

G. Homesick Camper Procedures

1. Homesickness will occasionally occur at 4-H camp. There are different ways to minimize homesickness, including homesickness prevention and homesickness treatment.

a. Homesickness prevention includes techniques that parents/guardians implement before camp begins, such as:

- Exposing campers to 4-H camp before camp begins (camp tour, etc.). To assist parents/guardians with this technique, camp directors should consider offering pre-camp tours, provide photos of camp on the camp's webpage, etc. This increases campers' level of comfort with camp because they better understand what to expect when they arrive at camp.
- Talking to campers about what they can expect to see and to at 4-H camp. To assist parents/guardians with this technique, camp directors should (again) provide photos and descriptions of the typical camp day, important camp locations like cabins/lodges, dining hall, activity buildings, program areas, campfire circle, etc. This also increases campers' level of comfort with camp because they better understand what to expect when they arrive at camp.
- Allowing campers to help with packing for camp.
- Normalizing campers' feelings of concern about leaving home by explaining to them that it's okay to miss home, and that they (campers) have the ability to be successful at camp even if they miss home.

b. Homesickness treatment includes techniques that camp directors and camp staff implement after camp has already begun, such as:

- Giving each camper a "buddy."
- Allowing campers to room with a friend.
- Keeping campers active and involved in camp activities, particularly the first day of camp.

2. Teen counselors should be trained to recognize the signs of homesickness and to immediately take action to get homesick campers involved in 4-H camp. Identify one or two paid or volunteer staff with experience addressing homesickness at camp who can deal with severe cases.

3. Allowing campers to call home can worsen homesickness. Camp directors should attempt other options before calling camper's parents/guardians about concerns with homesickness. Remember, campers are not allowed to use phones without the approval of unit Extension faculty/staff (or other person serving as camp director).

4. Parents/guardians should be contacted to pick-up the camper in the event that all other strategies are unsuccessful.