

CAMP SHRIVER AT UMASS BOSTON



2023
IMPACT
REPORT

CAMP SHRIVER

... SO ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN AND PLAY –AS EQUALS



Saturday Camp

Camp Shriver is proud to announce the return of Saturday Camp! Saturday Camp partners with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester to hold our extended camp programming during the school year.

Since 2006, Camp Shriver at UMass Boston has welcomed children, half with and half without intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 8-12, from low income families in the Boston area to a free inclusive recreational camp. New in 2023, Camp Shriver launched Summer Stars, an inclusive Summer Treatment Program, for children with externalizing behavior problems such as those associated with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder. Both programs are offered for 4 weeks in July, take place on the UMass Amherst Mount Ida Campus in Newton, MA, and provide transportation and meals at cost to parents.

A national model for inclusive recreational programming, Camp Shriver's mission is to improve the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children of all abilities, by providing an inclusive community of friendship and fun. At Camp Shriver, children with and without disabilities build social skills and positive social relationships by learning and playing together.

By sharing our best practices, such as in our new book published this summer, Camp Shriver strives to make sure that all organizations can better include children with disabilities.



CAMP SHRIVER IS FEATURED IN A NEW BOOK: *BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE CAMPS*

Camp Shriver is pleased to announce a new release, *Best Practices for Inclusive Camps*, from Sagamore-Venture Publishing, edited by Gary N. Siperstein—founder and director of the Center for Social Development and Education—Stuart J. Schleien, Martin E. Block, and Emily D. McDowell.

Camp Shriver was heavily involved in the conception and writing of this new comprehensive resource, designed to help camp leaders and staff create inclusive programs that welcome campers of all abilities. The book was guided by the "Standards for Inclusive Recreation Programs," developed by Camp Shriver in partnership with the National Inclusion Project.

Part I of this book addresses best practices in various aspects of camp, including "Programming," a chapter co-written by Director of Camp Shriver Mark Spolidoro, which includes such important topics as Planning for Inclusion, Fostering Social Interaction, and Supporting Participation and Positive Behaviors.

Part II is a series of case studies about inclusive camps—including a chapter on Camp Shriver—that represent both day and overnight programs across a range of organizational affiliations and geographical locations. Camp Shriver's chapter highlights many aspects of our unique program, including the topics Before Camp Begins, Staff Training, Inclusion in Action, and Evaluation.

This book is an essential resource for anyone involved in the administration, planning, or implementation of camp programming, with a focus on helping camp leaders and staff create environments that intentionally foster inclusion for all children. Camp Shriver is proud to have this opportunity to share our best practices with interested organizations everywhere!



THE CSDE MODEL OF INCLUSION

Founded in 1976, the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston is a multidisciplinary research and development institute whose mission is to promote the social development and overall quality of life for children with disabilities. The principles of the CSDE model of inclusion—based on 40 years of CSDE research and evaluation—are found in Camp Shriver programming:

Commitment to Inclusion: To demonstrate a commitment to serving children of all abilities in an inclusive environment, 50% of campers have an intellectual or developmental disability.

Commitment to Full Participation: To promote participation, all activities are planned in advance to support the camper with the highest needs and developed following the principles of Universal Design to promote equity. By planning for the child most in need, campers of all abilities can engage in the same activities together. Differentiated instruction is incorporated so that choices are offered between variations of activities (e.g., which line to shoot free throws from) and between different equipment (e.g., whether to pass a basketball, a playground ball or balloon) that benefit all campers, whether that camper has a disability or is simply trying an activity for the first time.

Commitment to Social-Emotional Development: To foster social connections and meaningful social interactions between campers, staff promote a culture of social responsibility by modeling and encouraging positive social behaviors among campers during structured and unstructured time. Social skills such as cheering for your teammates, inviting others to play with you and joining in groups that are already playing are the building blocks of positive peer relationships and friendships. Every week, campers work toward team goals that encourage campers to practice relationship-building, responsible decision-making, social awareness and self-management.

Commitment to Staff Support: To ensure that staff provide positive behavior supports that foster social skills for all campers with and without disabilities, staff attend two full days of training provided by experts from the CSDE and Boston Public Schools on best practices for successful inclusion. In a low 4:1 camper-to-staff ratio, staff have defined roles: an inclusion coordinator supports all camper and staff needs; coaches organize and lead specific activities (e.g., gym, field, arts-and-crafts); and counselors support campers through the day, modeling participation and positive social skills by engaging enthusiastically in all camper activities. Coaches and counselors together focus on each child's individual skills and abilities (not a specific disability label).

