



# PARENT HANDBOOK

Dear Parents,

We would like to welcome you and your child to SOAR! You are about to embark on a significant adventure with your child, and it is important for you to prepare ahead of time to ensure this is a successful experience for all. You are giving your child a wonderful gift by enrolling them in one of SOAR's programs.

SOAR is accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA). ACA is a group comprised of community and camp professionals who are dedicated to enriching the lives of children and adults through the camp experience. ACA defines "camp" as "a sustained experience that 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, and social growth."

More specifically, we believe camp is one of the best ways to teach pre-teens and teens to be successful, independent, and self-sufficient in a close cooperative learning community that is supportive of their individual gifts and differences. Our goal is to give campers a wide range of activities, skills, and experiences that will not only challenge them while they are here at SOAR, but will also relate to their experiences at home and in the classroom. After campers return home, parents frequently comment to us about how much their children have grown, not only physically, but in their attitudes and self-esteem. These are important and positive changes we strive to instill in our campers while on their SOAR adventures.

We look forward to providing your camper with a summer of fun, friends, and many unforgettable memories!

Sincerely,

Executive Director

## ACA Camps Set the Standard

### SOAR is Accredited By the American Camp Association (ACA)

#### ACA Accreditation Means...

- We cared enough to undergo a thorough (over 300 standards) review of our operation.
- Our camp complies with industry-established health and safety standards, recognized by courts of law and government regulators.
- We have a commitment to best practices in the industry.
- We go a step beyond a state's basic licensing requirements.
- We value expert collaboration. ACA collaborates with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Red Cross, and other youth-serving agencies to assure that current practices reflect the most up-to-date, research-based standards in camp operation.

"ACA Accreditation means that this camp submitted to a thorough (over 300 standards) review of its operation by the American Camp Association and complied with the highest standards in the industry," Cindy Moore, ACA National Standards Commission.



## Table of Contents

Checklist for Parents .....	4
Packing for Camp.....	5
Labeling Camper Belongings. ....	5
Laundry .....	6
Appearance Guidelines .....	6
Communication & Phone Policy .....	6
Packages.....	7
Birthdays at Camp .....	7
Food at Camp .....	7
Health & Personal Well-Being .....	7
Parent Notification of Injury and/or Illness.....	8
Personal Hygiene .....	8
Medication .....	8
Insurance .....	9
Visiting Camp.....	9
Participant Discontinuation of the Program .....	9
Transportation Policies and Procedures .....	9
Financial Information .....	10
Web Site Pictures.....	11
Inbrief & Debrief Process .....	11
Travel to Camp.....	12
When You Arrive at SOAR.....	12

**Course Specific Information is available through your CampInTouch account.**

## CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS:

- Carefully Read ENTIRE Parent Handbook
- Complete all Student Forms online by accessing your CampInTouch account.**
- ONLY if you do not have internet access**, please contact our Admissions Office at 828-456-3435 to have the following forms sent to you for completion:
  - Student Medical Form
  - Have the Student Physical Form completed by your child's physician.  
Note: This form should be signed by your doctor, to indicate a physical has been completed in the past 12 months from the start date of the course. Please check with your physician to determine the date of your child's last exam, as your child may not need a new physical.
    - Attach a copy of your child's immunization records
  - Parent Authorization Form with attached insurance card information
  - Student Goal Worksheet
  - Submit Course specific Transportation form
  - Attach copy of flight itinerary (if applicable)
  - Attach a photograph of your child (if applicable)

\*\* Fax the above completed forms to 801-820-3050. \*\*

- Call SOAR at 828-456-3435 to schedule inbrief/debrief times & confirm travel arrangements.  
(For details, see Course Specific Information on your CampInTouch account).
- Submit Final Payment (Final payment is due no later than June 1<sup>st</sup> for all courses except International Courses which are due May 1<sup>st</sup>)

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### COURSE SPECIFIC ITEMS:

#### **For students doing multiple courses:**

- Schedule layover days

#### **For Belize/Costa Rica/Caribbean Course:**

- Send Student's passport number and bring passport with you upon arrival

#### **For SCUBA Courses:**

- Send SCUBA PADI forms (will REQUIRE DOCTOR SIGNATURE)

#### **For Academic Courses: (NC & WY)**

- Submit Academic Questionnaire

#### **For NC Backpacking, NC Canoeing, or CA Courses:**

- Select Student Elective Activity Choice

## **Time to start gearing up for camp!**

This handbook contains information that you will need to be ready for camp. Please take a few minutes to read through everything. It's all important, and if you are familiar with the information you can save time and questions later on. Keep this information handy so you can refer to it later.

