

COUNSELOR EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN 2022-2024

FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMP

In October 2021, FJC convened a broad cross-section of the North American Jewish camp community to examine reasons for declining counselor recruitment and retention rates and make recommendations about how to combat these trends systematically and collaboratively. This action plan outlines the steps FJC and the field of Jewish camp will commit to taking over the next three years to address these challenges.

Working as an ecosystem with a shared belief in the importance and power of Jewish camp, we can move on from the structures and models that have been stagnating for years and reimagine a new and more resonant version of camp whose value proposition for campers, counselors, parents/caregivers, and the entire community, is stronger than ever. The needs facing the field are both urgent and important, and to make a significant and sustainable impact in the immediate and long-term future, our work moving forward must focus on the following areas:



EXCELLENT STAFF EXPERIENCE

We need to demand and enable an excellent staff experience that creates the best possible conditions for each individual counselor's success. This includes reimagining the staffing model, increasing staff support, setting the right baseline standards for the work experience, and ensuring staff are treated like the key stakeholders they are.



ATTRACT & RETAIN TOP TALENT

We must remove barriers and amplify opportunities as a field to retain and recruit top candidates to camp. This includes ensuring all counselors are meaningfully and appropriately onboarded, compensated, rewarded, and recognized.



TALENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

It is time to boost Jewish camp's performance and reputation as a place to develop and find top talent for the world beyond camp. This includes elevating on-the-job camp training and skills development, reimagining and personalizing the counselor job for individuals' career aspirations, creating genuine opportunities for staff to advance those aspirations, and making noise about camp as a great source of talent for future employers.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

EXCELLENT STAFF EXPERIENCE

1. New Professional Positions Dedicated to Staff Life
2. New Staffing Models
3. Training for Seasonal Camp Supervisors
4. Fieldwide Staff Experience Standards
5. Staff Advisory Councils & DEI Taskforce

ATTRACT & RETAIN TOP TALENT

6. Compensation Incentives
7. Literature Review & Data Analysis
8. Fieldwide Recruitment Efforts

TALENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

9. Career Advancing Opportunities with Camp
10. FJC Fellowship Expansion
11. Fieldwide Leadership Development Opportunities

SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

New Professional Positions Dedicated to Staff Life*

The work of camp professionals has grown in complexity over time and often cannot fully prioritize the counselors' experience and development. FJC will create a new cadre of camp professionals whose portfolios focus on staff life at camp.

Training for Seasonal Camp Supervisors*

More camps will have access to the performance management tools provided by our partners at e21, and professionalize their supervision experience. FJC will also create the Camp Management Fellowship, a new field-wide supervisor training program.

Staff Advisory Councils & DEI Task Force

Create local and field-wide Staff Advisory Councils (SACs) for staff members to be seen as valued stakeholders in Jewish camp all year round. A field-wide SAC will be an essential connection between FJC and the experience of seasonal staff. Special committees will address relevant field-wide concerns, such as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, which will continue the field's efforts to make camp accessible to marginalized populations of young adults.

Fieldwide Recruitment

Through large scale, fieldwide marketing campaigns we can showcase the value proposition of working at camp to a variety of audiences: prospective staff, their parents, and future employers. FJC will also form partnerships that can support the recruitment of young adults to work at camp, especially those from underrepresented communities.

New Staffing Models*

FJC will provide the risk capital and support to camps experimenting with new models and innovative staff related ideas. We look forward to learning from camps that are trying new compensation structures, new job titles and responsibilities for those with different skills and interests, new daily schedules that start with staff needs in mind, shorter contracts, and/or hybrid summer experiences that combine work at camp with other enrichment experiences.

Literature Review & Data Analysis

An overall analysis of the piecemeal research already conducted on camp counselors and this demographic will help the entire field craft a more powerful, data-informed value proposition for working at Jewish camp and for investing in Jewish camp staff.

FJC Fellowship Expansion

A cadre of Fellows will spend 2-years full time working for Jewish camps - their summers working in leadership roles at a Jewish overnight or day camp and the academic years as full-time professionals in the offices of that camp. As a group, the Fellows will gain access to professional development and networking opportunities provided by FJC. The Fellowship will recruit much needed professional talent to the field, while helping camps retain top leadership talent.

Fieldwide Leadership Development Opportunities*

The continuation and expansion of FJC's prestigious, fieldwide leadership development opportunities like Cornerstone, Common Ground, and our array of virtual internship opportunities that help camps retain their most talented staff and help these young adults bolster their resumes and increase their summer compensation.

Compensation Incentives

We have an opportunity to share data, implement and learn from pilot initiatives, and generate new incentives to increase staff compensation. FJC will partner with communities to pilot a variety initiatives and measure which of these levers move the needle on staff recruitment, retention, and performance.

Fieldwide Staff Experience Standards

Camps must adapt and build organizational cultures that meet the needs of current and prospective staff, and workplaces that reflect current standards of employee care. Included here are factors such as compensation, schedules, housing, recognition programs, social activities, and access to growth opportunities. After establishing the baseline benchmarks, FJC will support camps in achieving them.

Career Advancing Opportunities with Camp

Camp is an incredible place to gain the skills, confidence, and knowledge one needs to succeed in a variety of academic, career and personal passion areas. Programs in this area include creating a mentorship program guide for camps, and new pathways into Jewish camp employment with new titles and responsibilities that reflect the career aspirations of camp staff.

**In Progress as of Summer 2022*

