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Integra has an experienced and multidisciplinary professional staff that is dedicated to creating and implementing a range of programs. Integra serves as a centre for research, practicum placement and continuing education.

Integra is committed to the promotion of a community-wide understanding of the mental health needs of children and adolescents who have learning disabilities, and to improving community-based services for them and their families. A range of clinical services is provided by Integra, as well as related activities in research and evaluation, and in training, consultation, collaboration and advocacy.



Improving the Lives of Children &
Youth with Learning Disabilities

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Summer Activities for Children & Teens with LD and/or ADHD

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SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND/OR ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Planning for summer can be a challenge for parents of children and teens with LD and ADHD. The school year is often highly stressful and frustrating for a student with learning and/or attention problems. Children, teens and parents often welcome a break from the stresses of school. However, 10-12 weeks of summer without structured daily activities may also seem overwhelming and anxiety producing for parents and children.

**It is important to think about what you and your child want for the summer.
Do you want:**

- freedom from a strict or rigid routine
- a time of recreation
- a time for family bonding
- a time of separation between the child and the family
- an opportunity to socialize outside of an academic setting
- a time for the child to learn new skills

Your search for summer activities should take into consideration; **1)** what you want for your child in the summer, **2)** what your child wants to do or is interested in for the summer, and **3)** your child's strengths, difficulties and needs.

It is critically important to remember that the child or teen with LD and/or ADHD will likely require many of the same supports to succeed in a summer program as are needed in school. For instance, if an individual benefits from taking

medication, such as Ritalin, in order to succeed in learning new skills, then medication may be needed in a summer program that is designed to teach new skills. Programs that have activities which require specific cognitive or perceptual skills that are problematic for the child, such as art activities or strategy games, will need to offer participants accommodations and supports to help them to participate successfully. If an individual benefits from time out from activities at school to head off frustration or prevent overstimulation, then it is likely that time-outs should be built into summer programs, as well.

The more information parents are willing and able to share about the needs of their child with the staff of the program, the better able the program will be to meet those needs. It is not a good idea to let the staff learn on their own what you already know about your child. This may call for advance preparation by programs, to find an extra staff person who can spend time individually with your child, or to make adaptations to meet your child's unique needs.

Programs which you may want to consider for the child with LD and/or ADHD:

- Day camp programs through the Parks and Recreation Departments. Check whether they have experience with campers with special needs. They may be able to supply an extra support staff for campers with special needs
- Private day camp programs (contact the Ontario Camping Association)
- Half day special interest programs, e.g. computer programs, art programs
- Overnight camps which have had experience with campers with LD and/or ADHD (contact the Ontario Camping Association)
- Camps run by the Y.M.C.A./Y.W.C.A.

Remember:

You want the summer to be a time of diminished stress for you and your child. Do not set expectations that cannot be met.

Find a program that you feel comfortable with. Make certain that the staff of the program feel they are able to manage your child. You should try to orchestrate a summer success in order to build self-confidence and to help your child be ready for future challenges.

If your child has never been away from home and you are planning to send him/her to overnight camp for the first time, it is helpful to try out a series of experiences away from home before camp (sleepovers, a trip to a relative's). Perhaps search for a shorter program for the first time away.

Talk to the staff of the Ontario Camping Association. They have years of experience in working with all kinds of children and teens in summer programs.

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