Commitment to Evaluation: To continuously improve inclusive programming so that its positive benefits can be maximized each year, Camp Shriver conducts a rigorous, annual evaluation, involving parent surveys, counselor observations of campers and one-on-one interviews with campers.

With commitment to inclusion, full camper participation, campers' social-emotional development, staff support and program evaluation, Camp Shriver is creating inclusive communities where all children have equal opportunities to learn and play together.



CAMPER STORY—A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP

Sitting with Nelson, a 12-year-old camper, Camp Shriver's Inclusion Coordinator Danna Bille was trying to draw him out of his shell. New to camp, Nelson was very shy – he wasn't participating in activities or even talking to his teammates and counselors. Suddenly, Danna caught sight of JR walking past the tent and had a brainstorm.

"JR! Come over here, please. Have you met Nelson?"

JR was a returning 12-year-old camper with an intellectual disability, who had been attending Camp Shriver for over 3 years. In spite of the difficulties he faced in life, JR was a very polite and caring young man, who was very vocal about how much he loves Camp Shriver.

When JR sat down at the table, Danna asked if he could hang out with Nelson and show him the ropes of camp. Off went, with JR already eagerly talking and pointing out different aspects of Camp Shriver. Every morning, JR would sit at his team table and watch the buses for Nelson's arrival. When he saw Nelson, JR popped right over to tell him hello and go through the breakfast line with him, starting their day eating together.

JR and Nelson were inseparable. With one good friend to support him, Nelson began to participate in activities and talk to his other teammates and counselors.

Camp Shriver provides a safe place for all children, where campers like JR can grow and become a great friend, regardless of their disability status, ensuring in his turn that Camp Shriver is welcoming of new friends, like Nelson. Together, JR and Nelson, had an amazing summer!



EVALUATION OF CAMP SHRIVER

... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS

Each year, research staff from the Center for Social Development and Education evaluate camp programming to ensure that Camp Shriver continues to accomplish our mission: improving the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children of all abilities, by providing an inclusive community of friendship and fun. Assessment instruments and methods are drawn from scientific literature and adapted to assess campers' social-emotional skills, social relationships, and belongingness through individual camper surveys and interviews. Counselors, who directly interact with and observe campers every day, are asked to rate campers' improvement in social skills. Parents are also surveyed before camp about their goals for their child. This process helps camp leadership continue to improve and adapt programming to best meet campers' needs. From the 2023 evaluation, we learned:

Camp Shriver's model creates a community where campers feel they belong.

Camp Shriver welcomes a population of campers where 50% of campers have an intellectual or developmental disability in low 4:1 camper-to-staff ratio, and where staff are trained to focus on each child's skills and abilities—not on a particular disability label. This model creates an environment where campers feel truly included and supported. As expected, given the demands of school, a higher percentage of campers feel that they belong at camp (93%) than feel that they belong at school (78%). Most importantly, both campers with and campers without disabilities believe that they belong at camp (95% of campers without disability and 91% of campers with a disability). This contrasts with feelings of belonging at school, where there is a larger gap between campers with and without disabilities: 88% of campers without a disability feel they belong at school, compared to only 69% of campers with a disability. It is clear that the Camp Shriver community is a place where all campers feel that they belong, facilitated by the intentionally inclusive programming.

Camp Shriver improves the social-emotional skills of campers.

In addition to creating a supportive environment where campers feel they belong, Camp Shriver staff also work to promote social-emotional learning by teaching, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behaviors among campers during both structured and unstructured time.



... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS (CONTINUED)

This intentional focus on social-emotional development helps campers build social- and self-awareness skills, skills that provide a foundation for acting inclusively. For example, of the campers who found it hard at the beginning of camp, 62% found it easy to know how other campers are feeling and 80% found it easy to know when their teammates need help by the end of camp. Similarly, approximately 57% of campers who reported difficulty with self-awareness skills at the beginning of camp reported improvement in knowing how they were feeling and knowing what they were good at. These results are supported by counselor observations: of the campers who had room to improve, 88% improved at making friends; 93% at trying new things; and 81% at taking turns and sharing with others. Parents of returning campers report similar improvements, with 90% indicating that their children were more patient and self-confident as a result of camp.

