



San Juan Mountains Association

EXPLORE ♦ LEARN ♦ PROTECT

Homeschool Parent/Student Handbook

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Welcome to the San Juan Nature Academy!

We are excited to have your family join us for another year of outdoor learning and enrichment! This handbook serves as your guide to our homeschool enrichment program, outlining what you can expect from our staff and what we ask of you and your child. Please read it carefully, and reach out if you have any questions. Thank you for being part of our learning community!

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I. Introduction and Program Overview

Welcome to the San Juan Nature Academy homeschool enrichment program! As a member of our program community, your family becomes part of a dedicated network of educators, naturalists, and learners working to create transformational learning experiences for K–12 students in the spectacular public lands of Southwest Colorado.

This handbook outlines our philosophy, expectations, safety policies, and logistics so that you and your child feel prepared and supported throughout the year. San Juan Nature Academy is a state-funded homeschool enrichment program. Our elementary program meets one full day each Wednesday for K–6 students. Our middle & high school program meets one full day each Tuesday, plus a 4-5 day overnight trip each semester, for 7th-12th grade students. We are committed to cultivating curiosity, resilience, and environmental stewardship through hands-on, place-based education. Our curriculum is rooted in environmental science and outdoor skills, aligned with Colorado academic standards, and adapted to the seasons and the local ecosystems.

Our students meet weekly from September to May, with consistent routines and expectations throughout the year. We alternate between public land field sites (e.g., San Juan National Forest, BLM lands) and our Durango Nature Center base site, using each as a living classroom. We go outside regardless of the weather, and our curriculum is designed to help students thrive in all seasons and conditions.

San Juan Nature Academy is operated by the San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA), a nonprofit based in Durango, Colorado. The program is funded through Education ReEnvisioned BOCES and designed in alignment with Colorado state standards.

We operate under the following guiding principles:

- “Explore. Learn. Protect.” This is both our program tagline and the heart of our mission. It reflects the values of the San Juan Mountains Association and encapsulates our commitment to fostering curiosity, discovery, and stewardship in every student.
- Learning is experiential and inquiry-driven.
- All students are capable, curious, and worthy of respect.
- Safety, communication, and kindness are non-negotiable.
- Our goal is to empower children using the ACORNS Philosophy to guide us by being:
 - Active - in your program group and your community
 - Curious - ask questions, try new things, explore
 - Outside - get the physical & mental benefits of the outdoors
 - Respectful - to yourself, your neighbor, and to nature
 - Nature - nature education is the way we learn life lessons
 - Safe - all participants will always be safe!

Our educational model emphasizes place-based science, outdoor leadership, and hands-on, inquiry-driven exploration. Students attend one full day of programming per week (8:00am–3:30pm). Activities include

ecology, natural science, stewardship projects, group hikes, art and journaling, seasonal observations, and outdoor skills.

We operate year-round and fully outdoors in all weather conditions. Mixed-age groupings allow students to learn from one another and develop leadership skills over time. We maintain small group sizes with a low adult-to-student ratio (typically 1:7).

SJMA Program Contacts

Executive Director: Stephanie Weber — (970) 769-1800 | sweber@sjma.org

Education Director / Finance Contact: Adriana Stimax — (970) 715-1092 | astimax@sjma.org

Teacher of Record: Brooks Letchworth — (970) 430-7217 | bletchworth@sjma.org

Program Lead & Coordinator: Sage Cramer — (970) 316-2211 | scramer@sjma.org

Lead Educator: Thomas Fritz — (928) 551-0306 | tfritz@sjma.org

Lead Educator: Anson Brown — (314) 809-9186 | abrown@sjma.org

Please don't hesitate to contact our team with any questions, concerns, or suggestions. We are here to work with you as partners in your child's education.

II. Registration Policies and Procedures

Clear communication and a smooth enrollment process are key to a successful year. Our goal is to ensure families are well-informed, confident in their homeschool designation, and connected to the program.

A. Registration

Families can submit a registration form, including all waivers and release agreements, health forms and payment (if applicable) through the SJMA website. If needed, hard copies of registration forms can be provided to be delivered in person or by mail to our office.

Enrollment Requirements

San Juan Nature Academy is a state-funded Homeschool Enrichment Program operated in partnership with Education ReEnvisioned BOCES. Families are required to maintain compliance with Colorado homeschool law.

To enroll, families must:

1. File a Notice of Intent (NOI) with their school district or register with an umbrella/private school. Please note that homeschool enrichment funding from the state can only be applied to one program at a time. If your child is enrolled in another state-funded enrichment program, such as shared school, athletics, or another BOCES program, they are not eligible for state funding through San Juan Nature Academy. Families are responsible for ensuring they do not duplicate state-funded services.
2. Complete the SJMA Registration Form and submit required documents:
 - a. Emergency Contact Information
 - b. Any necessary Medication Administration or Care Plans

c. Signed Waivers and Participation Agreements

3. Attend Orientation: All families must participate in a fall orientation session prior to the start of programming

We will help guide you through each step of the enrollment process. Maintaining accurate paperwork is required for participation and ensures compliance with state and partner guidelines.

Please contact Adriana Stimax, Education Director, with any enrollment or homeschool compliance questions: astimax@sjma.org

B. State Funded Programming

This program is funded through homeschool enrichment state funding. Each student can only attend one state funded enrichment program per school year. If you plan on registering for another state funded program you will have to self-pay out of pocket for one of the programs. Parents and guardians are responsible for filing appropriate Colorado state mandated requirements and documentation with the appropriate entity pertaining to homeschooling which may include filing an NOI, enrolling in a private school, enrolling in an umbrella school and/or other state approved requirements.

III. Program Information and Procedures

A. Program Schedules and Locations

Weekly program schedules, field site rotations, and seasonal activity calendars are available on our website and will be provided at orientation. We alternate between field sites on public lands and the Durango Nature Center. Your child's group will follow a predictable weekly schedule that includes consistent timing, locations, and drop-off/pick-up instructions. We will email you a newsletter each week with updates, locations, and information.

B. Communication with Families

We use the following channels to keep families informed:

1. Email Updates: Weekly communications from your child's instructor or the Program Lead
2. In-Person Conversations: Before/after drop-off and scheduled check-ins
3. SJMA Website: Visit sjma.org/homeschool-program for current details and resources

Families can always reach out to instructors or SJMA staff with questions, feedback, or concerns. We strive for open, responsive communication.

C. Program Cancellation

A program may be canceled due to inclement weather. We follow the 9R school district for weather-related closures or delays. You will be notified via email and text by the night before or early morning of the program day. If you do not receive a message by 7:30 am on the program day, the program is still running. We understand families may travel from different microclimates, so please make the best decision for your family's

safety and notify us if your child won't attend. Per program policy, there are no refunds for weather-related cancellations.

D. Attendance

Regular attendance is essential. Students must be present for designated count days (last week of Sept and first week of Oct) and attend at least 90% of scheduled programming to remain eligible for state funding. If your child cannot attend due to illness or family circumstances, please notify your Lead Instructor as early as possible.

E. Drop off and Pick Up

Arrival: Parents must sign in their child directly with SJMA staff at the designated location. Please confirm your child has all necessary gear for the day and communicate any updates to their health or emergency information.

Late Arrival: If arriving after the designated start time, contact the Lead Instructor. We cannot delay group departure for late arrivals more than 15 minutes unless pre-arranged. Instructors will attempt to contact you starting 5 minutes after the expected drop-off window.

Absences: If your child is absent, please contact your group's instructor before the program begins. We do not provide alternate care for missed days.

Pick-Up & Release: Children must be signed out directly with a staff member. They will not be released to anyone in a car or to any unauthorized individual. SJMA staff will ask for ID as needed. Verbal authorization by phone is acceptable in emergency situations.

