



Welcome to EcoTarium Camp!

We are thrilled that you have chosen the EcoTarium for your camp experience. In our program, campers connect with friends new and old, discover the wonders of science and nature, and gain independence while working with our amazing team of counselors and educators. At the EcoTarium we value each individual and aim to provide our campers with life-changing experiences.

We believe that camp is much more than childcare; camp is a community that helps make the greater world a better place through understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of science and nature.

This philosophy forms the basis of all that we do and builds a community that truly embraces and values differences between its members. In a community of this kind, true life lessons can be experienced, learned, practiced, and understood.

We have prepared this information package so that you can support your camper in being a part of our amazing community and experiencing all that camp has to offer. As camp draws closer, we ask that you sit down with your camper and discuss personal goals and expectations for their camp week.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us at campdirector@ecotarium.org or (508) 929-2721.

Looking forward to a great camp season!

Jason Gurtman
EcoTarium Manager of Educational Programs

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EcoTarium Camp Program Overview

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access

Camp at the EcoTarium includes youth and young adults of all backgrounds. Together we work to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, age, cultural background, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, ideology, income, nationality, race, or sexual orientation has the opportunity to reach their full potential with dignity, feel accepted, and enjoy being a part of the camp community. We encourage you to speak with your camper about the diversity that exists in the world and encourage them to speak with one of the counselors if they have questions or concerns. We believe that through enjoying camp together, differences are demystified and stereotypes can be questioned and explored.

Camp Goals & Outcomes

Our camp programs at the EcoTarium have always been designed to foster friendships, build confidence, and help campers explore the wonders of science and nature through hands-on, engaging activities. Given the circumstances of the world in the last few years, it is more important than ever that we succeed at accomplishing these goals.

Camp Philosophy

Our camp philosophy focuses on inquiry-based learning between campers and staff. We utilize both the museum building and natural outdoor grounds to encourage camper questioning and exploration of science under the guidance and supervision of experienced counselors and educators. We encourage children to experience the natural world with all of their senses and challenge them to look for new ways of understanding and interacting with the world around them in a safe, fun, and educational environment.

EcoTarium and Camp Mission

The mission of the EcoTarium is to inspire a passion for science and nature. This mission extends to our camp program, and it is our goal to nurture the natural curiosity of campers. We will encourage campers to ask questions about the world around them and guide them on journeys to find their own answers. Camp counselors are expected to promote the mission of the EcoTarium. It is a counselor's priority to encourage campers to take strong initiative in their own learning about their environment. Counselors and educators will present clear, well-planned, age-appropriate activities that relate to the EcoTarium's mission.

Camp Promises

All campers will:

- receive instruction and guidance from our staff;
- participate in a variety of fun and engaging hands-on activities, crafts, and experiments;
- see live animals up-close and personal;
- use scientific tools and processes to build an understanding of the natural world; and
- participate in both traditional camp activities and science-focused programming.

Each camp session will focus on a different theme. Campers who are returning for more than one session will have the opportunity to explore different areas of science while remaining within the same camp community. Campers will be divided into groups according to their age in order to provide each camper with age-appropriate objectives and activities. Although the camp is divided by age level, some activities will involve the entire camp community. Each day, campers

will join their respective group to receive instructions. Each group will approach camp topics in a different way using developmentally appropriate goals and processes.

Camp Licensing and Regulation

EcoTarium Summer Discovery Camp and Vacation Week Camp complies with Regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (105 CMR 430) and is licensed by the City of Worcester Board of Health. Information on these regulations can be obtained at 508-799-8531. Parents/guardians may request acknowledgement of staff background checks and policies on health care and discipline as allowed by law. Please contact campdirector@ecotarium.org with requests or to file any grievances.

Camp Checklist

Go through this list before the first day of camp to ensure that you and your camper are ready for a great week!

Forms and Information

Profile information and medical forms are due in the CampDoc system two weeks before the start of the camp session. Please sign into CampDoc to see specific requirements, and please reach out to the Camp Director if you have any trouble accessing the system or have questions about required forms.

