

Project American Life: Guide for Parents

What is Project American Life?

Project American Life (P.A.L.) is an outdoor civics & character education program held at YMCA Hargis Retreat in Chelsea, Alabama. The P.A.L. curriculum is centered upon the founding principles contained in the Declaration of Independence & uses exciting, hands-on activities & simulations to teach students about civics, citizenship, & character. Throughout the week students are genuinely challenged, both emotionally & intellectually, by the activities in which they participate. The challenging & personal nature of the program fosters both learning & individual growth in its participants. Please visit the website, www.projectamericanlifealabama.com, to see some of the quotes from students, parents, & teachers who have attended P.A.L. to gain an understanding of the positive impact that the program can have upon those who attend.

While the P.A.L. curriculum has a social studies emphasis, it is an interdisciplinary program, designed to meet state & national Course of Study objectives in many subject areas. Additionally, P.A.L. is a wonderful opportunity for your child to build & strengthen relationships with other students as well as teachers.

Who is responsible for my child during the trip?

Your child's teachers will accompany the children on the bus ride to & from P.A.L., as well as chaperoning them in the evenings. During the day your child will be in a small group under the supervision of a P.A.L. group leader. We are extremely proud of the individuals that comprise the P.A.L. staff. They are highly competent & dedicated to the children as well as the P.A.L. curriculum. Each PAL staff member undergoes an extensive interview process, reference checks, background checks, & training.

What if there is an emergency or my child needs daily medication?

There is a nurse on staff at all times to administer medications & treat any injuries/illnesses that may arise. Additionally, the majority of PAL group leaders are CPR/First Aid certified. Please fill out the Registration/Medication form for your child, even if he/she does not receive medications.

Prescribed medications will be turned in to the school nurse & then turned over to P.A.L. nurse who will distribute the medication per instructions. Please place the medication in a zip-lock bag with your child's name & instructions. All prescription medication must be prescribed to your child & in original, unexpired container with label intact.

Over-the-counter medications must be supplied by the parent/guardian. All over-the-counter medications must be in an original, unopened & unexpired container with all manufacturer's labeling clearly legible. When available, please send single-dose packets rather than full-size bottles. The student's name must be written on each container. Please place all over-the-counter medications in a zip-lock also labeled with your child's name.

For each medication (over-the-counter &/or prescription) sent, an AL State Department of Education School Medication Prescriber/Parent Authorization form must be filled out & turned into the school. Medications & forms are to be turned into the school prior to leaving for PAL. **Please DO NOT pack medication in your child's luggage.**

In the unlikely event that an emergency occurs, emergency service is two minutes from Hargis. Parents will be notified of any problems immediately.

What are the facilities like where my child will be staying?

YMCA Hargis Retreat is a beautiful camp-like facility located on 200 wooded acres about half an hour southeast of Birmingham & can sleep 300 people in bunk bed style sleeping arrangements. All facilities have central heat & air, indoor restrooms, & large meeting areas. The dining facilities are well-equipped, offering a variety of wholesome & kid-friendly food options at every meal.

What should I send & not send with my child for the trip?

Please send enough clothes (preferably old) & toiletries to last four days & three nights, a sleeping bag or bed linens, a pillow & a bath towel. Please do not allow your child to pack any electronic games or devices. The goal of the week is for your child to have a great time & learn, please send only items that will aid in achieving this goal. See the "Supply List" for further details regarding what your child should pack.

How do I contact my child in the case of an emergency?

In the case of an emergency, please call the P.A.L. Director, Emily Hudson, at 256-454-2204.