Late Pick-Up: Families will be charged a \$1/minute fee for pickups more than 15 minutes late. After 6:00 PM, if no emergency contacts can be reached, authorities will be contacted. Staff remain with children until they are safely picked up.

F. Transportation

SJMA offers transportation for participants in our vans. We charge a monthly fee and registration is first come-first serve. If the fee is a financial burden, please contact us and we will discuss scholarship options.

SJMA is responsible for any child it transports and abides by applicable State and Federal motor vehicle laws. In order to provide transportation using the SJMA van, we must have signed Transportation and Liability Releases for each participant, included on the Registration Form. We will not use personal vehicles to transport children, unless in the event of an emergency. All children under 8 years old must use a car/booster seat provided by families, in accordance with Colorado state law. We will only get in and out of the van at locations designated on the program itinerary, with the exception of a roadside emergency stop. Please see Driving Policies in the following section for more details.

Please notify the SJMA instructor if your child has permission to independently walk, ride a bike, or use another

form of transportation to and from SJMA programs. SJMA staff will communicate with parents to make sure the child arrives when expected if they are traveling without an adult.

Most families use our transportation, but if you plan to drop your child(ren) at the Nature Center:

Durango Nature Center

63 County Road 310

Durango, CO 81301

From Durango: Take US Highway 550 south towards Farmington 12 miles from Farmington Hill. At the base of Bondad Hill, turn left at the blue Nature Center sign onto County Road 310/318. Make an immediate left onto “River’s End Lane” and travel less than 1/10 mile to the parking area. Travel time from Durango is about 20 minutes.

General Transportation Policies

1. Children may only be transported in SJMA vehicles. Staff may not transport students in personal vehicles unless directed by the Education Director in an emergency.
2. Two adults must be present in the van any time children are being transported. One drives; the second provides supervision.
3. Children under age 8 must be seated in an appropriate car seat or booster, provided by the family and installed by staff according to manufacturer guidelines and Colorado state law.
4. Seat belts must be worn by all passengers at all times while the van is in motion.
5. Students must sit one per seat (no sharing seatbelts), and may not sit in the front seat.
6. Children may not stand, kneel, or move around while the vehicle is moving.
7. Students may not eat or drink anything (except water) while inside the van.
8. All body parts must remain inside the vehicle—no arms, heads, or objects out the windows.
9. When reversing, the second staff member must act as a spotter outside the van.

Before any trip, staff must:

1. Complete a full head count before and after loading students
2. Confirm all seat belts are properly fastened
3. Store any medications or emergency supplies where they are accessible to staff but out of reach of children

Driver Responsibilities

Only staff members who have been authorized and cleared to drive SJMA vehicles may operate vans. Drivers are responsible for:

1. Driving conservatively and obeying all traffic laws
2. Maintaining full attention—no phone use while the van is moving (even hands-free)
3. Ensuring the van is stocked with all required materials (see below)
4. Reporting any damage, incident, or mechanical concern immediately after a trip
5. Notifying the Education Director of any change in license status or eligibility to drive

6. Drivers may not operate a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, medication that impairs function, or any illegal substance. Doing so is grounds for immediate dismissal.

G. Required Gear List

All participants are asked to bring the following each week:

(it is highly recommended you label all of your child's belongings with their initials)

Daily Packing List:

- **Sturdy backpack** - This should allow your child to comfortably carry the weight of all their water, food, jacket, etc.
- **Two liters of water** - (1-2 Nalgene bottles or 1 full-size camelback) There is NO potable water available at the Nature Center; we bring a limited supply of water each day for emergency refills, in case a student spills, loses, or forgets their water. During the winter months, please consider that camelback hoses may freeze.
- **Two Snacks** - Preferably healthy options, one for morning and afternoon.
 - Please do not pack candy or gum.
- **Appropriate Clothes** - Durable play clothes appropriate for bushwhacking, hiking, and outdoor play. This program will be attending various locations in and around the San Juan Mountains throughout the season. We recommend checking the weather forecast for the location each day and packing accordingly. *Fall weather can be unpredictable and we will go out regardless of temperature and weather, so be sure to pack appropriate layers.*
- **Sun Hat or warm cap** - Brimmed hats, or ball caps are great sun protection, as students will be exposed to sun throughout the afternoon! It may be chilly some days so a warm hat might be more appropriate.
- **Hiking Shoes** - Sturdy, closed toe shoes with traction on the bottom, preferably lace-up (or velcro.)
 - Please do NOT send a student in crocs, slip-ons, or flip flops. During our warmer months when we get in the river or creek, we do allow closed toed sandals or water shoes.
- **Sunscreen** - Please send your child with sunscreen and bug spray. Your child, or staff, can reapply as needed (see section below for sunscreen/insect repellent policy).
- **Personal hand sanitizer**- students should come with a personal hand sanitizer for when we are not near hand washing stations.
- **Sunglasses** - (recommended, but optional) High altitude sun is intense and can hurt sensitive eyes. We recommend your child wears sunglasses to protect them.
- **Rain Jacket/Poncho** - While rain is unlikely during our program hours, we ask that you send protection from rain for your student if there is any chance of rain. SJMA staff will have tarps to string up in case of extended periods of rainfall.
- **Medications:** Please be sure to let us know if your child requires any medication, and complete the appropriate [Medication Authorization Form](#) during registration. In order for your child to receive medication at our program, all medications must be properly labeled and stored according to policy regulations.
- **Electronic Policy:** Please do NOT send your student with any toys, money, personal electronic devices (this includes but is not limited to cellphones, smart watches, tablets, music devices, headphones, portable video games), weapons/knives*, fireworks, or matches. We do not allow cell phone usage at

any point during our program, this includes van rides, instruction time, free time, and meal times. Feel free to contact us before the program with any questions/concerns. If students are sent with any of the above items instructors reserve the right to confiscate them until the end of the day. SJMA is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

Winter Gear Recommendations:

Warm, dry bodies make for a fun day.

- The saying goes, "Cotton is rotten," so please do not send your child with cotton layers. These get cold quickly and stay cold. Send extra socks and gloves in case of feet and hands that do get wet.
- **Head**
 - Fleece or wool hat
- **Neck**
 - Gaiter or scarf fleece like turtle fur or soft wool
- **Body: Layers**
 - Layer 1: Silk or polypropylene long underwear
 - Layer 2: Fleece pull over or thin wool sweater
 - Layer 3: Waterproof coat that is long enough to cover past the hips
- **Legs:**
 - Layer 1: Silk or polypropylene long underwear
 - Layer 2: Thin fleece pant
 - Layer 3: Waterproof pants with a cuff. Overalls/snowsuits can be good for keeping snow out but harder to go to the bathroom outdoors.
- **Feet:**
 - Layer 1: Good wool or wool blend socks (lots of options that are not scratchy)
 - Layer 2: Waterproof boots kamik, bogs etc.

Additional info:

- SJMA has a limited supply of loaner gear (jackets, bogs, additional layers that we will bring with us on cold winter days! Please connect with one of our instructors if your student will need to borrow this gear, we want to make sure everyone comes dressed appropriately)
- Check Poshmark, facebook marketplace, local gear stores for gently used gear
- **Outdoor Skills Gear:**
 - During our program we will be learning a variety of outdoor skills (wood whittling, fire building, outdoor cooking, etc). SJMA will provide ALL materials needed for these skills and families are not required to purchase or send their students with any of these materials.
 - We DO allow students to carry folding pocket knives, as we are learning skills with those. We do not allow students to bring any straight blade knives. However, any student being sent with a pocket knife on their person parents must notify the instructors at drop off. Additionally, pocket knives must remain in their backpacks until instructors give permission. If these rules are not followed, instructors reserve the right to confiscate knives until the end of the day.