Packing List

Sending your camper with the items below will allow them to have the most fun at camp! It is very important that all belongings are contained and that the camper can repack them after getting what they need throughout the day. We recommend zip-top bags within the camper's day pack for easiest access.

Mandatory Daily Items

- Shirt that covers shoulders to prevent sunburn
- Pants or shorts that allow movement and participation in all camp activities
- Sturdy, closed-toe shoes
- Socks, plus an extra pair of socks
- Hat and/or sunglasses
- Change of clothes
- Reusable water bottle filled with water
- Sunscreen (non-aerosol)
- Insect repellent (non-aerosol)
- Non-perishable lunch
- A morning and an afternoon snack
- Personal medications in original containers to be turned in at check-in
- Raincoat or poncho (as needed)
- Rain boots (as needed)

Do Not Bring

Any prohibited items brought to camp will be held in the camp office until the end of the day, including cell phones. This policy is intended to keep our camp community safe and to allow campers and staff to focus on camp and each other without distraction.

- Digital technology of any kind, including cell phones (e-readers are okay)
- Gum
- Tobacco, THC, illegal drugs, alcohol
- Weapons of any kind, including toys
- Expensive or irreplaceable items
- Pocket knives
- Personal sports equipment
- Pets

Camper Expectations and Perspectives

Talk to your camper about what they can expect at camp. Help build excitement for their time as a camper and gently explore any concerns they may have. Review any tactics and behaviors that your camper may find helpful during camp, like taking turns or counting to ten when frustrated. Let your camper know that the counselors and staff are safe people to talk to if they are having trouble and are there to support them!

Here is a “packing list” of positive perspectives for campers which will help them prepare for a successful camp session:

- Expect camp to be a new experience even if you have been before.
- Be a friend to others and you will make new friends.
- See the unexpected as an exciting surprise.
- For returning campers: remember that each session is a different experience with new campers, counselors, and activities. Help newer campers have an awesome time at camp with you!
- Be prepared to HAVE FUN!

Camp Program Information

Camp Activities

Camp at the EcoTarium is an engaging mix between a traditional recreational day camp and an education-focused camp program. We are uniquely positioned as an indoor-outdoor museum to deliver this type of program. Campers will have a great time playing games and making new friends, with the added bonus of learning about the world around us!

Daily Schedule

On any given day at camp campers may go from building a wind turbine to free play at the Nature Explore playground to working with one of our Zookeepers to deliver enrichment to our animals. Please see below for an example of what a daily camp schedule may look like on a space-themed week. Water breaks, bathroom breaks, and sunscreen reminders occur throughout the day. The structure of each camp day will vary across groups and camp sessions, and it may be adjusted to adapt to the ages and interests of the campers.

8:45–9:15am – Camper Drop-off: Play games with their group and counselors while waiting for everyone to arrive.

9:15–9:30am – Morning Meeting: Circle up with your group to discuss plans and goals for the day before heading out to continue the fun!

9:45–10:30am – Design Challenge: Work with one of the museum educators to build a bridge that can hold a certain amount of weight using Keva blocks. Can you work together to build a bridge that can support a counselor?

10:30–10:45am – Morning Snack: Eat a snack with their group on Sundial Plaza.

10:45–11:15am – Rovers: Learn about interplanetary exploration and drive one of our model rovers across treacherous terrain!

11:15am–12:00pm – Morning Walk: Take a stroll on the trail around the lower pond and look for a variety of living things. Complete a tree scavenger hunt while learning about tree identification!

12:00–12:30pm – Lunch: Eat at the Nature Explore picnic tables.

12:30–1:00pm – Planetarium: Learn about the Apollo missions in the Alden Digital Planetarium.

1:15–2:15pm – Choices Time: Run around and play games with friends, read a book in the shade of a tree, work together on craft projects, create mud pies and sand castles with water from the stream, or head down to the pond to look for frogs!

2:15–2:30pm – Afternoon Snack: Eat a snack with their group on Pine Hill.

