



[Header Image Description: This is a logo for the Youth Project, which is black hand-drawn text in all capital letters that says “Youth Project” with an exclamation point at the end. On each side of the word “Youth” there are three drawn expression lines, shooting outward like lights from a star. End of description.]

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Access Guide to Camp Seahorse (2022)

This guide has been developed for the Youth Project’s summer camp, Camp Seahorse, occurring on July 9th. Its goal is to provide an overview of the space our camp will be held at (Mahone Bay Center), to allow youth and their guardians to decide if the space will be the right fit for their youth.

How to Get There

The Mahone Bay Center is located in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. Campers will need to arrange their own transportation to camp, or contact us for assistance in arranging a carpool. Youth are

also permitted to drive themselves to camp, but will be required to leave their keys with a staff member for the duration of camp.

COVID-19 Expectations

The Youth Project is committed to providing the most accessible space for all campers, that means that we will be upholding a mask mandate at all of our camps.

Campers and volunteers/ staff will be asked to wear masks unless they are eating and drinking and in these contexts folks will be socially distanced and/or outdoors. If you came with a close friend and/or bubble buddy - you are welcome to unmask together and not socially distance during meal times and break times as long as other campers' space and boundaries around covid-19 are respected.

We will ensure that there are specific cool-down/low sensory spaces where campers can take off their masks and have a needed mask break. This is important for many reasons including but not limited to restrictive gender affirming gear, heat exhaustion, etc. We encourage campers to check in with themselves and ensure that they are taking the breaks that they need.

Campers are asked to take a covid-19 test and swab their throat and nose 3 days before the first day of camp, if campers have a negative test but covid related symptoms, they are asked to please stay home for all other camper safety.

Before leaving to camp with Youth Project team members and/or before official registration, all campers and staff are required to

self-administer and/or have a supportive adult and/or bubble friend administer a covid-19 test. Before any youth is fully registered and before supportive adults/parents/friends drop off the youth fully, the test must come back negative.

The Youth Project will provide tests and extra masks at all camp spaces. There will also be hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies throughout camp to ensure that folks are staying as safe as possible.

If during camp a youth and/or facilitator begins to feel any covid-19 symptoms, they will be asked to isolate and their guardian/family member/friend will be called for immediate pick up.

If you have any questions and/or concerns about our covid-19 policy, please contact our Executive Director:
carmel@youthproject.ns.ca

Access to Physical Camp Spaces

Building Access

The Mahone Bay Center, Abriel Room, can be accessed via wheelchair ramp from the outdoor entrance, or otherwise by some staircases internally through the center. The gymnasium has its own ground-level entrance from the outdoors. None of the doors in the buildings are automatic, and are often kept closed to keep bugs from entering. The doors are relatively

lightweight, and some staff will be available to help with opening and closing.

Bathroom Access

The room we have booked (Abriel Room) comes equipped with a single wheelchair accessible bathroom near its entrance. This room is wide enough to accommodate a full turn of most wheelchairs and is equipped with grab bars.

Outdoor Spaces and Terrain

The ground on the main outdoor space is unpaved. This ground is a mix of gravel and short grass, and has some resistance for mobility aids with wheels. There are some areas of uneven ground that might be difficult to navigate for campers with balance-related access needs.

The majority of the area where we will have activities is flat and either gravel, or grassy on the soccer field. If there are youth who would like to participate in outdoor time but need support navigating the terrain, there are staff available to support - for example, pushing manual wheelchairs, or offering balance support.

Seating Access

Campers will have access to places to sit in all sections of the camp, and are welcome to sit or lay down whenever they want or need. The majority of the seating in the Abriel Room will be armless plastic chairs. In all sitting areas, there are spaces where seated mobility aids can be parked. Youth are also encouraged to take time to stretch, and lay down when needed

Places without seating are the gymnasium and field outdoor area, however chairs can be moved there if needed. If campers would like to sit on the ground outdoors, they're encouraged to do so in areas without grass, because of the risk of ticks.

Suggestions for Mobility Accommodations

It can be difficult to ask for support in having our needs met, so below is a non-exhaustive list of things that might be helpful to campers during their time with us. If any of these things would be helpful, we will give youth lots of opportunities to let us know!

- Would you like support opening and closing doors?
- Would you like support getting to and from the building to the field?
- Would you like support getting up and down wheelchair ramps?
- Would you like to let staff know any other mobility-related supports we can offer during your time at camp?

Food and Sensory Access

Food and Eating

Your dietary restrictions, allergies, sensory needs, and preferences are all very important, and we want you to share them with us! Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee a gluten-free kitchen space that is free from cross-contamination so we cannot accommodate serious gluten allergies that can be triggered through cross-contamination, we will have g/f options available though!

Some things that are helpful for us to know are if you have any food allergies or intolerances, what foods you dislike and what foods you absolutely love, if you have sensory needs that make certain foods harder to eat, or if there are any food groups you don't eat for any other reasons (like if you're vegan or vegetarian).

