



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**

Youth Camp Licensing and Regulation in Texas

Presentation to the House Committee on Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

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Laws and Rules for Youth Camps



[Health and Safety Code, Ch.141:](#)

Texas Youth Camp Safety and Health Act



[25 Texas Administrative Code, Ch. 265, Subchapter B:](#)

Texas Youth Camps Safety and Health

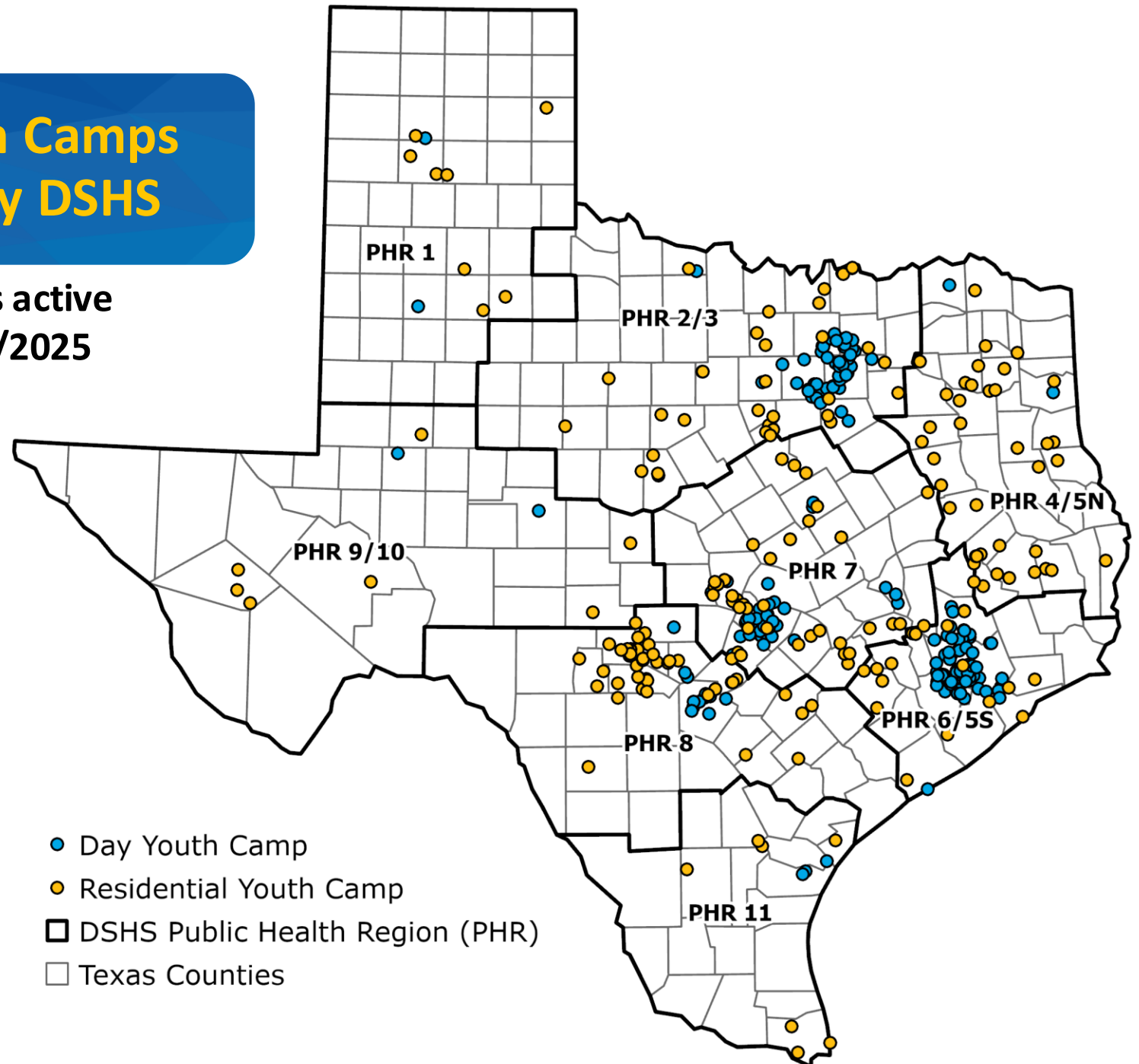


Website:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/youth-camp-program>

Texas Youth Camps Licensed by DSHS

375 licenses active
as of 7/31/2025



Statutory Requirements – Chapter 141



Defines youth camp, setting a minimum threshold of 4 operating days per year for youth camp activities.*

**Exempts certain types of facilities from licensure: facilities required to be licensed by DFPS; higher ed-run programs*



Delineates between day camps and “residential” or overnight camps.



