



## TAEG

### Camp with Allergies – Panel Session

Meeting Minutes Jan 31, 2017

### Table of Contents – click links to view content

Panellist Info .....	1
Camp Info .....	2
Question: What preparation do you do to ensure a safe & inclusive environment for anaphylactic campers? .....	2
Question: What advice would you give to parents of allergic children? .....	3
Parent Question: Concern about hot temperatures damaging EpiPens at camp. How to avoid? .....	4
Parent Question: How can we find a camp in a different area? .....	4
Parent Question: What food management policies do you use to keep allergic kids safe? .....	4
Parent Question: What advice would you give to a camper to have a good experience? .....	5

### Panellist Info

Name	Title	Camp
Bev Unger, RN	Health Coordinator	<a href="#">Camp Robin Hood</a> (day camp), also chair of the Ontario Camps Health Care Committee
Darren Greenspoon	Camp Director	<a href="#">Camp Green Acres</a> (day camp)
Catrina Knapp	Assistant Director	<a href="#">Zodiac Day Camp</a> (day camp)
Margot Perlmutter	Camp Director	<a href="#">Camp Tamakwa</a> (overnight)
Tan Robertson	Assistant Director	<a href="#">Camp Wahanowin</a> , (overnight)
Sharon Newman	Parent	Hillcrest camp; <a href="#">Robin Hood</a>

## Camp Info

[Camp Green Acres](#) – Day camp in Markham. 10 mins to Markham/ Stouffville hospital. Approx. 600-800 campers. Last year ~60 campers with allergies/ Epipens. Medical staff: 2 RNs & 1 student nurse. Have a relationship with an allergist from Sick Kids to ask questions and direct families to. Have a caterer who accommodates allergies but families can send food as well. Four different programs: traditional, sports, horseback riding, & “My Camp” where kids get to specialize in their choice.

[Camp Robin Hood](#) - Day camp in Markham. Approx. 700 campers & 250 staff. Bussed into camp. 10 mins to Markham/ Stouffville hospital. Traditional program: arts, swim, canoe, related sports camp. Medical staff: have a fulltime registered nurse in the medical centre & 2 student nurses. Extensive anaphylaxis protocol.

[Zodiac Day Camp](#) – Day camp in Toronto (Vaughan Rd & St Clair), has approx. 400 campers per week. Full range of activities – general program for younger kids, specialized program for older kids (sports, performing arts, swim, etc.). Have a nut-free caterer who brings meals to the camp. Roughly 80% of campers use the caterer, but 20% bring food from home. All campers eat together. Medical Staff: have 1 RN on site at all times, plus 1-2 nursing students.

[Camp Tamakwa](#) - Overnight Camp. Near Algonquin Park, 2.5 hrs from Toronto, 55km from Huntsville. Campers ages 7-16 yrs old. Approx. 200 campers. Water/ land sports, arts, canoe trips (incl. allergic campers). Last year ~30 kids with allergies & Epipens at camp (nuts, gluten, dairy, soy, poultry). Medical staff: always have 1 doctor (do 1-2 week stays, same docs for 10-20 yrs), 2 nurses (stay for 9 wks) and 1 medical assistant.

[Camp Wahanowin](#) – overnight camp outside Orillia, 15 mins from hospital. Have school groups in May/ June (approx. 2500 students); up to 400 campers & 200 staff in summer. Broad based program: land, adventure, trapeze, arts, sports, water sports, canoe trips. Accommodates many special diets. Strict “no outside food” policy. Peanut/ tree nut safe site (no nuts allowed on property). Tan does all the food planning & purchasing for the camp (dining hall, canoe trips, and tuck shop). Medical staff: 1 doctor (1-2 week stays), 3 nurses, owner Patti Nashman (social worker) oversees health centre. Protocols for allergies: staff trained, Epis spread throughout camp.

### Question: What preparation do you do to ensure a safe & inclusive environment for anaphylactic campers?

**Margot:** I have an extensive conversation with the family to learn about the allergies. For example with an egg allergy, some can eat “baked eggs”, some will eat items that “may contain” egg, others will not tolerate any egg at all. I discuss with the parent how the allergies are managed at home and whether we can make any changes at camp to accommodate (e.g. use poppy seeds not sesame seeds on breads). Each camper with special needs has a file that includes information about their particular conditions, the history, severity, medications, etc. This file gets reviewed by the camp staff with the medical staff. One of the camp doctors or nurses will go through this file with the camper’s counsellors, do Epipen training, and discuss dining hall protocol. If the camper is going on a canoe trip, the file will be reviewed with the trippers before they leave as well. We keep a master list of all the campers with allergies in the office, in the dining hall, and in the health service centre, so that everyone is aware of the allergies.

