



Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) for The Deer Hill Gap Experience

The Deer Hill Gap Experience is designed to challenge students mentally, physically, and emotionally. To ensure a successful, safe, and impactful experience for all participants, we have established the following Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC). Please carefully review these criteria to determine if our program is a good fit for you or your student/client.

Program Overview and Expectations

The Deer Hill Gap Experience is not therapeutic in nature and is not designed for adjudicated youth. We cannot accommodate students who require consistent therapeutic support or those who are mandated to participate by their parents, counselors, law enforcement, or others. Thank you for respecting this boundary.

Admissions and Enrollment Considerations

The EEC will be integral to our admissions process and enrollment considerations. We reserve the right to deny admission to any student who does not meet our EEC. If a student is admitted and is unable to consistently maintain compliance with the EEC, we reserve the right to remove that student from the program.

Criteria for Participation

The following criteria apply specifically to The Deer Hill Gap Experience, unless otherwise noted. We encourage potential participants, parents, educational consultants, and other professionals to carefully review these criteria and consider whether our program is right for their students/clients.

General Requirements

The following general requirements must be met:

1. **Compliance with Program Policies:** Participants must abide by all Deer Hill Gap Experience policies.
2. **Responsiveness to Instructions:** Participants must listen to and respond quickly to oral instructions given by their instructors.
3. **English Language Fluency:** Participants must have a high level of English language fluency and comprehension.
4. **Technology Usage:** Participants must be able to regulate technology usage, including giving up phones/laptops for extended periods during wilderness and culturally immersive program components.

5. Voluntary Participation: Participants must be choosing to participate in a Deer Hill program on their own free will, without being sent by parents or someone else. Students should not be legally adjudicated or court-mandated.
6. Independent Participation: Participants must be able to successfully participate without continuously requiring more of the instructor's time, focus, and energy than other students.
7. Self-Care and Health Management: Participants must take responsibility for and manage their health and well-being independently, including:
 - Hydration
 - General nutrition
 - Allergy management
 - Mobility
8. Medication Management: Participants must be responsible and capable of managing, administering, and securing a sufficient supply of all prescription medications needed for the duration of the program.
9. Medication Sharing Prohibition: Participants must not share, offer, or sell any prescription medications under any circumstances.
10. Shared Living Arrangements: Participants must be able to share living and sleeping spaces with other students, possibly of a different sex, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.

Ecological and Cultural Ethics Requirements

To ensure a responsible and respectful experience, all participants must:

1. Practice Leave No Trace Ethics: Minimize waste and environmental footprint by following Leave No Trace principles (taught by instructors during Orientation)
2. Support Sustainable Consumption: Commit to buying locally and avoiding products that harm plant or animal species and ecosystems whenever possible.
3. Respect Cultural Norms: Abide by cultural norms, including dress and behavior, as advised by instructors.
4. Engage with Local Cultures and Ecosystems: Make an effort to learn about Indigenous cultures and local ecosystems, demonstrating a willingness to understand and appreciate the environment and its inhabitants.

By applying to The Deer Hill Gap Experience, students commit to environmental and cultural responsibility.

Physical Requirements

All participants must be able to meet the following physical requirements prior to program start:

1. Remote Travel Endurance: Be able to travel for periods of up to one week in a physically demanding, remote, backcountry environments (e.g. mountains, desert canyons, riverways).
2. Physical Capability: Possess the strength, physical endurance, and agility to navigate rough terrain and travel through wilderness and urban landscapes at a moderate pace.
3. Gear Carrying Ability: Be able to carry all personal gear on their back for up to six miles at any given time (for backpacking components only).
4. Hiking Ability: Be able to complete a moderate uphill hike with a daypack weighing 5-20 pounds.
5. Medical Issue Discussion: Discuss any medical issues that arise with Deer Hill instructors and/or staff.
6. Disclosure of Physical Limitations: Disclose any physical limitations or health concerns that could impact their ability to fully participate in the program.

By applying to The Deer Hill Gap Experience, students affirm their ability to meet these physical requirements and ensure a safe and successful experience for themselves and others.

Emotional Requirements

To ensure the well-being of all participants must meet the following emotional requirements:

1. Group Participation: Actively participate in group meetings, practicing active listening, and openly expressing thoughts, feelings, and emotions to others.
2. Reflective Practice: Consciously reflect on experiences with the group through oral, written, and creative prompts provided by Deer Hill instructors.
3. Open Communication: Communicate openly and honestly with peers, Deer Hill staff, and local partners.
4. Safe Environment: Commit to creating a safe environment for all students, refraining from physical or verbal threats towards others.
5. Stress Management: Cope with the stresses of living, working, and traveling with a small group in unfamiliar environments.
6. Emotional Management: Discuss and manage social and emotional issues/challenges that may arise with Deer Hill instructors.
7. Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS): Engage with the CPS process, as guided by Deer Hill instructors and/or staff, to address behavioral challenges.

By applying to The Deer Hill Gap Experience, students affirm their ability to meet these emotional requirements and ensure a safe and successful experience for themselves and others.

Mental Health Requirements

Deer Hill is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for students on our programs. While we're not a therapeutic program, many students with various clinical diagnoses have had successful and rewarding experiences on our programs.

To support a successful experience, please carefully review the Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) to determine if The Deer Hill Gap Experience is right for you. If we identify concerns about a student's ability to meet the EEC during our holistic admissions process, we'll consult with an independent mental health specialist to determine the best course of action.

To participate in The Deer Hill Gap Experience, students must:

1. **Disclose Mental Health History:** Fully disclose mental health history, substance use history, medication history, learning differences, ongoing illnesses, physical injuries, and/or other limitations during the application process.
2. **Provide Professional Reference:** If requested, provide a reference from a mental health professional to help identify a student's ability to meet the Essential Eligibility Criteria.
3. **Independent Participation:** Be able to participate in the program without regular professional and/or therapeutic support for the duration of the program.

By applying to The Deer Hill Gap Experience, students confirm their ability to meet these mental health requirements for the well-being of themselves and others.