

# **Retreat Coordinator Handbook**

**Your Guide to Retreats at Damascus  
2021-22**

## **What's Included**

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### **Summary of Action Items**

## **Section I: Before the Retreat**

### **1. Payment & Registration.**

#### **How does registration work?**

We are hoping in the near future to implement an effective online portal that allows you to easily manage and share information with us. For now, we ask that you please collect and submit information for each student and chaperone about their dietary needs and contact information by filling out the following forms by 1 month prior to the retreat:

[School Retreat Information](#) (for weekday retreats)

[Parish Retreat Information](#) (for weekend retreats)

#### **How does payment work?**

A deposit is due with the contract to reserve your spot. The school will collect payment from the families, and will then be invoiced for the remainder of the payment.

Damascus will send an invoice for the final payment at the end of the season in which the retreat occurred: December 1 for August-November retreats, and June 1 for December-May retreats. Payment will be due one month after receipt of statement.

#### **What if our numbers change?**

The number submitted in your contract provides the baseline for the cost of your retreat. If those numbers change after the contract is signed, we are able to accommodate up to the percentages listed in the table below. The farther out from the retreat that you notify Damascus of the change, the more we are able to accommodate out of our operational commitments.

<b>Notification of Change</b>	<b>Minimum % of Contract Amount Owed</b>
Within 6 months-91 days of event	35%
Within 90-31 days	60%
Within 30-7 days	90%
Within 7 days	100%: no adjustments

If the total number of retreatants exceeds the original number, the parish will be billed for the number of students in attendance.

## **2. Chaperones & Clergy**

### **How much does it cost for chaperones?**

The cost of one chaperone is included. Any additional chaperones who stay for the whole experience pay the standard \$120 fee. (Note: This does not include clergy, who always attend free!)

### **How many chaperones can come?**

A minimum of one chaperone is required. That being said, we'd love for you to bring your team! We recommend bringing a reasonable ratio of chaperones to students that will foster their engagement with the program (most groups bring 2-3).

### **Where do chaperones stay?**

Typically chaperones stay in one of our Lakeside Retreat Centers, a short distance from the cabins where the students stay.

### **What are chaperones' responsibilities?**

Please request our Guidelines for Chaperones if you have not received them.

### **What is the role of clergy on retreat?**

At the heart of every Damascus retreat is a time of Eucharistic Adoration. This takes place for weekday retreats on Thursday evening, and for weekend retreats on Saturday evening (around 8-9pm). Weekend retreats also conclude with a Closing Mass, normally at 11:30am on Sunday. We invite clergy from your parish to preside at these key moments.

Outside of these formal opportunities, we would love to have priests from your parish here to enjoy time with their students! Many find it a great opportunity to help facilitate a significant experience in the spiritual formation of their parishioners, and to bridge the retreat experience back to their parish.

That being said, we understand that priests' other responsibilities may not allow for them to be present. In the event that no clergy from the participating groups are able to attend, we will charge a small fee to cover the stipend of the visiting priest who covers the sacramental needs (\$50 split amongst the groups). Please confirm the participation of clergy from your school by 1 month before the retreat.

### **3. Packing & Travel**

#### **What should students bring?**

The following items are a MUST for any retreat:

- Bedding for twin-size bunk
- Hygiene items
- Closed-toed shoes for activities
- Weather-appropriate clothes

If you have not received the full packing list, please ask.

#### **Is there anything students are not allowed to bring?**

- Cell phones and other technology (cameras are okay)
- Pocketknives or other weapons
- Snacks containing nuts

Please ask for and confiscate any of these items prior to the retreat.

#### **When does the retreat start and end?**

Leadership/Faith & Science/High School Retreats: 10am Wednesday- 1pm Friday

Confirmation/PSR Retreats: 6pm Friday- 12:30pm Sunday.

#### **Is the Closing Mass on Sunday optional?**

The Closing Mass is expected for those who are attending the retreat, and an optional invitation for parents & family members.

