

VANDERBILT  HEALTH



Vanderbilt's **Camp TALKS:**
Talking And Learning with Kids who Stutter

June 2nd - 6th

2025 Parent Handbook

Directory and Contact Information

Camp Leadership and Primary Parent Contacts

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Director

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Other Essential Camp Personnel

Wyatt Stegall, Camp TALKS Activities Director

Kate Carney, VUMC Communications Specialist

Robin Jones, Director of VUMC Stuttering Laboratory

Anne Marie Tharpe, Dept. Chair of VU Hearing and Speech Sciences

MS-SLP Class of 2026, Camp TALKS Counselor-Clinicians

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Introduction and Mission Statement

Camp TALKS (Talking And Learning with Kids who Stutter) is a week-long day camp for children and teens who stutter and their families. We serve campers ages 7-17. Camp TALKS began in 2011 as a half day week-long program for a small group of children and teens who stutter. We have grown to a full day camp with other programming throughout the year.

Camp TALKS counselors are volunteers who are Graduate Students in the Masters Speech-Language Pathology program at Vanderbilt or former campers/adults who stutter.

Camp TALKS aims to create something that is vitally important for people who stutter: community. It is an opportunity to meet and interact in an environment that is accepting, supportive, positive, and fun. Our mission is to empower children and teens who stutter to become confident communicators by developing understanding and acceptance of their stuttering, tools for improving communication, and self-advocacy skills for educating others in the community about stuttering in a supportive, interactive, and enjoyable summer camp venue, with parental involvement.

Core Values

At Camp TALKS, we believe that stuttering is OK, period.

We believe people who stutter can be successful, confident, joyful communicators regardless of their level of disfluency.

We give everyone as much time as they need to speak.

We don't seek to "fix" what isn't broken; but help our campers recognize the strengths they already have.

We believe that the "problem of stuttering" is not necessarily disfluency, but all that people who stutter might do, feel, and think to NOT stutter.

We believe that by directly acknowledging stuttering, we can begin to peel away any layers of struggle and avoidance.

We believe in creating a space for children who stutter to shine and share their gifts with others.

We believe that this cannot be fully realized without support from the family.

Camper Registration

Registration for Camp TALKS is done prior to camp either online or via paper form. After registration, the camp director will be in touch regarding payment and if any additional information is needed. In most cases, the eligible age range for campers is 8 to 16, with limited opportunities for 17 and 18-year-olds to return as counselors in training.

In some cases, parents may be asked to provide IEP documentation or evidence of other therapy, in order to help determine if Camp TALKS is a suitable program.

Information to be considered includes but is not limited to: significant behavioral issues or cognitive, language, or developmental needs that would prevent them from fully participating in Camp TALKS activities, safely and independently. Camp TALKS engages the campers in various activities requiring self-reflection and some level of awareness of their stuttering and attitudes around it. If a camper will be unable to engage in this programming, they may not be suitable for Camp TALKS.

Fees/ Payment/ Financial Assistance

The full cost for attending Camp TALKS is \$500 for the week, with cost of lunches and snacks included. Needs-based financial aid is available. Families can reach out to Elizabeth Robinson about applying at elizabeth.robinson@vumc.org or 615-936-7525.

The fee for Camp should be paid electronically at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/54j2cwcm>. Please indicate "Camp TALKS tuition" in the Memo/Reference field.

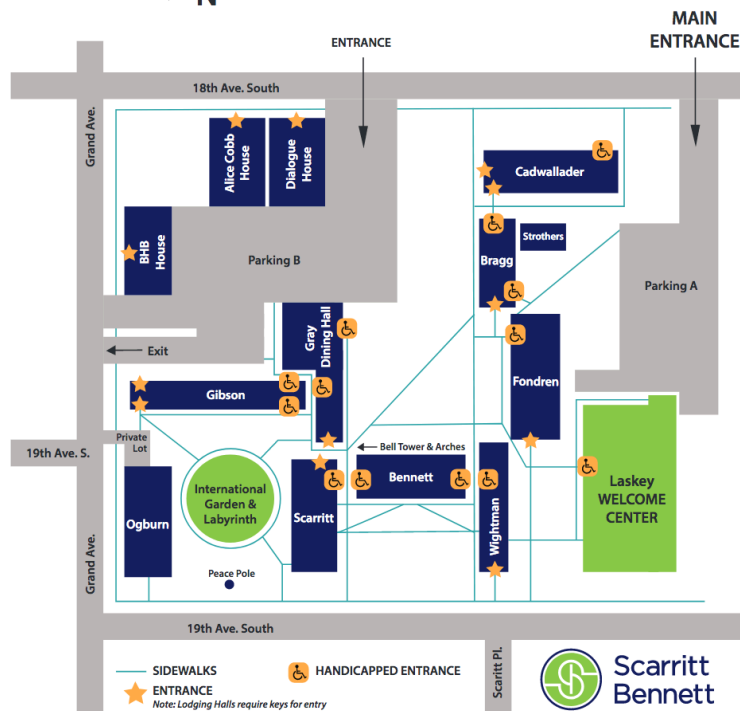
Contact Camp TALKS Director Ryan Millager (ryan.a.millager@vanderbilt.edu, 919-951-9781) if you need to pay via check and we can provide a mailing address.

