



# STAFF APPRECIATION GUIDE

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# INTRODUCTION TO STAFF APPRECIATION: WHY IS APPRECIATION IMPORTANT?

Welcome to this Staff Appreciation Guide — a resource your camp can utilize to complement existing staff appreciation strategies while creating new ones to raise overall staff satisfaction and retention rates amongst staff. This guide has been prepared by seasonal summer camp staff who are part of Foundation for Jewish Camp’s inaugural Staff Advisory Council (SAC).

In 2022\*, staff satisfaction remained high at 79%, compared to 82% in 2019 and 77% in 2021. While the likelihood of staff returning to camp dropped to 39% in 2022 compared to 44% and 45% in 2019 and 2021 respectively. Furthermore, 64% of staff said they felt appreciated and valued for their work, similar to 2019 and 2021 at 62% and 66% respectively. While the degree to which staff felt supported and listened to dropped from 64% in 2021 to 61% in 2022.

There are a number of strategies that camps are already using to recruit and retain staff, with over 50% of camps increasing salaries, giving more flexibility to summer roles, and creating new positions as incentives to work at camp. Staff appreciation strategies do not always have to be large gestures, but small appreciation strategies also mean a lot to the staff. Appreciation also comes in the form of receiving constructive feedback, being praised for the little things, and being entrusted with more leadership responsibilities.

These statistics reinforced the thinking behind this guide and the need for this type of project, in order to encourage camps to open up the conversation about how to engage in staff appreciation and where camps could improve upon their appreciation strategies. It is consistently found, via a number of studies, that strong appreciation and gratitude is associated with helping staff feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships within the work environment.

As a team, we wanted to support this conversation through the creation of this guide and to ask questions about what this data is saying and how it can inform the implementation of staff appreciation strategies. For example:

- Why is there a difference in the percentage of staff who felt appreciated, valued for their work, and supported and listened to compared to the percentage of overall satisfaction?
- Why are these percentages not closer together?
- If these percentages were closer together would we thus see an increase in staff retention as well?
- Is there a correlation between staff satisfaction, staff appreciation, and staff retention rates?

\*All data in this guide is from the Foundation for Jewish Camp Staff Satisfaction Survey and Trends Report: State of Jewish Camp 2022.



# TEN WAYS TO APPRECIATE YOUR STAFF

Showing that you care about your staff is one of the most important ways to keep camp running happily and smoothly. It is important to get to know your staff so you can understand how to best support them. Here are ten ways that we think can help you show your staff that you care about the work they do!

## 1. SHARING ONE-ON-ONE FEEDBACK

When you are part of a large group of staff, it can be easy to feel unimportant or forgotten. One simple way to remedy this is to regularly provide thoughtful and specific feedback to your staff members.

## 2. BEING A NETWORKING RESOURCE

One huge advantage to working within the world of Jewish camping is the networking opportunities it can provide to young professionals. Letting staff know that you are there for them to help foster connections in the future is a great way to make someone feel good about the work that they are doing.

## 3. TAKING STAFF OUT OF CAMP

As much as we love being at camp, sometimes the camp bubble can get overwhelming for staff. Taking staff out on a trip can be great for morale and for bonding. If you find that you may not have the coverage or time for a staff trip, letting some staff out of camp for the night can also be great for them.

## 4. TALKING ABOUT UPWARD MOBILITY

A great way to excite staff and show them how much you appreciate what they do is to talk to them about potential positions that either they want or you think may suit them. For example, if you have a cabin counselor who seems to do very well in a particular program area of camp, you may find that a conversation about being an area specialist excites them and makes them feel that their hard work has been noticed.

## 5. FINDING COVERAGE FOR EXTRA REST

Many staff members could benefit from a bit of extra rest. Finding the coverage to allow them to take an extra hour off can go a very long way. You may even find that you have time to cover for them and get the bonus of having some extra hands-on fun.

## **6. INCREASING PAY AND INCLUDING END-OF-SUMMER BONUSES**

According to FJC's 2022 Staff Satisfaction Survey, the most common recruitment and retention strategy for overnight camps was an increase in salary from summer to summer. We also think that bonuses for exceptional work are a great way to make staff feel special.