We have a special prep area in the kitchen for special diets. There is one person in the kitchen who is responsible for preparing all special diet meals. This decreases likelihood of cross-contamination. Each child with a special diet gets a cubby in the kitchen to store his/ her special safe food (e.g. GF buns). I

find the kids with egg & sesame allergies bring up a lot of their own food (mostly breads). We also have a special process to get ready for a canoe trip that includes a camper with a special diet.

One thing that we are careful about is kids sneaking in food. We know this happens and we must be very careful.

**Bev:** we ask parents to identify campers with allergies on the application form. The list of campers with allergies is given to Bev and either Bev or the owner Sari calls all the parents. Bev tries to invite these families on a tour of camp and then they walk through the camp's processes. There is an extensive written anaphylaxis policy that covers all areas. Campers must carry their EpiPens at all times, and there are designated spots to hang them at watersports. We have a kitchen at the camp, and 20% of the camp eats the lunch plan, but the rest bring their own food. The camp is nut-free and staff monitor the food brought into camp to ensure there are no nuts. We send notes to families who have kids on the bus or in a cabin with an allergic child, asking them to wash hands before boarding the bus & after meals. We also have designated allergen free tables where allergic kids can eat their lunches.

We have an open house before camp starts, where parents can come to meet the staff who will be working with your child. We hang the anaphylaxis forms for each allergic child in the office, on their bus, in the swim area, etc. The camp nurse reviews the forms with staff who will be caring for allergic children.

**Darren:** I don't want to repeat what Margot & Bev have already said. We do similar things. We have extensive policies in place for anaphylaxis. We have learned a lot and followed the work that Bev has done for the Ontario Camp Assoc. in setting up standards for allergies.

I would say that communication is the most important thing for managing allergies at camp. I want to make sure I am speaking with the right people to make sure the child is safe. We are a team with the family.

One thing that I learned from Tan is to check every single food item that comes through the camp. I check every single label every time. I take pictures of the labels on every item of food and store them on a drive on my computer. That way I can compare & make sure that there have been no changes in the product, and things do change. I had a case recently where chocolate chips that we had ordered many times before suddenly had a "may contain nuts" warning on them, so we called the supplier to confirm and then had to stop serving them. It is important that I do what the family would do at their own home, because we are creating a relationship between the camp & the family and this way the family can trust us with their child.

**Question:** What advice would you give to parents of allergic children?

**Tan:** Usually families contact me when they register their child for camp. I want to work with them to make sure they are comfortable and looking forward to camp. We want them to feel that they can trust us.

We have 1 person in the kitchen who is responsible for special diets. We tailor practices for each camper's needs. Some families are ok with "may contain" warnings, some are not. We decided to not allow sesame and poppy at all as they are too small and hard to control in the kitchen.

We run programs for schools in the spring, so families are welcome to tour and meet the kitchen staff and see the processes we have in place. Families can also meet the staff during pre-camp. We want to make sure that the kids feel safe and included.

**Catrina:** Kids are younger at our camp, so we must be even more careful. We have a few staff members with allergies, so we try to put allergic staff with allergic campers. We have rules about campers carrying Epipens and inhalers – they must have them on them at all times. We have bins that they must place them in for swim time.

We try to make sure all the kids feel included. We try to find similar items so that no one feels left out or deprived. For example, I will buy gluten-free, dairy-free chocolate chip cookies if all the other kids are having chocolate chip cookies.

We make sure that our staff is well trained so that they know how to act in case of an emergency. We train them using expired Epipens, and make sure they are able to use them. If they aren't comfortable with needles or with giving an EpiPen, we won't put an allergic child in their care. It is much better to know this before the summer begins.

**Sharon:** If you are still anxious after talking to senior staff, trust your instincts. Go to pre-camp. Meet the counsellors. Make sure they know how to recognize signs of anaphylaxis, know how to use an EpiPen.

**Darren:** Make sure all counsellors are getting trained, b/c you never know if there will be a change in staff of who is looking after your child. Someone can be sick, quit, in a different area of the camp, etc.

The Ontario Camp Association has certain standards. Not all camps are members and it is worth checking if your camp is a member. They recommend retraining staff every year. You should check what they train. You should also check what their policies are about carrying Epipens, food management, etc. (parent question about young kids carrying their Epipens) We make sure all children carry their Epipens at all times– this is a life skill, and I think you should ingrain it while they are young. You should ask about whether the camp purchases generic Epipens, how many are on site, and how long would it take to get to an EpiPen in an emergency, etc.

