



ATS Connections Peer Mentor Program

The purpose of A Thousand Summers' (ATS) Peer Mentor Program is to connect experienced parents and campers (Mentors) with first time parents and campers (Mentees) to assist in camp preparation so that everyone can get the most out of the camp experience.



Mentor Parent Instructions

Your primary role as a Mentor Parent is to support, encourage and answer camp related questions from your Mentee Parents and Mentee Campers. As you know, sending your child to camp for the first time can bring up various emotions such as excitement, fear, anticipation, and anxiety. Through your conversations with your Mentee Parents and Campers we hope you can pass along information that will reduce anxiety and increase confidence.

Another important role is to prepare your child to potentially be a Mentor Camper to their Mentee Camper. Determine if you feel comfortable allowing your child to communicate independently with their Camper Mentee. If and when you feel comfortable, review the Mentor Camper Instructions (found on page 4 below) with your camper and give them support as they support their Mentee Camper.

*We want parents to be comfortable with connecting their camper with another camper. **This is yours to determine.** We are making this available to give your camper the opportunity to pass along their experiences in support of another camper's preparation for camp. Contact the ATS Programs office with any questions or concerns.*

The [ATS Training Academy found here](#) and on the ATS website, offers videos designed to equip you to support your Mentee Family. You may invite your Mentee Family to watch the videos also. To determine ATS assistance the camper qualifies for, direct the family to their ATS Campership Agreement. ATS Assistance Programs referred to below are detailed on the [ATS Programs Resources](#) page on our website.

Mentor Parents are asked to:

- Contact your Mentee Parents within 5 days by phone AND email to establish contact information. *Contact the ATS Programs office if you have not heard back from your Mentee Parents after 5 days of reaching out to them.*
- Schedule a phone or video call (Facetime, Zoom {set up a free account [HERE](#)}) between both Mentor and Mentee Parents AND Mentor and Mentee Campers to introduce yourselves. [HERE](#) are some fun questions to help get conversations started.
- When you and Mentee Parents feel comfortable, discuss permission for campers to communicate independently of parents. IF/WHEN BOTH MENTOR AND MENTEE PARENTS GIVE PERMISSION, provide camper contact information, and establish boundaries for camper to camper communication. *For example, campers may text, call or zoom after homework is finished but before 9pm.*

- Plan to contact Mentee Parents and Campers **at least once per month between now and September 15th** to make yourself available for questions. *For example, you may plan to talk/zoom every second Tuesday of the month at 5pm.*
- Plan to contact Mentee Parents **each week while campers are away at camp** to answer new questions that come up, help calm fears, etc. *For example, you may plan to talk/zoom every Tuesday at 3pm while campers are at camp.*
- Plan to contact Mentee Parents and Campers **a few times after campers return from camp** to hear about how the camp experience went, discuss post camp ATS forms and encourage them to reapply for a campership.
- At the end of each conversation, confirm when you plan to talk next.
- If any questions come up that you or your camper cannot answer, direct them to either ATS or the camp. Provide phone numbers, email addresses and camp website addresses.
- If campers are communicating independently, check in with your camper weekly to verify they are communicating at least as often as the Mentor Camper Instructions suggest and troubleshoot issues as needed. *Contact the ATS Programs office with any questions or concerns.*

Conversations to have with your Mentee Camper and Parent before camp:

- **Ask your Mentee Parent and Camper how they are feeling, what questions they have and how you can support them each time you talk.**
- Share the best thing about sending your child to camp. How your camper grew or changed as a result of the camp experience.
- Describe what it felt like the first time you sent your camper to camp. What you did to reduce fears or anxiety. What you did to increase excitement for the camper.
- Explain the struggles your camper had at camp (homesickness, fitting in, class or racial differences, etc.) and how you and your camper handled them. How camp handled them.
- Share the things you wish you knew before you sent your camper to camp the first time.
- Describe the camp culture, camp community and traditions. There will be all types of campers at camp who come from different areas of the country with different life experiences. Highlight what to expect when it comes to racial and socioeconomic diversity.
- Review the camp enrollment process, the forms / paperwork required, how to access them and their due dates. Schedule a doctor visit to complete the camp required camper physical and complete medical forms.
- Explain how to connect and receive camp updates via Instagram or Facebook. Watch for Camp Staff Bios that will begin to pop up on the camp website to foster connection and excitement.
- Talk through camp transportation plans. Locate camp arrival and departure dates and required arrival and departure time windows. Arrange transportation to get the camper to and from camp following the camp requirements (as well as ATS Transportation Guidelines if receiving ATS Travel Assistance). Will the camper be driven to camp? Fly? Ride a camp shuttle bus? Explain how to communicate travel arrangements to camp. *Discuss the [ATS Transportation Assistance Program Guidelines](#) with those who qualify according to their ATS Campership Agreement.*
- Consider how to get camper luggage to camp. Will you ship luggage 10 days before camp start date? Will camp allow you to check luggage with the airline? *Discuss [ATS Baggage Assistance](#) with those who qualify according to their ATS Campership Agreement.*