H. Belongings and Personal Items

Please do NOT bring any toys, money, personal electronic devices (cell phones, ipods, or video games) , weapons, unapproved knives, fireworks, matches, candy or gum to any SJMA program. SJMA staff will confiscate these items for the duration of the program session. If you have any questions about appropriate daily gear or personal items, we are more than happy to assist you. Feel free to contact us before the program, or discuss with your child's instructor at the beginning of the program. SJMA is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

I. Lost and Found

We ask that all personal belongings be labeled with the participant's name. If a labeled item is found, it will be returned to the child as soon as possible. At the end of each day we will make an effort to match lost items with their owners. All "lost and found" items will be displayed at the end of the program session as part of our session clean-up. Lost & Found will be kept for one week after the program and can be found in a bucket inside our office. SJMA offices are located in the Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Court. All unclaimed items will be added to our bin of extra clothes, or will be donated to a local charity. Please do not bring items of great value to our program. **SJMA is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.**

J. Meals and Snacks

We ask that families provide all necessary snacks, meals, and water needed during the day for each child. We also ask that all participants come to the program already nourished with a complete breakfast. Unless otherwise planned, SJMA will not provide food for participants, although back-up snacks are available if needed. We have fresh drinking water available to refill participant water bottles at all times.

Lunch will be eaten within four hours of the start of the program. While we will discourage dairy and meat products for snacks, instructors will ensure that any such items will be consumed during morning snack or by lunchtime. Under child licensing requirements, the instructor must check participants' lunches to determine if they meet one third of the child's daily nutritional needs. If the child does not have a meal, or if the meal is not adequate for one third of the child's daily needs, SJMA must supply an adequate meal, and the parent will be notified and billed.

For concerns for participants' health and safety, sharing food is strongly discouraged among participants. All participants will wash hands with soap and water and/or hand sanitizer before eating and after using the bathroom.

K. Positive Instruction, Participant Expectations, Discipline, and Consequences

At SJMA, we are committed to fostering a positive, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. Our goal is to ensure that every student feels physically and emotionally safe, supported, and empowered to grow. We believe that clear expectations, proactive communication, and restorative approaches help children thrive.

All SJMA instructors receive training in child development, behavior guidance, and age-appropriate communication strategies. We set the tone for respectful group dynamics through consistent modeling, daily check-ins, and an emphasis on problem-solving and social-emotional growth.

Participant Expectations

Before participating in any SJMA activity, students are instructed on the core safety rules, behavior expectations, and land-use regulations relevant to their location (public land, Colorado State Parks, USFS, or BLM). These expectations are reinforced throughout the year.

Families are required to review and agree to the following behavior expectations with their child:

1. SJMA programs operate with the expectation that all staff, parents, and participants follow the “**3 Rs**”.
 - a. Respect each other. Listen when others are speaking. Keep hands, bodies, and belongings to yourself. Name-calling, physical altercations (e.g., hitting, slapping, biting), bathroom humor, and teasing are not allowed.
 - b. Respect yourself. Come prepared with weather-appropriate gear, food, and water. Be open to trying new activities, and advocate for your needs in a respectful manner.
 - c. Respect the environment. Follow Leave No Trace ethics. Do not pick plants, disturb wildlife, or remove natural objects without permission.
2. Treat all group members with kindness and respect. This means no name-calling, teasing, or exclusion, and no physical altercations such as hitting, biting, slapping, or pushing.
3. Participate in all activities to the best of their ability. Feeling nervous is normal, but we ask students to try each activity once before sitting out. If a student chooses not to continue, they are expected to sit quietly and respectfully without disrupting the group.
4. Use appropriate language. Swearing, bathroom humor, and sexualized or demeaning language are not allowed. If an instructor asks a student to stop using certain language, students are expected to comply without argument. While our staff works hard to ensure children are supervised at all times, there may be occasions where staff cannot hear conversations students are having (such as in the back of the van, while going with a buddy to the bathroom, etc). If a student hears or sees another student using inappropriate language, gestures, making crude jokes, or acting unsafely they are encouraged to tell an instructor to address the situation. This is to keep everyone safe. Inappropriate language may include:
 - a. Swearing or profanity
 - b. Body-related or sexualized language
 - c. Teasing, gossip, or targeted exclusion
 - d. “Bathroom humor” used disruptively
 - e. Slurs, hate speech, or phrases that cause emotional harm
5. Respect personal space and consent. No hugging or touching others without clear, mutual agreement. Students must honor each other’s boundaries and use words to express when they want space. Roughhousing, wrestling, or inappropriate touch will not be tolerated.
6. Communicate clearly and respectfully. Students are encouraged to talk with staff if they are feeling upset or uncomfortable. While it’s okay to have big feelings, yelling, sulking, or attention-seeking behavior is not an appropriate way to communicate needs.
7. Stay with the group and communicate needs. Students may never wander off alone. If a student needs to use the bathroom or step away, they must tell an instructor first.
8. Follow all safety instructions during hikes and games. Students must stay on trail between staff leading and sweeping, and follow all established physical boundaries during the day.

9. Know what to do if separated. If a student becomes separated from the group, they should stop, stay in the same location, and call out or make noise to help instructors find them. They should never try to find the group by wandering.
10. Come prepared and stay safe in all weather. Students are expected to carry sufficient water and wear protective clothing appropriate for the season. Staff will help coach students and families as needed.
11. Use materials and objects safely. Students may not throw rocks, sticks, or other objects unless it's part of a supervised activity.
12. Leave personal items at home. Electronics (phones, smartwatches, games), toys, money, and any weapons or tools not approved by staff (e.g., knives) are not allowed at the program. Instructors may confiscate these items and return them at the end of the day.
13. Contribute to a positive group culture. Students are expected to work together with peers and staff to create a fun, respectful, and inclusive environment for learning and exploring.

Not Allowed at SJMA Programs:

1. Weapons (including pocket knives, unless approved by staff)
2. Electronics (phones, tablets, gaming devices)
3. Matches, fireworks, candy, or gum
4. Toys or personal valuables
5. Disrespectful or aggressive behavior toward people, property, or nature

Discipline, Consequences

At San Juan Nature Academy, our goal is to support students in learning how to make safe, respectful, and responsible choices. We view behavior challenges as part of healthy development and strive to guide students toward growth using clear expectations, compassionate accountability, and restorative practices.

We do not use shame, punishment, or exclusion as tools for compliance. Instead, we prioritize relationship repair, safety, and long-term success in the program. All staff are required to document significant or repeated behavior incidents using the SJMA Incident Report Form and must notify the Education Director and the parents/guardians of the involved children of any safety-related behavior the same day it occurs.

Staff are trained to speak up early, ask for support, and use team-based problem solving to address patterns before they escalate.

Progressive Discipline Approach

We use a tiered response system to address behavior, recognizing that students need different levels of support. The following is a general framework:

1. Verbal Reminder & Redirection
Staff name the behavior and connect it to group expectations. The student is given an opportunity to reflect and reset without shame.
2. Short-Term Consequence or Reset

If the behavior continues or disrupts the group, the student may be asked to take a break from the activity, stay with a staff member, or miss a small privilege (e.g., preferred van seat, special role).

3. Restorative Conversation

Staff facilitate a one-on-one conversation with the student (and others involved, if needed). The focus is on understanding what happened, who was impacted, and how to make things right.

4. Incident Report & Family Communication

For repeated issues or more serious behavior (e.g., physical aggression, refusal to follow safety instructions, bullying, harmful or sexual language), an incident is documented and the family may be contacted by either the lead educators or the Education Director. A support plan may be initiated.

5. Student Support Plan

This plan may include: regular staff check-ins, modified participation, structured reflection time, behavior contracts, or agreed-upon consequences. In some cases, a student may be sent home for part of a program day. This is not intended as a punishment, but rather a way to support the student to participate safely in our program.

