

Peoria Park District



Summer Day Camp **COUNSELOR IN TRAINING (CIT) GUIDE**



2026



Peoria Park District Camps goal is to provide a safe, active, and engaging experience for all campers to learn new things, connect with others, and explore. Our hope is for CITs to also experience these things, along with facilitating it for younger campers while learning leadership skills.

Please also refer to the PPD Summer Day Camp Parent Guide for a complete list of our general Camp Policies

PPD camps and programs are *not* licensed or regulated by the Department of Children and Family Services.

If you have any questions about the CIT Program please call 309-681-3546 or email camps@peoriaparks.org

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1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Being a CIT at the Peoria Park District will be a challenging, rewarding and fun experience. Your days as a CIT will be packed with a wide variety of activities and challenges. You will learn about camp, about yourself, and about other aspects of the Peoria Park District. It is critical to understand that being a CIT is a **BIG RESPONSIBILITY**.

1. A CIT must always be willing to participate with enthusiasm.

An enthusiastic, positive attitude is essential.

We should never hear negative talk or complaining.

2. CIT behavior standards are dramatically higher than they are for campers.

There will be little tolerance for misbehavior amongst CIT's.

3. CIT's are expected to come to camp ready to learn every day.

We'll provide the opportunity and the guidance; you bring the right attitude.

4. A CIT must always come to camp prepared.

Required items: appropriate clothing and closed toed shoes, name tag, any other required items by individual camp for the day. Leave the phone at home!

Your Role As A CIT

Counselors In Training are camper participants in what is considered a specialty camp program. They are not traditional campers, and they are not staff members. They are their own separate group.

Your role as a Counselor in Training is extremely important.

Every camper who sees you will look up to you. Some campers will look at you as a big brother or sister. To others you will be a teacher. Most of all, you will be seen as a trusted friend who can be a source of caring, comfort, fun and friendship. After the campers have forgotten the summer and everything else about camp, they'll often remember you and the things you did with them and for them.

What is EXPECTED of you as a CIT

- Do everything with enthusiasm. It's contagious! Participate enthusiastically in all camp related activities.
- Stay with your assigned group or area; never leave an area without communicating to a counselor first. Do not leave camp on your own or with staff members.
- Follow the direction of the camp staff to help make the program a success.
- Be a team player.
- Try new things. Venture out of your comfort zone.
- Set a good example for the campers. **Act how you want the campers to act.**
- Maintain a positive attitude no matter what..
- Always ask for help or clarification from the camp staff
- Focus your attention on the campers at all times. After all, that's why you're here.
- Always think in terms of safety first.
- Be a CIT-NOT A CAMPER- you are in a leadership role.
- Observe how the counselors handle discipline and how they lead and learn from them.
- Be curious and ask questions.
- Smile and have fun with the kids
- Jump in and give it your all!

CIT Potential Duties

- Camp room/area/closet organization.
- Setting up the next activity, setting up games.
- Developing and implementing new or special activities
- Assisting with or leading lunch or snack time
- Helping counselors get the campers lined up.
- Including all campers
- Getting kids excited about games and activities.
- Playing with campers during free time and scheduled activities
- Helping younger campers with craft time.
- Explaining rules of games or activities to campers
- Helping clean up the area that the group has been using.
- Rewarding kids' good behavior with positive feedback or positive rewards.
- Reporting unkind behavior or concerns to counselors.
- Assisting on field trips and in the swimming pool

What's In It For You?

- Hands on leadership experience and learning
- Mentoring
- Professional development opportunities
- Skills building (behavior management, organization, problem solving, time management, creativity, empathy, and more)
- Resume workshops
- Building future job references from staff and directors
- Opportunity to shadow and learn about other aspects of the Peoria Park District
- Experience in “job” applying, interviewing, and receiving constructive feedback
- Fast track to potentially one day being a camp counselor
- Having so much fun!

Limitations

- CITs are NOT staff
 - You are never to be left alone with campers/groups.
 - CIT will not count in staff to camper supervision ratios
 - You are not permitted or responsible for checking campers in or out, or to talk with parents about camper issues/behaviors.
 - CIT's are not permitted to administer first aid or medications
 - CIT's are not permitted to discipline campers or write reports
 - CIT's are not permitted to leave camp with staff. They must be signed in and out by their guardian
- A CIT may be out of direct eyesight of a counselor while setting up activities or gathering supplies. Counselors will always be close by.