#### **What if our group has to arrive later/leave earlier than those times?**

Please ask Damascus about schedule accommodations when booking.

#### **Can a single student arrive late/leave early?**

Yes. We must be notified prior to the retreat of who, when, and who they will be leaving with.

#### **Is there a bus company you recommend?**

Columbus Coach offers a discounted rate to schools attending our retreats. For booking contact [stacia@columbuscoach.com](mailto:stacia@columbuscoach.com)

## **Section II: On the Retreat**

### **4. Missionaries**

#### **Who are the missionaries?**

Our missionaries are young adults who are pursuing a 2-year program of service and Christian formation with Damascus Catholic Mission Campus. The 46 missionaries in formation for the 2021-2022 year represent over 10 different states from around the nation.

Find out more about our missionary program at [www.damascus.net/mission](http://www.damascus.net/mission).

#### **What are their certifications?**

Our missionaries participate in two trainings for a cumulative 4 weeks of training on activities, programs, small group leadership, policies, and culture. All missionaries have a criminal FBI/BCI background check on file and have been certified through Protecting God's Children (VIRTUS) safe environment program. Our safe environment practices meet and exceed the Diocese of Columbus's standards.

Many of our missionaries and mission staff hold degrees in theology, education, and a variety of other disciplines from institutions including Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ave Maria University, the Augustine Institute, and the Ohio State University.

#### **What do the missionaries do on retreats?**

Missionaries serve in several roles throughout the retreat season, including small group counselor, activity leader, kitchen staff, facilities care, and administrative roles. They are under the leadership of the Program Directors, who oversee the schedule, program content and activities; and the Head Counselors, who oversee care of counselors & campers.

## **5. Lodging & Grouping**

### **What are the cabins like?**

We have several styles of cabins. Your group will most likely be in the Hillcrest Cabins, which have two sides with 10 bunks each. See our facilities at <https://damascus.net/rentals/facilities/>.

### **How are groups determined?**

Students will stay with the same group of boys or girls from their school that will be their main unit for the duration of the retreat, led by a missionary. Groups should have at least 5 and up to 9 students. You will have the opportunity to create those groups in your retreat information form.

### **Who stays overnight with the students?**

The missionaries will stay with the small groups they are leading. There will always be at least 2 missionaries present with any students.

### **Will other schools be present on the retreat?**

Most likely, yes! It is a great opportunity to experience the wider family of our Catholic Church. In nearly all circumstances, however, the small groups will be separated by school. In rare cases, i.e. an exceptionally large retreat and/or a very small school or parish, we may include students from two different schools in the same group.

## **6. Food**

### **What if my student has a food allergy/dietary need?**

All of our food is prepared nut-free, meaning no ingredients were processed in a facility with peanuts or tree nuts. Our kitchen can accommodate gluten-free, dairy-free, and vegetarian diets. For other allergies (eggs, soy, etc.) please contact our Director of Food Services, Theresa Medved, at [theresa@damascus.net](mailto:theresa@damascus.net). Please notify us of all dietary restrictions in the information form that you submit.

### **Can we bring our own food?**

You may bring snacks, as long as they do not contain nuts. Please bring any snacks to the kitchen staff upon arrival to confirm that they were not processed with nuts.

### **What meals are included?**

Leadership/Faith and Science/High School: Dinner Wednesday-Lunch Friday. Please have students pack a (nut-free!) lunch to eat at the campus on Wednesday.

Confirmation/PSR: Dinner Friday-Breakfast Sunday.

Snacks for the whole group will also be included at different times throughout the retreat.

### **Can we buy food there?**

Our snack shack will be open at certain times of the retreat with additional candy and snacks for purchase.

## **7. Health & Safety**

### **How are medications handled?**

Chaperones are responsible for keeping and distributing medications. Students may not keep oral medications on their person or in their cabins. EpiPens and inhalers are typically carried by the student's counselor. We recommend putting each medication in a ziploc baggie with the student's name on it.