Plan to make camp preparation a joint effort. Spend time as a family discussing camp policies and procedures. Carefully read through all information in this handbook. **Access your CamplnTouch account to complete the required forms as soon as possible so we can make plans for your camper.** We make staffing, trip and class plans based on the information on these forms, so don't delay in sending them back!

## **Packing for Camp**

In your CamplnTouch account, you will find your course specific information, including gear list. **Based on the location & type of course your child is attending, purchase the gear listed for that course.** If you have any questions about gear, please feel free to contact SOAR Admissions at (828) 456-3435 or consult our Gear Guide at <http://soarnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Gear-Guide.pdf>. As you begin your planning and packing for camp, keep in mind that storage space is limited. All items on the gear list are required unless stated otherwise. It is essential you purchase all items on the gear list before your child arrives, as there are not many places to purchase gear near our bases. However, don't over pack! We have carefully selected each item on the gear list to ensure your child will have everything he or she needs while on their course. Campers will have a limited amount of space in the cabins and on the vans to store their belongings. Several courses require campers to carry their belongings while backpacking. You do not want your camper to be weighed down. In addition, we will do our best to help your camper keep track of their belongings. However, ultimately that responsibility is theirs, and too much gear might make that task even harder!

All expedition equipment will be provided with exception of personal clothing, personal gear, and sleeping bag. A limited number of backpacks are available for loan. Please contact SOAR Admissions if you would like to reserve a backpack as soon as possible. Backpacks will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis.

### ***Do Not Bring:***

Cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, sparklers/fireworks, weapons (including knives), hair dyes, expensive or valuable jewelry, skateboards, cell phones, computers, CD players or radios with speakers, iPods, MP3 players, or hand held video games. If any of the above items are brought to SOAR, they will be gathered & held until the end of the course. However, SOAR will not be responsible for any lost or damaged items.

## **Labeling Camper Belongings**

We know your kid – keeping track of their belongings is not one of their strengths. Living in a tent or small cabin with six or seven other kids does not make this situation any easier! In order to help your child keep track of their stuff, EVERY ITEM should be labeled with their name. There are several ways to do this:

- Use a permanent marker and write their name on EVERYTHING. This is a cheap, effective solution that worked well for my own kids when they were at camp.



- Order pre-made labels that you can stick on EVERYTHING. Here are some companies we recommend:
  - Kidecals – <http://kidecals.com/>
  - Mabels Labels - <http://www.mabelslabels.com/>
  - Label Daddy - <http://labeldaddy.com/>



In addition, the more organized you can pack your child's belongings, the better! As you saw on the gear list, one of the required items is a box of gallon ziplock bags. Go ahead and use some of these to pack your students clothing according to like items – socks in one ziplock bag, underwear in another, t-shirts in another, etc. If you want to get really fancy, you can buy 5-gallon ziplocks for larger items like pants or towels and washcloths.



While we make every effort to help your child keep track of their belongings, we cannot be responsible for items that are lost.

*Note: SOAR will return labeled items of \$25 value or greater. Items will be mailed C.O.D. SOAR is not responsible for returning items that are not labeled.*

## **Laundry**

Students will do their own laundry at least one time midpoint during the course. We feel this is an essential life skill for students to learn. SOAR will provide your child with the quarters and soap necessary to do their laundry. In addition to your large laundry bag, you are welcome to send a small mesh laundry bag that can help keep track of smaller items (socks, underwear, etc.).

**Students will not do laundry prior to returning home, so be prepared to see (and maybe even smell ☺) evidence in their dirty clothes bag of the fun your child experienced while at SOAR!**

## **Appearance Guidelines**

SOAR is dedicated to providing students with meaningful summer experiences that will allow them to learn and grow. To that end, we feel an obligation to ensure each person feels comfortable in his or her attire and is not overly distracted by the clothing of those around them. Therefore, we have formalized our dress and personal appearance code. This dress code takes into consideration the need for self-expression, while also eliminating distractions that might undermine our students' experiences.

