STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF
LIFELONG EDUCATION, ADVANCEMENT, AND POTENTIAL

LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

BEVERLY WALKER-GRIFFEA
DIRECTOR

November 13, 2025

Taylor McGinn
The Highlands Adventure Camp
600 Highlands Drive
Harbor Springs, MI 49740

RE: License #: CD240409797
Investigation #: 2025C0129008
The Highlands Adventure Camp

Dear Taylor McGinn:

Attached is the Special Investigation Report for the above-mentioned facility. Due to the violations identified in the report, a written corrective action plan is required. The corrective action plan is due 15 days from the date of this letter and must include the following:

- How compliance with each rule will be achieved.
- Who is directly responsible for implementing the corrective action for each violation.
- Specific time frames for each violation as to when the correction will be completed or implemented.
- How continuing compliance will be maintained once compliance is achieved.
- Signed and dated corrective action plan.

If you desire technical assistance in addressing these issues, please feel free to contact me. In any event, the corrective action plan is due within 15 days.

Please review the enclosed documentation for accuracy and contact me with any questions. If I am not available and you need to speak to someone immediately, please contact the licensing unit at 517-284-9730.

Sincerely,

David Martin, Licensing Consultant
Camp Licensing Unit
105 W. Allegan St. 2nd Floor
Lansing, MI 48909
(989) 370-9334

enclosure

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
LIFELONG EDUCATION, ADVANCEMENT, AND POTENTIAL
CAMP LICENSING UNIT
SPECIAL INVESTIGATION REPORT

I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

License #:	CD240409797
Investigation #:	2025C0129008
Complaint Receipt Date:	07/11/2025
Investigation Initiation Date:	07/18/2025
Report Due Date:	09/12/2025
Licensee Name:	The Highlands Adventure Camp
Licensee Address:	600 Highlands Drive Harbor Springs, MI 49740
Licensee Telephone #:	(231) 526-3008
Administrator:	Taylor McGinn
Name of Camp:	The Highlands Adventure Camp
Camp Address:	600 Highlands Drive Harbor Springs, MI 49740
Camp Telephone #:	(231) 526-3008
License Status:	REGULAR
Effective Date:	08/11/2023
Expiration Date:	08/10/2025
Capacity:	60
Camp License Type:	CHILD CAMP - DAY

II. ALLEGATION(S)

	Violation Established?
Camper A fell approximately 20 feet from a chairlift.	Yes

III. METHODOLOGY

07/11/2025	Incident Report Submission to MiLEAP-CAMPS
07/14/2025	Special Investigation Intake
07/18/2025	Special Investigation Initiated – On Site
07/18/2025	Contact Document Received
09/12/2025	Inspection Completed-BCAL Sub Compliance
11/13/2025	Corrective Action Plan Requested and Due By 11/28/2025
11/13/2025	Exit Conference by Telephone with Ms. McGinn

IV. INVESTIGATION AND FINDINGS

ALLEGATION:

Camper A fell approximately 20 feet from a ski lift/ chairlift.

INVESTIGATION:

On 07/11/2025, the department received an incident report from camp director Taylor McGinn. The report read in part:

> *"I unloaded the lift at the top with 2 campers and was waiting for the other campers and counselors to unload. I saw the chair stop and then heard the lift operator shout "I think she fell!" I immediately ran to the lift line and saw Camper A being helped by up by two bystanders. Camper A was crying. I jumped in on one side of the to help support her, then helped her sit back down on the ground. I asked her initial questions of where she hurt while the lift operator called Patrol. Camper A said her feet were hurting her. I called the camp director, who contacted the parents. Parents were asked to meet Camper A in the patrol room. Patrol took over the assessment and care. I rode with patrol and Camper A to the first aid room. Patrol did their assessment, administered ice and took important information down. Director met me in the first aid room to complete report and talk with parents. Camper A was released to parents, who planned to take her in for scans."*

On 7/18/2025, I conducted an onsite inspection. I interviewed Licensee Designee, Candace Lamaka. She stated the lift operator is responsible for the safe operation of the chairlift and that the Day Camp Counselors were responsible for the safety of the children. Ms. Lamaka identified the written rules in the Day Camp Manual and staff

review the rules with all campers every time that the chairlift is used. The written rules included:

- *Only approach the loading area when instructed to do so.*
- *stand on the red line and wait for your chair.*
- *stay in your "lane" when loading.*
- *use your hands to pop yourself on.*
- *sit down and sit back.*
- *hop off at the red line at the end.*
- *bar stays down the whole ride.*
- *sit down and face forward.*
- *do not throw anything from the lift.*
- *sit still."*

Ms. Lamaka went on to say that the camp had 47 children in attendance that day with 7 staff members. When the incident took place, Ms. Lamaka was already off the chairlift at the top, 5 counselors were still riding the lift, and one staff member yet to board the chairlift. Ms. Lamaka stated that Camper A fell just after tower #11 from a height of 15 – 20 feet. Camper A landed on their feet and collapsed forward. Two bystanders nearby helped her up off the ground, and Ms. Lamaka then came over. Ms. Lamaka had not seen the actual fall, but the top lift operator reported to Ms. Lamaka, "I think she fell."

