

USM MARINE EDUCATION CENTER



RESIDENTIAL

Sharkheads™



2020

Parent Handbook



101 SWEETBAY DRIVE OCEAN SPRINGS, MS 39564 || 228.818.8095

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Thank you for registering your student for Shark Fest this summer, we are excited to have them join us this upcoming season. Shark Fest is an educational day camp sponsored by The University of Southern Mississippi's (USM) Marine Education Center (MEC). The MEC is the education and outreach extension of The University of Southern Mississippi School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE).

We know your student will enjoy learning about shark biology, conservation efforts, and contributing to ongoing research at USM. Here are a few points of information that you need to know prior to your camp experience.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Facility Location and Contact Information

Residential Sharkheads Shark Fest will be taking place at The University of Mississippi Gulf Park campus located at 730 East Beach Boulevard Long Beach, MS 39560. This provides a more central location for camp transportation needs for both residential and nonresidential campers.

The Marine Education Center is located on USM's GCRL Cedar Point site at 101 Sweetbay Drive, Ocean Springs, MS 39564. The facility's phone number is (228) 818-8095 and hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Registration

Residential camper check-in will begin on Sunday, June 21st at 12:00 p.m. at the Friendship Oak Village. Families are welcome to tour our accommodations and meet staff from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. Shark Fest instructors are available to answer any questions, comments, or concerns with parents and students during Sunday afternoon drop off.

Tuition

Tuition includes all instructional materials, field trip transportation, admission fees, field equipment, and a t-shirt. A \$50 non-refundable pre-registration deposit is required. The deposit will be applied toward the total due. ***Tuition must be paid in full 30 days before the first day of camp (May 31, 2020). Your student will not be able to participate in the program until they are paid.***

Refund Policy

Refunds for paid tuition balances will be made if requested in writing by fax, email, or in person at the MEC administration office according to the schedule below. If a student is registered for a camp session and becomes unable to attend, full credit can be obtained if applied to an alternate session of camp. This refund will apply only if space is available in another Shark Fest session. Refunds in the form of a personal check may take up to eight weeks for processing. We reserve the right to grant exceptions to this stated policy in certain situations.

Time of Request - Refund/Credit for Tuition Balance

- (5/21/20) At least 30 days before start of the requested camp session = 50% minus \$50 deposit
- (6/7/20) Less than 14 days before start of the requested camp session = No Refunds
- Leaving camp early or camper is sent home = No Refunds

Off-Site Transportation/Safety Policies

State owned/operated vehicles, and/or authorized automobile rentals will be utilized for scheduled field trips. Most field trips involve traveling off-campus within the coastal in-state area, by both land and sea. All vessels are Coast Guard certified and maintained.

Residential Housing Option

Residential housing accommodations will be located at the Friendship Oak Village across from the USM Gulf Park Campus at 522 Railroad Street Long Beach, Mississippi 39560. Each room is supplied with two beds, desks, and a shared suite bathroom. Facility amenities include laundry, high speed internet, gated pool area, controlled access to parking lot, and study areas.

Please contact the summer camp coordinator directly for any questions or concerns about your Shark Fest accommodations; please do not contact Friendship Oak Village about individual camp accommodation arrangements.

Meals

As part of the residential housing plan, three meals with beverages will be provided to the camper by Beach View Food Service through the University of Southern Mississippi. *If your student requires any special meal accommodations (i.e. severe allergies, vegan/vegetarian alternatives), please make this aware to the camp coordinator upon registration, BEFORE arriving to camp.*

II. CAMPER TRANSPORTATION

Travel by Air

- Please schedule travel so that your student **arrives** at the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport (Gulfport, MS) between 12:00 and 3:00 p.m. on the Sunday before your camp session begins and **departs** the following Friday between 5:00 and 6:30 p.m.
- Due to heightened domestic air travel, we require all campers to have a reserved airline ticket; PLEASE NO STANDBY FLIGHTS.
- A case-by-case basis will be discussed for those needing to fly out the day after camp conclusion.
- Airport pick-up and drop-off procedures must be carefully followed to provide your camper with a safe and positive traveling experience:
 - Marine Education Center staff will wear a MEC logo shirt and nametag when meeting arrivals and escorting departures.
 - Upon arrival and departure, parents will be notified that their camper has arrived/departed safely.
- *Flying as an **Unaccompanied Minor**:*
 - For maximum safety of your student, more airlines offer an “Unaccompanied Minor” option for an extra fee. With this, airlines will escort unaccompanied minors from the time they leave their parents until our staff picks them up. This allows the Marine Education Center to meet your child at the arrival gate and accompany them to their departure gate. *Please check with your airline carrier for their specific policy and age eligibility for unaccompanied minors.*
- *Flying as a **Regular Passenger**:*
 - With heightened security, campers who are flying as regular passengers will be responsible for getting from their arrival gate to the baggage claim area where they will be met by Marine Education Center staff. The camper is also responsible for getting themselves from the security check point to their gate on their departure date.
- Luggage Fees
 - Please be aware that some airlines charge for extra or overweight luggage; please send money with your camper accordingly, as airlines generally do not accept payment by phone for these services.