Staff and students are not permitted to wear provocative clothing. Male staff and students are not permitted to wear pants that expose underwear or clothing with rips and tears in inappropriate places. Additionally, shirts are required unless involved in water activities. Female staff and students are not permitted to wear: short-shorts, tube tops, belly shirts or any garment that exposes an excessive degree of cleavage or the midriff area, pants that expose their underwear, or clothing with rips or tears in inappropriate places. Uncovered bathing suits should be reserved for water activities and must be either a one-piece bathing suit or bikini with ½ inch straps. String bikinis are not permitted. Clothing that depicts violence, drugs, alcohol, sexualized references, or offensive symbols or words are unacceptable. Staff and students are not permitted to wear torn clothing while at base or in public.

Significant appearance changes while at camp are not permitted. These include but are not limited to the following: drastic changes in hair style or color, piercings of any kind, and henna (temporary) tattoos.

## **Communication & Phone Policy**

If parents need to communicate with a Director during course, they can call the numbers for each course area. These can be found in the course specific information in your CampInTouch account.

SOAR programs are designed to provide students with an opportunity to develop greater independence and self-reliance. With this goal in mind, students are not allowed to bring cell phones or other electronics to camp. Only students who sign up for multiple courses and who are on base between those courses will be provided with the opportunity to call home between their courses. If the need arises, parents can request an update during the course. Due to the travel and backcountry nature of our program, staff are limited in terms of the updates they can provide. This opportunity to build student autonomy is an integral part of the SOAR experience.



## **The Alternative!**

We encourage mail through the U.S. Postal Service or send a personalized fax or email. Our campers love it! It is the most dependable way to communicate with your camper. Mail is collected and sorted daily. Course directors take mail into the field for your camper once every two to three days. Only students on North Carolina or Wyoming courses are able to receive mail, faxes or e-mail. There is no way to get mail to our California, Florida or international course directors. E-mails and faxes are not checked from Fridays at 5 p.m. to Mondays at 8:30 a.m. While campers are unable to check their own e-mail addresses, you are welcome to send an e-mail for North Carolina courses to [admissions@soarnc.org](mailto:admissions@soarnc.org), and for Wyoming courses to [evr@soarnc.org](mailto:evr@soarnc.org). SOAR office staff print and sort e-mails daily, just like regular mail. **PLEASE make sure to include your child's full name and the course they are participating in on the subject line** (i.e., Chris Smith, Llama Trek 5).

**See the course specific information for course specific postal addresses, email addresses, and fax numbers.**

## **Packages**

Packages **should not** be sent to campers while they are on course. There simply is not enough room to store items sent in packages. DO NOT SEND FOOD TO CAMP. Please share with relatives and friends not to send food in the mail. Food in the cabins and in the tents attracts insects and small rodents, creating a health problem. The food served at camp is wholesome and abundant. We will do our best to accommodate your child's eating preferences.

## **Birthdays at Camp**

If a camper has a birthday during camp, the cook will provide a cake for the dinner meal, and we will sing happy birthday. If a camper is out in the field for a birthday, the course director will make arrangements for a birthday surprise for your child.

## **Food at Camp**

SOAR serves and chooses healthy food options for our students. While students are at base camp, a cook prepares and serves well-balanced meals. In keeping with our philosophy of developing independence and life-skills, students help plan some of their own menus as well as prepare their own food when they are in the field. We will accommodate vegetarian and non-orthodox kosher diets; however, students are ultimately responsible for their own food choices. If your child has other food needs such as lactose intolerance, gluten intolerance, or allergies, please give us a call so we can make a plan to insure their food needs are met. There will be an additional charge to accommodate those dietary needs.

## **Health & Personal Well-Being**

The number one concern for SOAR is the health and well-being of our community. All SOAR instructors are certified in first aid and CPR, and they receive training in all wilderness and adventure activities. All Florida and California staff members are certified lifeguards. You will be notified if your child is ill or injured and needs to be taken to the hospital. Health checks are completed by a SOAR staff at least once a week.