In all cases, our goal is to help students:

- Understand the impact of their words or actions
- Repair relationships or trust
- Learn and grow without shame

NO REFUND WILL BE GIVEN FOR ANY STUDENT ASKED TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM DUE TO A 3RD BEHAVIOR POLICY INFRACTION.

Behavior That May Require Immediate Intervention

Some behaviors are considered serious safety risks and require immediate staff response and notification of the Education Director and parents/guardians of the involved students. These include:

- Physical aggression (hitting, biting, pushing, kicking)
- Repeated defiance or refusal to follow safety directions
- Threatening language or behavior toward others
- Harassment or bullying (verbal, physical, or social)
- Possession of unauthorized items (e.g., weapons, contraband)
- Intentional property damage or environmental harm
- Leaving the group without permission

In these situations, the student may be removed from the group temporarily and a restorative response or modified participation plan may be put in place before returning to full group activities.

Removal from Program Activities

In rare cases, a student may be asked to miss a portion of the day or be picked up early if their behavior:

1. Poses an immediate safety risk to themselves or others
2. Prevents the group from functioning
3. Does not improve after multiple interventions

SJMA does not remove students permanently from the homeschool program for behavior alone. As a publicly funded enrichment program, we are committed to supporting every student's success and will work collaboratively with families to provide consistent, developmentally appropriate support when challenges arise.

IV. General SJMA Program Policies and Procedures

A. General Policies

- 1) SJMA complies with all local, state, and federal regulations, including those set by Colorado State Childcare Licensing and Education ReEnvisioned BOCES.
- 2) Staff-to-student ratios will not exceed 1:15, with an operational target of 1:7 for homeschool programming.
- 3) Before participating, all Participants will complete and submit the following required forms:
 - a) Registration Form
 - b) Signed Parent/Guardian Waivers and Agreements
 - c) Any medication forms if applicable.
- 4) All SJMA staff members will complete the following paperwork:
 - a) SJMA Policies & Procedures
 - b) Employee Handbook
 - c) Medical Information
 - d) Emergency Contact Information
 - e) pass a Background Check with a fingerprint card
 - f) required training including:
 - i) Child Abuse Reporting
 - ii) Standard Precautions
 - iii) Transportation
 - iv) Emergency/Disaster Procedures.
- 5) Lead SJMA field instructors must have valid CPR, First Aid, and Medication Administration training certificates and 15 hours of annual training.
- 6) Staff must read and acknowledge all policies as a condition of employment.
- 7) Staff cell phones and handheld radios must be fully charged and carried in the field for communication and emergency use.
- 8) In the absence of the Education Director, the Executive Director will maintain the ability for constant communication with all SJMA Field Staff during programs.
- 9) Participants and SJMA Instructors will wear shoes at all times during the SJMA program hours, except when sleeping during overnight programs.
- 10) Participants will not swim or enter water above their shoulders at any time.
- 11) SJMA staff may not subject participants, staff, visitors, or volunteers to physical punishment, ridicule, neglect, or abuse under any circumstances.
- 12) SJMA maintains zero tolerance for:
 - a) Violence toward staff, students, or the public
 - b) Use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs during program hours
 - c) Inappropriate touch, sexual harassment, or sexual abuse

- d) Any Participant or SJMA Staff member who participates in these actions will be removed immediately from participating in SJMA's program and/or employment will be terminated.
- 13) Child Abuse Policy- SJMA staff read and sign a statement clearly defining child abuse and neglect pursuant to state law and outlining the staff member's personal responsibility to report all incidents of child abuse or neglect according to state law. Staff Members who have reasonable cause to suspect or knowledge of a participant that has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed a participant being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect will immediately report the incident to the Executive Director. Either the staff member or the Executive Director will file a report with the La Plata County Department of Social Services if necessary and appropriate. If a parent believes that his/her child has been abused, s/he should seek immediate assistance from the County Department of Social Services: La Plata County Human Services: Tech Center Plaza, 10 Burnett Court, First Floor, Durango, CO 81301; La Plata County Human Services main number: (970) 382-6150. La Plata County Human Services child abuse and neglect reporting number: (970) 385-6438
- 14) SJMA staff members will never be alone in an enclosed space with a Participant, including in a bathroom or a tent.
- 15) Participants must be clothed (shirt and shorts/pants or swimwear) at all times during SJMA program hours. If a Participant needs to change clothes, this must be done in private and if assistance is needed, the SJMA Instructor must ensure another adult is present.
- 16) Participants and SJMA instructors should not touch any potentially dangerous plants or animals, including dead animals like bats and rodents which carry diseases.
- 17) SJMA cultivates positive child, staff and family relationships through various methods of communication and interaction. SJMA Instructors incorporate daily social and emotional student check-in times and are available for individual check-ins throughout the day to promote positive relationships with children. SJMA has an open door policy on communication between staff and parents. SJMA Instructors will do their best to inform the parents or guardians of the child's behavior, progress, and social and physical needs. SJMA staff members and Field Instructors are available before and after the program each day for this purpose as well as being available by phone.

B. Safety and Health Policies

Safety is the foundation of SJMA's educational programs. All instructors are expected to prioritize physical, emotional, and environmental safety in every decision and activity. The following policies align with Colorado Child Care Licensing requirements and internal SJMA standards.

1. All SJMA Program staff will be trained in CPR, First Aid, Standard Precautions, and Medication Administration and hold valid certifications for each of the above prior to leading groups of SJMA participants. Full-time permanent staff may also be certified Wilderness First Responders. Only staff with medical delegation may administer any medications or treatments including splints, bandages, and antibiotic ointments.
2. Emergencies and Incidents occurring while participants are in the care of SJMA require Instructors to file an incident report as soon as reasonably possible after the emergency/incident and before the Participant involved in the emergency/incident leaves for the day. All emergencies/incidents will be

reported to parent/guardian and Education Director and medical supplies must be replaced in the first aid kit on the day that the emergency or incident occurred.

3. SJMA Instructors will maintain sight or voice contact with Participants at all times while Participants are under their supervision. Periodic headcounts of participants will be conducted by SJMA Instructors, and each time the group arrives or departs from a location. While moving, there will be at least one SJMA Instructor in front of the group, and one SJMA Instructor as a sweep behind the last child.
4. SJMA Lead Instructors will carry a stocked and approved first aid kit and SJMA Emergency Action Plan at all times when participants are in their care.
5. SJMA Instructors will not apply ointments, sprays, or lotions (including sunscreen and insect repellent) without written permission from parent/guardian on the completed registration form.

Sunscreen Policy

SJMA Instructors and staff are not allowed to apply ointments or topical lotions to participants without written parental permission. Complete the Sunscreen Release during your registration process if you would like your student to have assistance in the reapplication of sunscreen during snack and lunch breaks. If you sign this release, your child's instructor will assist with applying sunscreen to bare surfaces including the face, tops of ears, bare shoulders, arms, legs, and feet. Sunscreen will not be applied to any broken skin or if a skin reaction has been observed. Any skin reaction observed by staff will be reported promptly to the parent/guardian. Please provide sunscreen labeled with your child's first and last name with a minimum of SPF 15, and apply it to your child before leaving for the day. SJMA has SPF 50 (Banana Boat Sport) on hand if children need to use it. Contact us if you would like additional information on sunscreen and safe sun habits.

