



Camp Mak-A-Dream  
PO Box 1450  
Missoula, MT 59806  
Phone: 406-549-5987  
Fax: 406-549-5933  
[www.campdream.org](http://www.campdream.org)

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Volunteering At Camp**

**What kind of volunteer positions are available?** We have a variety of volunteer positions available for each of our sessions. We offer four areas of volunteer work: cabin staff, program assistant, dream team, and medical. Each role is essential to the success of our program.

**Cabin Counselors / Concierges** work with other volunteers and core staff in supporting and assisting campers 24 hours a day. Cabin counselors and concierges sleep in the cabins with campers (cabins sleep up to 20 comfortably, concierges sleep in a separate room within the cabin) and participate in daily and evening activities. Counselors also offer continuous support, encouragement and companionship. Because the participants at kids, teen, and siblings camps require more focused attention and care, cabin counselors are assigned 2-4 specific campers to look after throughout the week. At our Young Adult Conferences the participants are all over 18 years of age making the role of the concierge different from that of the counselor. The 1-2 concierges assigned to each cabin gently guide and assist the participants as needed.

**Program Assistants** help the core staff to organize the diverse activities we offer at camp, including art projects, outdoor recreation, and special evening activities such as dances, carnivals, campfire, etc. The creative and enthusiastic are encouraged to apply.

**Dream Team** volunteers work “behind the scenes”, helping out in the kitchen, dining room and lodge, doing everything from cooking and setting up tables to cleaning the toilets. We couldn't do it without these wonderful, hardworking folks!

**Medical:** (medical professionals only) Each camp session, we select a group of doctors and nurses to review camper medical files, administer medications and handle any medical emergencies 24 hours a day.

**What are you looking for in a volunteer?** One of the main reasons Camp Mak-A-Dream is a magical place is because of the people who come to volunteer. We look for enthusiastic, safety-conscious, caring individuals whose first priority is the well-being of the campers. We also look for a willingness to work together as a team, while aiming to fulfill our mission. A background working with children, teens and/or young adults, as well as experience at other camps is helpful but not required. Special skills in areas such as music, art, outdoor recreation, storytelling, and group activities are also beneficial at camp. All prospective staff members participate in an extensive application and interview process to ensure the safety and care of our participants.

**Do I need to have any kind of medical background?** No. Unless you are hired as volunteer medical staff (a doctor or nurse), previous experience and knowledge of cancer and the effects of treatments is not required. All volunteers take part in a discussion of specific medical issues and concerns during the training session. During the presentation, the Medical Director covers what you need to know and answers any questions you may have. The medical staff is at camp full time to handle each and every medical issue that arises, we just ask that you alert the medical staff to anything of concern.

**How ill are the participants who come to Camp?** Most of the participants who come to Camp are currently in the midst of treatment for their illness, or are up to a few years out of treatment. Participants who are *in* treatment are usually the sickest. Some of the immediate effects of treatment are nausea, lack of energy and appetite, loss of body hair, sun-sensitivity, and feeling of malaise. For any child or young adult with cancer, however, there are often physical and emotional reminders of their illness that stay with them well into adulthood. Depending on the type of cancer and treatment administered, participants may be amputees or have other physical disabilities. They may also have vision or hearing loss as well as impaired memory, speech or balance. Emotional effects vary from depression and grief to guilt. Most often, however, survivors of childhood cancers share a feeling of loss from not experiencing a “normal” childhood. Many of these young people are viewed as being different by their peers and are treated as “special” by their families, friends, and doctors, often making it difficult to relate to others in their own age group. Campers at siblings camp are cancer free and are in attendance because a brother, sister or parent has cancer.

**Who makes up the staff of Camp Mak-A-Dream and how does it all work?** Along with the Gold Creek facility, Camp Mak-A-Dream has a main office located in Missoula, Montana. In addition to a Board of Directors, eight full-time employees work year-round at camp or in the office, fundraising, planning programs, managing rental groups and recruiting campers and staff for the summer. During the summer, in addition to the supervisory team of the camp director, campus director, food service manager, facilities manager and program & residential directors, approximately 10 paid core staff members are hired. Core staff is committed to working full-time each camp session from mid-June through mid-August. Core staff consists of Residential (4 cabin leaders), Program (5 Specialists including: ropes course/climbing wall, art, sports & recreation, and waterfront), and Office

Manager. A very talented and qualified group, these individuals go through rigorous training before Camp begins. Core staff is an excellent resource, as they provide guidance, leadership and support for volunteer staff. The entire Camp Mak-A-Dream staff follows an *Open Door Policy*, where asking questions is welcomed and voicing concerns is encouraged.