All campers are required to turn in a medical form and physical form signed by a doctor before attending camp. Campers must have a physical exam within 12 months of the start of camp. It is important for you to communicate any physical limitations your child may have with the staff prior to the course.

## **Parent Notification of Injury and/or Illness**

Parents will be notified of student injuries and illness under the following circumstances:

1. When the injury or illness requires medical care beyond the scope of staff certification.
2. When the student is to be seen by anyone other than SOAR staff for medical care.
3. When an illness or injury results in the student being separated from the group for a significant length of time (i.e., more than one day).
4. When an illness or injury requires a student be removed from the course.
5. To obtain permission for administration of over-the-counter medication not included in SOAR's first aid kit (i.e., cough or cold medication).

## **Personal Hygiene**

SOAR is an outdoor adventure program, not a traditional residential camp. Students are given a minimum of two bath opportunities during their course. SOAR staff also provide opportunities for daily hygiene needs to be met, such as tooth brushing, hand washing, foot care, sponge baths, wet wipes, etc. We encourage and model proper hygiene. Ultimately, it is the student's choice to take advantage of these opportunities.

## **Medication**

Proper administration of prescription medication, over-the-counter drugs and vitamins is critical, and we need your assistance. If your child will be on any prescription medication during the course, please send each medication in the **original prescription container** (no pill dispensers please). Include only a two-day surplus. If your child has liquid medication that normally comes in a glass bottle, please ask the pharmacy to use a plastic one. *Note: Each medication should be listed separately on the Medication Information Form.* Please notify SOAR if you will be initiating changes to your child's medication schedule during the four weeks prior to the course. If your child will be flying to SOAR, please **do not** put their medications in checked baggage.

SOAR staff receives training on all aspects of medication administration, including information about the common types taken by LD and ADHD youth, their purpose and contraindications, and a standard protocol for administering the medication. SOAR instructors will review your child's medication information during the inbrief process.

### **Attention DAYTRANA Users:**

SOAR has found that campers participating in our Florida and California programs (which contain a large amount of water-based activities) who utilize *Daytrana*® patches may experience trouble keeping the patch on for the prescribed amount of time. Here is what the official website says about the patches getting wet.

Q. What happens if the *Daytrana*® patch gets wet while my child is wearing it?

A. When properly applied, the *Daytrana*® patch is designed to stay on and keep delivering medicine. If the patch falls off, discard the old patch and a new patch can be

applied to a different area of the same hip. Do not use tape, bandages, or other household adhesives to reapply the patch that no longer adheres. Exposure to water during bathing, swimming or showering may affect patch adhesion.

SOAR does not make recommendations regarding prescription medicine. However, if your child is currently using *Daytrana*® patches and will be attending one of our water-based courses, we do suggest talking with your child's physician to get more information regarding the potential for the patches to come off during water activities and to discuss possible solutions.

## **Insurance**

If an accident or injury does occur, your child will be transported to the nearest medical facility. Any charges for sickness related to doctor or hospital visits, including transportation, and/or needed medications will be the sole responsibility of the parent. Family health insurance information must be included on the camper's medical form, and a copy of your insurance and prescription card (if applicable) must be on file with SOAR.

## **Visiting Camp**

Parents will not be permitted to visit their children while they are on course. We welcome parents and campers to visit base before attending camp. We encourage families to stop by if you are in our area during the fall, winter and spring. SOAR directors give numerous presentations at national and regional conferences throughout the year. Contact SOAR and watch your e-mail for specific dates and locations.

## **Participant Discontinuation of the Program**

There are occasional instances when students may need to leave or may be asked to leave a SOAR course.

These instances include, but are not limited to:

1. Illness or injury.
2. The student's profile and behavior upon arrival are inconsistent with information presented in application materials.
3. The student requires an inordinate amount of one-on-one attention from SOAR staff.
4. The student displays continual aggressive behavior toward other students, self, or staff.
5. The student displays inappropriate sexual behavior.
6. The student uses illegal drugs, alcohol or tobacco products.