Insect Repellent Policy

SJMA instructors and staff are not allowed to apply ointments or topical lotions to participants without written parental permission. Complete the Insect Repellent Release during your registration process if you would like your student to have assistance in the re-application of insect repellent during snack and lunch breaks. If you sign this release, your child's instructor will assist in applying insect repellent to bare surfaces including the face, neck, bare shoulders, arms, legs, and feet. Insect repellent will not be applied to any broken skin or if a skin reaction has been observed. Any skin reaction observed by staff will be reported promptly to the parent/guardian. If you would like your child to wear insect repellent, it is the parent's responsibility to provide the preferred product labeled with the child's first and last name. SJMA has insect repellent that may contain up to 7.9% DEET (Cutter Sensations Insect Repellent with Aloe and Vitamin E) on hand, if needed. Contact us if you would like additional information on insect repellent.

Medication Policy

All SJMA Lead Instructors are trained in Medication Administration, First Aid, CPR, and Standard Precautions. If your child needs medication administered while under the care of SJMA, please complete the appropriate forms during registration. When possible, parents are encouraged to administer medication to their child prior to and after programming instead of sending medication to school. When necessary, a SJMA staff member with Medication Administration Certification will keep and administer medication with the required medication forms with written parental consent AND authorization of the prescribing practitioner. Without these required forms, the child with a reported medical condition will not be permitted to attend programs.

This is for their safety. Children should not transport medications to and from school; this includes medication placed in a backpack or lunchbox. For any and all other medications such as eye drops or antibiotics, complete the Permission of Medication Administration form. **Please note that medication includes inhalers, Epi-pens, Benadryl, homeopathic remedies, over-the-counter drugs, and/or anything used to treat a condition. Prescription and nonprescription (over-the-counter) medications for eyes or ears, all oral medications, topical medications, inhaled medications, and certain emergency injections can be administered only with the written order of a person with prescriptive authority and with written parental consent. If your child has an asthma-related medication such as an inhaler, complete the Asthma Care Plan. If your child has an allergy-related medication such as an Epi-pen or Benadryl, complete the Allergy and Anaphylaxis Care Plan. Medications must be kept in the original labeled bottle or container and must contain the original pharmacy label. Over-the-counter medication must be kept in the originally labeled container and be labeled with the child's first and last name. Medications will be kept in an area inaccessible to children. Controlled medications must be counted and safely secured, in a locked container. A written medication log must be kept for each child by SJMA staff. This log is part of the child's records.

C. Illness, Accident, Injury, & Emergencies

SJMA staff are responsible for maintaining student safety and responding quickly, calmly, and professionally to illness, injury, or emergencies in the field. All incidents—no matter how minor—must be documented and communicated to parents/guardians and the Education Director.

Injury and Illness Response Protocol

1. If a student reports or shows signs of illness or minor injury:
2. Move the child to a quiet, supervised space (e.g., shade, sitting spot, in the van)
3. Offer water and rest
4. Check for symptoms or discomfort
5. Monitor the student for 10 minutes

If symptoms improve and the student is comfortable returning to activities, they may rejoin the group. If symptoms persist, escalate, or cause distress, the parent/guardian must be called to discuss early pickup.

Minor Accidents (cuts, scrapes, bumps, stings)

1. Clean and treat wounds with standard first aid
2. Use gloves and follow Standard Precautions
3. Document the incident
4. Notify parents at pickup

Significant Accidents or Injuries

These include but are not limited to: large cuts, heavy bleeding, possible sprains, broken bones, head injury, breathing difficulty, allergic reactions, or illness accompanied by vomiting, fever, or confusion.

1. Activate the Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
2. Call 911 if immediate medical help is needed
3. Contact the Education Director
4. Call the child's emergency contact

5. Provide care until medical help arrives
6. Complete a written Incident Report the same day

Students may not return to the program until medically cleared if the incident involved serious injury, allergic reaction, or illness requiring professional medical care.

Contamination and Biohazard Cleanup

If a child vomits, has a bathroom accident, or bleeds significantly:

1. Safety First:
 - a. Move the group away from the contaminated area
 - b. Block off the affected area
 - c. wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves, aprons, and masks
2. Clean-up:
 - a. Absorb the spill: Use absorbent materials (like paper towels or absorbent powder) to soak up the fluid.
 - b. Disinfect: Apply an EPA-approved hospital-grade disinfectant to the area, following the manufacturer's instructions. (10% bleach or approved substitute)
 - c. Remove and Dispose: Pick up the absorbed material and double-bag in a heavy-duty trash bag, sealing it tightly.
 - d. Clean Surrounding Areas: Clean surrounding areas that may have been affected by the spill, using paper towels and disinfectant.
 - e. Repeat Disinfection: Re-apply disinfectant to the area, following the manufacturer's instructions. Area must be off-limits to students for at least 30 minutes after disinfection

Documentation

All illnesses, injuries, or emergencies must be documented in an SJMA Incident Report Form, submitted to the Education Director within 24 hours. Include:

1. Description of incident
2. Staff response
3. Communication with parents
4. Follow-up steps (if any)

Staff must also check and restock their First Aid Kits the same day after any supply use.

D. Communicable Illness

If a child is ill, please keep them home so that they can get better and protect the health of the other participants and adults. If a child has had a fever within 24 hours before the start of the program, we ask that they stay home. When a child shows signs of a severe or communicable illness, they will be separated from other children, the parent/guardian notified, and a doctor or medical facility consulted as needed regarding treatment. In case of a known communicable illness such as hepatitis, measles, mumps, meningitis, diphtheria, rubella, salmonella, tuberculosis, giardia or shigella, the Director will report to the local health department pursuant to regulations of the State Department of Public Health.

How sick is too sick? When Children and Staff Should Stay Home from School or Child Care

Evaluation of a sick child must consider which diseases are currently circulating among students, staff, and the community. Known exposure to cases or an outbreak of a contagious disease (including but not limited to those listed here), even without a confirmed diagnosis, may necessitate more stringent return to school requirements.

During Colorado's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, children and staff who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should receive testing, and follow the COVID-19 isolation guidance until testing is completed or if they test positive. If the individual tests negative for COVID-19, the individual should then follow the recommendations for their disease or symptoms using the below guidance.

There are four main reasons to keep children and adults at home:

1. The child or staff is at risk of infecting others with COVID-19 or another contagious illness, either because of symptoms or recent close contact.
2. The child or staff member does not feel well enough to take part in usual activities. For example, a child is overly tired, fussy or will not stop crying.
3. A child needs more care than teachers and staff can give while still caring for the other children.
4. The child or staff member has symptoms or an illness is on this list, and staying home is required.

See Diagram A below for specific guidance.

Diagram A:

Guidance for COVID-19 Symptoms	Child or staff member must stay home?
<p>COVID-19 symptoms which must be <i>fully resolved</i> before a child or staff member returns to school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling Feverish, having chills or Fever (Temperature of 100.4°F or greater. Babies who are 4 months or younger need to see a doctor right away for a fever of 100°F or higher) ● Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing ● Nausea, Vomiting/Throwing Up ● Diarrhea (Frequent, loose, or watery stools (poop) compared to normal ones that are not caused by food or medicine) ● Cough* 	<p>Yes - These symptoms are often present in individuals with COVID-19 and other contagious infectious disease, and a person with any of these symptoms (whether new or worsening from baseline) should first receive a diagnostic test for COVID-19.</p> <p>When to seek emergency medical attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trouble breathing ● Persistent pain or pressure in the chest ● New confusion ● Inability to wake or stay awake ● Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips or nail beds, depending on skin tone <p>These are not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you. Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility. Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.</p> <p>If all symptoms are consistent with the usual symptoms of a known chronic condition and the child is otherwise well enough to return to school, no further evaluation is necessary.</p> <p>If the test is positive, or the individual has not yet been tested, the individual should follow CDPHE’s isolation guidance, https://covid19.colorado.gov/isolation-and-quarantine. Further guidance for the school or child care can be found at https://covid19.colorado.gov/practical-guide-for-operationalizing-cdc-school-guidance.</p> <p>If the test is negative AND the symptoms are explained by a specific illness other than COVID-19, then the child or staff can return to school or child care following exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p> <p>If the test is negative and the illness is not explained by a new illness or a known chronic condition, the ill individual should still stay home until symptoms have been resolved for at least 24 hours without medication.</p> <p>*Students and staff may return if the cough is not fully resolved following discussion with a care provider.</p>
<p>COVID-19 symptoms which must be <i>improving</i> before a child or staff member returns to school or child care</p>	<p>Yes - These symptoms are often present in individuals with COVID-19, and a person with any of these symptoms (whether new or worsening from baseline) should receive a diagnostic test for COVID-19. If all symptoms are consistent with the usual symptoms of a known chronic condition and</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sore throat ● Runny nose or congestion ● Muscle or body aches ● Headache ● Fatigue ● New Loss of Taste or Smell** 	<p>the child is otherwise well enough to return to school, no further evaluation is necessary.</p> <p>If the diagnostic COVID test is positive, or the individual has not yet been tested, the individual should follow CDPHE’s isolation guidance, https://covid19.colorado.gov/isolation-and-quarantine. Further guidance can be found at https://covid19.colorado.gov/practical-guide-for-operationalizing-cdc-school-guidance.</p> <p>If the diagnostic test is negative and the symptoms are explained by a specific illness other than COVID-19, then the child or staff can return to school or child care following exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p> <p>If the COVID test is negative and the illness is not explained by a new illness or a known chronic condition, the ill individual may return to school as long as all symptoms are improving and cough, shortness of breath, fever, diarrhea and vomiting have fully resolved.</p> <p>**Loss of taste or smell can persist for weeks or months. This condition does not need to be resolved or improving before an individual returns to school or care.</p>

Guidance for Symptoms Not Due to a Specific Disease, Following a Negative COVID Test	Child or staff must stay home?
<p>Diarrhea Frequent, loose, or watery stools (poop) compared to normal ones that are not caused by food or medicine.</p>	<p>Yes - Unless the diarrhea is related to an existing chronic condition, is explained by a diagnosed condition not requiring the person to stay home, or is consistent with the person's baseline.</p> <p>The child or staff member may return to school or child care 24 hours after their last episode of diarrhea unless the diarrhea is caused by an illness that requires them to stay home longer. If the diarrhea is explained by a specific illness, then the child or staff can return to school or child care following exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p>
<p>Fever Fever is a temperature of 100.4° F or greater. Babies who are 4 months or younger need to see a doctor right away for a fever of 100° F or higher.</p>	<p>Yes - The child or staff member may return to school or child care if the fever has been resolved for 24 hours without fever reducing medications unless the fever is caused by an illness that requires them to stay home longer. If the fever is explained by a specific illness COVID-19, then the child or staff can return to school or child care following exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p>
<p>Flu-like Symptoms Fever Sore throat Runny nose or congestion</p>	<p>Yes - Children and staff may return to school or child care as long as they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms are improving, unless the symptoms are caused by an illness that requires them to stay home longer. If the symptoms can be explained by a specific illness, then follow the exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p> <p>In consultation with a healthcare provider, additional evaluation for flu-like illnesses, sore throat, and upper respiratory symptoms may be appropriate, including evaluation for strep throat.</p>
<p>Vomiting/Throwing Up</p>	<p>Yes - Unless the vomiting is related to an existing chronic condition or is explained by a diagnosed condition not requiring the person to stay home. If the vomiting is unexplained and inconsistent with the person's baseline state of health, the child or staff member may return 24 hours after their last episode of vomiting. If the vomiting can be explained by a specific illness, then follow the exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p> <p>If a child with a recent head injury vomits, seek medical attention.</p>

Guidance for Specific Diagnosed Illnesses	Child or staff must stay home?
Chicken Pox	Yes - until the blisters have dried and crusted (usually 6 days), or in immunized people without crusting, until no lesions within 24 hour period.
Conjunctivitis (pink eye) Pink color of eye and thick yellow/green discharge	No - children and adults do not need to stay home unless they have a fever or are not able to participate in usual activities. Call your doctor for advice and possible treatment.
COVID-19 (clinical diagnosis, symptoms without testing, or a positive diagnostic test)	Yes - children and staff who have suspected COVID-19 or who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 must be excluded and follow CDPHE's isolation guidance . Guidance for schools and child care settings can be found here: https://covid19.colorado.gov/cases-and-outbreaks-child-care-schools .
Fifth's Disease (parvovirus)	No - the illness is no longer contagious once the rash appears.
Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackie virus)	No - unless the child or adult has mouth sores, has uncontrollable drooling or is not able to take part in usual activities.
Head Lice or Scabies	Yes - children may stay at school or child care until the end of the day but cannot return until after they have had the first treatment.
Hepatitis A, Salmonella, Shigella, or Shiga-toxin Producing E. coli	Yes - children and staff may return to school or child care when cleared by the health department.
Herpes	No - unless there are open sores that cannot be covered or there is uncontrollable drooling.
Impetigo	Yes - children and adults need to stay home until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has started.
Ringworm	Yes - children may stay at school or child care until the end of the day but cannot return until after they have had the first treatment. Keep the area covered for the first 3 days if participating in activities with person to person contact.
Roseola	No - unless there is a fever or behavior changes.
Influenza	Yes - Children and staff should remain out of school or child care until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have been improving for 24 hours.
Croup, RSV (Respiratory	No - It is recommended that children and staff remain out of school or

Syncytial Virus)	child care until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have been improving for 24 hours.
Strep Throat	Yes - for 12 hours after starting antibiotics unless the doctor says that it is okay to return to school sooner.
Other Vaccine Preventable Diseases Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German Measles), Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Yes - Children and staff can return to school once they are no longer contagious (see Infectious Disease Guidelines). Public health consultation may be necessary.
Yeast Infections Thrush or Candida diaper rash	No - follow good hand washing and hygiene practices.
Other Symptoms or illnesses not listed	Contact the child care center director or school health staff to see if the child or staff member needs to stay home (see Infectious Disease Guidelines).

This document was developed in collaboration with pediatricians, medical epidemiologists and public health professionals.

The information presented is intended for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of your personal doctor's advice and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information should not be used in place of a visit, call or consultation or advice of your doctor or other health care provider.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics. *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide*. Aronson SS, Shope TR, eds. 5th ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2020.20.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. *Infectious Diseases In Child Care and School Settings: Guidelines for Child Care Providers and Health Consultants, School Nurses and Other Personnel*. 2022.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. COVID-19 Resources. <https://covid19.colorado.gov/>. October 7, 2020.

Updated March 2022

E. Special Activities

Many SJMA homeschool enrichment program days involve off-site exploration and hands-on outdoor learning. Staff must follow strict procedures to ensure student safety during transportation and while participating in special activities.

Daily Itineraries & Parent Communication

1. Families will receive a weekly or seasonal itinerary outlining each day's location, activity focus, and pickup/drop-off times.
2. Itineraries will be followed as closely as possible. Changes due to weather, safety, or logistics must be communicated to the Education Director immediately.
3. Instructors must ensure they know the exact location of the group at all times and be prepared to provide updates to the office or families if needed.
4. Parents may opt out of specific activities by notifying staff in advance. Accommodations will be made when possible, and alternate activities may be arranged.

Certain activities—such as fire-building, archery, carving, fort construction, or exploring around water—require heightened supervision and risk management. Instructors must be trained and certified appropriately for the activity and follow all guidelines outlined in the SJMA Special Activities and Elevated Risk Procedures Guide (available upon request).

This document outlines:

1. Required staff-to-student ratios for elevated-risk activities
2. Gear and safety equipment checklists
3. Site setup and hazard mitigation practices
4. Decision-making guidelines for modifying or canceling activities

Staff are expected to review these procedures before facilitating any special activity. The Education Director should be consulted if there is uncertainty about whether an activity requires additional risk management steps.

