

Outdoor Education Teacher's Manual



Camp Chief Hector YMCA
Outdoor Education
2025/2026

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Site address:
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PO Box 250
Exshaw, Alberta T0L 2C0



Welcome to Camp Chief Hector YMCA!

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to Camp Chief Hector YMCA, where the classroom has no walls, and learning happens under towering trees, beside flowing rivers, and beneath the vast mountain sky!

We know that bringing students to an outdoor education program is a big decision, and we want you to know—we're here to make this an exciting, smooth, and meaningful experience for both you and your students. My name is Roody, and I work closely with our Outdoor Education Supervisor, Emily, to ensure your time at camp is engaging, well-organized, and full of those magical "aha" moments that outdoor learning can provide.

At Camp Chief Hector, students step into a new role, explore new friendships, and return to the classroom with new energy and confidence. Whether it's the thrill of their first night away from home, the wonder of stargazing in the mountains, or the joy of singing at campfire, these experiences have a lasting impact. In fact, many of our counsellors were once students who came here and later returned to share that same magic with the next generation!

What This Experience Offers You

This trip isn't just for the students—you'll also get a chance to see them in a new light. With our trained and passionate counsellors leading activities, you'll have the opportunity to observe, step back, and connect with students in ways that aren't always possible in a traditional classroom. It's a chance to watch them shine in unexpected ways and build confidence in an environment that encourages curiosity, teamwork, and adventure.

What Makes Camp Special?

Let's be honest—how often can your students say they went camping in the mountains and still learned something? Our unique location in the Canadian Rockies provides an incredible backdrop for hands-on learning, teamwork, and personal growth.

Looking Forward to Seeing You!

If you're unsure just how magical camp can be, we'd love to show you! Feel free to reach out to us with any questions—or better yet, schedule a visit for a tour and experience the magic yourself!

We can't wait to welcome you and your students to Camp Chief Hector YMCA.

See you soon,
Andrew "Roody" McAllister
Manager, Outdoor Education and Weekend Departments





IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Emily Easton - Outdoor Education Supervisor

Ph: 403-650-4559

Email: emily.easton@ymcacalgary.org

Outdoor Education Team - General Inquiries

Email: outdoor.education@ymcacalgary.org

Patrik Peter - Executive Chef

Email: patrik.peter@ymcacalgary.org

Andrew 'Roody' McAllister - Manager, Outdoor Education and Weekend Programs

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Camp Chief Hector YMCA - Main Office - Limited Hours (Sept-April)

Ph: 1-833-299-2267

Email: cchy@ymcacalgary.org





LOGISTICS

YMCA Calgary Camp Chief Hector

Location

Camp Chief Hector YMCA is located approximately one hour west of Calgary. Travel west on the Trans-Canada Highway towards Canmore and Banff. Exit to the right at the sign for the "Rocky Mountain YMCA" (**Exit 114A – after the overpass**). At the stop sign, turn right and follow the road for 4km. Park in the first parking lot for Bowfort Lodge. Continue down the road for 2km for Hector Lodge.

Accommodations & Meals

Camp Chief Hector YMCA has indoor accommodations for students attending ECO-School in the Fall and Winter Seasons. During our Spring season, most students and teachers will be staying in yurts. Each yurt is fully enclosed from the elements, has a wood-fire stove. Additionally, each yurt will have a counsellor assigned to it, who will be "bunking in" with the students each night, teachers will have their own yurts, located in their school's section to help with any issues that may arise. If students are attending the OES Program in the spring, they will usually be in our indoor accommodations.

Students eat meals (served family-style) in one of our two main lodges. Camp provides three meals per day as well as a nutritious snack in the evening during campfire. We are able to accommodate almost any allergy and dietary restriction. If you have any questions about specific severe allergies or restrictions, please do not hesitate to contact our Executive Chef Patrik (contact information is included above).

Fees, Deposits & Cancellations

Outdoor Education fees are subject to GST. Families pay all fees directly to the school and the school pays Camp. Fees include counsellors, meals, accommodations, activities and busing. Due to logistics around food and staffing costs, we cannot offer refunds or reduced fees for students who must arrive late or leave early for any reason.

Schools are registered with estimated student numbers. A deposit of 10% is required to secure the booking and will be invoiced in full, following your booking. Schools will be invoiced for the remaining amount within 3 business days after departing Camp, based on the total number of students who attended or the minimum number of participants expected in accordance with our cancellation policy.