SOAR reserves the right to remove students from the program due to these and other issues deemed appropriate to maintain the safety of SOAR students and staff and the integrity of the program. SOAR also recognizes that families may need to remove students from the program due to family emergencies, etc. While we will make all attempts to facilitate a speedy removal of the student from the field (normally 4-6 hours), families should be aware that evacuations may take as long as 24 hours due to distance from the trailhead. Please review the cancellation policy for important information regarding participant discontinuation.

## **Transportation Policies and Procedures**

To keep families abreast of SOAR's continued commitment to the safety of students during transport, we have posted SOAR transportation policies and procedures on our website at [www.soarnc.org](http://www.soarnc.org). If you have any questions regarding these protocols, feel free to contact us.

## **Financial Information**

### **Registration Deposit:**

Prior to June 1 (May 1<sup>st</sup> for international courses), families will be required to submit a \$250, **non-refundable registration** deposit (\$500 for international courses) along with their application for admission. We accept check, money order, MasterCard, Visa, Discover, and AMEX. The deposit will only be charged if your child is accepted. If a camper must cancel a course, the registration fee may be used for another course during the current season or during the next season. After that, the deposit will become unavailable for use.

### **Fee Payment:**

When completing your online application, you will be required to submit payment information for all future billing, including tuition balances and additional expenses that may occur. For any registration received prior to June 1<sup>st</sup>, the balance of all tuition fees is due no later than June 1<sup>st</sup> (May 1<sup>st</sup> for international courses). After June 1<sup>st</sup> (May 1<sup>st</sup> for international courses), payment must be received *in full* for the student to be confirmed for the course. On June 1<sup>st</sup> (May 1<sup>st</sup> for international courses), any remaining balances will be automatically charged to the payment selected during the application process. If paying via an alternate source (i.e. check from family member, DSS, or other) payment must be received prior to June 1<sup>st</sup> to prevent your card from being automatically billed. Tuition payments made via credit card or e-check, prior to June 1<sup>st</sup> (May 1<sup>st</sup> for international courses) may be completed by phone or online by logging into your account at [soar.campintouch.com](http://soar.campintouch.com).

### **Additional Expenses:**

Your child may incur additional expenses while at camp. This includes prescription medication costs if your child gets sick, damage fees for intentional damage done to SOAR property, or additional airline expenses. Airline expenses may include, but are not limited to, airline baggage fees, airline escort / unaccompanied minor fees, flight change fees due to missed flights, etc. In the event any additional fees occur, SOAR will charge the payment method selected for future billings, and will notify you of the amount charged your credit card on file.

### **Cancellations:**

Upon cancellation, the tuition balance (excluding the registration deposit) will be refunded on the following schedule:

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| ▪ 61 days or more from course start date | Full refund |
| ▪ 31 – 60 days from course start date    | 50% refund  |
| ▪ 16 – 30 days from course start date    | 25% refund  |
| ▪ Within 15 days of course start date    | No Refund   |

SOAR reserves the right to cancel a course due to insufficient enrollment. If a student is removed from course for any reason, there will be no refund. This includes injury, illness, behavior, or any other reason.

### **Scholarship Fund:**

A limited number of scholarships are available to students based on financial need. Applicants are encouraged to contact SOAR early for necessary forms. SOAR's scholarship fund is raised from donations made by parents of current and former campers. If you are interested in contributing to this worthwhile fund, please speak to us! Your contributions are tax deductible.

## **Spending Money:**

Spending money for all course and layover days will be added to your invoice. **We have carefully evaluated the amount of spending money appropriate for each course and ask you not to send more money beyond the invoiced amount.** SOAR will not be responsible for any money sent over the recommended amount. Approximately \$15.00 of your child's spending money will be held aside for a celebratory dinner near the end of their course. The remainder of the spending money may be used by the student for souvenirs or necessary personal items during the course. Unspent money from purchases will be returned during the debrief. If requested, the staff will keep track of student spending through receipts, which may be returned to parents. This may be used to help teach financial accountability.

## **Damage to SOAR Equipment:**

Although we take precautions to ensure gear is treated respectfully, SOAR reserves the right to charge students for damage done to SOAR equipment due to negligence or non-compliance. This may include damage to tents, rental vans, cabins, etc. Parents will be notified of the damage occurred and will be billed in the amount necessary.