Fee must be paid by May 31, 2025 to be considered registered and participating in Camp Talks.

If you need to withdraw your child from Camp TALKS prior to the May 31 deadline, you will be refunded your payment in full. After May 31, Camp fees should be considered non-refundable.

Location

Camp TALKS 2025 will be held at the Scarritt Bennett Center, near Vanderbilt's campus, in Fondren Hall, in Nashville, TN. A map of SBC is below.



Parking

Parking for Camp TALKS and drop off and pick up will be in Parking Lot A on the map of Scarritt Bennett above. Parking is free. Parents may park there on Monday mornings and Friday afternoon for the parent meetings and end-of-week celebration. Parents are asked to not remain on-site throughout the day otherwise.

On at least the first morning of camp, counselors will be available outside to help guide campers to the building. Campers are checked in at drop-off, and parents are required to confirm pick-up with a counselor before leaving camp grounds. Please inform the camp director in advance if someone other than a parent/guardian will be picking up during the week of camp.

Hours and Attendance

Camp TALKS will be held from the hours of 8am to 3pm. Drop off can be as early as 7:30am each morning.

Regular camper pick-up is between 3pm and 4pm. If pick up must be later, please communicate with camp staff as soon as possible. Camp TALKS will end later on Friday, by approximately 5pm, due to the end of week celebration and performance.

Although we recognize that traffic and other life circumstances can be unpredictable, exceptionally late drop-off or pick-up can be disruptive to overall camp programming and staffing capacity. Consistent issues with drop-off or pick-up may be grounds for dismissal if not resolved after a verbal warning. Note that any pick-up after 5pm may need to be at the Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center at 1215 21st Ave South.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you expect your child to miss any part of camp, including the final show on Friday, as we plan for each child's part in daily programming and group activities. Contact the Camp Director with any unexpected illness or family emergencies.

Parent Meetings

Parent involvement is a major component of Camp TALKS. **There will be a parent discussion group after dropping off the morning of Monday, June 2nd and at 1pm the afternoon of Friday, June 6th.** Discussion groups will be led by the Camp TALKS Associate Director. The meetings will be an opportunity to share your story, your concerns and hopes, and to hear from other parents. The Friday meeting will, in part, feature discussion with a panel of adults who stutter from the community. While parent participation in this group is not required for campers to attend Camp TALKS, it is strongly encouraged and viewed as a key part of the camp mission.

Accessibility

Please let us know in advance if you or your child have any particular accessibility needs (e.g., mobility concerns, need an English-language interpreter). The Scarritt Bennett Center is ADA compliant, and we will make every effort to accommodate individual camper or parent needs.

What to/ not to Bring

Camp TALKS is an active summer camp. Please dress your children in **comfortable clothes** for indoor and outdoor activities. Close-toed shoes with socks are strongly encouraged. **Please bring a water bottle** – some extras will be available but one for each camper is not guaranteed. If we engage in a water activity, prior notice will be given and a change of clothes will be recommended.

Clothes with inappropriate or adult content will be strictly prohibited. Please do not bring valuables, jewelry, or anything that may be damaged or lost or is not needed to enjoy the week of Camp activities. Camp TALKS is not responsible for damaged or lost items your camper brings to the week of camp. Please do not bring outside snacks or food (see Food, below) unless you have arranged an exception with camp staff.

Cell Phones

Campers are not permitted to use their cell phones after 8am and before 3pm unless there is an emergency. Parents are asked to contact the camp director's cell phone in case of emergency during the day. Campers will be given a verbal warning if they have their phone out during the day and on second warning their phone will be confiscated by the counselors or camp director until 3pm that same day. Camp TALKS is not responsible for damaged or lost cell phones campers bring with them.

Food

Included as a part of Camp TALKS, lunch will be provided to the campers every day in the Scarritt Bennett Center dining hall. Camp TALKS will also provide snacks in the mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Parents are required to provide information regarding food allergies or dietary restrictions before the start of Camp TALKS in order to prepare with the food service staff.

A light breakfast will be provided for parents on Monday morning for the discussion. Food will be provided for guests on Friday evening after the end of week performances. Please communicate any family food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Health and Safety

Camp TALKS follows all Vanderbilt University Medical Center regulations regarding general safety and communicable disease guidelines. Any changes during or immediately prior to camp will be communicated as soon as possible.

