

Camp Avanti Practicum Program: Intensive Mentorship Model for Sensory Integration

Camp Avanti is the original therapeutic camp model developed by Patricia and Julia Wilbarger in 1983, sanctioned by Avanti Therapeutic Projects, Inc. This camp has the ongoing support and guidance of Patricia and Julia. The Avanti model holistically blends occupational performance in a natural environment with sensory integrative (SI) interventions, allowing children to develop competence across their occupational roles as a camper, team member, and friend.

The practicum program is a rigorous mentorship program that allows therapists to be immersed in camp culture, living with and learning from leading professionals in SI practice. Practicum therapists receive daily lectures from experts in the field of sensory integration, totaling 15-20 hours over the course of the week. Lecturers have included Patricia Wilbarger, Julia Wilberger, Patricia Oetter, Eileen Richter, Nancy Lawton-Shirley, Irene Ingram, Sheila Frick, and Gretchen Kamke, among others. Practicum therapists are also placed with a cabin family, where they learn from hands-on experience working side by side with experienced Avanti therapists. Practicum therapists hone their skills in developing individualized sensory motor programs, as well as how to collaboratively infuse these strategies into the natural routines of the campers in order to allow successful participation in the camp experience. The unique professional growth that takes place at Camp Avanti, as well as experiencing the profound progress that the children can make in a matter of days can give therapists a new therapeutic mindset emphasizing teamwork, flexibility, and creativity.

The campers selected for Avanti often would not succeed in a typical camp setting due to their sensory processing differences. Each practicum will be presented with opportunities to enhance professional development and skills **within the framework of the camp's goals for the children**. It is essential that practicum therapists keep this philosophy in mind. The overall goal for each child is to have a successful camp experience; therefore, the primary focus for all Avanti adults is in supporting camper outcomes. Treatment will be geared at supporting this goal and will look different than treatment might in a typical treatment facility.

Campers are divided into cabin groups of 6 campers of the same gender identity and similar age range. Campers remain with their cabin group throughout the day following their daily schedule with exceptions of short periods when campers may benefit from an even smaller group for skill building. The structure and flow of the daily schedule largely remains the same across the week to provide predictability for the campers. Every camp activity has intrinsic therapeutic value which is tapped into by the Avanti therapists and may be supported by other therapeutic interventions depending upon each camper's unique needs.

In applying, remember that the camp environment necessitates active participation, physical stamina, and "forced intimacy." The camp environment is more than comfortable but may be "rustic" by some standards. It is an experience that can be life changing as well as a lot of fun, provided one comes with an open mind and flexible attitude about what each day will bring.

Important Dates:

Saturday May 31st 2025

Orientation kick-off via virtual platform

Time: TBD

Link will be provided closer to the date.

Month of June

Self-paced on-line study and training

Details and links will be provided closer to June.

Saturday June 28th 2025

In-person orientation on site at True Friends Camp Courage

Time: All day, starting at 8:00 am

Meals and lodging are included with the application fee.

Sunday June 29th - Friday July 4th 2025

Camp week at True Friends Camp Courage

Meals and lodging are included with the application fee.

Friday July 4th 2025

Closing circle for Avanti staff, therapists, volunteers (after campers have left)

Time: around late afternoon/early evening

The closing circle is an important part to putting closure on the amazing and busy week of Camp Avanti for the staff, therapists, and volunteers. As a newbie to Avanti, your participation in this will be invaluable and we encourage you to keep this in mind when making your departing travel plans.

** Lodging near/or on camp will be available (likely free of charge to you) the night of Friday June 27th and the night of Friday July 4th to facilitate prompt arrival for orientation and ability for participation in the closing circle as well as dinner/fun out with the group after the camp week wraps up. Meals on these evenings may be your responsibility.

Application Process & Cost:

Submission of an application does not guarantee a spot. Applications are reviewed to ensure this experience will be a good fit for all who are accepted. A deposit of \$200 (which is refundable if a space is not available for you) is due with your application. The application form and payment link are available on our website.

Cost: \$1800 USD

Includes lodging and meals from Saturday June 28th - Friday July 4th 2025 as well as a course completion certificate noting your contact hours.

EST. 1983