## **Tipping:**

This practice is NOT permitted at SOAR. Please share your appreciation in person or send a note to those persons you wish to thank. Some parents choose to contribute to the SOAR scholarship fund as a way of expressing extra thanks.

## **Web Site Pictures**

Each course director will carry a digital camera throughout each course and take pictures of the students participating in the various activities. These pictures will be uploaded the day the course ends and can then be accessed through your CampInTouch account. You can purchase prints or downloads through CampInTouch.

## **Inbrief & Debrief Process**

The inbrief and debrief meetings are crucial to all SOAR programs. If you are driving your camper to either the Balsam Base or Eagle View Ranch, the times you schedule your inbrief and debrief will serve as your arrival and departure times. Please do not plan on arriving earlier than your scheduled time. **This process typically takes about 30 minutes to one hour, so please take this into consideration when making your travel plans.**

During the inbrief, you will meet with one of your child's counselors to review their medications and goals for the program. During this time, you may also ask any last minute questions. The counselors will use the information gathered during the inbrief to complete a Student Achievement Plan, which will help them facilitate your child's SOAR experience and will be the foundation for the written Achievement Report you will receive at the end of the course **(except for specialty courses)**. During the debrief, you will review your child's experience on the course and will receive the written Achievement Report **(except for specialty courses)**. If your child will be flying to camp, we will be happy to conduct an inbrief via the telephone. Phone inbriefs are generally conducted earlier in the day so staff will not need to leave the group to conduct an inbrief. Likewise, phone debriefs will be conducted after the students leave the course. While it is crucial for your child to participate in this process, you may call the admissions office to request time alone with your child's counselors.

## Travel to Camp

**If your child will be flying to a course site, it is required to clear airline dates and times with SOAR Admissions before purchasing your ticket.** A copy of the itinerary should be sent to SOAR as soon as possible. Most airlines require a photo ID for children 16 years and older.



**NOTE:** Students under a certain age and flying alone may be required to pay an unaccompanied minor fee to the airline to and from their destination. Please make arrangements with your airline to pay these fees or any extra baggage fees as you purchase your tickets, as this is ultimately your responsibility. If the airline escort fee is unpaid for the return flight, SOAR will pay this fee and bill your credit card on file. Call your airline for any questions, as escort fees and restrictions vary. Due to scheduling issues that may arise, SOAR cannot guarantee the name of the person picking up and dropping off your child sooner than one week prior to the flight.

## When You Arrive at SOAR

A staff member will be waiting to greet when you pull into base or arrive at the airport. If arriving at base, you will be shown where to park and will be led to the registration area. One of the members from our admissions team will sign you in and ensure you have all necessary forms turned in. There will also be a chance for you to grab a quick snack before beginning your inbrief process. Once you are checked in, you will meet with one of your instructors. During the inbrief, you will review your camper's medication (if applicable), discuss goals for the course, and talk about any last minute questions. After the inbrief is completed, you will be led to your child's cabin where they can store their gear. Parents will then say goodbye as their campers meet with their group for some awesome games before dinner.

On the first night, all campers will meet together for dinner, and a first night ceremony. Each student will be presented with a gift that represents the number years they have completed at SOAR. This will be a great chance to get to know the other people in the group, and review what will take place over the next few days. This will also be the time when each group will form a "Full Value Contract," which details group guidelines for the duration of the course.

The next several days are exciting! Your child will have the chance to try out all kinds of awesome and fun activities. It will be an adventure they will never forget!

The last night of the course, each group will have a celebratory dinner and see a slideshow of pictures taken throughout their course and selected pictures from other courses. This allows each student to preview the variety of courses SOAR offers. These pictures will be available online for you to view. See the Web site pictures section for more details.

Thank you for your cooperation and patience with all of these details! Getting ready for camp is a huge task, even more so for us here at SOAR. Can you imagine getting over 600 campers ready for camp? The more you can do ahead of time the better. If you have questions, please feel free to e-mail [admissions@soarnc.org](mailto:admissions@soarnc.org) or call 828-456-3435.

Thank you so much for your consideration. We look forward to seeing you and your child soon!

