

Camp Noah began in 1997 as a response to flooding in the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota after social workers received reports of children showing increased fears and anxiety, grief, sleep disturbances, and other regressive behaviors. In 2006, in response to Hurricane Katrina, Camp Noah grew dramatically into a national program, and has now held over 300 camps, serving over 14,000 elementary-age children across 29 states and Puerto Rico.

Why? Because disaster changes lives - especially for children. Whatever type of disaster or trauma they have experienced, children often need support to process what has happened. A study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics titled [“The Psychosocial Implications of Disaster or Terrorism on Children”](#) states, "If children are helped to learn to cope with this stress, their symptoms subside. We can help our children live with this fear, adjust to it, and plan for the future rather than remain paralyzed in fear" (2005).

Research shows that as many as 69% of school-age children suffer severe impairment following a disaster. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), “the effect of trauma on people is variable. Impact may happen immediately or may manifest after some time. Experiencing a traumatic event, such as a natural disaster, can impact mental health, learning and school performance for students. Trauma can lead to behavior changes, lower GPAs, increased suspensions and expulsions, increased number of students dropping out of school, higher rates of absences, interference with concentration and memory, and decreased reading ability. Although extremely rare, some individuals may be at increased risk of suicide if they suffer from severe PTSD or depression.”

TEA has also identified some common reactions of children, youth and adults who are exposed to a disaster:

- Feelings of insecurity, unfairness, anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, despair, or worries about the future;
- A sense of helplessness, fear that another disaster will strike;
- Believing myths or folklore to explain the cause of the disaster;
- Disruptive behaviors, irritability, agitation, hyperactivity, avoiding activities or situations;
- Increased discipline infractions among displaced students;
- Regressive behaviors in young children such as; clinging/dependent behaviors or temper tantrums;
- Physical symptoms, such as stomachaches, headaches, loss of appetite, sleep problems and nightmares;
- Increased concerns regarding the safety of pets, family members, friends, or loved ones; and
- School-based problems with diminished concentration, decreased motivation and academic performance.

This is where Camp Noah comes in. In a safe and supportive setting, children are encouraged to face their fears, grieve their losses, identify and share their unique gifts and talents, and plan for an amazing future.

During this 5-day, day-camp setting, a team of 15 – 25 certified camp staff accompanies campers through an intentional, 10 session curriculum that enables the children to process their disaster and/or

trauma experiences while giving them the space and time necessary to tell their stories and build resiliency skills. Campers participate in small groups, large group time (including music, skits, and puppet shows), crafts, and recreation time. Through our curriculum, campers develop or reestablish a sense of self-worth, learn coping skills to deal with anxiety, develop language to identify and name their feelings, identify oneself as a strong survivor, and, again, nurture a sense of hope for the future.

The skills gained are noticed by both campers and parents alike. A recent evaluation of the Camp Noah program by the Wilder Foundation shows that 99% of campers surveyed learned two or more resiliency skills during camp, and 93% of parents surveyed reported that their child(ren) feel(s) more prepared to handle challenges in life. Bringing back stability and structure into these children's lives is paramount to creating a sense of normalcy and providing a space for true emotional recovery to begin. Camp Noah does just that.

**Our Mission**

Camp Noah brings hope and healing to communities that have been impacted by disaster.

**Our Vision**

Our vision is to serve disaster-impacted children and families by building resiliency, restoring hope, and changing lives.

**Who can attend Camp Noah**

Camp Noah is open to all children who have completed Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade in the community being served and would benefit from learning resiliency and disaster preparedness skills. Camp Noah provides a secular curriculum that is open to all backgrounds and faiths. Camp Noah will work with each individual community to help them recruit students. It is recommended that each camp host between 35-50 students.

**Staffing**

A team of certified camp staff members facilitate all Camp Noah curriculum activities. This group of trained, background checked staff may be recruited locally, regionally, or nationally. Each camp has a mental health professional and a local site coordinator. These are extremely important, as volunteers are beneficial, but they are not the mental health experts. Additional local volunteers serve meals and snacks, provide transportation, and support the camp in a variety of ways.

Camp Noah is a disaster recovery service offered by Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSSMN), which provides a therapeutic camp experience in communities impacted by disasters. LSSMN hosts Camp Noah in disaster-impacted communities across the country with the mission to bring hope and healing to these communities.

**How We Work**

Camp Noah provides a safe and caring environment where children build resiliency skills within the familiarity of their own communities, using a proven curriculum designed to help children process their disaster or trauma experience through creative activities and play.

Camp Noah celebrates every child as special. In this safe and supportive setting, children are encouraged to face their fears, grieve their losses, identify and share their unique gifts and talents, and plan for an amazing future.

**History**

Camp Noah began in 1997 as a response to flooding in the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota. In 2006, Camp Noah grew dramatically in response to Hurricane Katrina. Camp Noah has developed into a nationally recognized program for children whose communities have been impacted by natural disasters and other collective trauma.

To date, Camp Noah has been hosted in 31 states and Puerto Rico in response to a wide range of natural and human-caused disasters. Since 1997, over 300 camps with over 4,000 adult volunteers have served

over 14,000 elementary-age children. Camp Noah has a very small but dedicated staff, based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Camp Noah is owned and operated on a national basis by Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.

### What children receive

Every child receives 30 hours of therapeutic play-focused creative activities with a ratio of 3-4 children for every Certified Camp Staff member. Meals and snacks are provided. In addition, will receive the items outlined below.