Outdoor School bookings are made many months in advance and are difficult to replace if cancelled. Cancellations received more than 90 days prior to your booking start date are entitled to a full refund of the deposit. Cancellations that are received less than 90 days prior to your program start date may not be entitled to a refund. Please see the cancellation policy for deadlines on cancellations and updating of participant numbers.





TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES AT OUTDOOR SCHOOL

Student Groupings

Camp Chief Hector YMCA has indoor accommodations for students attending ECO-School in the Fall and Winter Seasons. During our Spring season, most students and teachers will be staying in yurts. Each yurt is fully enclosed from the elements, has a wood-fire stove. Additionally, each yurt will have a counsellor assigned to it, who will be "bunking in" with the students each night, teachers will have their own yurts, located in their school's section to help with any issues that may arise. If students are attending the OES Program in the spring, they will usually be in our indoor accommodations.

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Evening Activities

Teachers are responsible for providing classroom meetings and recreational evening activities to students in the early evening. This happens directly after dinner (~6:15 PM) until students meet their counselors for evening snack and campfire promptly at 8:00 PM. Planning a schedule and arranging supplies for the three evenings of your stay will help you and your peers have a comfortable system when you are at Outdoor School. Some schools prefer to set up a rotation over the three nights or have teachers run activities for students in their own class. Having students sign up for activities before arriving at camp or during classroom meetings also helps to decrease confusion during transition times. We will not be having camp staff sign up the students, as this results in confusion and missed students. Please contact the Outdoor Education Team if you need evening activity or classroom meeting ideas. Some program areas such as the Outdoor Games Court will need to be shared between schools. Indoor space is very limited for Eco-School and Outdoor Experiential School during classroom meetings so its best to plan to be outside. If your plans require sports equipment or supplies, you should bring these items with you to camp.

Food Restrictions, Allergies, and Medications

Teachers will be expected to support students who have allergies or dietary restrictions during meal times. This includes making sure they are aware of allergies that might be in the food served (listed and announced before the meal), as well as helping them with getting the alternative meals prepared by the kitchen.

Teachers will be responsible for managing all medication administration, as well as securely storing those medications throughout their time at camp.





Student Support

Participating in activities with your students is one of your main roles at Outdoor School. You will notice some of the students you were most concerned about show you sides of their personalities that you've never seen. You will be amazed by the maturity and courage of other students. To benefit from these changes, and to help them along, you must be sharing this experience with your students and helping them make the proper choices. Teachers are welcome to move between activity groups to see all their students in action, but it is expected that activity groups should have a teacher with them most of the time. The Exploration Day Hikes, Predator Prey and bed times, in particular, are activities where we request teacher support.

Please check your school board's regulations for field trip supervision requirements and expectations.

Counsellor Support

YMCA Outdoor Education staff are experienced with youth in the outdoors but are not teachers themselves. They appreciate your feedback and tips for dealing with students when it is delivered in a timely, supportive, and positive fashion. As students learn from them, it would be great for our staff to learn from your experiences with curriculum and youth. If a counsellor is having a particularly challenging time with a student, they may ask for a teacher to join their group for extra support. We like to deliver feedback to our staff as well.

Please provide positive and constructive feedback to the Outdoor Education Counsellors, Coordinator or Supervisor at any time throughout the week.

Campfire & Bed

Teachers are encouraged to participate/perform at campfire and to sit among the students to help them focus. After campfire, students head to bed. Teachers are expected to help with bedtime and to support the counsellors until the students have mostly settled. Before or after campfire is a great time to deliver evening medications and for any necessary student phone calls in the main lodge. When saying goodnight to your students, please support the counsellors by maintaining a calm and quiet presence in the dorms during the bedtime routine.

Student Care

Our first priority is to ensure the physical and emotional safety of our young clients. Student care is a collaborative effort between YMCA staff, teachers, parent/guardians, and the students themselves. Like at school, teachers act in loco parentis (in the place of a parent) and are ultimately responsible for their students while they are attending Outdoor School. YMCA staff, who have a duty to care for clients at the Outdoor Education programs, will consult with you about concerns regarding your students. Similarly, you should keep the YMCA informed of any changing circumstances in regards to your students. Please do not remove a student from a group without informing their counsellor.





