



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

SAINT LOUIS COUNTY
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SAM PAGE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

October 19, 2023

(314) 615-7016

The Honorable Michael Burton
MO House of Representatives
201 West Capitol Avenue
Room 109-D
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Representative Burton:

Thank you for bringing your interest into the laws and policies governing St. Louis County led summer camps to my attention. My team has completed an extensive review of the suggestions you provided, including the Los Angeles County ordinance, to determine if they should be implemented. Here is what we learned after reviewing your recommendations.

Our summer camps are reviewed by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Department of Social Services. Per the requirements of the state statute enacted in 2022, St. Louis County sponsored camps qualified for and received a licensing exemption. Due to this exemption, some of your suggestions are not feasible, such as unannounced inspections, fines, and suspensions of business licenses. The County, however, relies on our Department of Public Health for inspections based on the St. Louis County aquatic and food code ordinances and we follow best practices as set forth by the Missouri Park and Recreation Association and the National Recreation and Park Association.

Camp fees, which fund programming and help defray oversight costs, will be increased in 2024. Our camps fees will remain below market average, providing affordable options for County residents.

The Parks Department works closely with human resource personnel on all hiring matters, including completion of an initial background check for camp employees. Effective 2024, the Parks Department will also perform an additional background check for all camp staff using a private company. Convicted felons are not eligible for hire for positions that interact with children per Parks policy.

Camper safety is furthered ensured with management oversight of counselors, ensuring that at least two camp staff work together when interacting with children, and all camp employees receive a minimum two days of training, including their reporting obligations. Programming staff also receive First Aid, CPR/AED training. Mandatory reporting is followed pursuant to County and State law in the event of injury or another adverse event. Emergency Action Plans are in place to reduce injuries, provide direction, and protect those who interact with our park facilities. Our plan is continually refreshed and reviewed based on best practices.

Our staff and counselors are trained by certified instructors. Our camps do not provide high risk activities such as gun ranges, horseback riding, fencing, or paintball. Any other specialized programs are led by certified staff. Camp Directors are required to have the equivalent of two years of experience working with children and at least three years of college level coursework in recreation or physical education or a related field. The job

requirements for our camp directors are detailed in a formal job description and filed with the County's Civil Service Commission.

You suggested that written documentation of all plans, certifications, and programming be made available to parents and caregivers upon request. Currently, this information is available on premises. I have asked the Director of the Parks Department to create a written policy mandating that this information also be available to caregivers in an easy to access location in the building as well as the County website.

In addition to your suggestions, we have made additional changes which have enhanced safety at our camps. We partnered with Midwest Pool Management to of America, LTD to recruit, train, and manage lifeguards at County pools. For the safety of day camp participants, we now require children to undergo a swim test before swimming in deep water areas of the pool. Those who pass the test are given wristbands for easy identification by lifeguards. We revised and updated our Day Camp Staff Manual to ensure all staff members are well informed of the latest safety protocols and operational guidelines. The Day Camp Registration Form has been updated for all summer camp programs. We have reduced the number of day camp participants at each of our facilities to match the staffing at each location. We have invested in new U.S. Coastguard lifejackets at each pool. We upgraded the AEDs at the Kennedy Recreation Complex, and each have adult and pediatric pads. Lastly, our vendor conducts daily phone checks to ensure that our phones connect properly to 911 services.

After our review, I was glad to see all that is done in St. Louis County. There is no denying that any loss of life is a tragedy. We have taken this opportunity to learn, reflect, and to modify our procedures. On October 29, 2023, at 3:00 p.m., in coordination with his family, we will be naming the playground at Suson Park in memory of T.J. Mister. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Page". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sam Page

cc: Douglas Forbes via dougliveshere@gmail.com