

OTA Summer Staff – Teenagers

Before getting into the different categories of teenage staff, please recognize the following points:

*Each territory must identify whether there are rules or regulations specifically targeting CIT, Junior Counselor, or Mentor/Leadership Programs for teens. Some of these regulations could be regarding: Age Requirements, Training Requirements, Compensation or Registration Fee Guidelines, Impact on Instructor/Camper Ratios, or specific rules about participants time commitments, roles, and functions.

1. NOTES:

- “Teenagers” are 13 – 17 year olds
- 18 and 19 year olds are recognized as adults (regardless of level of education)
- Therefore 13 – 17 year olds are minors, but potentially eligible to “work” camp

2. Supervision of Campers – Regulations

- Most states have regulations for camper to staff ratios
- These ratios often outline the number of adults required to supervise a group and/or the number of assistant counselors (minors) to supervise a group
- See example of a Supervision Ratio Chart (from the State of Maryland)

3. Teenage “Hiring” Rules

- RECOMMENDATION: No teenager should join staff (in any capacity) the year after they age out of being a camper.
- For example, camp is for 6-12 year olds
 - 13 year olds should not be brought on staff
 - Age 14 would be first year of eligibility to join staff
- RECOMMENDATION: Exception – camp is for up to age 17, 18 year olds are still eligible to join staff

4. Exceptions to the Rule for Teenagers joining staff

- Camp Operators will often be confronted with a number of exceptions to consider
 - Operators own children or other family members (nieces, nephews, etc.)
 - Operator has coached teenager on competitive sports teams
 - Operator has taught teenager in a school setting
 - Operator has close family relationship with teenager (neighbor, etc.)
- Exceptions to the Rules should be given careful consideration before green-lighting the option for teenager to join summer staff.

5. Staffing Categories to Consider (for Teenage Workforce)

- **Employee**
- **Volunteer**
- **Counselor In Training (CIT)**
- **Junior Counselor**

- **OTA Junior Leadership Program**

EMPLOYEE:

- There are no rules or regulations (regarding DAY CAMPS) to our knowledge preventing the hiring of High School Students (Teenagers) from working camp and filling the role of Camp Counselor (or assistant camp counselor).
- Camp Counselors who are minors (13 – 17 years old) may impact your ratio plan and that should be cross-referenced with the territory or states requirements for supervision.
- It should go without saying that of course you can't leave a minor alone, by themselves, supervising a group of campers.
 - It doesn't mean that the minor can't lead a station, activity, lead a group, or coach a team.
 - It Just means that the camp site, or programming area, also has adult supervision present during all activities.
- Hiring teenage camp counselors as employees requires the same background check and training program that any camp staff counselor would be required to complete.
- It's very common for camp operators to have a pay-scale that reflects the age of the employee (and experience) and teenage/high school camp counselors often receive the lowest wage (often minimum wage).

VOLUNTEER:

- A camp volunteers' role is to support the Admin, Director, Staff, and Campers during the course of the program.
- Roles are less defined and approaching the "position" as one where the volunteer is looking to pitch in, fill in, and be an extra hand is the best way to frame the volunteer experience.
- Volunteers often aren't taken into consideration regarding the supervision plan and the ratio requirements.
- Volunteers don't commit to the same schedule as Hired Staff and Counselors. In some cases, volunteers have less hours per day, less days per week, or less weeks per summer session.
- Volunteers should have background checks and clearances completed, but often have a modified training program to complete before being eligible to "work" or volunteer at camp.
- Volunteers are unpaid.
- Volunteers may be eligible for service hours to go towards any graduation requirements for high school, but it is the responsibility of the volunteer to get approval and confirmation.

Counselor In Training (CIT):

