

**From:** [Elizabeth Kobert](#)  
**To:** [Covid Archive](#)  
**Subject:** FW: NRC Updates: Re-Opening in 2021  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 10, 2021 9:15:11 AM

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**From:** Rabbi Mitchell Cohen, National Ramah Director <[ramah@campramah.ccsend.com](mailto:ramah@campramah.ccsend.com)> on behalf of Rabbi Mitchell Cohen, National Ramah Director <[mcohen@jtsa.edu](mailto:mcohen@jtsa.edu)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 9:51 AM  
**To:** Naomi Steinberger <[NSTEINBERGER@J TSA.EDU](mailto:NSTEINBERGER@J TSA.EDU)>  
**Subject:** NRC Updates: Re-Opening in 2021



January 26, 2021 / 13 Shevat 5781

Dear Ramah Leaders:

Everyone continues to plan for a safe reopening this summer, and the enthusiasm for camp among our staff and campers - and their families - is off the charts! While contingency planning during these turbulent times can seem quite overwhelming, we take pride in the ongoing support from our camper families, donors and other community supporters who show tremendous confidence in Ramah. Here are a few updates:

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### 1) Plans to Open Ramah Camps this Summer

Ramah camps are all planning to re-open in summer 2021, pending the approval of local authorities. Every camp leadership team, as well as our national cohorts of the COVID Planning Group, NRC Medical Committee, Day Camp Directors, and others have been grappling with the decision making around session offerings, length of staff week, days off, size of cohorts, availability of international staff, meal service, and so much more. Most camps do not have any guidance yet from their boards of health regarding camp capacity, which also creates challenges for planning. We are all hopeful that as more adults get vaccinated this winter and spring, local

authorities will turn their attention to summer camp and the importance of permitting all of us to open our day and overnight camps with reasonable accommodations for COVID 19.

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## 2) NRC Medical Committee Guidelines and Recommendations

The NRC Medical Committee, consisting of 16 physicians with a wide range of expertise representing all of our camps, under the leadership of Dr. Cliff Nerwen, has created a [comprehensive set of guidelines and recommendations](#) for summer 2021. This document will continue to evolve throughout the winter and spring. Every camp should read these provisions carefully and adapt them based upon the conditions of their site, as well as the regulations from their local authorities. We are enormously grateful to all of our physicians who have spent countless hours researching and discussing the ways to open camp safely this summer.

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## 3) Updates from ACA

- ACA has just released [EHE's updated field guide](#). It contains a new chapter on vaccines.
- ACA's "CampCounts" Business Operations study, as well as their COVID-19 research findings, will both be released on or about January 26.
- Camp professionals are encouraged to sign up for [ACA's national webinar](#) on January 27.

ACA-led state advocacy groups advocating for clear guidance on the opening of summer camps have made some progress, but many are pausing their efforts until mid-February, when hopefully, the surges of virus in many states will be better under control, and vaccines will be more widely available.

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## 4) PPP2

All of our U.S. camps are applying for a second round of forgivable loans from the federal government under the CARES Act passed this December. Many thanks to CRNE board member and Canada Ramah alumnus Jeffrey Scheer, of Bond, Schoeneck & King in Syracuse, who provided us with some expert legal opinion regarding the new legislation. ([See presentation.](#)) Several of our camps have already applied, seeking 3.5 times average monthly payroll. Under PPP1, Ramah camps received approximately \$4 million in needed support. We anticipate that this new legislation may provide even more funding after a year of significant loss.

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## 5) Collaboration with Other Organizations

NRC leaders continue to meet with leaders from FJC and other camping movements to share plans for summer 2021. Last Thursday, Amy, Jeff, and I met with Ruben Arquilevich, Rachael Brill, and David Berkman from URJ and went through our respective guidelines for the summer, which were remarkably similar. We are hoping to set up an opportunity for our directors and URJ directors to meet and discuss summer planning in the coming weeks. We continue to receive essential support from both FJC and JCamp180.

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## 6) COVID Planning Group

Pediatrician Dr. Laura Blaisdell, consultant to AMSKier and medical director, Camp Winnebago, led a discussion about vaccines at the COVID Planning Group's January 14 meeting. ([See meeting notes.](#)) The next meeting of the COVID Planning Group will take place on Thursday, February 18 at 1 pm ET.

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## 7) Camp Communications and Resources

We continue to add materials to the [NRC COVID-19 Toolkit](#). Please let [Nancy Scheff](#) know if we are missing materials from your camp.

- [Camp Summer 2021 FAQs](#)
  - [Camp Emails](#)
  - [Calendar of Camp Emails](#)
  - [Camper Care Resources](#)
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## 8) Group Purchasing

We are seeking bids from five different vendors for PPE and other health and safety-related equipment to try and obtain bulk pricing to reduce costs for each camp.

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## 9) In Other News

- **Outstanding Weinstein Leadership Institute** - From January 3-5, 122 madrichim and madrichot (counselors), rashei edah (division heads), and Amitei Ramah (year-round Ramah Fellows) from across the Ramah Camping Movement joined together for this inspiring 3-day virtual staff training conference. Links: [Video Highlights](#) | [Blog](#) | [Program Guide](#). Further training for these and other cohorts will take place in late winter and the spring.
- **Tichon Ramah Yerushalayim (TRY)** - We have near record enrollment for the TRY 2021 spring semester in Israel. In light of Israeli travel restrictions, the start of TRY has been delayed by two weeks to February 8. 60 very enthusiastic teen participants are enrolled.
- **TikvahNet** - Last week, NRC began a third series of TikvahNet, our movement-wide virtual vocational training and socialization program for Tikvah participants and alumni. During the pandemic, TikvahNet, supplementing the excellent programming by local camps, has helped Tikvah participants and alumni to overcome loneliness and isolation and expand their social networks. [Read more](#)
- **[Ramah Israel Bike Ride & Hiking Trip](#)** - Almost 100 riders and hikers have registered for the October 12-19, 2021 trip through the Galil and Golan to raise funds for Ramah Tikvah programs. Early registration rates expire on January 31. We may shortly begin a waitlist.
- A new **[Mental Health First Aid](#)** certification course is being offered for 10-12 young adult staff members from each camp. This NRC training program, supported by funding from the Arlene Topal Creative Art Fund, will help our staff members to identify, understand, and respond to signs of addiction, emotional distress, and mental illnesses.
- **Mishlachat 2021** - Our directors are beginning to interview and tentatively hire shlichim for the summer. All shlichim will need to be vaccinated, as per the Jewish Agency. Success will depend upon the reinstatement of the J1 Visa program and clearance for international travel.

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We will continue to provide updates from NRC in the coming months.

Shalom,

*Mitch*

Rabbi Mitchell Cohen, Director  
National Ramah Commission, Inc. of The Jewish Theological Seminary

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