Please do not bring your child to Camp TALKS if they are sick. This may be:

- A contagious disease such as COVID-19, chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye, ring worm, or any other unexplained rashes
- A temperature over 100 degrees within 24 hours
- Persistent cough or cold-like symptoms
- Head lice
- Vomiting or diarrhea

The health and safety of the campers is of the utmost importance. There will be a first aid kit on hand for minor cuts, scrapes, or other injuries. In the event of a medical emergency or accident we will:

- Contact you immediately at all numbers and email addresses provided.
- If you are unavailable or cannot be reached, the child will be transported to Vanderbilt Children's Hospital accompanied by a camp director.

If a camper requires medication during the time camp is in session, the medication must be provided in the original container, in a zip lock bag with the camper's name, type of medication, dosage, and time written on it. This must be given, upon arrival, directly to the camp director and they will provide it to the camper when it is time to take the medicine. Medication will be returned to the family each evening and brought back each morning. If a medication is injectable, it must be administered by the camper or by parent, arriving at camp to administer the medication. If a medication requires refrigeration, notify staff and it will be refrigerated at the Scarritt Bennett Center.

Campers' relevant medical or speech therapy information may be shared with counselors on a need-to-know basis and will be kept confidential in keeping with Vanderbilt confidentiality policies.

Additional Safety Information: The physical and emotional safety of our campers, counselors, and other staff are our highest priority. The following camp and campus policies are in place:

- Campers are supervised by Camp TALKS staff throughout the session. For any events that bring us off the Scarritt Bennett campus, all groups are accompanied by at least two counselors.
- No camper will be dismissed without signing out and clearing it with a counselor who communicates with the camp director and/or associate director.
- All other groups or individuals using the Scarritt Bennett campus must register with the main office, so that anyone else using adjacent buildings is pre-approved. Camp TALKS counselors are trained to question and/or report unfamiliar or suspicious persons on campus as appropriate.
- Although campers will occasionally be invited to advertise their participation in Camp TALKS as part of stuttering advocacy activities, no one is permitted to give out personal information or the exact location of camp.
- Vanderbilt security conduct regular patrols of all grounds as part of broader campus security efforts.

Rules of Participation

All Camp TALKS campers and families are expected to support and follow Camp TALKS guidelines and policies at all times.

Our core guideline for members of the Camp TALKS community is **to let others finish speaking and to give them the time they need to say what they want to say**. We all make an effort to model good listening and to avoid interrupting others, except where unavoidable to maintain camp schedules and safety.

The following behaviors are not permitted and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program:

- Hitting, shoving, punching, or any other violent/ inappropriate physical contact (or threat of same) towards another counselor or camper
- Bullying or disrespectful language towards others
- Profanity
- Theft
- Consistent failure to follow staff directions

Disciplinary Procedures

We make every effort to support campers' compliance with Camp TALKS guidelines and to resolve interpersonal conflicts through individual "scaffolding" – in other words, our staff and counselors (1) work with campers individually to give them reminders of key guidelines, and they (2) remain aware so as to intervene in any conflicts or disagreements between campers before they might escalate.

If a camper does violate a camp policy, our first effort is to speak with the camper and follow-up with parents as necessary. With repeated or egregious violations of policy, the camper may be dismissed from camp entirely.

While at Camp TALKS and interacting with camp staff and others, parents and caregivers of campers are also expected to model appropriate behavior in line with Camp TALKS policies. You are welcome to speak privately with a camp director if you have any questions or concerns.

Photos and Social Media

To protect the privacy and safety of everyone at camp, campers are asked to not post any pictures they take during the week on social media.

Camp TALKS staff will take photos throughout camp for internal sharing only. All parents will be given a consent form for photographs that may be shared on the Camp TALKS website or future media from the Vanderbilt Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences.

Camp staff are prohibited from sharing images of campers or Camp TALKS details on any personal social media accounts. Camp staff are also prohibited from adding any campers to their social media contacts (e.g., add as a friend on Facebook) or from otherwise contacting campers directly outside of official Vanderbilt communications.

Lost & Found/ Missing items/ Damaged

Camp TALKS is not responsible for lost or broken items. Campers are asked to not bring any valuables or jewelry or money to Camp TALKS. Any items left after the week of camp will be kept secure by the camp director and, if possible, parents will be contacted to return the lost items.

Procedure for Feedback

We hope Camp TALKS is a positive, care-filled, and supportive environment for all. However, we understand there may be times when you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the program. Please contact Camp Director Ryan Millager (ryan.a.millager@vanderbilt.edu) with any such feedback and we will do our best to address your concerns. If you need an alternate contact for any reason, you are welcome to reach out instead to Associate Camp Director Daniel Shaw (kenton.o.shaw@vumc.org) or our departmental Program Manager Keli Lawrence (keli.s.lawrence@vumc.org).

Thank you for being a part of Camp TALKS 2025!