- Talk through where to find the camp packing list. Where did you find the items and how did you minimize the cost? Did you borrow items from friends and family, purchase from Thrift stores, online discount stores, loan or rent equipment from camp, etc. *Discuss [ATS Equipment Assistance](#) with those who qualify according to their ATS Campership Agreement.*
- Identify items that were not on the packing list that campers should take to camp. Camp theme days? Crazy dress up events? Crazy Creek style chairs?
- Go over camp communication. How do parents hear from the camp while their camper is at camp? Will counselor letters be mailed to parents or posted on the camp website? Can parents reach out via phone or email to the camp director? How can parents communicate with the camper while they are at camp? Letters only? Can parents send an email to the camper? Can parents send care packages? How can campers communicate with parents?
- Consider any trips, activities and/or items camp offers that require additional fees. How does the family enroll in the trip or activity and how do they pay for them? *Discuss [ATS Trip & Activity Assistance](#) with those who qualify according to their ATS Campership Agreement.*
- Introduce Camp Bank / Camp Store, what it is used for and how to make a deposit. *Discuss camp bank assistance with those who qualify and how much ATS will contribute according to their ATS Campership Agreement.*

Conversations to have with Mentee Parent while campers are at camp:

- Brainstorm coping skills for parents when campers are away at camp. (write positive letters, call a friend, schedule 'me' time, etc.)
- Discuss how and when the camp will post camp photos while the camper is at camp.
- Warn parents that letters may take up to a week to get to you from camp.
- Save counselor letters as these will be required for ATS post-camp requirements.

Conversations to have with Mentee Parent and Camper when campers get home from camp:

- Ask how the camp experience went, what were the best parts, what were the challenges and how did their camper meet those challenges.
- Review the ATS forms due when campers get home from camp.
- Explain the benefits of multiple years at camp and encourage them to reapply for an ATS campership for next summer. ATS campership applications are available online starting September 1st and applications are due as soon as October 15th.

Conversations TO AVOID with your Mentee Parent and Camper:

- Camp related gossip or bad / negative camp experiences. Keep the conversations positive. *Please contact the camp or the ATS Programs office to discuss concerns about camp or ATS Programs.*
- Topics outside of the scope of offering support to the Mentee Parent or Camper that are offensive or discriminatory.

Contact Karen in the ATS Programs office with any questions or concerns by email at karen.smith@athousandsummers.org or by phone at 720-981-2532 x 102.



Mentor Camper Instructions

Your role as the Mentor Camper is to support, encourage, and answer camp related questions from your Mentee Camper. You may be the first friend they have from camp so you will represent camp for them. It is an important role and A Thousand Summers thanks you for taking on this responsibility.

Mentor Campers are asked to:

- Take part in video calls with parents.
- IF/WHEN BOTH MENTOR AND MENTEE PARENTS GIVE PERMISSION, plan to check in with your Mentee Camper at least once per month to make yourself available for questions.
- Get to know each other. [HERE](#) are some questions to ask to help get conversations started.
- **Ask your Mentee how they are feeling, what questions they have and how you can support them each time you talk.**

Examples of ongoing conversations to have with your Mentee Camper:

- What camp is like.
- What activities you liked the most. What activities you want to try this summer.
- What activities you were scared to try but tried anyway. Talk about how it went and how that felt to accomplish something you were scared of.
- What you wish you knew about camp before you went for the first time.
- What the food at camp is like. What the dining hall is like. How far the dining hall is from the cabins.
- What the bathhouse looks like. How far it is from the cabin.
- What the weather at camp is like. Rainy? Hot? Cold? Different each day?
- Your best piece of advice for making new friends at camp.
- How you felt about going to camp for the first time. Excited? Scared? Nervous? All of these?
- How you feel now about going to camp. Are you more confident, know what to expect, still a little anxious?
- When you get home from camp ask ~ How was the camp experience? Best parts? Challenging parts? How do you feel about how you worked through the challenges?
- How going to camp multiple years makes the experience better and better. Encourage them to reapply for a campership for the following summer.

Examples of conversations NOT to have with your Mentee Camper:

- Camp gossip or bad camp experiences. Keep it positive. *Tell your parents if there were things that happened at camp that concerned you.*
- Topics outside of the scope of offering support to the Mentee Camper that are offensive or discriminatory.
- If you wonder if a topic is appropriate, ask your parent(s) before bringing it up.
- If any communication feels uncomfortable, talk with your parent(s) or the ATS Programs office immediately.

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