



Office of Mary C. Barlow
Kern County Superintendent of Schools
Advocates for Children

COUNSELOR PRE-TRIP ORIENTATION LETTER

Thank you for volunteering to create an awesome week for our students.

Being a counselor is a challenging, fun, and extremely rewarding experience. Be prepared to learn a bunch about science, nature, kids and...yourself.

Counselors are not babysitters, but rather, temporary staff members who are responsible for the safety, well being, and educational support of approximately 7-12 elementary students for five days, 23 hours per day.

This letter is a quick introduction to prepare you for your week as a counselor at KEEP. You will receive a complete orientation after lunch on your first day.

We highly recommend you download and read the KEEP Counselor Handbook available at <http://www.campkeep.org>. This website also has a ton of useful information for your trip.

Roles & Responsibilities

As a counselor, you will assist naturalists during ecology hikes, you will directly supervise 7-12 students during meal times, evening activities, showers, and in cabins at night. You will be immediately available for emergencies while bunking with students.

Your days will be full with activities on a tight schedule so students can get the most out of their week. Please be ready to guide and mentor the students under your care through their busy days, follow the student rules, and role model the great behavior you'd like to see from your students.

Per Ed. code, KEEP requires fingerprints for all adults. For student safety, adults are never to be alone with a single student, and students must always be supervised by an adult.

Cell Phones/Computers

You will have a short break each afternoon, but during program don't count on using your cell phones, in fact we discourage it. Service is sporadic, time is limited, and at KEEP the kids come first. We visit sandy, salty areas and advise against bringing electric equipment of any kind on hikes. However, counselors may use the camera function on phones, provided student privacy is respected in regards to sharing and social media. Outlets are available for charging. Wi-Fi is not available.

Hiking

You will be hiking, every day, rain or shine, covering up to 5 miles up steep, dusty hills or on slippery, rocky shores. Be prepared! There is a good chance that clothing and footwear will get dirty, sandy, or wet during your visit. Make sure you bring good, sturdy, closed-toed shoes with good tread on the bottom. Ugg boots or rubber boots are NOT good for hiking on trails.

Bring warm clothes, as the weather can get cold. A big heavy jacket is not recommended for hiking instead, several light warm layers work much better. Don't forget a backpack to carry your layers, camera, and refillable water bottle.

Meals

The KEEP Menus are available at <http://www.campkeep.org>. Menus are designed to be student friendly while complying with USDA Free and Reduced School Breakfast and Lunch guidelines.

Food is ordered prior to your visit so please inform KEEP staff three weeks before your visit of any special dietary needs (e.g. vegetarian, food allergies/restrictions, etc.).

Do you drink coffee or tea? Please bring your own insulated mug to enjoy your hot beverages.

Important Tips

Adults may bring medicine for themselves and their own child to be stored in a secure location away from students. KEEP medical paperwork must be filled out for anyone under the age of 18 even if a parent is attending. Limited over-the-counter medicine is available to adults as requested.

Adults are not allowed to bring separate vehicles without prior written permission from their school and KEEP. Adults are not allowed to leave campus during the week except for scheduled hikes.

DON'T BRING: tobacco products (including vape), illegal/recreational drugs, gum, knives, matches/lighter, electronic equipment, blow dryers/curling irons, swimsuits, shorts, clothing/materials with inappropriate logos or content.

Checklist

Pre-Travel Health Screening Form:

- Filled out for 10 days prior to trip
- Signed (Parent/Guardian for under 18)
- Bring both with you on departure day

Registration Form:

- Filled out completely
- Signed (Parent/Guardian for under 18)
- Returned to visiting school site

Counselor Contract:

- Initialed
- Signed (Parent/Guardian for under 18)
- Returned to visiting school site

Student Medication Form (Under 18):

- Filled out completely
- Signed (Parent/Guardian)
- Signed (Doctor)
- Returned to visiting school site

Counselor Handbook:

- Download from <http://www.campkeep.org>
- Read Handbook