

# Olympic Nature Experience



## Camp Family Handbook

Olympic Nature Experience (ONE) is a Sequim-based non-profit organization that nurtures our community's connection with nature through immersive, outdoor experiences.

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# About Olympic Nature Experience

Olympic Nature Experience's Vision is that every person in our community has the opportunity to develop a deeply felt sense of connection and appreciation for our local, natural environment that positively affects their daily actions and decisions.

**Our Mission** is to nurture our community's connection with nature through immersive outdoor experiences.

**Values** Through our interactions and programs, ONE board members and staff strive to embody the following values, continually working to create a safe, meaningful experience:

- **CARETAKE:** We take personal responsibility to protect our natural resources, the beings that depend on them, each other and ourselves as a collective part of nature.
- **GRATITUDE:** We practice appreciation for each other and the natural world, which helps us remember how we are all connected.
- **RESPECT:** We honor the rights of all living creatures to live in a clean, healthy and peaceful environment. We practice respect for each other by honoring our various needs and personal choices.
- **AWARENESS:** We aim to increase our understanding of the world around us. From wild spaces to our relationships with others, we are committed to understanding how our actions create change in the world.

## **Inclusion, Equity and Diversity**

We honor all people and show our commitment to inclusion, equity and diversity in all that we do. Through our policies and actions, we live these values: Respect, Awareness, Caretaking and Gratitude.

If you or your child has a disability, transportation challenges, or need extra support with clothing or gear, please let us know. We strive to work as a community to support you.

We welcome diverse cultural perspectives, experiences, languages, practices and celebrations. Feel free to bring any languages you child speaks at home into the classroom.

As part of our curriculum, children will read stories, play with tools and toys and discuss (at age appropriate levels):

1. People from different cultures around the world and within their own country.
2. People with varying abilities and disabilities.
3. People with different sexual orientations and gender expressions.
4. People with different ideas, beliefs and experiences.

Olympic Nature Experience does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.

***We welcome discussion, questions and feedback at any time.***

# Parent and Guardian Involvement

You are always welcome to visit your child's camp and participate in activities (see our visitor/volunteer policy below). Join us for a hike, encourage your child to join others in play and exploration or lend your hand at building forts. Please let your child's teachers know if you or other family members plan to visit. Because we go on daily hikes, it may sometimes be difficult to find the class if you arrive mid- class. All adults in the classroom are required to follow COVID-19 safety measures.

## Communication

Communication between staff and parents benefits the educational experience of children and continues to create a deeper community for us all. In addition to reminders at pick up and drop off for programs we will utilize the following communications tools: email, newsletters, texts, phone calls, Instagram and Facebook. Newsletters will be sent by email seasonally.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OlympicNatureExperience/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/olympicnatureexperience/>

Website: <http://www.olympicnatureexperience.org>

In case of an emergency outside of class, please contact both of your teachers on their cell phones. If a teacher does not answer call again or text. If a family member who is not listed as a contact is trying to contact the teacher, remind them to try and call multiple times.

# Child Protection Program

The Staff and Directors at Olympic Nature Experience are committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment for the children and families in our program. Below are our policies to ensure the safety of the children while in our care.

To ensure our programs are intolerant of abuse of any sort we have:

1. Developed a child protection program that creates an environment intolerant to abuse of children of any sort.
2. All teachers and staff are mandatory reporters, and are required by state law to report any suspicions of abuse towards children of any sort.
3. We have a whistle blower policy in place so that all staff are safe to report unhealthy or suspicious actions by peers or supervisors, creating a self-policing atmosphere that is intolerant of abuse.
4. The staff conduct routine training on: what constitutes safe and nurturing touch, what constitutes inappropriate touch/actions/words, how to monitor for signs of abuse or inappropriate actions towards children and what to do if abuse of any kind is suspected.
5. All staff undergo extensive background checks through County, State and Federal government.

The foundation of our policy to protect children while in the nature classroom are:

1. All actions, words and touch are kind, nurturing, child led and age appropriate. This ensures that children are the ones who dictate when to hold hands, to be hugged and if they feel it necessary to sit on a lap for security or comfort reasons. Additionally, touch is age appropriate, which means

that the comfort given to a 3 year old may include lap sitting and hand holding, while for a 6 year old, it may be pats on the back or encouraging words.

2. The only time touch will be TEACHER DIRECTED is for safety reasons; to keep a child from hurting themselves/others or to keep them from running away. At this time, the teacher will use the most gentle touch possible to ensure the safety of everyone involved. When a child needs to be restrained for any reason, an incident report will be made and the children's parents and staff supervisors will be informed. Teachers are trained in safe restraint policy.
3. Three or more children will remain with a given teacher at ALL times, ensuring that even in small groups, the children are never alone with an adult.
4. When a teacher is helping a child use the restroom, they will remain within eyesight of another teacher unless physically helping a child who needs assistance toileting.
5. When a child needs help cleaning their physical body while toileting (such as wiping or changing soiled clothes) a teacher will wear gloves to assist the child. If this is necessary, an incident report will be filed and the parents will be informed.
6. All our classrooms have an open parent policy ensuring that parents can visit at any time.
7. Children's feelings of emotional safety around toileting, privacy and dealing with body functions and touch are given equal importance as physical safety.
8. We invite questions and conversations regarding these topics and are welcome to discuss these ideas at any time.