Social-emotional programming at Camp Shriver also targets two particular social skills that facilitate friendships: joining a group of campers already playing, which can be especially challenging for children with disabilities, and asking other children to play, especially important for children without disabilities. Of the campers who struggle at the beginning of camp with these skills, 53% improved at joining a group of campers already playing and 56% improved at asking other children to play. An improvement in these skills is noted by counselor observations: of the campers who needed improvement, 78% improved at joining a group of campers already playing (69% with disabilities, 88% without) and 61% at asking other children to play (45% with disabilities, 75% without).

Camp Shriver fosters positive peer relationships and friendships.

Most fundamental to Camp Shriver's mission is that Camp Shriver brings together children with and without disabilities to promote positive peer relationships and friendships. For children with disabilities, especially, the fostering and development of peer relationships is important, as children with disabilities often lack opportunities to develop positive peer relationships. This year at camp, 94% of campers named a peer a friend at camp. Encouragingly, this percentage was almost exactly the same between campers with a disability (93%) and without a disability (96%). Additionally, as reflects the diversity of our camp population, 75% of friendships were between campers of different races. Importantly, most campers without a disability (77%) named a peer with a disability as a friend. This is particularly notable, given that a study by research staff at the CSDE found that only 41% of middle school students report becoming friends with a student with a disability, even in the context of inclusive extracurricular programming (Jacobs, et al., 2018).



... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS (CONTINUED)

Camp Shriver promotes motor skill development.

Camp Shriver provides opportunities for motor skill development by increasing camper participation in all activities; this is accomplished by planning for the child most in need and making inclusive accommodations to all activities to promote equal participation. This is important as 48% of parents report that their children never or rarely play on sports teams outside of camp, limiting opportunities to engage in motor activity.

Overall, campers participate in over 78 hours of motor skill development on the field, on the tennis courts, in the gym, and in the arts and crafts room, playing a variety of activities such as swimming, archery, golf, tennis, tag games, kickball, basketball, soccer and more. These activities are beloved by campers – some noted that “getting to do a lot of activities” and “doing something different each week” is what makes Camp Shriver fun! They similarly enjoyed “exercising while having fun” and “always having fun games to play.” Campers enjoyed getting to “play different things;” including “hitting a bullseye” in archery and playing “all different kinds of tag.” Many campers experienced these activities for the first time - one camper said that he “tried tennis for the first time and it was really fun!” This enthusiasm for activities seems to carry over into the school year as well, with over 95% of returning parents reporting that as a result of Camp Shriver, their children are more likely to be active during the school year.

In Conclusion, when asked what makes Camp Shriver fun, one of our campers said, “it’s the different people you meet—everyone is kind and fun to play with.” In the words of another camper, Camp Shriver should never change “because Camp Shriver is already how it's supposed to be.” The inclusive and welcoming atmosphere leaves campers “looking forward to coming back next year.”

Camp Shriver has had demonstrated success in meeting its objectives since its inception in 2006 and the evaluation results are used to continuously revise and improve programming to maximize positive effects. Camp Shriver’s successes have been widely disseminated in books ([Best Practices for Inclusive Camps](#) from Saga-more-Venture Publishing, 2023), conferences (e.g., the American Camping Association Conference, 2023; the National Inclusion Project Power of Play, 2022), encyclopedias (Encyclopedia of Intellectual and Developmental Disorders, 2018), scientific journals (Social Inclusion of Children with Intellectual Disabilities in a Recreational Setting. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, **47(2)**, 97-107), psychology magazines (Monitor on Psychology, July 2008), camping magazines (American Camping Association, 2007) and in national media outlets such as It’s Only a Game on NPR.



SERVING CHILDREN OF DIVERSE

At Camp Shriver, we remain committed to welcoming children, ages 8-12, boys and girls, with and without disabilities, from low-income urban neighborhoods and ensuring diversity among our campers. In 2023, 131 campers with and without disabilities were served from Boston (80%) and Quincy (20%). The majority of campers lived in the neighborhoods surrounding UMass Boston, including Dorchester, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roslindale, South Boston and Roxbury.

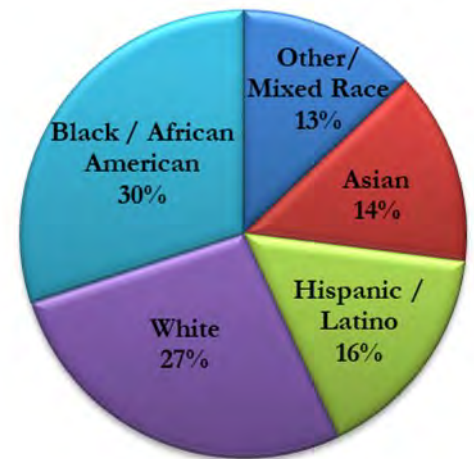
The ethnicity of our campers is representative of the communities in which they live: 78% of campers self-identified as a racial-ethnic minority. We are committed to maintaining this level of diversity in our camp population: 27% of campers self-reported as Black/African American, 18% as White, 16% as Hispanic/Latino, 16% as Asian, and 18% as mixed race or other.