- Counselor in Training, or CIT, is a common term used in the Youth Camp Field. This term refers to training programs designed to be a leadership training experience for future Camp Counselors.
- These programs most commonly are for 14 and 15 year olds (for day camps).
- *(Note – Sleep-away or Overnight Camps typically have much more regimented CIT Programs and often 14 – 17 year-olds are eligible.)*
- Some CIT programs are free to participants (but require an application and approval process)
- Some CIT programs have a registration fee for participants (usually a reduced rate from what campers would pay to participate in the program).
- CIT Programs are designed for teens who truly enjoy working with young children, the program provides Counselors in Training (CIT) with hands-on experience and guidance in becoming successful camp counselors. Working under the supervision of experienced counselors, CITs enjoy connecting with campers while modeling positive behavior.
- A minimum week's commitment is typical of most CIT Programs.
- The training program for CIT's is very similar to the training program for full staff (to include background checks and clearances), perhaps with some minor modifications. CIT's should be expected to attend pre-camp meetings and trainings in order to be familiar with the policies and procedures of the camp.
- It must be made clear that completion of the program does not guarantee that CITs will be hired as future paid counselors.
- CIT programs will require that full staff understand the parameters of CIT responsibilities, behavior, and their role in mentoring, leading, and interacting with CIT's.
- CIT Programs require oversight and will be an added responsibility for operators and camp directors.
- Operators and Camp Directors should expect some paperwork involved throughout the course of the summer session as it relates to the CIT Program (documenting exercises, training, progress, and evaluations).
- Operators and Camp Directors should expect some "customer service", parent interaction, with a CIT's parents and guardians.
- It's possible that some states or the ACA (American Camp Association) licensing or accreditation requirements include specific requirements for Counselor in Training Programs. These should always be adhered to.

STEPS to Implement a CIT Program

1. Design Program Features (age, time commitment, fees, locations, training)
2. Identify Responsibilities and Oversight (who leads program, how program is managed)
3. Develop Paperwork (application and in-summer documentation, etc. – where applicable)
4. Create CIT Program Announcement (identify vehicles for posting and recruiting CIT's)
5. Implement Application and Interview Process (with timeline)
6. Set-up Registration (and Payment Procedure – where applicable)
7. Initiate Onboarding and Training Program (any modification from full staff IHT System)
8. Provide Evaluation/Mentoring (plan in-summer meeting schedule and end of program closeout)

Sample CIT Program Description

Counselor In Training (CIT)

AGES: 14-15

TIMES: Monday- Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Candidates MUST commit to at least one (1) two-week consecutive period:

[June 20-June 30], [July 3-14], [July 17-28], and/or [July 31- August 11]

The Summer Programs Counselor in Training (CIT) Program is an experiential program for students who:

- have finished 8th grade
- are typically between the ages of 14 to 15
- have the ability to commit to at least one two-week session (this is required)

The program is designed to develop and foster core skills of leadership, integrity, character, communication, and initiative. The CIT acquires skills through active participation in the summer programs activities, with instructors and staff serving as mentors to the program's campers. The CIT program is a model for promoting positive group dynamics, inspiring creativity, and fostering a nurturing and caring environment for all children while developing and reflecting upon the acquired skills through this volunteer service. CIT's will participate in training sessions on such topics as basic child development and behavior management, counseling techniques and best practices, communication and leadership. Successful participants will come away from this program with valuable leadership skills that will serve them well at home, in school, and in their own community. CIT's are considered campers for the CIT program while preparing for their future potential opportunities as camp counselors.

Prospective CITs:

- Must first apply for the position through the office before registering for the CIT program on the camps website.
- Vetted CITs will have either a phone or in-person interview with the Camp Operator, CIT coordinator, or the Camp Director to determine selection to the program.
- If selected for the program, the CITs will then register for the program through the camp registration website.

*CITs may receive Student Service-Learning hours through school district.

Junior Counselor:

- This term for a teenage member of camp staff could be considered CIT-lite. Similar properties, but perhaps not the same level of detail (or expectations) from Junior Counselor or Parent with regards to the focus of the program.
- The Junior Counselor is often a day-care option for the working parent that needs their young teen to be supervised during those summer days that require such supervision.
- The Junior Counselor could be a Volunteer, “working” camp for free OR be charged a reduced fee to participate in the program.
- The process of joining as a Junior Counselor might not be as rigid as a CIT application and interview process and might not have the same requirements regarding time commitment throughout the course of the summer session.
- Filling Junior Counselor positions is more commonly done through word of mouth, rather than any formal posting or recruitment process.

OTA Junior Leadership Program:

- **This is an OPTION to capture 14- and 15-year-old CAMPERS (for camps not specifically targeting this age group).**
- This is a customizable program that OTA has used for OLDER CAMPERS and is designed to be a REVENUE STREAM.
- We don’t identify it as a CIT Program. We don’t identify it as a Junior Counselor Program.
- OTA Junior Leadership Program – JLP “Team Captain” Campers
- **See Supporting Documents and Materials**
 - **JLP Program Description**
 - **Program Curriculum**
 - **FAQ’s**
 - **Participation Requirements**
 - **“Theme Work” Supporting Materials**
- ***Note – this program could easily be adjusted to support a CIT Program Format**