2:30–3:00pm – Camouflage: Play a camp game on Pine Hill. Hide behind trees and try not to be spotted as you inch toward the finish line!

3:00–3:45pm – Stomp Rockets: Build and test paper rockets on our stomp rocket launchers before trying out the pneumatic rocket launcher and sending a rocket flying across Sundial Plaza!

3:45–4:15pm – Pick-Up: Play games with your group until your caregiver arrives. We'll see you tomorrow!

Museum Exhibits, Alden Digital Planetarium, and Explorer Express Train

Campers will have designated time during each camp session for indoor museum exploration. Campers will also have designated times throughout each camp session to experience the Alden Digital Planetarium.

The Explorer Express Train runs seasonally and closes during the Winter months. At this time, we expect that the train will be open for campers during both April Vacation Week Camp and Summer Camps.

Camper Behavior

Behavior Management Policies

We facilitate a camp behavior management policy with an emphasis on prevention, positive reinforcement, redirection, and the development of self-discipline for campers. Expectations are established for the safety of campers, staff, and the public and to ensure that everyone at camp shares a common code of conduct. Behavioral guidance shall be consistent and based upon an understanding of the individual needs and development of each child. The EcoTarium shall respond to camper behavior with the goals of maximizing the growth and development of campers and protecting the group and individuals within camp. If a child is struggling to meet

the behavioral expectations of our program, a caregiver conference is arranged. If the behavior continues this can result in dismissal from camp.

Corporal punishment, including spanking, is prohibited. No camper shall ever be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse. No camper shall be denied food, water, or shelter as a form of punishment. No child shall be punished for soiling or wetting themselves or for not using the toilet.

Camper Expectations

All campers are expected to demonstrate mutual respect for each other and for the staff. In order to provide the safest environment possible, we require strict adherence to all camp expectations and policies.

Our expectations fall under three categories, and will be reviewed with campers at the beginning of each session.

- 1. Be safe**
 - Keep yourself safe
 - Be safe with others
 - Be safe with equipment and materials
- 2. Be respectful**
 - To yourself
 - To all campers and staff
 - To museum visitors
 - To museum property and camp supplies
 - To the environment
- 3. Have fun!**
 - Explore new things
 - Try something new
 - Celebrate failures and move forward
 - Keep trying and ask for help

We practice a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR HITTING. Campers who repeatedly strike other campers or counselors will, at minimum, be sent home for the day. We also practice a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR BULLYING. Harassing or bullying other campers will initiate a caregiver conference and may result in the camper being sent home for at least one day. Camper fees are non-refundable if a camper is sent home for disciplinary reasons. Camp groups will go into further details about these expectations and guidelines with their counselors.

Discipline Procedure

If a camper is unable to follow behavior guidelines and camper expectations, the following steps will be taken as challenges progress:

1. Staff will redirect the camper to more appropriate behavior.
2. If inappropriate behavior continues, the camp counselor and camper will review and discuss behavior guidelines and camp rules.
3. If the camper's behavior does not meet expectations and is affecting the experience of other campers, they will receive a "strike one" warning. A Camp Director will be notified, and they will notify the camper's caregiver.

4. If inappropriate behavior continues, campers will receive a “strike two” warning, in which case the Camp Director will notify the camper’s caregiver and arrange for a meeting.
5. If inappropriate behavior continues, the camper may be dismissed from camp.

If acts of violence or severe disrespect occur, an incident report may need to be completed and in some cases reported to the local Department of Public Health.

If a camper leaves the EcoTarium property without camp staff permission, 9-1-1 will be called immediately.

All strike incidents and/or immediate dismissals will be kept on record.

