MEMORANDUM

May 15, 2020

To: Governors’ Offices
From: Bill McBride, Executive Director
Re: Summer Camps and Summer Learning Opportunities

As states shift their focus from the immediate emergency of COVID-19 school closures toward the reopening of schools and educational centers in the summer and fall, there has been growing interest in opening summer camps and summer schools to provide opportunities for students’ academic and social development. Taking stock of these early deliberations, this memo provides a brief overview of recent governor and state actions in this area as well as relevant resources for opening summer camps and providing other learning opportunities.

Recent State/Governor Actions

North Carolina Governor Cooper announced on May 5 that the state would enter Phase 1 of reopening on Friday May 8. Phase 1 of the state plan includes opening summer camps and day camps provided that they follow CDC guidelines; however, no overnight camps will be allowed to open. Section 4, Part D on page 9 of his executive order (here) discusses the reopening restrictions placed on summer camps and day camps for children and teens.

Connecticut Governor Lamont announced on May 5 that summer camps can open on June 29 and that the state will be issuing guidelines for summer camps in the near future (see here, here, and here for related news reporting). In Connecticut, summer camps that open will have to comply with state guidance on health screening, cleaning/disinfecting, group size, and social distancing. Overnight camps will not be allowed to reopen. State Superintendent Michael Cardona is currently considering whether or not to allow in-person summer school in July.

North Dakota Governor Burgum recently issued an amended executive order that allows local school districts to open school facilities for on-site summer programming, including camps and summer school. These summer programs must adhere to the state’s Smart Restart Guidelines: Health and Safety Logistics.

South Carolina’s school reopening and recovery task force, known as AccelerateEd, is currently exploring ways to expand the state’s existing “Read To Succeed 3rd Grade Summer Reading Camp” to include students in more grades (K-3) and also address additional subjects (mathematics). The goal is to help young students catch up if they are struggling in reading and math as a result of the school closures. Governor McMaster plans to use CARES funding to pay for the expansion of this summer camp. The expanded camps are expected to be four weeks long and would meet either face-to-face or virtually depending on the status of the pandemic at the time (see here and here).

The Missouri Department of Education recently convened a summer school task force to discuss summer school questions and the options available to school leaders. The task force produced this administrative memo outlining three main recommendations for school administrators as they develop summer school
plans. The task force also released this lengthier Q&A guidance for local education agencies. In contrast to the status summer school, however, the status of summer camps in Missouri remains less certain (see news reporting here).

Other Resources

The American Camp Association (ACA) has created a resource center devoted to COVID-19 that includes information about camp operations, health & wellness, online learning, staffing, and communications. The ACA recommends camp providers wait for the CDC to release new guidance on summer camps. Among the resources that ACA will be publishing in May is a Field Guide for Camps on Implementation of CDC Guidance, which will be created as soon as the new CDC guidance is released.

An unofficial draft of the CDC’s upcoming summer camp guidance and decision tree was recently reported by the media and posted online. Pages 4-9, titled “Interim Guidance for Schools and Day Camps”, provide considerations for opening summer camps. The document suggests that “communities with low levels of COVID-19 spread and those with confidence that the incidence of infection is genuinely low (e.g. communities that remain in low transmission or that have entered Phase two or three) may put in place the practices described [in the document] as part of a phased reopening.” However, some camp providers in cities like Atlanta have already consulted the unofficial guidance and indicated that it did not provide enough clarity to make decisions.

The Idaho Out-of-School Network has released guidance for child care and school-age services during the pandemic, including considerations for camps and other out-of-school activities. The guidance addresses topics like planning and coordination, the selection of facilities, staffing, health and safety.

This new RAND report examines how federal, state, city, and district policies can support summer learning programs. It was published in 2020, but before the pandemic, so it may not be directly relevant to the current situation. However, it may provide some value when thinking long-term about this issue. Relatedly, the 2019 Shaping Summer Experiences consensus study report by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine may provide useful information. This report can be downloaded from the National Academy of Sciences.

Finally, the CDC summer camp guidance during the H1N1 flu pandemic provides some useful recommendations that may inform current considerations for states, localities and camp providers.

For questions or concerns related to the contents of this memo, please contact NGA staff:
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