offer four or eight week sessions. Some directors of non-profit camps eventually find the resources to start their own private independent camp.

The goals of many not-for-profit camps and private independent camps are parallel. The facilities in some not-for-profit camps may, in fact, be more expensive than in some private camps, because they have the advantage of securing tax deductible contributions for that purpose. The private independent camp generally charges higher fees for many reasons including the need to recover income from the capital investment made by private parties as well as being subject to many

taxes not-for-profit camps do not have to pay. Therefore, the clientele tends to come from a socioeconomic level that can pay such fees. However, many such camps provide camperships for those who cannot pay; and, on the other hand, many not-for-profit camps charge significant fees and serve a similar clientele.

There is really little difference between not-for-profit and private independent camps. As indicated above, there are a few generalizations that can be made about one type of camp or the other — in terms of wages, clientele, program, goals and objectives, and facilities. In both cases, it is essential that the camp director earn a decent living. The director in the non-profit camp and in some private independent camps receives a set salary. In some private independent camps, the director receives a portion of the profit (if any) as salary.

One of the growing complexities of the camp world is the continued growth of camps serving a variety of uses and audiences. Many camps operate twelve months a year, a portion of which is the more traditional camp experience and the other portion in the role of conference center. On the other hand, there are camps which operate no conferences, and conference centers which operate no camps. Most of the principles in the management of a camp and a conference center are the same. This text identifies some of the differences wherever possible.

## What is Camping?

The early camps were primarily directed toward getting youth out of the city into a healthy and moral environment, and little energy went into defining a camp. By 1929, a special committee of the New York Section of the Camp Directors Association, reported the essential functions of the camp as being:

“education for:  
Physical health,  
Emotional integration,  
An understanding of primitive processes,  
Enlightened social participation,  
The acquisition of tastes and appreciations, and  
Spiritual growth.”<sup>4</sup>

The “primitive processes” referred to outdoor experiences.

By the late forties, Hedley S. Dimock identified that the “characteristic elements, blended together in the right proportion, of an organized camp included: (1) persons, (2) outdoor life, (3) living in groups, (4) a camp community, and (5) leadership and conditions designed to satisfy personal needs and interests, and to stimulate wholesome personal, social and spiritual development.”<sup>5</sup>

He goes on to underline the importance of experiences that are “indigenous to group living in the out-of-door setting.”

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4. Lehman, Eugene H., Ed. *Camps and Camping*. New York, N.Y.: American Sports Publishing Co. 1929. p. 18.

5. Dimock, Hedley S., Ed. *Administration of the Modern Camp*. New York, N.Y.: Association Press. 1948. p. 22.

The American Camping Association offers as its definition:

“... A sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth.”<sup>6</sup>

With all of the words which have flowed from experts, it is still difficult to draw narrow lines around what a camp is and what a camp is not. There is substantial support for the basis that a camp provides a group living experience, with trained leaders who facilitate that group and community experience and utilize the outdoor surroundings to accomplish the mental, physical, social and spiritual goals of the sponsoring body or owner.

As Bernard Mason suggests in the opening head of this chapter, camps must be imaginative to be able to interest individuals in this type experience. Camps as an organizational force have not always been the best source of interpreting the value and meaning of the camp to the general public, but have more often relied upon the voice of those who have experienced it to propagate the camp.

The commonalities among all types of camps, resident or day, private independent or not-for-profit, are far greater than the differences. This is easily discovered where the directors of camps take the opportunity to sit down together and get to know each other, and get beyond labels, terminology, and preconceptions. Regardless of the type of camp and program, the similarities bind camps together because they all work for an ultimate educational experience for each camper.

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6. American Camping Association. *Standards for Day and Resident Camps: the Accreditation Programs of the American Camping Association*. Martinsville, Ind.: American Camping Association. 1984. p. 9.

CAMP OWEGO, PA.



# What Is the Camp Director's Job?

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*"The philosophy under which a camp functions, the morale of staff and counselors, the contributions the camp makes to the lives of youngsters, the adequacy of physical equipment— All are a reflection of the insight, character, and competency of the camp director . . . His/Her executive ability, together with . . . sense and appreciation of justice, needs to be at a high level . . . He/She needs insight, a world of patience, physical stamina, and ability to command the respect as well as the friendship of those associated with him/her in the camping enterprise."*

John A. Ledlie<sup>1</sup>

If one were to line up ten experienced camp directors and ask them what the job of a camp director is, one would probably get ten different answers. To survive, a camp director must possess a smattering of many skills and must combine many roles: cook, bookkeeper, plumber, minister, teacher, nurse, electrician, mechanic, salesperson, lawyer, politician, corporate executive, naturalist, and eternal optimist. Every camp director will discover new dimensions to the job each summer.

## Job Description

A new camp director's first task, if a thorough job description is not supplied, should be to develop one in consultation with various people at the particular camp. Each camp owner will have different expectations. For example, in one camp, the bookkeeping may be handled entirely by a centralized organization office while, in another, the bookkeeping may be part of the director's job. A summer day camp director's duties and concerns will differ from those of a year-round residential camp director. Therefore it is difficult to outline a model job description for a camp director.

However, there are aspects of the job in any camp which are somewhat uniform and require specific duties depending upon the administrative situation. A camp director's job is to:

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1. Ledlie, John A. *Managing the YMCA Camp*. New York, N.Y.: Association Press, 1961. pp. 80-81.



1. Develop and implement the purpose, goals and objectives of the camp
2. Determine the constituencies to be served by the camp
3. Design a program based upon the goals and objectives, and various constituencies to be served
4. Develop and implement a risk management system to protect the participants, the camp, and the staff
5. Develop and implement a marketing plan for the camp and recruit participants
6. Design and implement a staff organization based upon the program and constituencies, developing job descriptions and personnel policies
7. Design and implement a plan for the development and maintenance of the camp site and facilities
8. Develop and implement a health care plan which provides for the health and safety of the campers and staff
9. Develop and implement a nutritious and sanitary food service program
10. Develop and implement a safe transportation system to meet the needs of program, maintenance, and safety
11. Design a financial development program which not only includes fundraising, but also a sound budget plan which is monitored regularly
12. Recruit and train staff
13. Develop and implement a system of evaluation of program and staff
14. Develop a system of supervision of all elements of the camp operation, with particular attention to the program and the participants
15. Maintain relationships with the local community near the camp and the broader community served by the camp
16. Maintain the director's own professional growth through study, peer relationships, and conferences.

### **For Non-profit Camps Only**

17. Serve as staff to the managing board or committee, working to ensure the strongest, most effective board/committee possible, and carefully help that group define the philosophy and policies governing the operation.

Once a job description is created, it is vital for a new director to have a clear understanding with his/her supervisor as to the priorities of the job. All things are not possible immediately, so the supervisor's expectations need to be clarified. The plan of work for the upcoming months should reflect both the priorities of the supervisor or the camp owner and those of the camp director.

### **Overall Approach to the Job**

Beyond asking what the job is, it may be more important for the new director to determine what kind of director he/she wishes to be. The attitude with which a director begins work may well affect his/her ultimate job performance. What kind of camp director do you wish to be? Only careful thought can prevent the new director from being cast in stereotypic roles like the following ones.