

**Darke County 4-H Camp
Cell Phone/Electronic Device Policy**

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE:

When campers have cell phones at camp, this can cause trust issues. When children come to camp, you are temporarily transferring their primary care from you as their parent to the camp staff. This is one of the growth-producing, yet challenging aspects of camp. As children learn to trust other caring adults, they grow and learn, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges. We believe this emerging independence is one of the greatest benefits of camp. It is one important way your child develops greater resilience and develops self-confidence – important life skills. When campers feel they must have the ability to call home, this essentially means they have not made this transition.

We can assure you that if your child is experiencing a challenge in their adjustment to camp, the 4-H Educator will contact you. If your child expresses concern about being away from you, you can help by sharing with them that there is always someone at camp available to help them. They will have access to trusted activity leaders, cabin counselors, camp directors and the medical staff.

We respectfully ask you to consider that if you send a cell phone to camp with your camper “in case they need you”, you are essentially communicating to your child that you as a parent have not truly come to peace with the notion of them being away from you and that you have reservations regarding our ability to care for your child. If you don’t trust us, your children certainly won’t.

VALUABLES:

Cell phones are expensive and can get lost or stolen. In addition, the physical camp environment is not kind to such items.

HIDING CELL PHONES:

We appreciate that most families will honor our request and support our reasoning for not using cell phones at camp. We also recognize that some families may feel that hiding a cell phone in camper luggage is OK because their child won’t get homesick or won’t abuse the opportunity. Why we ask for your support: if your child brings a cell phone and passes the phone to another child to use, it can have and has had a negative effect on the camp experience of the other child and their family. We ask that you are considerate of ALL camp children and respect other families as they help foster their child’s independence.

TEXTING:

We also understand that for many teens, and increasing numbers of younger children, texting is a favored means of communication. We certainly are not against this form of communication outside of camp. At camp, however, another goal of the camp experience is to connect with other people face to face and nurture the art of interpersonal communication. Texting friends outside of camp during the camp session, impedes the ability of campers’ freedom to truly benefit from this special aspect of camp and the process of building these new friendships. By leaving the cell phones at home, this does not become an issue.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS:

Another drawback of having cell phones at camp is the built-in camera. As with schools, there are camps around the country where children have secretly taken inappropriate photographs of other campers or staff and displayed them publicly. (We would recommend an inexpensive disposable camera with the camper’s

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name on it). Please help us maintain a safe environment by explaining this to your child. You should know that any camper that takes a compromising photograph of another camper or staff member and makes it public in any way may be subject to dismissal from camp and may not be allowed to return. If the law is broken, the appropriate authorities will be notified. This includes websites like, but not limited to, youtube.com, myspace.com and facebook.com.

iPOD TOUCH, iPODs and MUSIC/VIDEO STORAGE DEVICES:

We maintain a policy restricting the use of iPods and other types of music and video data storage devices at camp. Due to the capability of such devices to access the internet, download and store, in a private manner, easily available sexually explicit, degrading, foul and vulgar content, they are potentially inappropriate for use at camp. In addition, it is our aim to promote activities, whether formally planned, informal, or spontaneous during free time, that are inclusive and group oriented rather than exclusionary for private personal use or benefit. Counselors will typically have some type of device for music in the cabins.

Campers may choose to use these devices at rest time or bed time, but the devices are not permitted out of the cabins during the day's programming. A reminder: we highly discourage bringing expensive items such as these, to camp.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DATA/MESSAGES SENT:

Another concern regarding phones and electronic devices is the risk that others will gain access to your child's property. If a message/data is sent from their device, I have to assume that your child was responsible. I have no way of knowing if they granted someone else permission or if someone took the device without asking. Your camper will be held responsible for any data transmitted from their devices.

Cell Phone Policy Agreement Form

- Campers are not allowed to use cell phones at camp.
- Campers are restricted in their use of other electronic devices at camp.
- Campers are responsible for any information transmitted from their devices while at camp.
- If a device becomes a problem at camp, it will be held by the Camp Director until the end of camp.

I understand the above guidelines regarding cell phone and other devices.

Print Name of Camper: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Camper: _____

In this technology age it is difficult for youth to not be in contact via cell phone. Camp is a unique environment. We are trying to help youth develop life skills at camp including independence and self-reliance. Oftentimes homesickness, which is a normal part of a week at camp, can be worsened by talking to mom and dad. We respect and appreciate the wonderful relationship youth and families have, but if our campers are to enjoy camp fully they must be able to develop this independence. If there is an emergency or we are concerned about the youth's well-being, parents will be contacted.

I have read the above cell phone policy and agree to the guidelines stated, including that the cell phone & or other electronic devices will be taken to be returned at the conclusion of Camp if the policy is violated. I understand that if there is an emergency I may contact the camp at the phone numbers listed in the camp packet.

(Signature of Parent)

(Date)