## **7. SAYING THANK YOU**

As simple as it sounds (and is!) sometimes all a person really needs is a genuine and heartfelt thank you from their supervisor. Thanking your staff regularly in a personalized and authentic way can make staff feel seen and feel they are making a positive impact.

## **8. LISTENING TO YOUR STAFF**

Staff at camp are often a great resource for new ideas and ways to make camp run smoother. Many of the staff that fill the roles of cabin counselors and area specialists are young people who may have been campers not too long ago. The fresh perspective that they offer makes for a wealth of new ideas for camp. Utilizing your staff's recommendations and ideas is beneficial not only for camp but also for them, as it helps them feel that you recognize their abilities, opinions, and needs.

## **9. ENCOURAGING CAMPER APPRECIATION**

Nothing makes a job feel more important and rewarding than hearing from those you are directly impacting. Establishing ways for kids to show how much they appreciate their cabin counselors, area specialists, and other members of the leadership team are incredibly important to staff. One great way to get the ball rolling is having campers write notes or letters to their staff members.

## **10. GIVING STAFF EXTRA LEADERSHIP ROLES**

In FJC's 2022 Staff Satisfaction Survey, "being given opportunities to lead" was a factor in feeling appreciated that came up a lot. Many staff members feel that when they are given these chances, they feel that they are being trusted. Trust means a lot to camp staff, and placing your trust in your staff shows just how much you appreciate their hard work and dedication throughout the summer.



## PROGRAMS OF APPRECIATION

The goal of this program is for staff to show other staff how much they appreciate all the hard work they do at camp. This is from the supervisors' to counselor perspective.

One example of a staff appreciate program that camps can do is have an award shirt (or an equivalent to this such as pins, hats, fanny packs,



sunglasses, etc); something of value that no one has. At the beginning of the summer, the head staff will create this item and add value to it. Let's say the staff really want to award their counselors for connecting one on one with a camper. You would give the shirt a special name, design, and a nice quote on the back. Once every couple weeks at staff meetings, head staff will award other staff with these shirts, in front of the rest of the staff. They will give a small speech about this person, why they deserve this shirt, and what makes them a good counselor. The goal of this program is public recognition. It feels special to be recognized by your supervisor, especially when it is in front of friends and colleagues.

It is important that the head staff only give out a couple of shirts every time to preserve the special nature of the award and to show others they have to work hard to get one. After the program, staff can proudly wear their special shirt, and as the summers go on, it becomes a collectable item that

not everyone has. It is an incentive that has no monetary value and also gives recognition to the counselors that go above and beyond.

## **BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP**

This resource is to be used to support the development of new staff appreciation strategies at camp. Every camp will do staff appreciation in different ways. So, take snippets from this resource and combine them with your own thinking and ideas to develop something fun and unique for your staff. Just by starting this conversation at your camp, and bringing new ideas to the table, you will be doing a service to the many counselors that work at camp each year.





# APPENDIX - DEFINITIONS TO STANDARDIZE TERMS THROUGHOUT THIS GUIDE

Camps across FJC's network use a variety of terms when it comes to speaking about different roles at camp. In order to standardize terms for this resource, we have put together a definition guide.

**Activity Area Supervisors:** Summer staff in charge of program areas, specialists, and operations. For example, area supervisors and area directors of aquatics, sports, art & crafts, etc.

**Area Specialty Staff:** Staff in charge of specific programmatic areas. For example, Lifeguard, Soccer Specialist, Drama Specialist, etc.

**Cabin Counselors:** Staff members who work as cabin counselors take care of campers and take them to their activities.

**Staff in Training (SIT):** A position between camper and staff member, actively learning how to be a staff member and usually the oldest campers. Sometimes also known as Counselors in Training (CIT).

**Summer Leadership Team:** A team of staff supervisors and leaders of different areas of camp that make up the summer leadership team.

**Unit Heads:** Summer staff in charge of cabin counselors and unit/village operations. For example, Village supervisors, Division leaders, and Unit heads.

**Year-Round Team:** Staff that work year-round to prepare camp for each summer. For example, the Director, Assistant Directors, Social Workers, etc.