### **Are the activities safe?**

Yes. As a campus with emphasis on high adventure activities, we have a policy of zero tolerance when it comes to risk in our facilities, equipment, and operation. Every one of our adventure activities undergoes annual third party inspection or recertification, and all of our staff are trained by a certification body approved by the Association for Challenge Course Technology. The Redwoods Group is our insurer and partner in risk assessment and safety implementation and training.

### **What happens in case of emergency?**

Damascus is located approximately 20 minutes from Knox Community Hospital and Urgent Care, and is accessible in less than 5 minutes by local EMS and fire personnel. In the case of any emergency, Damascus staff is committed to aiding school chaperones in contacting parents and arranging for emergency medical care.

### **How does communication happen on the retreat?**

We understand the tremendous responsibility it is for parents to entrust us with the care of their child, and their safety and wellbeing is the primary concern of each and every missionary on retreat.

Our Head Counselors are specifically dedicated to making sure that each camper is cared for to the highest degree, and are equipped to collaborate with chaperones in ensuring effective communication between parents and children when it is needed.

A school chaperone should be the primary contact for parents who need to reach their children in case of emergency.

### **What if my student has a special need?**

Please contact us to discuss specific care need for the physical, mental, and/or emotional health of any student.



## **8. Miscellaneous**

### **What does the program look like? What activities will students participate in?**

Please ask if you have not received a schedule or overview of your particular retreat. Note: We recommend not distributing the details of the schedule to students to allow them to better engage with the program.

### **What if the weather is bad?**

We live the adventure in the rain and snow! We will of course make accommodations for extreme weather, but except in case of lightning or extreme cold, you can expect to be outside. Please pack according to the forecast!

### **Is there a gift shop?**

Yes! It will be opened at specific times during the retreat.

### **Can the missionaries speak to our parents ahead of time?**

We would love to be a part of your parent meeting! Please schedule parent meetings with at least a week of notice.

### **What other programs do you offer?**

Our vision is deep partnerships with schools and parishes which allow students to have successive experiences that invite them further in their relationship with Christ, and bring lasting transformation to the culture of the school and parish. With that in mind, our programs are designed for specific developmental levels which a student can experience in sequence:

Faith and Science: 6th grade

Leadership: 7th grade

Confirmation: 8th grade

Abundant Life: High School Underclassmen

Made for More: High School Upperclassmen

In addition to our integrated retreat programs for 6th-8th grade and high school classes, we offer a more extended opportunity for encounter and adventure in Catholic Youth Summer Camp. To explore all of our programs, see [www.damascus.net/programs](http://www.damascus.net/programs) and [www.cysc.com](http://www.cysc.com).

**Summary of Action Items**

<b>Timeline/Deadline</b>	<b>Coordinator Responsibilities</b>
After booking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add retreat to your calendar</li> <li>• Ask priest about presiding for Adoration/Mass</li> <li>• Intercede for your students!</li> </ul>
Beginning of the school year/semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule transportation</li> <li>• Collect dietary needs and contact information for students &amp; chaperones</li> <li>• Share packing list and waiver with parents</li> <li>• Schedule a parent meeting with missionaries (optional)</li> </ul>
One month before retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit student &amp; chaperone information to Damascus</li> <li>• Confirm priest participation in Adoration/Mass</li> </ul>
Day of retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect student medications</li> <li>• Confiscate any cellphones, pocketknives, or snacks with nuts</li> <li>• Bring signed waivers to retreat</li> <li>• Participate in chaperone meeting with retreat leadership</li> <li>• Enjoy the retreat!</li> </ul> <p><i>Running late? Call the office at (740) 480-1288</i></p>
End of the semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit final payment to Damascus</li> <li>• Book for next year!</li> </ul>