At the heart of Camp Shriver's unique inclusive experience, an equal number of children with and without disabilities are brought together to engage in the same recreational activities alongside one another. Our campers with disabilities are children with intellectual disabilities, on the autism spectrum, and or who have other developmental delays. In 2023, 51% were children with a disability.

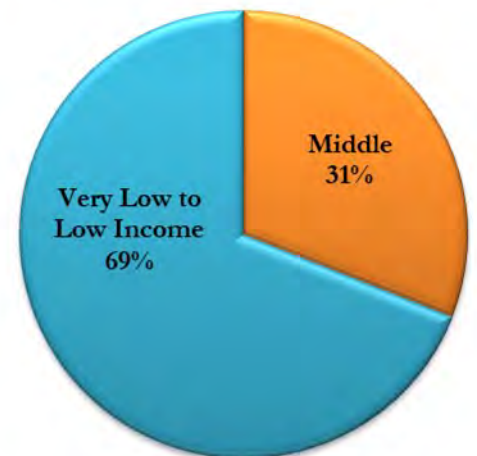
Additionally, Camp Shriver partners with schools and community groups to identify children from low-income neighborhoods who might be interested in and benefit from a free summer sports camp. In 2023, 61% of Camp Shriver families were very low to low income, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



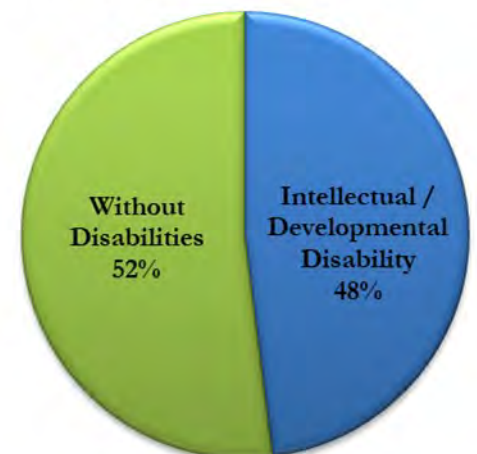
Camper Ethnicity



Family Income Levels



Camper Disability Status



SUMMER STARS

... A NEW CAMP SHRIVER PROGRAM

When Dr. Andre Maharaj joined the CSDE, one of his first priorities was bringing a Summer Treatment Program for children with externalizing behavior problems such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder, to the CSDE. This intensive summer behavioral intervention prepares children with problem behaviors for success in school and recreational programs.

In bringing this program to the CSDE, Dr. Maharaj's goal was to make the summer treatment program inclusive, combining the strengths of the CSDE's inclusive programming with the strengths of the summer treatment program, which includes both classroom activities and recreational play. This summer, Summer Stars welcomed 16 children, half with a disability, for a very successful summer, where campers played and learned together, working on social skills to promote friendships and strengthen social networks, improving academic skills tailored to each child's needs, and focusing on good sportsmanship and teamwork. Freeze dance was a popular game: the counselors played music and the campers froze when the music went off; campers who are still dancing are out until there is only one left. This game is not only fun, it teaches attention, inhibitory control, and how to follow rules. The game gives campers a chance to practice coping skills when you are called out and how to cheer for your friends when they are winning.

During games, counselors could also focus on the social skill of the day. For example, when the social skill of the day is "taking turns," during a t-ball game, counselors would make sure that everyone had a turn at bat and so that campers practiced how to wait patiently and not skip the line. After the game, counselors would review the emotion of the day, for example, asking for something that made someone feel "sad" or "happy" during that day's game.

Another component of the Summer Stars that was more successful than hoped was the parent training. During parent training, parents came together to learn how to build positive relationships with their children, for example, learning how to follow their children's lead during playtime, and to support their child's academically, for example, teaching parents how to interact with schools. Parents found the training so useful that not only did attendance actually increase as the program went on, but also the parents of the peers, children without externalizing behavior issues, also asked to join the group. Parents have requested that training continue through the school year... and the CSDE is working to set that up. Camp Shriver is looking forward to continuing this successful program next summer.