## Getting Ready for Camp

### What to Bring Each Day

1. **A child-sized backpack large enough to hold a water bottle, snack and extra clothing layers in a plastic bag.** Please assist us by familiarizing your child with the contents of their backpack before school begins so that they are able to find needed items on their own.
2. A water bottle (filled with water 10-12oz of water).
3. Appropriate weather-related clothing layers.
4. A healthy lunch.
5. For children older than 5 wear one mask and bring two additional masks.



### Food

Your child is required to bring their own food and water bottle with them to drop off programs. Pack enough food for them to eat lunch and a snack.

#### Snack / Lunch Guidelines:

- Pack a clean washcloth for them to clean their hands and a small baggie with wet wipes for cleaning when very muddy.
- Have foods ready-to-eat, limiting the need for teacher assistance.
- Use small, light or easily portable containers as your child will need to carry their lunch and water bottle in their backpack all day.
- Water bottles must be labeled with child's first & last name.
- Please limit sugary foods, sweets or candy.

Sometimes teachers will bring in food to share for learning or celebrations. Foods provided to students will be checked against known student allergies and kept simple and healthy. Whenever possible, items include but are not limited to: popcorn, tea, whole fruit, student-made ice cream. If you have questions or concerns about these guidelines, please feel free to talk to your lead teacher.

## Pick Up & Drop Off

Arrival Time: We have set aside a daily “Welcome to School” time to allow parents to drop off their child and briefly check in with the teachers. Please respect the drop-off period by arriving at school on time. Arrivals before class may prevent teachers from preparing properly for the day. *If a child will be more than 15 minutes late or absent please text both your teachers.* When you arrive at school:

- All family members dropping off and picking up will be required to wear a mask while at school, we have extras if you forgot, please also maintain 6 feet of distance from others.
- Before coming to school take time to inspect your child for signs of illness and take their temperature if possible. You will be asked COVID-19 health screening questions each morning upon arrival at school. Wait until a teacher has signed your child in before departing.
- Upon arrival, sanitize your hands and your child’s hands with provided hand sanitizer.

Pick Up Time: Please pick up your child when class ends at 1:30. If you know you are going to be late contact a teacher immediately. We offer a 10-minute grace period. If you pick your child up after the grace period you will be charged \$5 for each additional 5 minutes. Please take charge of your children upon your arrival at the classroom by signing them out on the clip board. After students have been picked up our teachers need to continue their work of breaking down the classroom in order to leave on time. Once the majority of the students have been signed out the teachers will verbally let all parents know that they are leaving so it is clear they are no longer monitoring safety.

## Clothing

Helping your child dress comfortably for the weather and role modeling a positive attitude about the weather are the two things you can do to set your child up for success in our all outdoor classrooms. Make sure everything your child wears (even shoes) could get muddy or wet any day they come to camp. Rain coats and pants can be crucial layers year-round in the Pacific Northwest. They keep your child comfortable and dry. On rainy days, we highly suggest that at the very least a rain coat is packed. Having extra clothes packed in the backpack for spares or extra layers is essential. Label everything!

- Make sure any and all clothing and shoes can get wet or dirty. Have an extra layer, top to bottom including socks & gloves (when applicable) inside your child’s backpack. Please check your child’s backpack regularly.
- Put all your child’s clothes inside a plastic bag, inside their backpack. This will keep the clothes dry if it is raining or their backpacks get muddy.
- For younger children, stretchy waste bands are ideal for easy and fast use of the restroom.
- Make sure clothes allow lots of movement.
- Layers, layers, layers! Many thin layers can be more comfortable than one thick layer and is more flexible for heat regulation.

We have gear to lend! Contact our office to find out more about our gear library if your child is attending a camp and needs to borrow rain gear, winter clothing, or clothes that can get dirty.

# Health & Safety

## Health & Wellness

### Symptoms that indicate the need for your child to stay home:

- **COVID-19 Related Symptoms** listed our [COVID-19 webpage](#).
- **Fever of 100 degrees F** or higher accompanied by one or more of the following: diarrhea or vomiting, earache, headache, signs of irritability or confusion, sore throat, rash or fatigue that limits participation in daily activities. The child's temperature must return to normal (98.6°F) for at least 24 hours before coming back to school.
- **Vomiting:** in the past 24 hours.
- **Diarrhea:** 2 or more watery stools in the past 24 hours or any bloody stool.
- **Eye Discharge or Pink Eye** (conjunctivitis): conjunctivitis is highly contagious. Students may only return to school when eyes are clear or after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.
- **Lice or Scabies:** Children who are found to have lice will need to stay home until all lice and nits have been removed. Please let us know if your child has lice. Students with scabies may return after treatment.
- **Skin Rash/Lesions:** especially with fever or itching.
- **Open or oozing sores:** unless properly covered and 24 hours has passed since starting antibiotic treatment, if antibiotic treatment is necessary.
- **Sick appearance, not feeling well, and/or not able to keep up with program activities.**

## Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy you must provide written instructions from the child's health care provider that identifies the food that must not be consumed and steps to take in case of unintended allergic reaction. If medication is required, arrange with your lead teacher that we have the necessary medication and the proper training to use it.