HEALTH & SAFETY

YMCA Staff Requirements

All YMCA staff are required to have current Standard First Aid and CPR certification. Additionally, some of our staff have training in wilderness or remote first-aid, hiking instruction, and high challenge course facilitation. We provide 5 – 6 days of staff training at the beginning of every Outdoor Education season and we continue to work on staff and program development throughout the season. In order to be employed by YMCA Calgary, all staff also need a clean and current criminal record check including a vulnerable sector search.

First Aid

YMCA staff are trained in emergency procedures and will act in the case of a first-aid situation or other incident. Teachers will be asked to coordinate non-emergency decisions such as transportation, and to handle communication to principals and parent/guardians. The YMCA Coordinators and Supervisor are eager to consult with teachers to make these important decisions as the need arises. Our goal is for students to either return quickly to program, or access the support they need to feel safe and be comfortable. We do not have a nurse or doctor employed on site. YMCA Staff members carry first aid kits, and we have an automatic external defibrillator, splints, and ice on site. We try our best to accommodate the physical needs of students who are feeling unwell or who have limited mobility. The best decisions and plans are made between parents, physicians, teachers, and YMCA staff. In many cases, students who are ill can only recover at home.

Medication

Organising and dispensing medications is the responsibility of the teachers who visit our site. Please collect and label all medications for the students in your school and create a recording system to track their administration. Students who carry inhalers, or EpiPens may still do so at Outdoor Education. All other prescription and over-the-counter medications must be in the teachers' possession. Due to school board regulations, we do not have any medications on-site available for student use, so it is a good idea to bring some over the counter medications like Tylenol and Benadryl, just in case. Ideal times to distribute medications are during meals and just after campfire before bed.

Student Transportation

Teachers are responsible for having one personal vehicle on site for their school. This car will be used to transport students to Canmore or Calgary for medical treatment in non-emergencies. In case of emergency, EMS will be called. Bus transportation to students from Calgary is provided by **First Student, or Southland**. We will book these buses for you if your school is located in Calgary or an outside area serviced by this company. Please call or email if you are unsure about your busing arrangements. Unless otherwise noted, buses are booked to arrive at your school at 9:30 AM on the day of departure, to leave by 10:00 AM. One bus is booked for every 30 students, with a separate bus for the luggage. Buses return to school between 2:00 and 2:30 PM on the afternoon of your final day at camp, depending on where you are located in the city.





Parent Contact

Schools are encouraged to bring a cell phone for parent contact. If a parent does call a CCHY staff member, we will take down all the information and pass the message on to the child's teacher. We encourage a proactive approach to parent communication and ask teachers to call home during Classroom Meeting time to let parents know about any incidents such as injuries, bullying, fights or large animal encounters.

Supervision

Students are supervised by YMCA staff and teachers. If students need to move from one area to another, for example, from an activity area to the washroom, they travel in partners. At night, YMCA staff supervise our student dormitories. Counsellors have a communication device in each dormitory. The remainder of the staff team and teachers are close-by and readily available in case of an overnight emergency. YMCA staff carry communication devices to maintain contact with the Outdoor Education Coordinators and Supervisor as needed. It is expected that teachers are participating in program activities with students, attending campfire and lending support at mealtimes and bedtime. Please check your school board's regulations in regards to daytime and overnight supervision requirements for teachers.

Activity Risks

In general, injuries at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA are similar to the types of injuries that occur in elementary school gym classes, during recess and playing outside. Because our activities take place outside, there is a risk of falls, joint injury, and scrapes as students move from area to area or as they run during wide-games. Every year we have a few students who visit the hospital in Canmore for a few stitches or to assess an injured arm or leg. Some areas, such as the low challenge course, have potential for short falls, so students are trained as spotters to support their peers under staff supervision. Staff carry first-aid kits at all times when they are working with a group of students.

Environmental Risks

The Bow Valley is an area prone to rapid and drastic weather changes. All students should be prepared for wind, snow, rain, and scorching sun all in the same week. The packing list included in the Parent/Guardian's Manual should be followed so students have the warm layers, extra socks, and sunscreen that are required for a comfortable stay. It is better to come over-prepared than to have a wet/cold or hot/burnt student. Our outdoor activities continue in most weather conditions. We share our Bow Valley home with a number of wild creatures and there is the possibility that students could cross paths with a bear, cougar, elk or coyote during their stay at Outdoor School. Students travel in groups when hiking and participating in activities and counsellors carry bear spray. We are very mindful of our waste management system and work closely with the local conservation officers to monitor animal activity on our site.