Travel by Car

- Residential Check-In

- Camper check-in will begin on Sunday, June 21st at 12:00 p.m. at the Friendship Oak Village. Families are welcome to tour our accommodations and meet staff from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
- Residential Pick-Up
 - Camper pick-up will begin Friday, June 26th at 4:00 p.m. Students will only be released to those listed on the “Deliver and Receive” portion of the registration who have proper photo identification.

III. CAMP RULES

Dress Code

T-shirts and shorts are appropriate. Please wear clothes that you do not mind getting dirty. We will be outside much of the time or in the laboratory with fish. Your student may even want to keep a spare change of clothes available during camp in case they get really wet or dirty.

Please dress modestly for camp; shorts and shirts of appropriate length should be worn at all times. Bathing suits worn under clothes are a great option to wear on boat days. One-piece bathing suits for girls and swim trunks of appropriate length for boys are recommended; all swimwear must be conservatively cut and tasteful. Shorts must be at fingertip length and no higher than mid-thigh; “short-shorts” or spandex shorts are not permitted.

The University of Southern Mississippi’s policies mandate that closed-toed shoes be worn on all University vessels and on all University field trips (NO Chaco’s or flip-flops; Crocs™ are allowed only with a heel strap). Failure to comply with this policy will result in expulsion from the trip or activity for the day.

Electronics

To ensure your student’s safety, it is vitally important they be able to clearly hear instructions given to them, particularly on boat days. We find that cell phones and iPods create a distraction that inhibits student attention. If you choose to send these devices with your student, please leave them on silent and in their bag. Please note that the USM Marine Education Center is not responsible for electronic devices that have fallen overboard or gotten wet. We require students to restrict their use of electronic devices to lunch and designated breaks only. Should you need to reach your student throughout the day, you may contact the Marine Education Center at (228) 818-8095. Excessive use of electronics will result in confiscation of the item, to be returned to the parent at the end of the day.

Behavior

Working with scientific equipment, tackle, and being over water requires the full attention and complete compliance of students. Failure to comply with instructions is a safety hazard and will **NOT** be tolerated. Behavior problems will result in a call to parents, and depending on the severity of the problem, potential expulsion from camp.

Medication Storage/Administration

Medication is not administered to a child without obtaining a parent/guardian’s signature on the required medication form. Camp counselors are responsible for maintaining any medications a student may need. Tylenol/Benadryl may be administered to a child only after checking the camper’s registration form. Parents should discuss any medication issues with counselor and/or camp coordinator during registration.

Medical Crisis

Should an emergency situation arise, the camp coordinator or the student's counselor will tend to the child while the parent is notified. If necessary, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital or clinic until the parent(s) arrive. If parent(s) are unable to be contacted, the camp counselor will then proceed down the emergency contact list until someone is notified. All staff members are CPR/AED/Basic First Aid certified by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.

Medical Crisis Exemptions

If your child is exempt from medical care on religious grounds you **MUST** provide the name, address, and phone number of a certified practitioner to be contacted in the event of a medical emergency. ***This information must be provided prior to your child's involvement in the camp.***

Reporting Child Neglect

The staff of the USM Marine Education Center has a legal obligation to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect in the state of Mississippi. The Mississippi State Department of Health provides guidelines on identifying abuse and neglect. Any suspected abuse or neglect will be brought to the attention of the camp coordinator immediately.

Damages

The University of Southern Mississippi and Marine Education Center are not responsible for any damages to personal property brought by the student. Campers are responsible for the care and preservation of any equipment belonging to the University of Southern Mississippi, or Marine Education Center. All students should and will respect the property of the Marine Education Center as any damage to university property will be repaired at the expense of the camper causing the damage.

Visitors/Leave of Absence

Under no circumstances are campers allowed to have external visitors during the week, aside from parents at the time of drop off. Leaves-of-absences will be considered by a case-by-case basis. Time and camp activities are pre-planned for each day; campers will not be allowed to leave camp except in the case of an emergency. In such cases, campers must have prior approval from the camp coordinator. Under normal circumstances, campers must agree to remain at camp for the entire session.