Immediate Intervention

There are some behaviors and actions that will require immediate intervention from the camp program staff, in direct consultation with the camp leadership team. Since behaviors and actions are situation-dependent, it will be the Camp Directors’ decision whether the act(s) will result in a trauma-informed intervention, automatic strike 2, or immediate dismissal from the camp program. See below for examples of behavior and actions that may result in intervention, automatic strike 2, or immediate dismissal (please note this is not a comprehensive list of behaviors and actions, and appropriate next steps after any behavior are up to the Camp Directors’ discretion):

- Hitting, pushing, shoving, spitting, and/or biting
- Throwing objects
- Inappropriate language and/or subject matter
- Repeatedly not following directions and constantly distracting staff from routine activities
- Severe disrespect for staff, campers, volunteers, and/or visitors
- Instigation of fighting
- Harassment and/or bullying of any kind
- Leaving the program and/or camper group without permission
- Theft
- Destruction of property
- Falsely reporting emergencies and/or fire
- Sexual misconduct
- Possession of weapons or blades of any kind
- Possession of fireworks, matches, and/or lighters
- Possession and/or consumption of illegal drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and/or drug paraphernalia
- Possession of pornography
- Threat of bodily harm to self, others, and/or animals
- Intentionally endangering the safety of self and/or others

Camp Operations

Hours

Camp operates from 9:00am to 4:00pm Monday through Friday. Please help us keep camp running efficiently by arriving on time and allowing for extra time to enter through the gate when dropping off and picking up campers.

Entering Museum Grounds

All vehicles must enter through the main entrance and stop at the Gatehouse to speak with the attendant before continuing to the upper parking lot area. Pets of any kind will not be permitted through the gate onto the museum grounds, per federal regulations. Service animals while under the control of their handler are permitted on site as they are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for their person with a disability.

Morning drop-off runs from 8:45 to 9:15am and pick-up runs from 3:45 to 4:15pm every day. Caregivers will bring their camper(s) to the drop-off or pick-up location to check in with camp staff, then leave grounds through the main entrance.

Morning Drop-Off

Campers are to be dropped off between 8:45 and 9:15am. If you are running more than 5 minutes late, or your child will be absent from camp for any reason, please email campdirector@ecotarium.org or call (508) 929-2721. *Do not call or email while driving. If already on your way, please locate a safe place to park your car before contacting camp.*

Afternoon Pick-Up

Camp regulations prohibit the EcoTarium from releasing a child to anyone who is not confirmed as an authorized release contact in CampDoc and/or who lacks a photo ID, even if we have seen you on previous days. Pick-up takes place promptly between 3:45 and 4:15pm. **You must show a photo ID and be an authorized release contact in CampDoc** before campers will be released to your care.

Late Pick-Up Policy

All campers must be picked up between 3:45 and 4:15pm. \$5.00 per 5-minute increment later than 4:15pm will be charged and is due immediately. If you are running late to pick up your camper, please call the Camp Directors immediately. The purpose of this policy is to respect both the hours of operation of the program and the cost of staff time.

If a caregiver does not arrive or call within 5 minutes past the designated pick-up time, staff will begin to call the authorized release contacts for the camper. If no authorized release contact can be reached within one hour past the designated pick-up time, the Camp Directors and EcoTarium management may make the decision to contact proper authorities.

Early Pick-Up

If you are picking up a camper at any time, including earlier than 3:45pm, you must be listed on the list of authorized release contacts in CampDoc and present your photo ID at pick-up. Please give the Camp Directors at least 24 hours' notice of any anticipated early release.

Transportation

EcoTarium camps are caregiver-transport only, and we are unable to provide transportation to or from camp each day. If you have a challenge with transportation that is limiting your camper's ability to attend camp, please reach out to the Camp Directors at campdirector@ecotarium.org.

Lunches and Snacks

All campers must bring a nut-free, balanced lunch and two snacks to camp every day. We suggest a sandwich, fruit juice or water, crackers and cheese, carrots or other vegetables, fruit, and other similar fare. Please plan for meals that do not need refrigeration or reheating.

Coolers, thermoses, ice packs, and/or insulated lunch boxes are encouraged for any food that requires temperature control. Microwaves and toaster ovens will not be available to campers due to time constraints and limited resources. Direct purchases by campers from the onsite food vendor or vending machines are strictly prohibited during camp.