F. Disabilities and special needs

San Juan Mountains Association is committed to providing inclusive, respectful, and accessible programming for all students. We comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will make reasonable accommodations to support children with disabilities or special needs whenever possible.

Partnering with Families

We ask that families communicate clearly and proactively about their child's needs during the registration process. This helps us plan ahead for staffing, location selection, and equipment adjustments. Instructors may follow up with families to gather more information or request a planning conversation before the program begins.

When appropriate, SJMA will work with families to develop a support plan or to include a parent, guardian, or support aide in the program day. If students have a previous IEP or 504 plan, please share this information for SJMA staff to better support the needs of your student.

Program Considerations

SJMA's homeschool enrichment program takes place in outdoor environments that may include steep trails, uneven terrain, seasonal weather extremes, and remote locations. While we strive to create welcoming conditions for all learners, some field sites may have physical or environmental limitations.

Students must be:

1. Sighted and ambulatory, or supported by a qualified aide or caregiver who can ensure safe participation on backcountry trails
2. Able to remain with the group for the duration of the day, either independently or with consistent adult support
3. Physically and emotionally able to participate safely in a dynamic outdoor group setting

If SJMA determines that we are unable to provide the necessary level of support with current staffing and resources, we will work with families to explore alternatives or potential accommodations, and make referrals where appropriate.

G. Weather Policy

SJMA's homeschool enrichment program operates year-round and outdoors, regardless of weather conditions. Our goal is to help students build resilience and confidence in nature through all seasons, while prioritizing safety and preparedness.

General Policy

1. Programs will not be canceled due to rain, snow, or cold temperatures alone. Staff and students are expected to arrive dressed appropriately.
2. Weather forecasts are reviewed before each program day, and staff should adjust lesson plans and activities accordingly.
3. Families are expected to send children with appropriate layers, rain gear, and insulated clothing during colder months. Staff should model preparedness and coach students in staying warm and dry.

SJMA Staff will be informed of expected weather before each program. SJMA will not cancel a program according to weather forecasts, but will consider weather when planning outdoor activities. It is SJMA policy to hold programming regardless of rain – please make sure to always pack a waterproof layer for your child.

Severe Weather Response

SJMA will closely monitor conditions and may shelter, pause, or relocate programming when the following hazards are present:

1. Lightning and thunder in the area
2. High winds that pose a risk of falling trees or debris
3. Extreme cold or wet conditions that create unsafe exposure risks
4. Active fire weather alerts or poor air quality
5. Road closures or impassable travel routes

In these cases:

1. Students will be moved to the van or a sheltered location immediately
2. Staff will keep the group calm, safe, and engaged until conditions improve or pickup is arranged
3. If necessary, parents will be contacted directly for early pickup instructions

For specific response procedures to weather emergencies (e.g., fire, flash floods, or natural disaster), see Sections V and VI.

Program Cancellations and Delays

SJMA follows the Durango 9R School District for weather-related closures or delays. If 9R schools are closed or on a delayed schedule due to weather, SJMA homeschool programs will follow the same schedule.

In the event of cancellation, families will be contacted by 7:30 AM via email and text. Staff will receive a group message with next steps.

H. Visitors

All visitors must sign in with the SJMA Instructor or Program Leader upon arrival on the day of their visit, show identification, and fill out the visitor log. SJMA instructors will remain and supervise the participants while the visitor is present.

I. Filing a complaint

SJMA is committed to maintaining high standards in all aspects of our homeschool enrichment program. We operate under Colorado State Child Care Licensing and are accountable to Education ReEnvisioned BOCES and other regulatory bodies.

If a parent, guardian, or staff member has a concern about program operations, safety, or licensing compliance, we encourage them to:

1. First, speak directly with the Education Director to address the concern collaboratively.
2. If the concern is not resolved or involves a potential licensing violation, a formal complaint may be filed with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC).

To file a complaint regarding suspected licensing violations, contact:

Colorado Department of Early Childhood

710 S. Ash Street, Denver, CO 80246

Main Phone: (303) 866-5958

Online: cdhs.colorado.gov/child-care

A copy of SJMA's current child care license and most recent inspection report is available upon request. We are transparent in our operations and welcome dialogue that helps improve the program experience for all families and staff.

L. Parental Notification

SJMA values open, proactive, and respectful communication with all families. Our goal is to keep parents informed of program updates, student needs, and any changes that may affect their child's experience.

Program-Wide Notifications

SJMA will notify parents and guardians in writing (via email) when:

1. There are changes to policies, procedures, or program structure
2. A program is canceled or significantly altered due to weather, safety, staffing, or facility needs
3. SJMA is no longer able to offer services to a particular group or site

We aim to provide as much advance notice as possible, along with context and next steps.

Student-Specific Notifications

The Education Director or staff may contact a parent directly if:

1. A child has a behavioral or emotional incident that affects their well-being or the group
2. There is a health concern or injury, minor or serious
3. A student is involved in or affected by a disciplinary situation, including receiving or causing harm

In these cases, staff will contact the parent on the same day whenever possible and will document any formal incidents in writing.

Ongoing Communication

1. Staff are available for brief check-ins at pickup and drop-off
2. For more complex conversations, the Education Director may schedule a phone call or meeting
3. Families are encouraged to reach out with questions, concerns, or updates that may help us support their child more effectively

SJMA operates with an open-door policy and views communication as a two-way partnership with families.

V. Safety First: Prevention and General Procedures

Student safety is SJMA's highest priority. Our instructors are expected to uphold consistent procedures that prevent accidents, minimize risk, and respond effectively in emergencies. This section outlines prevention practices, environmental hazards, and incident response protocols specific to our homeschool enrichment program. This section

A. Prevention: Ground Rules for Safe Supervision

To create a safe and supportive learning environment, SJMA staff will:

1. Maintain a "safety sandwich" while hiking: one instructor leads and another sweeps behind the last student
2. Ensure that sticks, rocks, and loose materials are only used under direct supervision and for a specific purpose
3. Never be alone with a single student in an enclosed space or remote location. Always remain within view of another adult or bring two additional students as "buddies"
4. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes at all times during program hours

Tree Climbing Policy

1. Participants may only climb trees with staff permission and supervision
2. No one may assist another person in climbing
3. Climb only on branches thicker than the climber's thigh
4. Limit climbing height to the climber's own standing height
5. Only one person per tree at a time

B. Environmental Awareness: Weather, Water, and Wildlife

Weather

Sun & Heat: Encourage hydration, shade breaks, and sunscreen reapplication. Staff should monitor students for signs of heat exhaustion (e.g., fatigue, headache, crankiness, flushed cheeks).

Rain: Program continues in rain. Keep students warm and dry as much as possible. Seek natural or constructed shelter and keep group morale high.

For more on specific weather events (i.e. thunderstorm, wildfire, and natural disaster procedures), see Section IX: Procedures for Situational Emergencies

Delays & Closures: SJMA follows the Durango 9R School District for weather-related closures or delays. If 9R is closed or delayed, SJMA homeschool is too. Families will be notified via email and text by 7:30 AM.