**What is the percentage of returning volunteers?** About 40% of our volunteer staff has volunteered at camp the year before, while approximately 60% of our volunteers return to volunteer at camp in some capacity in the future.

**What are the benefits of volunteering?** Besides gaining practical experience working with children, teens and young adults, volunteering at Camp Mak-A-Dream creates life-long memories and friendships. Every person joining the camp community each summer makes a difference in the lives of the young people who visit.

**Is transportation to Camp provided?** You will need to provide your own way to Missoula, Montana. United, Delta, Northwest, and Alaska airlines fly into Missoula. We suggest booking a ticket as soon as you are confirmed as travel to Montana can be expensive. Once you arrive, Camp is completely cost free.

**What can I expect once I get to camp?** Each summer session begins with a one-day orientation for staff and volunteers, where we learn about the mission and philosophy of Camp Mak-A-Dream we review policies, duties and the program for the upcoming week. We also spend time working in small groups, getting to know each other and learning through scenarios and role-playing. Our goal for orientation is to build a supportive, motivated, and enthusiastic team. We strive to give volunteers the support, confidence and knowledge they need to feel prepared for the participants' arrival.

**What are the facilities like at Camp Mak-A-Dream?** Camp Mak-A-Dream is located at Gold Creek Lodge, 65 miles east of Missoula, Montana at the foot of the Flint Mountains. Although the Lodge is nestled in the hills amongst incredible Montana scenery it is not a rustic camp. We have beautiful modern cabins, an art studio, health center and main lodge, in addition to sports fields, a swimming pool, hot tub, ropes course and climbing wall.

**Where do staff / volunteers sleep?** Residential staff (cabin leaders, counselors and concierges) stays with participants in one of four cabins (2 Male/2 Female). Each cabin has a common area equipped with a fireplace, kitchenette, phone/intercom system, and two handicap-accessible bathrooms with showers. Program, dream team, medical staff and volunteers reside in dormitory-style rooms in the staff cabin or health center.

**What do we eat?** Everyone at Camp eats together in the main lodge for each meal. Large round tables create an atmosphere of community. Food is abundant and nutritious and is served in either family style servings or buffet style. A variety of snacks is also available in the cabins. For staff and participants who require vegetarian or other dietary alternatives, we ask you to let us know and will do our best to accommodate any special needs.

**What is the camper to staff ratio?** In order to ensure the safety and well-being of all our participants, the camper to staff ratio is generally at least **2:1** at kids camp, **4:1** at teen camp, and **4:1** at siblings camp.

**Do I get any time off?** We believe time off is necessary in order for staff members to feel clear-headed, energetic and their ultimate best when with the campers. We, therefore, do our best to schedule individual time off every day for our volunteers. We encourage everyone to take this time to read, rest, exercise or do whatever else they may need in order to feel their best.

**What is a typical day like at camp?** We generally start the day together at breakfast around 9:00 am. Often times an early morning activity, such as archery, fishing or hiking, will be scheduled before breakfast. After breakfast, morning activities at kids, teen and siblings camp might include visiting the art studio, ropes course, or soccer field. In addition to recreational activities, participants at our young adult and adult camp sessions attend workshops and discussions focusing on issues of interest. After lunch, a mixture of outdoor (pool, sports, nature) and indoor (art, theatre) activities is offered. Each evening, we plan a special event, designed to foster community and friendship. These may include a dance, carnival night or a cookie cook-off. During kids', teen and siblings camps, campers follow a schedule of activities that the cabin leader and counselors have reviewed. Generally campers visit each program activity together as a cabin, but occasionally they have the opportunity for "free choice" to connect with campers from other cabins.

The pace and energy at young adult and adult sessions is far less structured. Participants at these sessions receive a program of events for each day; however, they can choose which workshops and recreational activities they would like to attend.

**How do I apply?** Staff applications can be downloaded from our website: [www.campdream.org](http://www.campdream.org), or please call or email us at the office: (406) 549-5987 / [camp@montana.com](mailto:camp@montana.com) to have one sent to you. Applications for our summer program are accepted after February 1st. After reviewing your application, we will call you for a 30 minute phone interview. We will begin interviewing for winter conference in November and for all summer positions in February. We will continue the process until all positions have been filled. We encourage you to submit your application as soon as possible as many positions fill very quickly! (12/09)