



Hiking and Fitness Trails

Recreational activities are pillars of summer/winter camp, summer school, and recreational center experiences. They provide an opportunity for socialization and learning in a fun setting. These activities also provide an increased liability and potential for staff and/or participant injury. The safety of participants and staff should be standard operating procedure. It should be completed to the highest professional standards and in line with federal, state, local, and accrediting agency guidelines. The following checklist template provides a high level oversight to assist with your activity structure. Your organization is responsible for the development of your own written program guidelines and policies for the oversight of your activities. Through consistent management and preventative programs, exposures can be reduced to help ensure a safe recreational experience.

Pre-planning and Participant Evaluation/Selection:

- Pre-planning is critical (what is the worse-case scenario). Identify potential hazards and untimely events (weather, injuries, runners, etc.). Identify those individuals that should not participate (physical or emotional limitations) or past history of running. Include 1:1 supervision of participants with a pre-disposition for running. Educate Supervisors/Chaperones.

Hiking Trail Safety Tips:

- Choose the hiking trail according to the ability, fitness and experience of the group.
- Formal written program outlining minimum age requirements and liability controls (liability waivers reviewed by legal counsel meeting state and federal guidelines) signed by parent or legal guardian and kept on file.
- Research the Trail. Check regional hiking information for hazards including poisonous plants/snakes, insects, animals and water hazards.
- Guidelines for appropriate clothing, footwear, eyewear, water, food, sun protection, insect repellent, etc.
- First Aid and Emergency Medical Evacuation. Notify someone of your plans.
- Adequate number of qualified supervisory staff participating in the hike.

Fitness Trail Safety Tips:

- Choose the Fitness Trail according to the ability, fitness and experience of the group.
- Formal written program outlining minimum age requirements and liability controls (liability waivers reviewed by legal counsel meeting state and federal guidelines) signed by parent or legal guardian and kept on file.
- Guidelines for appropriate clothing, footwear, eyewear, water, food, sun protection, insect repellent, etc.
- Hazards such as head and neck entrapment, shear and crush of body parts, falls to the ground surface, protrusion and entanglement become serious concerns.
- Warning signs and instructions prominently posted.
- Adequate number of qualified supervisory staff participating in the hike.
- If the organization uses third party guide service, verify adequate risk transfer controls are in place.
- Formal contract between organization and the guide service.

- Verify certificates of insurance with adequate limits.
- Additional Insured status
- Hold Harmless language
- See the [Nationwide Risk Transfer resource](#) for additional information on how to protect your organization.

Hiking Resources:

- [Your Hike Guide - Hiking Pack Checklist](#)
- [Hike Smart-National Park Service](#)
- [Sierra Club](#)
- [National Recreation and Park Association](#)
- [Hiking and Backpacking Safety Tips](#)

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