CAMP SHRIVER...
IN THE CAMPERS' OWN WORDS

Making new friends every day is my favorite part of Camp Shriver!



My friends play with me and listen to me!

My friends include everyone!

Playing with my friends is the most fun part.



Camp Shriver has activities that kids like, like sports and yarn, dodgeball and water balloon activities!

I got to learn how to swim better!



Makes you want to come back every year!

CAMPER STORY – A NEW TEAM

The four campers approaching Director Mark and Inclusion Coordinator Danna were hesitant, pushing each other toward the front, smiling tentatively until the boldest of the group said, “Director Mark... is there any way we can come back next year? Maybe as volunteers?”

This summer, Camp Shriver tried something new. Director Mark Spolidoro and Inclusion Coordinator Danna Bille are constantly adjusting Camp Shriver to continuously improve our inclusive programming. In past years, campers were divided into six teams by age: three younger teams of 8-, 9-, and young 10-year-olds and three older teams of 10-, 11-, and 12-year-olds. This year, to improve the transition of young, new campers to Camp Shriver, they decided to have a team composed entirely of 8-year-olds. To balance this, they created a camper team composed entirely of 12-year-olds.

12-year-olds have sometimes struggled during their last summer at Camp Shriver. Being on a team with campers who are two years younger than them, who maybe are at camp for the first time, can be frustrating for a camper ready for more independence and more challenging activities.

The coaches could now challenge the 12-year-olds, on a team by themselves, in their activities. The campers collected and carefully painted rocks with colorful messages to leave around the campus, had a game of kickball that lasted for three days and were constantly thinking about why the rules were in place, not just why they had to follow the rules.

Additionally, their experienced counselors challenged the 12-year-olds to become leaders and work with other campers during free time, modelling positive behaviors for younger campers. One camper began sitting at the 8-year-old table during choice time. Some of the younger campers were trying to create bracelets from gimp, but they were having trouble. She helped them, getting their projects started, teaching the campers new gimp stitches; she stayed with them and when the campers got stuck, she reached out and helped. She attracted more campers to what she was doing until the gimp table was a popular activity at camp. Other 12-year-olds led games of football or baseball, and still others had camper groups chalking the walkway.

At the end of the summer, the 12-year-olds’ emerging leadership capabilities culminated at field day, when they were split up and assigned to teams as junior counselors. They participated in activities alongside their fellow campers, supporting and helping the younger campers wherever they could, figuring out teams for tug of war, making sure everyone had a hand in the parachute activity, and cheering for everyone during the egg races and balloon toss.

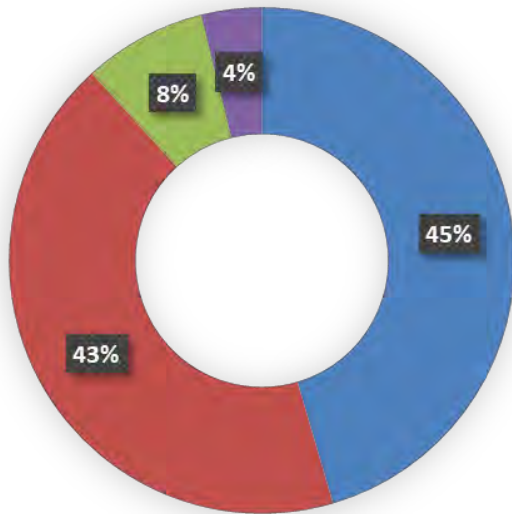
“So... could we? Come back?” This year’s group of 12-year-olds had a fun summer and they learned how to be part of Camp Shriver in a different way... as leaders. Mark and Danna looked at each other, smiled and said, “We can’t wait to see you!”

In 2023, these four campers will pilot a new counselor-in-training program at Camp Shriver, volunteering their time with the 8-year-old team as they learn more about what makes a great counselor.



SUSTAINABILITY OF CAMP SHRIVER

Camp Shriver is a financially stable program, comprising support from the Center for Social Development and Education (administration and fundraising) and the University of Massachusetts Boston (facilities and transportation). Additionally Camp Shriver has been awarded a multi-year grant from the Liberty Mutual Foundation and is a member of the Official Charity Program of the Boston Marathon. We continue to actively solicit new and varied funding opportunities each year.



- Individual Giving (including gifts as part of the Boston Marathon Official Charity Program)
- Corporate/Private Foundations
- University of Massachusetts Boston
- MA Summer Food Service Program



A GRATEFUL THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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CAMP SHRIVER

AT UMASS BOSTON



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2023