Nut-free Policy

Food brought to the camp program must be peanut and tree nut free. As a public-facing museum, we cannot guarantee that food brought or purchased on-site by museum visitors is nut free. Our goal is to create the most welcoming and inclusive camp community possible, and allowing our campers with severe allergies to feel safe and comfortable in our program is a part of achieving this goal. Camp staff will be trained and equipped to prevent and manage allergy emergencies, and campers with anaphylaxis risk should still bring an epinephrine auto injector to camp as needed. Please feel free to reach out to the camp director with any questions, or if you would like recommendations of nut-free lunches and snacks.

Camp Staff

Camp Staff are enthusiastic, talented, and caring individuals. We carefully select staff based on maturity, program skills, experience, and their ability to serve as role models. Our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and capable young adults we can hire—counselors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of that pledge. All staff must attend an intensive pre-camp training session to bond as a team and gain skills to ensure a successful program, including safety, activity planning, camper care, team building, and much more. Safety is our priority, with healthcare supervisors certified in First Aid and CPR/AED, and we conduct thorough staff criminal (CORI) and sex offender (SORI) background checks. In accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and licensing by the local board of health, you have the right to request proof of background checks, camp healthcare policies, discipline policies, and policies for filing grievances.

The legally mandated staff to camper ratio is 1:10 for 7-14 year-old campers and 1:5 for campers under the age of 7. In order to enable counselors to take breaks and to observe proper health and safety measures within their group, each camp group will be assigned at least two staff members. In addition, members of our year-round Zoological and Education staff facilitate specialty programming at designated times for each camp group.

Off-season Communication with Camp Staff

Our staff work with your children in the context of a visible, well-scrutinized environment that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised by senior staff guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to co-workers and campers. We hire our staff for the camp season and cannot take responsibility for their behavior outside of the camp season. We recognize that campers and counselors develop close trusting relationships with one another at camp and that these relationships are healthy, wholesome, and beneficial to campers and staff alike. We also recognize that some campers and staff like to keep in contact after camp. Camp staff have clear expectations in staff-to-camper interactions while on-site, but when not at camp, the EcoTarium is unable to monitor all interactions. We also know that children may share contact information (e.g., e-mail address, social media profiles, cell phone numbers) with counselors without our or your specific awareness or permission. We recommend that you as the caregiver supervise your

child's online activities just as you do other aspects of their life in your home and oversee any off-season contact between staff members and your child. You take full responsibility to oversee any contact that results. If you would like resources on keeping your child safe on the internet, please contact us for a collection of tips and links to information. Our goal is to keep your child safe both in and out of camp!

Museum Gift Shop and Money at Camp

Please do not send your child to camp with money. Campers will not be permitted to purchase anything from the museum gift shop or snack area during camp.

Federal Tax ID Number

Camp fees may be tax deductible for some families. Our Taxpayer Identification Number is 04-2105868. Please keep this number with your tax information. Your camper confirmation can be used as a receipt of your payment. If you need an additional receipt, please email reservations@ecotarium.org.

Refund Policy

Please see our full refund and cancellation policy linked on our camp website.

Health Policies and Procedures

Medical Forms

All camper health and permission forms will be submitted electronically through the secure CampDoc platform. All camper health information must be submitted at least two weeks before camp starts. In accordance with Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations, any camper without the forms turned in will not be able to attend camp until required camp paperwork is received and processed. We also request that camper photos uploaded to CampDoc are not more than one (1) year old.

These forms provide camp staff information about how to keep your child safe, happy, and healthy. Please be forthcoming with information through both forms and direct communication prior to the start of camp to help us ensure a positive and successful experience for all. If there are additional questions, concerns, or information about your child that you feel would be helpful for us to know, please contact the Camp Directors at campdirector@ecotarium.org or (508) 929-2721.

Immunizations

Immunization requirements per the Massachusetts Department of Public Health can be found [here](#) in the linked [Required Immunizations for Children Attending Camp](#) document.