Focuses on operations during the year as a youth camp, not how the facility may be used during non-camping season.



Outlines rules requirements, waiver options.



Directs DSHS to establish specific health and safety standards.

Statutory Requirements – Chapter 141

- **Waiver option, Sec. 141.0025:**

- DSHS may issue a waiver to specific types of facilities. The facility must meet all qualifications to be considered:
 - Sponsored by a religious organization
 - In operation for at least 30 consecutive years
 - Camp operations limited to not more than 7 days per year
 - No more than 80 campers
 - All adult participants are volunteers
 - Operates in a small population county – at least 4,000 but not more than 4,350; and
 - Background checks are still required by each adult participating in the program
- Waiver section added to statute in 2017.
- Current staff are not aware of any waivers issued under this provision.

Statutory Requirements – Chapter 141

Standards, Sec. 141.009

Supervision

Sanitation / public
health

Medical services

Water supply

Waste disposal

Boating equipment

Motor vehicles

Buildings / facilities

Fire precautions

Density / use of
premises

Water safety
procedures for
“swimming pools,
lakes, and waterways”

Staff qualifications /
ratios /
criminal convictions

Current Fee Structure

License Category (<u>25 TAC Sec. 265.28</u>)	Total Fee Required for a One Year License (includes Texas Online Fee)
Initial License – Day Youth Camp	\$250
Initial Residential Youth Camp	\$750
Renewal day youth camps operating less than 10 days per year	\$52
Renewal day youth camps operating 10 or more days per year	\$155
Renewal residential youth camps operating less than 10 days per year	\$103
Renewal residential youth camps operating 10 or more days per year	\$464

Current Staffing and Resources

Staffing

All retail food inspectors (40 in total) flex from retail foods duties and provide some level of support to youth camp inspections during summer months.

Fees

~ 50% of program cost covered by youth camp fees currently – general revenue also helps to cover these costs.

Inspection Frequency

New youth camp licenses must be ready for inspection in May each year. DSHS typically inspects all camps each year.

Staff Cross-Coverage with Other Duties

Retail food/youth camp staff will also be implementing mobile food unit inspections required by HB 2844 (89-R) beginning in summer 2026.

Steps to Obtaining a License

Application for license submitted with license fee & activity schedule

DSHS inspects facilities, operations, and premises

Department issues license

Youth camp can begin operation

Annual Renewal: Applicant must submit renewal fee, renewal app, and have any deficiencies from inspection corrected. Annual re-inspection not required by law but is standard practice.

Criteria for Inspections

86 Possible Inspection Criteria Under These Categories

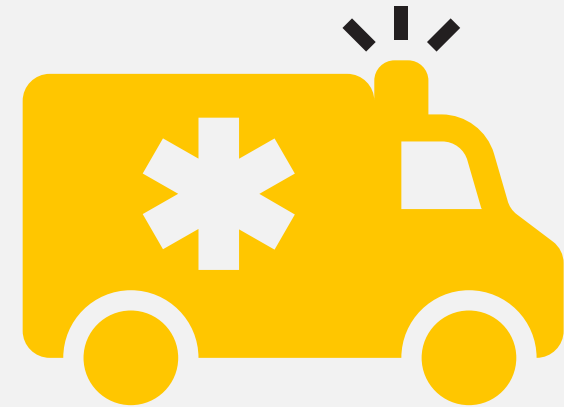
Licensing	Medical and Nursing Care (includes Criteria 51. Required Emergency Plans)	Staff	Waterfront Safety	Site and Physical Facilities
Program Safety and Equipment	Primitive or Wilderness Camp	Fire Prevention	Maintenance and Safe Use of Motor Vehicles	Insect and Rodent Control
	Farm and Domestic Animals	Nudity Prohibited	Inspections (interference prohibited)	

Link to blank **inspection form**: [Youth-Camp-Inspection-03-09-17.pdf](#)

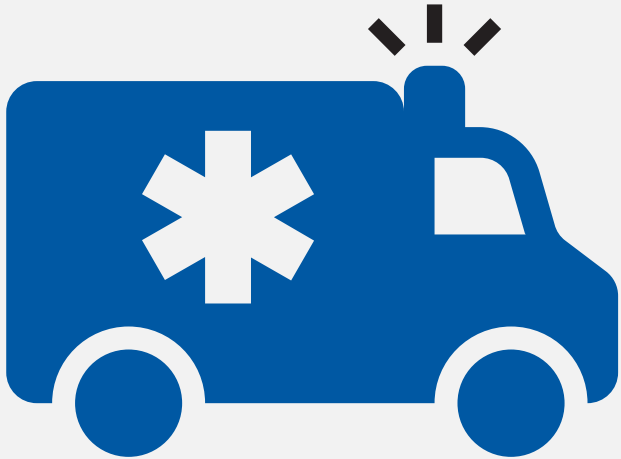
Link to blank **inspection matrix** w/ details on each potential violation:
[YouthCampInspectionMatrix_20210331JM.pdf](#)

