

Wilderness School Short Course Programs

The Wilderness School offers Short Courses for youth year round. The focus of these programs is to support collaborative partnerships among both state and community organizations. Participants from DCF programs and facilities as well as community agencies are welcome to apply for a short course program.

These programs are sequenced from initial experiences promoting communication and trust to more challenging experiences, as greater time and comfort is established in the Wilderness School setting.

Wilderness School Short Courses are intended to develop skills in decision-making, problem-solving, and other interpersonal skills, as well as to focus on increasing self-esteem and personal responsibility. They are experiential and emphasize the rewards having successful experiences together. Short Course Programs are strengths based and oriented towards establishing relationships between participants.

Wilderness School also offers Leadership / Team Building Short Courses to staff at the Department of Children and Families to provide support for the work force and offer opportunities for team cohesiveness.



The types of activities include:

1. **One-Day Team Building Courses**

These courses are designed for the specific needs of participating groups, and can be utilized at various stages of a group's development. Activities include problem-solving initiatives, team-building activities, and group challenges. Opportunities to develop leadership skills, strengthen group cohesiveness, and practice decision-making skills are presented and discussed throughout the day.

2. **One-Day Wilderness Challenge Courses**

Wilderness School offers 1-Day Wilderness Challenge courses featuring special activities such as canoeing, rock climbing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, tracking and the high ropes course. Participants engage in challenging activities together and have opportunities to experience goal setting and interpersonal skill enhancement. Experiences also focus upon gaining self-confidence, trust, and personal responsibility.

3. **Student/Agent/Family Days**

Adolescents and adults are enrolled together in pairs and join others spending a day outdoors participating in problem-solving initiatives, new games, and group challenges. This course gives youth and adults the opportunity to strengthen relationships and develop communication skills. Activities and initiative problems foster trust, cooperation, and teamwork.

4. **Programs for Specialized Populations**

Programs may be designed for youth in need of extra support as well as other youth not yet appropriate for more intensive Wilderness School activities. Specially designed programs may include residents of DCF facilities and other youth in more restrictive, out of home settings with special requirements for participation. Wilderness School can provide unique services to youth who have experienced acute, significant trauma. Programs vary in duration and skills or abilities required, and are designed to provide an entry level experience with the Wilderness School. Activities range from evening campfires to full day programs specially designed for group development.

5. **Overnight Short Courses**

Youth may participate in an intensive Short Course Overnight (two or 3 day courses) based on agency request. This experience is an entry level overnight program intended for participants needing to become accustomed to the remote Wilderness School setting and approach. This experience can be designed based on individual program goals and may include backpacking, camping, team-building or canoeing. Opportunities exist to develop leadership, cooperation skills, and personal responsibility.