River and Water Safety

River wading and water-based activities will only occur:

1. With prior approval from the Education Director
2. When conditions (flow, temperature, weather) are appropriate
3. With a 2:10 staff-to-student ratio or lower
4. When participants are wearing secure, closed-toe river shoes (no Crocs or flip-flops)
5. With clearly marked boundaries (blue stakes or flagging)

Other water-specific safety rules:

1. Water cannot be deeper than 24 inches
2. Participants must have a change of clothes and dry towel available
3. Hands must be washed or sanitized after river activities and before eating
4. Each child must have a buddy, and “BUDDY CHECKS” should be called every 5–10 minutes
5. Instructors must position themselves upstream and downstream and maintain visual contact with all children in the water
6. No submersion past chest depth and no water-related horseplay
7. Rolled rocks must be returned to their original position to preserve aquatic habitat
8. One-strike policy for unsafe behavior in the water

Wildlife Encounters

Snakes:

1. If a snake is seen, back away slowly and alert the group.
2. Do not approach or provoke the snake.

Mountain Lions or Bears:

1. Gather the group and make noise. Do not let anyone stray away from the group.
2. Do not run—back away slowly
3. Back up slowly and keep your gaze down.
4. Make yourself look big (e.g., raise backpacks)
5. Yell at the animal to go away.
6. Throw objects if the animal approaches
7. Once safe, call the Education Director and report the encounter location

Ticks:

Students should be inspected for ticks after time in woods or brush. Ticks may carry serious infections and must be completely removed. Do NOT handle ticks with bare hands. If a student reports having a tick or one is spotted on someone, follow these procedures as soon as possible:

1. Wear gloves to prevent exposure to body fluids
2. Wash the tick area gently with soap and water before attempting removal.
3. Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure.
 - a. Do NOT twist or jerk the tick as the mouth parts may break off. It is important to remove the ENTIRE tick.
 - b. Take care not to squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick as its fluids may carry infection.
4. After removal, place the tick in a sealed baggy to give to parents/guardians at pick up. Ticks can be tested for certain diseases and if possible we will provide the tick to guardians to make that decision
5. Wash the tick area and your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
6. Apply a bandage.

Insect Stings:

Students with a history of allergy to stings should be known to all staff. An Allergy Action plan should be on hand. Because of the nature of our programs, it is possible that we might be the first time a student has an allergic reaction to insect bites or stings. Note that only camp staff with medical delegation can legally administer any medication to participants. Follow these steps carefully:

1. If the student has difficulty breathing, a rapidly expanding area of swelling, especially of the lips, mouth or tongue, and/or a history of allergy to stings:
 - a. Check student's Allergy Action plan and administer Epi-Pen and/or Albuterol
 - b. If a student does not have an allergy action plan but is showing signs of anaphylaxis, administer our spare epinephrine
 - c. Call 911, alert camp director, education director, and student's parents/guardians
 - d. Remove stinger if present.
 - e. Wash area with soap and water.
 - f. Apply cold compress.
2. If the student is not showing signs of anaphylaxis, follow steps d-f above.

Note: A student may have a delayed allergic reaction up to 2 hours after the sting. Adult(s) supervising student during normal activities should be aware of the sting and should watch for any delayed reaction

VI. Safety and Emergency Procedures

In the event of any emergency, 911 will be contacted immediately. SJMA Lead Instructors are certified Wilderness First Responders and are equipped to handle an emergency until emergency personnel arrive. SJMA instructors will notify the Executive Director as soon as possible.

If participants must be evacuated from their location, they will go directly to the SJMA offices located at the Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Court, in the Tech Center.

Available instructors, the Executive Director, and other office staff will notify all parents/guardians of the emergency and/or evacuation directly via email and phone. Participants will only be released to those listed on their registrations forms, unless verbal permission has been given. All participants will be checked out with a SJMA instructor or other SJMA Staff member.

A. Medical Emergency

1. Call 911 immediately. Clearly describe:
 - a. The nature of the emergency
 - b. The exact location (with landmark references if in the field)
2. Provide care within your level of training.
3. Use gloves and the First Aid kit
4. One instructor provides care; the other supervises the group
5. If at the Nature Center, send a staff member to meet emergency responders at the Welcome Center/Parking Lot.
6. Call the Education Director after 911.
7. Complete an Incident Report Form as soon as the situation allows and restock the first aid kit.

B. Flash Floods

1. Move the group immediately to higher ground (e.g., hilltop, building's upper floor, boulder, or vehicle roof).
2. If at the Nature Center, evacuate to the Welcome Center or Parking Lot.
3. Call 911 and remain at the safe location until the danger has passed or help arrives.
4. Do not attempt to cross flowing water.

C. Hail

Hail is a common weather phenomenon in the high elevations of the Durango region. In the event of hail, Participants should cover their heads with their backpacks or hold their coats above their heads to create a shield. Cover may be taken in a rock shelter or under a tree, but if the hail is accompanied by lightning, programs WILL NOT seek shelter in either of these sites. They will follow lightning protocol and protect their heads and faces.

D. Wildfires/Structural Fires/Smoke

In the presence of wildfire smoke or active fire:

1. Check smoke conditions and air quality daily via the Colorado Department of Public Health and local emergency notifications.
2. Evacuate to an indoor location (e.g., Smiley Building or Public Lands Center) if:
 - a. Visibility is reduced to less than 5 miles due to smoke
 - b. Air quality is unhealthy
 - c. A fire is spotted nearby

If caught near a wildfire:

1. Move away from the fire
2. If necessary, take cover in a water source, submerging as much of the body as possible

If inside a building during a fire:

1. Evacuate immediately following posted emergency routes
2. If evacuation is blocked:
3. Remain low to the ground
4. Cover face with a damp cloth

In all fire situations, stay together and contact emergency services

E. Lightning

SJMA follows the 30/30 rule: If thunder occurs within 30 seconds of lightning, evacuate to shelter immediately and remain for at least 30 minutes after the last observed lightning or thunder.

1. Primary shelter at the Nature Center is the Pavilion or Welcome Center
2. If no shelter is available:
 - a. Do NOT shelter under trees or near rock faces
 - b. Evacuate immediately. If above treeline or in an exposed area, descend in elevation as quickly and safely as possible
 - c. Remove or throw metal objects (e.g., butterfly nets) far away

F. Extreme Heat

1. Keep students in shade or water as much as possible
2. Offer frequent water breaks
3. Monitor for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke
4. Use extra water jugs to refill bottles regularly
5. In the event of temperatures exceeding 105°F, evacuate to an indoor location such as:
 - a. Durango Recreation Center
 - b. Smiley Building
 - c. Public Land Center

G. Tornado

If a funnel cloud is seen nearby and/or if warning sirens are heard, Participants should be moved indoors or to shelter immediately. If in a building, groups will seek shelter on the bottom floor or basement, away from large furniture. If outdoors, groups will seek shelter on the ground, away from trees or other potentially unstable objects. Refuge may be taken in a road culvert, rock shelter, or cave, away from the entrance.

H. Missing Person(s)

1. Perform silent headcounts every 15 minutes and during all transitions
2. If a student is missing:
 - a. Do not split the group to search
 - b. Keep the group calm and together
 - c. Call out for the missing person; listen for a response
 - d. If a student cannot be accounted for within 15 minutes, Call 911 and notify the Education Director and the parent/guardian

3. Students are instructed to stay put and call out if separated from the group

I. Active Shooter

If indoors:

1. Lock doors, turn off lights, and take cover behind solid objects or in closets
2. Remain silent and keep cell phones on silent mode
3. Wait until the “all-clear” is communicated

If outdoors:

1. Lead participants to lie flat under bushes, trees, or behind boulders
2. Remain silent and low until the threat passes

Once safe:

1. Account for all participants
2. Notify emergency services and the Education Director
3. Reunite with families as soon as possible following the evacuation protocol

J. Roadside Emergency/Auto Accident

In the case of an emergency while transporting participants in the van, or if the SJMA van is involved in an auto accident, the van will be immediately moved to as safe a place as feasibly possible and come to a complete stop. All passengers will be unloaded to a safe place away from the traffic and outside the vehicle. One instructor must stay with the passengers, both SJMA instructors will remain at the scene of the accident. Instructors will render any injured person reasonable assistance or request emergency medical assistance as necessary. Law enforcement authorities and the Executive Director will be contacted as soon as possible.