

Frequently Asked Questions

Happy Trails for Kids summer camp is for children ages seven and older who have open cases in the California foster care system. New campers must be 7-12 years old. Exceptions are made only for previous campers, who can attend after age 12. Happy Trails for Kids provides transportation to and from a central Los Angeles location, as well as meals and camp accessories (sleeping bags, toiletries, etc) if needed.  **Thanks to many generous donations, camp is free!**

**Space at camp is limited. Registration is on a first come, first served basis for all returning and new campers depending on availability in cabins.**

Who can go to Happy Trails?

Happy Trails serves youth ages 7-12 who have had open dependency cases in the State of California at the time they sign up to go to camp.  Select campers who are over 15 can also attend as Junior Leaders (see below for more information about the Junior Leader program.

How does my camper get to camp?

Happy Trails provides roundtrip transportation for campers between the drop-off location in Central Los Angeles and camp. You must drop-off and pick-up your camper at the assigned location. Detailed information about camper drop-off and pick-up will be available in your camper’s Happy Trails confirmation packet. Campers cannot be dropped off or picked up at the camp.

Who are the staff members?

Happy Trails staff members are at least 18 years old. They have been selected through an application process that requires reference checks and criminal records background checks that comply with of California state law. All staff members complete extensive training on topics including youth development, behavior and conflict management, and emergency procedures.

What is the camper to staff ratio?

At Happy Trails we maintain a low overall staff-to-camper ratio of approximately 1 adult to every 5 campers for younger campers and 1 adult to every 6 campers for older youth. Each cabin has a minimum of 2 adult counselors and additional support staff is provided at camp during the week.

What is the daily schedule like?

The camp schedule is organized to allow campers the maximum amount of time to participate in camp program activities. Campers typically wake-up at 7 a.m. and are scheduled to have lights out by 9:30 p.m. During the day campers receive breakfast, lunch, dinner and an evening snack.

What are the camp activities at Happy Trails?

Camp activities are age appropriate and campers are typically separated into age groups. Camp activities include swimming, team building, zip line, canoeing, hiking, arts & crafts, rock climbing wall, organized sports, archery, singing silly camp songs, fun night time all camp activities and much more.

Will you be leaving the camp at any time?

No, we will not be leaving camp at any time during the week.

Will my camper need to bring money to camp?

Please do not send any money to camp with your camper. We will have a camp store and your camper will be able to earn “Happy Trails dollars” throughout the week to use at the store.

What are the sleeping arrangements?

Campers are separated by age and gender and assigned to cabins. Each cabin has bunk beds, storage closets and indoor bathrooms and showers.

What are the meals like at camp?

At Happy Trails we serve nutritious, well-balanced meals that meet the USDA’s meal pattern requirements. Breakfast is served at 8:00 a.m., lunch at 12:30 p.m. and dinner at 5:30 p.m. Campers also receive an evening snack at 7:30 p.m.

What if my camper has food allergies or special diet needs?

We can change meals for campers who have a medical condition or have requested a special diet due to food intolerance or allergies. Special diet requests must be noted on the Camper Health History Form that is included in the Happy Trails registration packet. Food preferences can only be accommodated within reasonable requests. Campers are not allowed to bring food to camp.

*What does my camper need to bring to camp?*

You will be sent a confirmation packet once your camper’s enrollment is confirmed. Please see the packing list in the Happy Trails confirmation packet for more information. If your camper does not have a sleeping bag to bring to camp, sleeping bags will be available only for new campers or for returning campers who have relocated since last summer’s camp. Please also carefully review the list of items that campers are not allowed to bring to camp. Happy Trails will not be responsible for any damaged or lost articles. Luggage is limited to one suitcase or duffel bag and a regular sized backpack per camper.

What happens if my camper gets homesick?

Happy Trails staff members are trained to work with homesick campers to help them be more comfortable at camp and to encourage participation in camp activities. We will contact you if your camper is unable to complete the week at camp. You will be responsible for transporting your camper home.

What happens if my camper needs to leave camp due to a medical or behavioral issue?

If your camper needs to leave camp due to a medical or behavioral issue, *you are required to arrange for transportation to pick-up your camper, wherever camp is located.* Depending on the time of day, you may be required to pick-up your camper at camp. Once you have been contacted by Happy Trails you must pick up your camper within four hours. If pick-up is not arranged and completed within four hours we will call the hotline at the Department of Children and Family Services to pick-up the camper.

Can my camper call home?

Campers are not allowed to bring cell phones to camp or to make calls home. Phone calls are only allowed in case of an emergency. Campers may receive letters at camp. Letter can be sent via email, fax or mail – additional information will be available in the confirmation packet.

Can I visit camp?

For the safety of all campers there are no visitors allowed at Happy Trails.

What should I do if my camper takes medication?

All medication must be checked in with Happy Trails and should not be packed in your camper’s luggage. Happy Trails will have a nurse on staff all week that will administer all prescribed medication and provide minor first aid. All medication must be in the original container with the original label listing your camper’s name and doctor’s instructions (including inhalers). All medication will be kept by the nurse at camp and will be returned at the end of camp.

What happens if there is an emergency at camp?

The registered nurse on staff at Happy Trails will only provide minor first aid to campers. If there is a major emergency at camp, such as an illness or injury, you will be notified immediately and your camper will be transported to a local hospital. Please make sure that the emergency contact numbers and health insurance information listed on the registration forms are accurate. Happy Trails staff members are also trained to address other emergencies such as a lost camper or natural disaster.

Does Happy Trails provide other activities for campers throughout the year?

Yes, Happy Trails is committed to long-term involvement with our campers. We organize numerous camper reunion events throughout the year. These events are an opportunity for campers and staff to see each other again and have fun at activities such as bowling, ice skating, musical theater, surfing, sailing, cooking classes and SO MUCH MORE! Camper reunion events are for Happy Trails campers only and are provided at no cost to you. You will receive an annual calendar and information about events via email.

How many times can my camper attend Happy Trails summer camp?

Each camper can only attend camp for one week each summer. We hope that campers will attend Happy Trails summer camp every year.

What happens when my camper turns 16? Can he/she no longer come to Happy Trails?

Campers who are 16 and are already involved with Happy Trails (i.e. have been to camp before) can apply to be Junior Leaders. The Junior Leader positions are competitive and require campers to complete applications and interviews. Once campers reach age 18, they are no longer eligible to be Junior Counselors but will be eligible and are encouraged to apply for summer camp staff positions.