Parent Notification

Safety and positive experience are the top concerns of the Marine Education Center staff, and it is our general practice to contact parents when there is concern about their student's health and/or behavior. Educational staff will contact parents or guardians in the case of behavioral or social issues while at camp, or in the case that the student is sent to an emergency health facility.

Emergency Communication

If an emergency arises and you need contact your camper immediately, please contact the University Police Department at 601-266-4986. This is an emergency dispatch number and should only be used in the **case of an emergency**. A UPD officer will assist you and contact an educational leader to reach your student at camp. **Remember this is for emergency situations only.**

Non-Emergency Communication

Should you need to reach your student throughout the day for non-emergency communication, you may contact the Marine Education Center at (228) 818-8095.

IV. CAMP EXPERIENCE

Tips for Homesickness

Feeling homesickness is normal, especially if this is your camper's first time away from home! These feelings are a little different for everyone that experiences it, however, here are some ways to combat homesickness:

1. Include your camper in the planning process.
2. Discuss what the camp will be like when they leave home and discuss any concerns that they may have about their camp experience.
3. Talk openly about homesickness. Stay positive about the new camp experiences they will be having.
4. Keep your doubts about separation to yourself, as not to make your child anxious. Children often worry more about their parents than themselves in their time of separation during camp.
5. Inform educational staff about events or situations at home that may result in homesickness.

Please visit the American Camp Association (ACA) website at www.acacamps.org for more information on homesickness. There are plenty of resources available regarding camper homesickness that may prove to be beneficial.

What Will My Student Be Doing?

All activities are tentative and subject to weather conditions. We will have camp, rain or shine, and have a full suite of alternative activities planned in the case of inclement weather. **All vessel excursions are dependent on both environmental and weather conditions and/or boat maintenance.** To ensure your child has the opportunity to fish, we have two boat days into the Shark Fest itinerary. **In the event that all boat days are cancelled, you will receive a \$75 refund on your Shark Fest tuition.**

Monday

Students will begin the week with introductory lessons to shark biology and proper species identification. Hands-on laboratory activities include a shark dissection, tagging demonstration, and pier fishing. Campers will also discuss boat safety and proper shark handling for the upcoming field trip days.

Tuesday

Campers will board the R/V Jim Franks and spend a full-day tag and releasing sharks in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, as well as learning how to take scientific samples to contribute to real-time research.

Wednesday

The morning will consist of sampling at East Beach (Ocean Springs, MS), where campers will dive deeper into shark ecology, significance, and environmental threats in the afternoon.

Thursday

Campers will board the R/V Jim Franks for a second time and spend a full-day tag and releasing sharks in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, as well as learning how to take scientific samples to contribute to real-time research.

Friday

To end the week up, students will be kayaking in Davis Bayou learning about estuaries and their importance to local shark species. Wrap-up and goodbyes!

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding your upcoming Sharkheads Shark Fest, please contact the Marine Education Center (228) 818-8095 and/or Jessi A. James (*Summer Camp Coordinator*) at (228) 818-8091 or jessi.james@usm.edu



Residential Packing Checklist

Remember, we will be outside...*a lot*. Bearing that in mind, here is a list of items we recommend that your student bring to camp. Please label all items with your student's name for easy identification:

CAMP CLOTHING

- ☐ Short Sleeve Shirts or Wide Tank Tops (6)
- ☐ Shorts/Pants (4-5)
- ☐ Socks (6 Pair)
- ☐ Underwear (6)
- ☐ Pajamas
- ☐ Hat
- ☐ Light Jacket
- ☐ Rain Poncho/Raincoat/Small Umbrella
- ☐ Swimwear
 - One-Piece (Girls)
 - Boardshorts (Boys)
- ☐ Camera (Optional)
- ☐ Spending Money (If Needed)
- ☐ Reusable Water Bottle
- ☐ Phone Charger

FOOTWEAR

- ☐ Closed Toed Shoes (Camp)
- ☐ Sandals (Shower/Rec Time)

TOILETRIES

- ☐ Shampoo/Conditioner
- ☐ Brush/Comb/Accessories
- ☐ Soap (In Box or Bag)
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Towel
- ☐ Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- ☐ Orthodontic Devices
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Insect Repellant
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Contacts/Prescription Glasses
 - Extra set of contact lenses or glasses in case of loss/damage.

PERSONAL ITEMS

- ☐ Small Backpack or Easily Carried Bag for Personal Items
- ☐ Sunglasses

PLEASE DO NOT BRING:

NO Short-Shorts/Spandex Shorts
NO Non-Conservative Swimwear
NO Spaghetti Strap Tops
NO Dress Shoes
NO Nail Polish
NO Expensive Jewelry/Personal Items
NO Pets
NO Laptops/Large Devices