You should check about bus protocols: training for the bus drivers, policy about food on the bus, rewarding kids with food on the bus, etc. We usually ensure that there is one or two staff members on the bus in addition to the driver, to keep an eye on the kids. We do make sure the drivers have EpiPen training, but it is very unlikely that they would be the ones administering an EpiPen.

**Parent Question: Concern about hot temperatures damaging Epipens at camp. How to avoid?**

**Bev:** Extreme cold is more of a threat to Epipens than the heat. The ones on the kids are wherever the kids are, so you should check the window on them to make sure they aren't discoloured. We keep the spares in bins, covered.

**Parent Question: How can we find a camp in a different area?**

**Bev:** You can look up camps that are members of the Ontario Camp Association on line or in our guidebook. You can also call camps in your area and interview them on the phone to determine if they will care for your child appropriately.

**Parent Question: What food management policies do you use to keep allergic kids safe?**

**Catrina:** at mealtime, cabins sit together. We have signs on chairs to indicate when a child has allergies. The counsellors check the packed lunches of the other children to make sure there isn't anything harmful near the allergic child.

**Margot:** Young kids with allergies sit next to their counsellors, so they can make sure there is no food sharing, etc. Ask the camp: how often do you get deliveries of food? How often do you check the labels? Who is responsible for checking labels?

**Bev:** when the kids are very young, they sit in cabin groups and eat picnic style. The counsellors are aware of the allergies and check to make sure there aren't any allergens near the allergic camper. When they are older, they sit by unit and the kids self-police, but the staff are aware of which kids have allergies and patrol.

**Tan:** First, we check bags for food when the kids arrive at camp and after visitors' day.

We have a separate area in the kitchen where we prepare special diet meals. All the food is plated separately in the kitchen. Even if an allergic camper doesn't want what's on the menu and instead wants something from the salad bar, which is always available in the dining hall, we plate it in the kitchen to avoid cross-contamination. If any allergic kids are going on "intercamps" (trips to another camp to play sports), we pack a lunch for them to take to make sure they have safe food. If they are going on a canoe trip, we plan carefully to make sure there is safe food for them, we plan ahead if the plan is to stop at McDonalds or somewhere on the way back to camp.

**Bev:** Robin Hood has a "home & away" program, where kids can go to Robin Hood for 2 wks and then go to Camp Walden for overnight camp for 2 weeks. They go as a cabin group and have the same counsellors for the entire time, so there is continuity. Camp Walden is owned by the same family as Robin Hood, so we can coordinate with Walden to make sure they have the same information and take appropriate steps to keep allergic children safe.

**Margot:** I find that allergic kids are very good at taking care of themselves, they are very self-aware and parents have done a great job of training them to be vigilant. We make sure when we are hiring staff that they understand that they are responsible for all the campers in their care, including the allergic ones. They take this responsibility very seriously, even the 17 yr olds. Other campers are also aware of their friends' allergies and I find that they take steps to keep their friends safe.

We have a strong canoe trip tradition and we want all our campers to go on canoe trips, even allergic ones. We plan these trips very carefully: we make sure we have extra Epipens, that are stored in multiple dry bags, and that these dry bags are carried separately, so if something happens to one, like a canoe tips, there is still a backup in another canoe.

**Tan:** You can ask to speak to another parent of a child with allergies who has been to the camp in the past. They can tell you about their experiences.

We have lots of choices at mealtime, so it's not like everyone at the table will be eating one thing and the allergic child is eating something different. People can always choose to eat from the salad bar, we have special meals for vegetarians and vegans, etc. So food allergic kids are not singled out.

**Parent Question:** What advice would you give to a camper to have a good experience?

**Margot:** I would say, it's ok to be nervous, but **our** job is to make sure you're safe and have fun. You just have fun.

**Bev:** Kids are the experts of themselves. If something feels wrong, or there is something that concerns them, they should speak up.

**Darren:** Just have fun! It's my job and the staff's job to make sure you are safe.

**Tan:** Your parents chose the camp; they met with our staff and trained us. You can feel safe here, but you should advocate for yourself.

**Catrina:** I tell kids that I have my own special diet and that I bring my own special meal. I hope this shows them that everyone has different needs and they shouldn't be self-conscious or feel different.

**Sharon:** I make sure that my son knows that he is the first line of defence to keep himself safe. I tell him that if he isn't sure about a food, don't eat it!