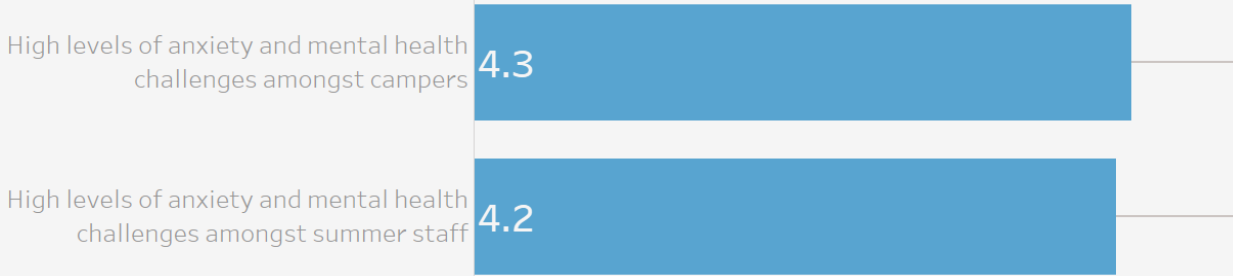




This document reflects 2023 Camp Insights Survey responses related to the following societal trends:



Note that respondents rated each societal trend using the following prompt - **Please rate the extent to which the societal trend below creates significant opportunities or challenges for your camp over the next 5 years** – using a 1 to 5 scale where **1 = Not Significant** and **5 = Very Significant**. *The full list of trends and their ratings can be found in the appendix of the full [2023 JCamp 180 Camp Insights Report](#).*

In addition, respondents were asked to share areas of both strength and growth in their efforts related to **mental health at camp**. This document summarizes the responses camps reported – we hope these ideas help other camps as they determine how to best respond to these societal trends.

High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst campers

“We have hired our camp social worker part time during the year to help with screening new campers, speaking with families of campers with mental health concerns, developing support plans in advance of camp, etc.”

After three years of being the #1 ranked trend, high levels of anxiety and mental health challenges among campers was the #2nd rated trend. Along with similar challenges for staff (#4), this reflects the continuing critical importance of this issue.

Camps are continuing and expanding the initiatives introduced over the past few years. They are adding human resources (variously referred to as social workers, mental health counselors, camper care coordinators, psychologists, wellness coordinators, inclusion professionals and parent liaisons). Part of the staff augmentation is to provide training and support to staff so they can better provide support to campers.

Camps are also strengthening their communication with parents prior to camp. “We try to message that mental health just like physical health is something about which we need information and parent partnership to work with.” Camps also are making the camper intake process more rigorous, to better enable support services to be designed or screen out campers who won’t be a good fit at the camp.

During the summer, camps are implementing a range of approaches to provide support for campers. This includes “time out spaces,” “CORE (Chill Out, Relax and Energize) spaces,” “private zones for decompression,” “space and internet enablement for zoom calls with therapists,” and more broadly “restructuring our schedule and programs to lower the level of anxiety.”

Recognizing the high costs of mental health support, camps are pursuing specialized fundraising and grants, and are especially appreciative of the Foundation for Jewish Camp’s Yefid Nefesh grants for mental health initiatives.

High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst summer staff

High levels of anxiety and mental health among summer staff is again a top four rated societal trends for significance, as it has been in each of the three years we have asked about it. Camps are taking approaches with strong similarities to those they are adopting to for campers. This most notably includes significant increases in community care and mental health professionals to support staff (some of the same people also supporting campers). It also includes training of staff to help “counselors prepare better for dealing with their campers, and with anxieties with how they are going to be successful in their roles” and to be better at “self-care.” These initiatives not only directly help staff, but they also help staff better support campers.

As part of their approaches to managing the Gen Z generation (most of the summer staff), a number of camps are also implementing further strategies as indicated below.

- Alleviating the work pressures through adding “floating staff to relieve staff when needed,” reducing hours during the day, and providing more time off during sessions
- Responding to competitive demands on young people’s times and “recognizing we might need (more flexibility) and different types of seasonal staff models. This includes, for example, allowing staff just to return for one session of work, or incorporating different types of jobs – [for example,] just being an activity specialist without cabin responsibilities.”
- Investing in more staff programming and supports, including CORE spaces, access to teletherapy, and wellness bonuses
- In addition to all the above-noted supports, several camps noted their efforts to help staff develop perseverance, “while also pushing staff harder to recognize their potential to achieve despite the adversity and holding them accountable in a healthy way.” Some camps also noted they are also becoming more rigorous with their staff recruitment and intake process, carefully explaining the pressures, and once hired “are being clearer about expectations.”