Exceptions to these requirements are also prescribed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in 105 CMR 430:

- Religious Exceptions. If a camper or staff member has religious objections to physical examinations or immunizations, the camper or staff member shall submit a written statement, signed by a parent or legal guardian of the camper, to the effect that the individual is in good health and stating the reason for such objections.
- Immunization Contraindicated. Any immunization specified in 105 CMR 430.152 shall not be required if the health history required by 105 CMR 430.151 includes a certification by a physician that he or she has examined the individual and that in the physician's

opinion the physical condition of the individual is such that his or her health would be endangered by such immunization.

Campers who do not meet the above requirements are not able to participate in our program. If you have questions, please contact us at campdirector@ecotarium.org.

Medications

All medications (prescription or over-the-counter), must be given to the Camp Directors in the *original* container at the beginning of the camp session. Written documentation of dosage and medication instructions must be submitted through CampDoc for each medication. Medication will be kept in a locked box and administered by the on-site healthcare supervisor. This includes over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or Motrin. According to Massachusetts regulations, we are not allowed to give any medications to your child without your prior written permission. Your child will not be allowed to hold their own medication with the exception of a rescue inhaler or an epinephrine injector, contingent upon the caregiver having completed the necessary form permitting their camper to self-administer these medications.

Aides and Behavioral Considerations

We aim to work with children who receive support at school in the form of behavioral aides, IEPs/BIPs for learning and behavioral development, etc., and their caregivers to ensure a positive experience for everyone. To facilitate accommodations to best support your child, camp staff request a minimum of three (3) weeks' notice of camper need. If an aide or caregiver regularly assists your child at school, we welcome and encourage the aide to attend camp alongside your child. Please note that all aides must pass standard CORI and SORI background checks and complete a brief orientation prior to the start of camp per Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidelines.

Medical Conditions and Assistive Devices

If a camper requires any assistive device (wheelchair, braces, communication board, etc.) or other accommodation (specialized medication protocol, major allergy, etc.), please contact the Camp Director a minimum of three (3) weeks in advance of the camp session so that proper support can be provided for each camper and their respective camp group.

Sun Exposure and Dehydration

To protect against sunburn, sunscreen of SPF 25 or greater can be used. Application before going to camp and with periodic reapplication throughout the camp day is most effective. Please show your camper how to use sunscreen and send a supply with them. Staff will remind and assist campers as necessary but are unable to directly apply sunscreen on campers.

Liquid intake is critical to our body's health. Providing a marked water bottle with a shoulder strap is an encouragement to your camper to remember to drink water regularly during the day. Counselors will also remind campers and lead them to drink water throughout the day.

Insect and Tick Exposure

Much of camp takes place on our outdoor grounds, and we have plenty of mosquitoes; insect repellent or protective clothing is advised. Insect repellent is important. Please talk with your camper about its importance and application. Consult your own doctor for their recommendation of the best insect repellent for your child. Long sleeves and long pants are suggested alternatives to repellents.

When outside, there is always a risk of campers being bitten by a tick. Tell your camper to check over their own bodies for ticks at least once or twice a day. They should check their hair and areas where clothing is tight or in body folds. If they do find a tick, campers should alert their counselor, who will take them to the healthcare supervisor to remove it.

For more information about communicable diseases including [Lyme Disease](#), please see the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [Fact Sheets on Infectious Diseases](#). If you would like a printed copy, please contact a Camp Director.

Communicable Disease

Per Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations, each case of communicable disease listed as reportable under 105 CMR 300.000: *Reportable Diseases and Isolation and Quarantine Requirements* will be immediately reported to the Board of Health and Department of Public Health. Such report will include the name and home address of any individual in the camp known to have or suspected of having such disease. Until action on such case has been taken by the camp health care consultant, strict isolation of affected individuals will be maintained.

Each suspected case of food poisoning or any unusual prevalence of any illness in which fever, rash, diarrhea, sore throat, vomiting, or jaundice is a prominent symptom will be reported immediately to the Board of Health and to the Department of Public Health.

For more information about communicable diseases including [meningococcal disease](#), please see the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [Fact Sheets on Infectious Diseases](#). If you would like a printed copy, please contact a Camp Director.