We can also ensure that campers have tools that make eating more accessible. Some examples of things we invite you to share: if certain utensils are harder for you to use, if you'd benefit from access to straws, if you prefer cups with handles (like mugs), if you would like support carrying your dishes to and from the kitchen, if chewing or other food-related sounds are difficult for you, or any other eating-related access needs that you'd like to share with us.

Scents and Chemicals

We ask that campers try to bring scent-free products, or low-scent products whenever possible. Some products to think about include detergents, hair products, soap, perfume, and lotions; using these products can make camp less accessible for campers with scent and chemical sensitivities and other sensory access needs. More heavily scented products like perfume can attract insects, so it's especially important to leave those at home.

We cannot, however, guarantee a scent-free experience at camp. We encourage campers to let us know if they have scent and chemical access needs. We will be providing low-scent sunscreen and hand sanitizer to campers however bug-spray used is often quite strong. If you have a severe allergy to bug spray and/or know of less irritating and effective alternatives, please let us know!

Weather and Heat

The week when Camp Seahorse takes place is often one of the hottest of the year.

It's important to stay hydrated during hot weather, and there will be water available at all times; we will also have electrolyte liquids when needed. In the kitchen there will also be damp cloths and handkerchiefs kept in the fridge that youth can use to cool down, and can be accessed by asking a staff member.

Lighting

During camp, youth will have lots of time in the sun! The main outdoor space gets lots of direct sunlight, and we will be doing a lot of outdoor activities (but youth always have the option of taking a break indoors). Packing sunscreen and sunglasses are strongly encouraged, but we will also have extra on-hand so that everyone has access to them.

The lighting inside the main building we will be using is mostly natural window light with some overhead lighting. Sometimes certain types of lighting, or too much sun, can hurt our eyes, give us headaches, or feel overwhelming - some tools that might be helpful are packing your favorite sunglasses, and taking regular sun breaks.

Sound

The three areas where most group activities will happen - the main building, indoor gymnasium, and the outdoor field - are large hall type spaces, and can produce a lot of echo. It might be louder in these spaces, more difficult to hear each other, and more overwhelming to the senses. Campers who have sensory-related, speech-related, and hearing-related access needs might find these spaces more difficult to navigate in larger groups. To help with some of these barriers, we will have a microphone and speaker in use when having larger group chats.

When campers are sharing space together, it's important to think about how to make the space comfortable as a community. Something that we can consider together when making a space easier on the senses, is trying to lower the levels of noise we're making individually. This mostly means trying not to yell and scream, even though it can be easy to do so without realizing when we're excited about being with our friends!

Some tools that might be helpful when feeling overwhelmed by sound: taking a break with a buddy to go to a quieter space (like outside or in a different space) after letting a staff member know where you are going, using an ear barrier (like earplugs or noise-canceling headphones - we will have disposable earplugs available), or by using a tool called stimming!

Stimming

Lots of people find it helpful and soothing to stim in many different situations - like overwhelming social spaces, or to navigate things that engage our senses in strong ways (like exciting music, delicious food, or harsh lighting). Stims are usually repetitive actions; sometimes they're body movements like hand-flapping, with an object like a fidget toy, or with sound like repeating a word we like, and those are only to name a few!

There are times at camp where youth might feel overwhelmed or overstimulated, and may find it helpful to use a tool like this to feel more comfortable. We ask all campers to remember that

these are amazing ways of navigating shared spaces, and while our neurodivergent community members (for example, autistic folks) are often marginalized for stimming, everyone stims in one way or another!

Suggestions for Food and Sensory Accommodations

- Do you have any dietary restrictions or sensory-related food needs that we can incorporate into the menu?
- Are there certain tools or supports that would make eating more accessible (straws, certain utensils, etc.)?
- Do you have scent or chemical sensitivities or other related access needs you would like to let staff know about?
 - Would you benefit from having access to disposable earplugs?
 - Would you benefit from having access to stim toys?
- Are you particularly sensitive to sun or heat in a way you want to let staff know about?
- Do certain ways of checking-in feel better when you're feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed?
- Do certain forms of communication feel better when you're feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed (or generally?) - such as typing on a phone, writing on paper, or using AAC?
- Do you have any other sensory-related access needs you'd like to talk to staff about?

Social Conditions

Names, Pronouns and Check-Ins

During camp we offer stick-on name tags so that youth and staff can write down their names and pronouns to wear. Just like how you can't know someone's name by looking at them, you can't know someone's pronouns by looking at them either. If you need to use someone's pronouns and they aren't wearing a name tag, it's important not to assume. Instead, you can ask "what are your pronouns?".

During group activities at camp, we will often do go-arounds of everyone's names, pronouns, and access needs. These go-arounds are also times when youth might choose to try out a new name or pronouns, just to see how they feel for the day! Talking in a big group can sometimes feel overwhelming, and youth are always welcome to skip their turn by saying "pass" or making a gesture.

Camp Activities

The things we will do together at camp will be planned based on the campers who register! Once we know who is coming, we can plan our activities based on what everyone likes to do and what everyone's access needs are, and make sure there are things to do for everyone.

If there are certain activities that you really love, ones that you don't love so much, or ones that feel more accessible than others, we would love to know!