2. CONDUCT

Phones

Personal cell phone use is 100% not allowed while you are at camp. If you bring a phone to camp, it must be stored away at all times (away in your backpack or in camps designated ‘phone jail’, depending on your camp). If you are watching your phone, you are not watching the campers. If you are seen on your phone it will be locked at the front desk. Staff follows the same guidelines.

Attire

- You are expected to wear your summer CIT apparel as instructed by your specific camp. This may be a CIT shirt, PPD shirt, or themed clothes for dress up days.
- Shorts/pants must appropriately cover you for the function of your job- which includes running around and playing on the ground (short spandex shorts are not allowed. Your bottom should be covered at all times)
- Appropriate swimwear, (swim trunks for boys and a 1 piece suit or tankinis for girls).

- Closed toed shoes (for safety while running around)
- CIT nametag
- A watch is recommended
- Look like you're supposed to be here!

Social Media

Social media is not an acceptable form of communication between counselors and CIT's.

Respecting Personal Space

You can give campers and/or staff high fives, fist bumps, or quick side hugs if they consent. We do not permit roughhousing of any kind, piggy back rides, hitting, kicking, slapping, spitting, tickling, massaging, carrying, hanging on, sitting in laps, or extended hugs; even if you think it's a joke.

Respectful Attitudes

CITs will treat all campers and staff with kindness and respect. They will not play favorites or discriminate for any reason. They will speak kindly to all and never make fun of, bully, or put down campers for any reason. Their role is to be an uplifting, positive influence.

3. LOGISTICS

Selection

In order to give CITs the best experience of obtaining jobs and to ensure that they are a good fit for the program, all CITs will fill out an online application and complete a Zoom interview with directors. Questions will be geared to learn more about the applicant and their history, and why they wish to become a CIT. The ultimate goal is to make sure that the applicant genuinely wants to participate in the CIT program and will be a positive addition. Applicants should fill out the online application on their own. When doing a Zoom interview, parents/guardians are welcome to observe, but the applicant should be the one speaking for themselves.

If selected, your PPD account will have access granted to register for the CIT sessions of your choice, dependent on availability. CITs may register for multiple sessions, and even sessions across multiple locations if they desire and space allows. Acceptance decisions will be made on a rolling basis, so early application is encouraged. Spaces are limited per session. Guardians will fill out information on ePACT as part of the registration process.

Sessions 2026

Cost is \$75 per session. Registration will be available online if selected.

SESSION A	SESSION B	SESSION C	SESSION D	SESSION E
6/1-6/5, 6/8-6/12	6/15-6/18, 6/22-6/26	6/29-7/3, 7/6-7/10	7/13-7/17, 7/20-7/24	7/27-7/31, 8/3-8/7
Ancient Oaks Lakeview Proctor	Ancient Oaks Lakeview Proctor	Ancient Oaks Lakeview Proctor	Ancient Oaks Lakeview Proctor	Ancient Oaks Lakeview

Attendance

Sessions are for two weeks of camps. Ideally CITs will be there every day of the session, but we understand if there are other events happening. Please communicate with your site supervisors if the CIT will be absent. Camp is open from 7:30am-5:00pm. It is preferred that CITs are on site from at least 9am-3:00pm when the bulk of scheduled activities occur. They are welcome to arrive earlier and/or stay later. Parents/guardians must sign the CIT in and out of camp. Parents will receive the weekly email newsletter of what is happening at camp.

Dismissal

CITs are expected to set a positive example for behaviors. If a CIT is being a negative influence or a harm to the camp program, they will be dismissed. If a CIT is continually speaks negatively, is unwilling to participate, consistently complains, speaks unkindly to campers or staff, or continually says that they do not wish to be here, they will be dismissed from the program without refund. They will follow all other PPD camp policies and will be dismissed if these policies are broken.

4.TIPS

Actions Steps to be A Great CIT

- Learn your campers names
- Ask campers about their interests outside of camp
- Ask campers about their favorite camp activities or what they are excited for
- Sit with the campers during free time and get involved with what they are doing
- If during free times campers aren't doing anything, take initiative and start up a game
- Participate in games and activities
- Spend equal amounts of time with all campers in your group
- Tell campers when they do something good, give praise
- Smile
- Ask "What can I help with?"
- Look for things that need done and do them (trash can overflowing? Empty it!)
- Be on time and prepared
- Explain activity instructions to campers who may not understand
- Keep a headcount of the campers in your group
- Ask questions and communicate openly
- Say please and thank you

Know Your Why

How do you want to be remembered by your campers? Your counselors? Your camp directors? Write it down now and keep that in mind all summer so you'll stay focused on your mission and why you're at camp. It will help you make wise choices with your campers. Always keep in mind the reason for being at camp.