

OCA Statement on Backyard Camps and Alternatives To Day Camp

The OCA is founded on the understanding that running a camp is a complex and risk-filled operation. The OCA exists to support and accredit camps to meet high [standards](#) of addressing the multitude of risks that camps can face. OCA Member camps know that a scandal or tragedy in any camp hurts the entire industry, and therefore we all have a stake in how camps in Ontario are run.

With the constraints placed on both overnight and day camps this summer, the OCA is concerned about a proliferation in less formal "camp" arrangements arising as substitutes. These are expected to take the form of backyard or driveway camps, or rent-a-counsellor programs. While the OCA recognizes the efforts of those trying to meet the need created with the restrictions on camps, the OCA believes that many of these programs may fall short in their levels of management and organizational infrastructure and/or risk management expertise to run safe and effective programs given the numerous risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Without the kind of thoughtful rigor that the OCA accreditation process provides, these non-accredited programs raise risks for campers, families, staff, volunteers and potentially for the industry as a whole.

Further, the OCA urges its member camps to be cautious about providing these camp experiences themselves and in particular, developing any relationship with these newly-formed programs, including referring campers and families, or lending support for rent-a-counsellor programs that are not directly under member camps' supervision. For any member camp who does choose to have a relationship, the OCA strongly recommends being very clear on the restrictions in place, seeking legal advice and advising insurers. For any of these programs that intend to run child care programs instead of camps, the OCA additionally recommends that they review the [restrictions on childcare](#) in place and the differentiation between childcare and recreational programs as outlined in the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#).

OCA Press Release June 10, 2020

The OCA has issued a press release regarding the opening of day camps in Ontario. [Click here to read it.](#)