Emergency Plan Requirements

- [25 TAC 265.15\(k\)](#): Emergency plan “to be implemented in case of a disaster, serious accident, epidemic, or fatality... [and] shall include procedures for emergency shelter and for evacuation of each occupied building in the facility.”
 - Each camp is required to maintain records of its plan.
 - Each camp is responsible for developing its own plan.
 - Plan must be posted in every building.
 - All camp staff must be made aware of the plan.
 - Campers shall be instructed on what to do in event of “fire, disaster, or need to evacuate.”
 - Emergency drills are not required.

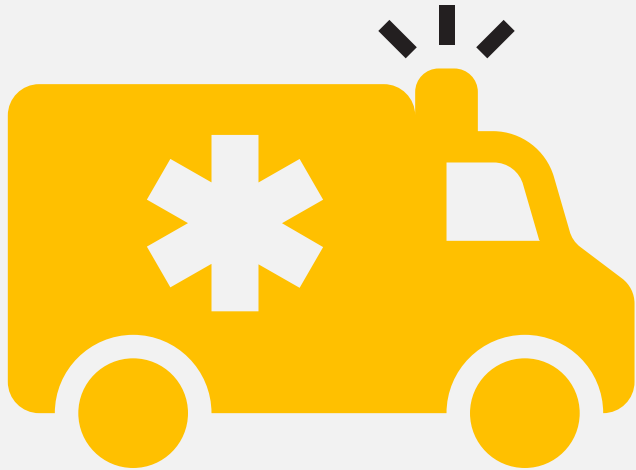


Emergency Plan Requirements



- Camps maintain and post copies of their emergency plan on site.
- Camps are responsible for developing their own emergency plan.
- Each plan is reviewed during annual inspections.
- Review is to determine if it covers the correct elements (specific types of events), not to formally approve or evaluate the specific plans for efficacy.

Emergency Plan Requirements



- **Inspection Criteria 51:**
 - Covers specific event types?
 - Written plan?
 - Posted in camp?
 - All camp staff/volunteers aware of the plan?
 - Documentation of training kept at camp?

Facility and Waterfront Requirements



Inspection Criteria 13: “Safety of camp facility. The buildings, structures, and grounds shall not present a fire, health, or safety hazard.”



Inspection Criteria 15: “Compliance with building, plumbing, electrical and life safety codes. All camp buildings shall comply with applicable building, plumbing, electrical, life safety, and similar codes.”



Inspection Criteria 54-64: staffing, lifeguards, additional personnel, flotation devices, and related policies for supervised waterfront activities.



Inspection Criteria 72: “Fire and safety codes. Facilities at all youth camps shall meet local fire and safety codes.”

Youth Camp Statistics, Fiscal Year 2024

Youth Camps Licensed:

- 374

Youth Camps Inspections:

- 352 renewal inspections
- 3 pre-licensure inspections
- 2 complaint investigations

Youth Camp Advisory Committee (YCAC)

Purpose: Advise commissioner of standards and procedures, make recommendations on rules, provide other functions as requested related to youth camps



Expiration date: dictated by Government Code 2110 and rule



Enabling Statute: HSC 141.010

Youth Camp Advisory Committee (YCAC)

Up to 9 members

- At least 2 members from the general public.
- The rest – experienced camping professionals reflecting geographic diversity of the state in proportion to geographic concentration of licensed youth camps.
- Serve 6-year terms.

Meets at least annually

- Last meeting was in March 2025.
- Next meeting planned for October 2025.

Recent Rule Recommendations from Youth Camp Advisory Committee – March 2025

- **Clarify who can serve be on-call to provide medical assistance.**
 - Provide options, under rule 265.15(a) - on-call physician, to include on-call Physician's Assistant (PA), or on-call Nurse Practitioner (NP).
 - Will be included in a future rule revision project.
- **Clarify whether a camp health officer is required for fields trips, when some campers remain at the camp facility.**
 - Plan to include a requirement for an adult staff member currently certified in AED, CPR, and first-aid to accompany campers on off-site field trips.
 - Will be included in a future rule revision project.



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Thank you

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