

Are We There Yet?: Keeping the Kids Occupied This Summer

Before you know it, school will be out and the kids will be home for the summer months. Are you prepared? Are they? Do you know what options are available for them? Do you know where to go for resources?

Summer break from school can be a charmed time in a child's life, but with more people than ever living in urban areas and with more and more electronic devices distracting our kids, summers aren't the fresh-air and care-free times they once were.

Summers are, however, an excellent time for your child to experience something completely new to them. One option, summer camps, can provide your child with opportunities to learn new skills such as learning to cope with being away from home and making new friends while immersed in an enriching environment. Church and private school camps, parks and recreation programs, specialty camps and residential camps are available in many areas.

To determine if summer camp is appropriate for your child, you will find a Camp Evaluation Sheet as well as a link to camp locator under Worklife Services on T.E.A.M.'s website www.team-mn.com.

In addition to summer camp, here are some other ideas for summer care:

- Childcare centers. More centers are expanding their programs to include school-age children during the summer months.
- Local family child care. This could be a good option especially if the family has children about the same age as yours.
- In-home care. Provided by an adult relative, responsible older teenager, or college student is another option. Perhaps a neighbor could share the care with you as well as the cost.
- Agency camps. More YMCA and YWCA organizations now run day camps for boys and girls up to age 15.
- Public school care. Some of the public schools have expanded their after school child care programs to all day care during the summer months.

While many teenagers don't necessarily need supervision, support, encouragement and guidance will help them make positive choices for their time. Sit down with your teen together and set some guidelines and structure to their day. Focus for them could be exploring a new interest, pursuing a hobby or skill, or volunteering for a cause that interests them. Public libraries and animal shelters are in constant need of volunteer help.

Click the Worklife Services tab on T.E.A.M.'s website www.team-mn.com to find an abundance of resources, information and checklists to help you make the right choice for your child for a fun and safe summer.

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