PACKING LIST (FOR TEACHERS – can be used to make one for students)

Outdoor Gear

- Raincoat/Rain pants
- Winter Jacket/Snow pants
- Warm Mittens
- Running shoes/hiking shoes
- Warm winter boots (lined)
- Thermal underwear bottoms and top
- Warm layer (i.e. fleece)
- Warm socks (i.e. wool)
- Toque/beanie
- Day pack and water bottle

Clothing

- Pajamas
- Sweaters/Shirts
- Pants/Jeans
- Casual shoes/sandals
- Shorts/T-shirts
- Socks
- Slippers or indoor shoes for lodges and dorms

Fun Stuff (optional)

- Musical instrument
- Books/Journal
- Camera
- Evening Activity supplies
 - Arts and Crafts
 - Sports Equipment
 - Board Games, Cards, Chess Boards
 - Classroom Journals

Reader's Theatre scripts, story books

Personal Articles

- Towel(s)
- Toothbrush & Toothpaste & Dental Floss
- Lip Balm
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Soap/Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Comb or Brush
- Sleeping bag
- Sheets
- Pillow and pillow case
- Blanket
- Flashlight/Headlamp
- Personal Medications
- Tylenol, Advil, etc.
- Alarm Clock

Outdoor School Support

- Student Information Forms
- Parent Contact Information
- Copies of your school board's documentation (i.e. incident reports)
- Cell Phone
- First Aid Kit
- Medication
- Copies of Rosters





Parent Meeting

Parent/guardians need to be informed on the nature of extended field trips such as an Outdoor Education experience. A teacher, principal or member of the YMCA Outdoor Education team will share a presentation that highlights how the needs of students will be met, how risk is managed, and what activities they will complete during their stay. The meeting should take approximately 30 minutes, with a question period following.

We are now offering virtual meetings available for parents hosted through Microsoft Teams, or at the invite of the school's preferred platform. In these meetings, all content will remain the same and will facilitate questions and answers for parents as well. In-person meetings can be requested for unique situations, while virtual meetings can be set for almost any weekday evening between 4:00 – 7:00 pm.

If you are an experienced teacher with our Outdoor Schools Program, you also have the option to facilitate your own in person meeting at your school. If this is the option selected, schools will be provided with a Power Point slide presentation and a digital copy of the parent/student manual to be printed by the school. Parents should be strongly encouraged to contact the Outdoor Education Supervisor if they have comments, questions or concerns. **Please inform the Outdoor Education Supervisor if you are facilitating your own meeting and when it has been completed.**

If you do choose to have a YMCA staff member facilitate your Parent Information Night, the meeting package serves as back-up for those who cannot attend the meeting.

YMCA Paperwork

To prepare for your visit we need to know the numbers of male and female students attending, the number of teachers accompanying the group, the dietary restrictions of all parties, and medical/emotional/learning needs that will require support. A teacher planning tool will be sent to each school in order to collect various information (important dietary, medical and behavioural information). This should be compiled from your school board's Student Information forms and transferred to the planning tool.

- Please do your best to have the Outdoor Education Planning Tool completed and e-mailed to outdoor.education@ymcacalgary.org at least two weeks prior to your arrival. If you are finding yourself very busy or parents are slow at returning forms, the key information is the number of students, gender split and dietary restrictions. We will email you back instructions for group and dormitory assignments.
- Financial Assistance Applications must be completed and presented to the YMCA Outdoor Education Team two weeks prior your arrival at Outdoor School. The final invoice will be adjusted accordingly.





Special Needs

If you have any students at your school that may need some extra support and reassurance in order to attend Outdoor School, please contact the Outdoor Education Manager or Supervisor to discuss different options. Tours of our site are available for parents and students who are feeling nervous about attending. Students with physical limitations are definitely able to attend camp; however certain activities may need to be modified.

Lost And Found

We do our best to have students look at Lost and Found items before they depart and to send Lost and Found back to your school with you, however quite a few items get left behind. If a child or parent thinks they may have left something behind at Outdoor School, please have them take a look through your school's lost and found. If they do not find the item, the Outdoor School Team should be emailed with a description of the item, as well as what school they attend. If the item is found, it can be picked up at our site or at the Shane Homes YMCA at Rocky Ridge, if requested. If items have not been claimed within two weeks, they are donated to a local shelter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please contact the Outdoor Education Team if you have questions, comments or concerns. We look forward to having you at Outdoor School!





YMCA Calgary
Camp Chief Hector

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YMCA CALGARY
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