## What Every Child Receives at Camp Noah

### Preparedness Pack

- Backpack
- Flashlight
- Kleenex/tissues
- Whistle
- First aid kit
- Child-sized dust mask
- Hand sanitizer
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, and holder
- Deck of playing cards
- Small notebook and pen
- "Let's Get Prepared" workbook
- Child-sized work gloves
- Emergency information card
- Luggage tag

### Small Group Supplies

- Daily theme bracelets
- "I am Somebody Special" poster
- "Coat of Arms" poster
- "Brighter Day" poster
- Safe Place poster, worksheet and picture templates
- Wall of Memories brick
- Seeds of Hope materials
- Survivor Circle materials
- My Camp Noah Book
- Sunshine Box materials
- "My Story" poster
- Daily take homes

*Campers also receive all the materials to complete multiple craft projects.*

### Camp Noah T-Shirt

### Kids Kit

- Toolbox with handle
- Washable Classic Color Markers
- Washable water color paints & brush
- Glue stick
- Crayons (24 ct.)
- Kid-sized scissors
- Black pen
- Play-Doh (4 oz.)
- Pencil
- Pencil sharpener

### Birthday Party

- Birthday gift
- Birthday treats
- Bracelet
- Camp Noah pencil
- Birthday card

*Campers also receive all of the supplies for birthday party activities.*

### Fleece Blanket

# Themes and Noah's Wise Words

*The Camp Noah curriculum is a process. Each session builds on the previous session(s) to help campers develop resiliency skills and cope with what has happened in their lives.*



**Day 1/Sessions 1 & 2**

**Theme:** I Am Somebody Special (Life Before the Ark)

**Key resiliency skills:** develop a sense of self-worth • understand oneself as unique and special • understand we are each an important part of a diverse community • laughter, play, creativity

**Noah's Wise Words:**

**"I am somebody special! There's no one else like me!  
I like the way I am! This is who I want to be!"**



**Day 2/Sessions 3 & 4**

**Theme:** Storm Stories (Getting Onto the Ark, The Storm Begins)

**Key resiliency skills:** telling one's story • listening and empathy • dealing with anxiety • identifying support systems • preparedness skills • relaxation techniques

**Noah's Wise Words:**

**"When a storm comes, I am not scared.  
Want to know why? Because I am prepared!"**



**Day 3/Sessions 5 & 6**

**Theme:** Why Am I Feeling This Way? (Life After the Storm)

**Key resiliency skills:** identifying and naming feelings • processing grief and loss • empathy • understanding real vs. imagined fears • coping strategies

**Noah's Wise Words:**

**"No matter how I feel today,  
I'm looking forward to a brighter day."**



**Day 4/Sessions 7 & 8**

**Theme:** I Can Do That (On Dry Ground)

**Key resiliency skills:** identifying oneself as a survivor • identifying unique gifts and talents • developing teamwork skills • understanding diversity

**Noah's Wise Words:**

**"When things are tough, I learn a lot —  
About who I am and what I've got!"**



**Day 5/Sessions 9 & 10**

**Theme:** Can I Help You? (Life After the Ark)

**Key resiliency skills:** nurturing a sense of hope for the future • identifying future goals • identifying community support systems • developing an action plan to "give back" • teaching gratitude

**Noah's Wise Words:**

**"My future is bright! Filled with sunbeams!  
I have hope! I have dreams!"**



## The campers

Campers learn ways to relax, feel more prepared to handle stressful situations, and learn how to stay safe during stormy weather.



**93%** of campers  
learned ways to relax



**92%** of campers  
learned how to stay safe during stormy weather



**93%** of parents said their children  
feel more prepared for stormy weather or disasters



**93%** of parents said their children  
feel more prepared to handle challenges in life



“Each day he learned something new and was very interested and excited about sharing his day. He is now not afraid when a storm comes. He shares with me how to stay calm.”  
– Parent

“My child has a stronger sense of safety. She also learned she’s not alone.”

– Parent

“It gave her an opportunity to understand how others go through life situations and still be okay.”

– Parent



## Campers learn that they are special.

Campers learned that they



are somebody special



have gifts and talents

Parents said Camp Noah helped their children



understand or know something that makes them unique



feel good about themselves

## Campers built relationships with others.

96% of campers said they liked their teachers

95% of campers said they liked their friends

95% of parents said their children made friends at Camp Noah



“I learned that I am special and to always look forward to a better day.”

– Camper

“My children have more confidence in their selves when it comes to trying new things.”

– Parent

“[My child] made some really great friends that have been dealing with similar loss.”

– Parent

## Camp benefits persisted.

Three months after camp, parents completed another survey about the enduring impact of the camp on their children.



### Feeling special and confident

100% said Camp Noah helped their children feel good about themselves

96% felt that Camp Noah helped their children understand or know something that makes them unique



### Improving social skills and relationships

94% reported that their children engage more with friends after participating in Camp Noah



### Having the ability to handle challenges and using strategies to relax

92% reported that their children feel more prepared to handle challenges in life

84% felt that their children used the strategies they learned at Camp Noah to relax



### Using their safe spaces and feeling prepared for stormy weather

90% reported that their children continued to use their safe spaces

98% said their children feel more prepared during stormy weather after participating in Camp Noah

96% said their children feel safer during stormy weather after participating in Camp Noah

