

Special needs camp sessions taking place throughout the Conference

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17

8:30 – 9:45 AM

The Apples Don't Fall Far From the Tree: Working with Difficult Parents of Difficult Children

Ryan Wexelblatt, Hill Top Summer Camp & Travel Adventures

Ask any seasoned camp professionals and they will tell you that many of their difficult campers also happen to be the children of their most difficult parents. Parents of children with special needs can be needy and defensive and may monopolize our time. The first thing we need to do is empathize with these parents and understand that they actually share similar characteristics to their children. This workshop will teach you how to meet these parents where they're at, form an alliance and set boundaries with them.

10:00 – 11:15 AM

Inclusion Isn't Always Best

**Debbie and Eric Sasson, Camp Akeela
Michael Freidman, Freidman Associates**

When should you say "no" to a camper with special needs? Is your camp really equipped to create a meaningful and successful summer for a child with differences? Learn the questions you and your camp staff need to be asking yourselves before you take a child with special needs. Help ensure that you will not be taking campers whom you cannot effectively serve in your communities. We will help you establish a clear understanding of the needs children may have and which questions you'll need to ask parents so that you can be sure that you know your campers before they arrive this summer.

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

Structuring and Facilitating Challenge Activities for Youth with Special Needs

Rebekah Rosenberg, Ramapo for Children

This session will identify ways to plan for successful challenge activities (cooperative games, initiatives, and ropes course experiences) for children with emotional, learning, and behavioral needs, give participants an opportunity to play, and provide tips for facilitating for this population.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18

8:15 – 9:30 AM

Can We Handle this Kid? • Assessing the Appropriateness of Campers with Special Needs and How to Successfully Integrate Them into Your Camp Program

Ryan Wexelblatt, Hill Top Summer Camp & Travel Adventures

Almost every camp director has been faced with the decision of whether to accept (or retain) a camper with special needs such as Asperger's syndrome, learning disabilities and social skill deficits. As camp professionals we want to be as inclusive as possible yet we also need to know if we will be able to successfully support a camper with such needs in our program. This workshop will address key issues such as: assessing whether if a camper is appropriate for your camp, understanding what type of supports these campers will need, finding effective ways of collaborating with their parents, and supporting your staff to work effectively with these campers.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19

8:00 – 9:15 AM

Inclusive Adventure Activities

Eric Kohl, Creative Themes Day Camp

Adventure activities have been used in the camp setting for a number of years. The inclusion of individuals with disabilities helps not only their development of positive character traits but also the positive character development of other group members. This session will discuss the levels of disability awareness, show how to modify activities for individuals and groups, and present examples and hands-on experiences of activities that can be used in an inclusive setting.

8:00 – 9:15 AM

Understanding and Effectively Integrating Difficult Children

Marc Rauch, Problem Solved Inc.

Children continue to flood camps with an ever-increasing level of “emotional baggage” and having had exposure to a multitude of traumatic events. It is very important to both the smooth functioning of camp groups and the best interests of the individual camper, for camp staff to possess a comprehensive understanding of the causation of difficulties and proven methods to effectively integrate these campers into the camp setting. Specific strategies and techniques will be discussed during this session. Time will also be allotted for group discussion of strategies that have been employed effectively in other camps. Having a comprehensive understanding of “Difficult Children” and how to effectively integrate them will allow for a more positive summer experience for all the campers you serve and may prove life changing for the individual camper.

8:00 – 9:15 AM

Inclusion Where You Are

Aron Hall, National Inclusion Project

Kat Pheysey, Frost Valley YMCA

There is not a program serving children that is not also serving children with special needs. This session will address how you can successfully serve children through training staff and program modifications without breaking the budget.

9:30 – 10:45 AM

Disabilities/Diagnoses within the Camp Setting

Marc Rauch, Problem Solved Inc.

Children are being diagnosed with disorders at one of the highest rates of all time. We are all faced with the challenge of effectively integrating these children into all walks of life, including the camp setting. Having a solid understanding of the diagnoses that children will be bringing to camp is essential to being able to work with such children. Dr. Rauch will present a wealth of information on the many disabilities/diagnoses you may encounter within the camp setting. Participants will gain information on the best practices in dealing with specific disorders. An overview of relevant medications will be presented, as will a discussion regarding medication issues within the camp setting.