WiFi Access and Phone Service

At Camp Seahorse, there is cell-phone service available, and free wi-fi access. If campers does not have a phone and needs access to a phone to call home, a staff member will assist. There are outlets available in the main building. Please bring a portable charger with your regular charging cords if you would like to always have access to your device. Please bring expensive electronics at your own risk. The Youth Project takes no responsibility for lost or stolen items.

Suggestions for Camp Activity Accommodations:

- Do you like movement-based activities? Are there certain movement-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them more accessible?
- Do you like art-based activities? Are there certain art-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them more accessible?
- Do you like talking-based activities? Are there certain talking-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them more accessible?

Do you like game-based activities? Are there certain game-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them feel more accessible?

Environmental Conditions

Outdoor Space

Mahone Bay Center is located in an open area surrounded by gravel and a field. There are many roads nearby. Campers will be asked to stay within the gravel and grass areas unless with permission and while being accompanied by a volunteer.

Tick Bite Prevention and Treatment

Wooded areas in rural Nova Scotia have higher rates of ticks that carry tick-borne diseases, and it's important to take steps to reduce the risk of tick bites when preparing to spend time in these areas. Camp activities will happen indoors, and in outdoor areas that are much lower risk (short or no grass, gravel, and sand), however there are areas in the camp that youth have access to that may be grassier or more wooded.

In the event of a bite, we will have devices on hand for removing the tick, and ensure the site is cleaned and monitored for a bullseye rash. Ticks are sometimes missed because of their size, and if a tick is believed to have been attached for 24 hours, or if youth show signs of Lyme disease transmission (new or

increased rash, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain, fever), we will call the camper's guardian to make a plan to access timely medical care. In this event we will also try to save the tick in a plastic sealed bag for testing, and will make note of when and where it was found on the body.

Medication Use and Storage

Medication must be stored with staff along with information about what medication campers are taking and the frequency. If youth would like to have consistent access to their meds and self-store their meds, that is possible with a note from a guardian/family member/supportive adult. If staff are needed to support dispensing medications, please share this during camper intake as staff will need written permission from guardian/family member/supportive adult to do so. Staff will also store Advil and Tylenol for pain relief and/or headaches, as well as other Over-The-Counter (OTC) medications that may be needed. If the camper is under the age of 16, staff will need written permission that we can offer OTC medications as needed.

Substance Use

The Youth Project is deeply committed to working from a harm-reductive space in relationship to substance use. Organizationally, harm reduction means that we aim to work from a care-centric, open and shame-free framework around youth's various potential relationships to substance and do our best to

ensure that our spaces are not alienating to youth who have relationship to substances but are also safer for youth who are sober and/or uncomfortable around substance/use.

We ask that youth attendees not use substances at camp as Youth Project staff and volunteers have a legal obligation to confiscate any substances that youth (19 and under) may have brought to the space and removal of substances will be a part of our Community Standards to build a safer space for all. If a youth is using substances at camp, the substances will be removed and the youth and staff will discuss a support plan with the intention of keeping them at camp that will be specific to each potential situation. If the Community Standards are broken three times, on the third time the youth will be asked to leave.

If you have a relationship with substance which includes using regularly and you still would like to come to camp, please make note that you would like to discuss this with staff during your intake process and we will do our best to offer supportive options so that camp can be as accessible as possible for you.

If you use cannabis for medical purposes and/or pain management, please let staff know so that they are aware, have the appropriate documentation on file, and can support you accessing what you need. Sharing medication with another camper is a violation of community standards at camp.

It is so important that we build a space that can meet a variety of youth experiences and youth needs. These Community Standards in place are not meant to punish any camper, but

rather work with each other, honor our available resources, skill sets, and limitations while acknowledging that there are often contradictory needs regarding substance as well legal obligations around youth substance use. If you have any questions or feedback about this policy, especially how it could better meet your needs, please be in touch with our Executive Director:

carmel@youthproject.ns.ca

Harm Reduction Information

We will have menstrual and safer sexual health supplies in every washroom space at camp. It is so important that campers have access to supplies that they may need at camp as well as outside of camp to ensure their safety and care.

Smoking/Vaping

If youth are regular cigarette smokers or use a nicotine vape, we ask that you let staff know prior to camp and there will be a designated smoking area. Youth are asked to not share their cigarettes or vape with non-smoking youth.

Other Accessibility Notes

Barriers to Access: ASL Interpretation

At this time, we do not have an ASL interpreter booked for Camp Seahorse. If having an ASL interpreter would make it possible for

you to attend, please let us know! In working to remove this barrier, our goal in upcoming years is to have Youth Project staff in attendance who are fluent in ASL in interpretation roles.

Barriers to Access: Audio Descriptions

This year we're unable to bring a trained audio describer to Camp Seahorse, however staff will be available to offer verbal descriptions of actions as needed throughout camp. We encourage youth to also give verbal descriptions when needed, which might mean describing what you look like before speaking, describing a picture if you want to share it, or describing an action that is happening. An example of this would be saying, "this is a picture of the Youth Project house, which is an old two story house that is dark gray and off-white with a bright pink door, and has the numbers '2281' beside the entrance".