*If there is a severe food allergy in your class, we will alert you at the beginning of the program. Please make every effort to refrain from packing these foods in your student's lunch box.*

## Foraging Wild Edibles/Medicine

Foraging for wild/medicinal plants is taught in limited amounts at nature school, due to our families' range of familiarity with local plants.

While at camp, we will ONLY teach edibles that:

- Are easy to identify
- Have NO poisonous look a-likes
- That are abundant and therefore hard to avoid
- That have been abundantly communicated with parents, so that parents can be prepared for their child's new knowledge

We encourage families to set firm foraging rules with their children. Here are our suggestions so that edibles taught at school can still be consumed safely at home:

- Children must check with a grown up EVERY time they eat a foraged edible (even if the plant has been identified correctly, there may be other dangers the child didn't notice).



- The grown up with the child at the time, must be able to correctly identify the plant (So if Grandma or Mom doesn't know the wild berry when they are out on a walk, it doesn't get eaten)
- Teach children the hazards and look alike plants so they can learn how to be safe (this helps for those times when you aren't around)

## **Bathroom**

It is our policy that children have largely independent bathroom skills. Please do not let this policy be the limiting factor in attending our programs. Contact us so we can discuss potential accommodations if you feel your child is otherwise ready to attend nature school but not yet toilet trained.

Children will be using the "facili-trees" (also called backcountry toileting procedures or nature potty) while at nature school. This means they will pee in the bushes (without toilet paper) most of the time, allowing for appropriate privacy at all times.

If a child needs to use the bathroom for solid waste, we will try to get them to the nearest toilet but are prepared to use the forest if a toilet is too far away or it becomes an "emergency" for the child.

If they need to use the nature potty for solid waste, we:

1. Dig a hole 6 inches deep.
2. Have them squat over the hole.
3. Give them toilet paper or wet wipes to use themselves for wiping (if a child needs help, a teacher wears gloves and informs that parents at pick up).
4. We bag and carry out all toilet paper used.
5. We use hand sanitizer to clean our hands afterwards.

If a child does not know how to use the nature potty, we will teach them. If you have any concerns or questions, or would like help teaching your child how to use the facili-trees, we are happy to help.

## **Discipline and Behavior Challenges**

At all times we are helping children to be successful and thrive. If a dangerous or destructive behavior occurs, staff will address and seek to resolve it directly with the child using positive discipline methods. It is important that parents and directors work together, but the consequences and problem solving need to be immediately tied to the behavior. Our policy is as follows:

- Hurting another child or using materials in an unsafe way leads to being away from the group until the child is calm enough to rejoin the activity.
- Abuse of an activity or object leads to a loss of the privilege of using that object or material for a specific length of time.
- Repeated unprovoked hurting of another child, using objects as weapons to injure staff or children, or any behavior that compromises the teachers' ability to maintain safe overview of the classroom for an extended period of time leads to a call to the parent(s) to come and take the child home.
- Behavior leads to injury of another child, a staff member or the destruction of an object will be detailed with an incident report and parents will be informed at the end of the day.
- Serious injury of a child or staff member, 3 or more incident reports for similar behavior or habitual behavior that compromises the safety of the children, may lead to termination of enrollment.

**Discipline:** The goal of discipline is to develop self-discipline. Our program fosters an environment in

which children learn to respect others and their surroundings. We teach and encourage children to use problem solving, self-regulation and conflict resolution skills. Other discipline techniques we employ are prevention, teacher shadowing, redirection, reflective listening, positive modeling and gentle reminders. Discipline shall be fair, consistent and appropriate for the age and maturity of the child. Physical punishment, such as spanking, is strictly prohibited on the premises of the preschool program. We never, ever engage in discipline that is frightening or humiliating.

Every effort will be made to help parents and children resolve difficulties that may arise in the program. Steps toward resolution include: Scheduling a parent/teacher conference. Developing a written plan of action agreed upon by parent and teacher. A referral to an outside agency if there seem to be developmental or behavioral concerns. Possible withdrawal of child if a behavioral problem is so severe that no positive solution can be found.

## Registration & Tuition Policies

### **Applying for Tuition Assistance**

Olympic Nature Experience offers tuition assistance to help meet your family's financial needs. Applications for tuition assistance can be found on our website.

### **Cancellations and Refunds**

Visit our website to find out our policies on cancellations and refunds.

### **COVID-19 Closing Procedures and Tuition**

We follow local County and State guidelines. If at any time, we are required to close, or we think it is prudent to close due to safety concerns, we will close our programs. If an entire program is cancelled due to COVID-19 tuition will be refunded. If a few classes are required to close during a session we will offer distance learning opportunities and tuition will be kept. In the event your student or family needs to quarantine due to COVID-19 we are unable to prorate tuition or offer make-up days.



*Photo Credits: Jessica Haugen, Owl's Hollow Parent*

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