My interviews revealed an unusual coincidence of incidents resulting in the camper falling. Mixed in with the day campers riding the chairlift are members of the public that ride up the chairlift while their mountain bikes are loaded onto special bike racks to be lifted to the top of the hill by the Heather Express Lift. The bikes can be loaded at the bottom at the same rate of speed as the campers and public. However, one bike slipped out of its bike rack mount so the bottom lift operator, Staff Member 4 (SM4) stopped the chairlift at that time so that the bike could be properly loaded into the chairlift bike rack. At that same moment, a camper in the chair in front of Camper A accidentally dropped their water bottle. Camper A leaned over the front edge of their chair to watch the water bottle fall to the ground placing their weight on the front edge of the chair. Camper A also partially lifted the safety bar to look at the falling water bottle. Camper A's chair, at this time, started to swing due to the chairlift being stopped at the bottom due to the bike loading issue. The unusual coincidence of these incidents caused Camper A to slip out of her chair and fall to the ground.

Staff Member 1 (SM1), Lift Maintenance Manager, informed us that the Heather Chairlift is inspected two times per year by the Carnival and Amusement Division of the State of Michigan. The last inspection was conducted in January 2025, with no issues cited on this lift. The lift operators have three areas where they can stop the lift. Two are at the bottom and one is at the top. Before a lift may be started, the bottom and top lift operators must be in phone communication with each other ensuring that safety protocols are met to begin lift operations. The chair, while

loading the occupants, is moving at approximately one meter per second. Once the chair has left the loading platform, the chair speeds up to three meters per second.

SM1 reported the rules for riding the chairlift for the Day Campers state that a camper must be over 48 inches tall and are loaded in groups of two to four. Campers 48 inches and under must ride with a counselor in groups of up to four. Camper A was over 48 inches tall. The safety bar that protects the campers from falling out is not automatic. The campers pull the bar down as soon as they sit back in the chair. The lift operator stands at the exit area and will physically pull the bar down if a camper(s) fails to bring the bar down all the way into its safety position. When loading the Day Campers, there are approximately eight seconds between each loaded chair. While in the loading zone, the camper group has approximately 12 seconds to safely sit in the chair and move back leaning against the backrest, then pull the bar down. There are 71 chairs in total on the Heather Chairlift.

Staff Member 2 (SM2) was the lift operator at the top of the chair lift. They saw Camper A fall, as SM4 had stopped the lift, Staff Member 6 (SM6), also located in the top ski hut, called for the Ski Patrol (medical team) and ran down to assist Camper A. It took SM2 15 – 20 seconds to reach the camper. SM 6 arrived 30 seconds later. Two unknown passersby were in the area along with Ms. Lamaka. All adults began first aid protocols. Camper A briefly stood up but was instructed to lay back down. She said that her feet hurt. Camper B was accompanying Camper A in the chairlift and was directly above her still in the chair while it was swinging. The chair's lift arm was in the up position. Camper B said she was scared. SM2 told Camper B that "everything will be fine. Just sit tight." SM2 was prepared to catch Camper B if she had slipped out of the open chair.

Staff Member 3 (SM3) took the call for Ski Patrol assistance. As SM2 had radioed that that Camper A was conscious, speaking, and able to move, it was determined that it was not a medical emergency, but rather an evacuation. Staff Member 5 (SM5) drove about one mile in a Polaris Ranger side-by-side. Due to the incline where the accident occurred, it took about 7 minutes for the Polaris to safely arrive to Tower #11. Camper A was loaded into the Polaris accompanied by SM5 and Ms. Lamaka.

When the Polaris left the scene, campers were told that the lift would be restarting, and those on the lift would slowly make it to the top. Campers at the bottom of the lift who had not yet started on the chairlift were taken back to the Day Camp area. Campers on the lift were unloaded at the top. At the top of the mountain, SM 6, along with Day Camp staff on the lift, gathered the children and spoke to the campers for about 10 minutes. They explained that Camper A was getting excellent medical attention, and that she was talking to the staff and able to move. The staff then began the standard protocol for moving children down the chairlift with one staff member in every chair accompanying children. Once at the bottom of the chairlift, all Day Campers gathered back at the Day Camp area.

At the medical area, SM5, and EMT, ran a full assessment of Camper A, received first aid and awaited the parents of Camper A who had been called and alerted of the accident. Once the parents arrived, SM5 strongly encouraged the parents to take Camper A to the hospital. Ms. Lamaka stated that Camper A's spirits, at the time she left, were significantly improved.

I reviewed the "Chairlift Rules and Reminders" established for safe operation with Day Campers on the lift. The rules read [Note: Ms. Lamaka stated that all areas in **bold type** are rules added by The Highlands Day Camp staff after an internal audit of the accident of 7/11/25]:

"Pre-Loading

- ***Call Lift Ops and Let Them Know We're Coming.***
- *Have Groups Organized-* ***3 to 4*** *People per Chair.*
- *Space Counselors Evenly Throughout Groups.*
- ***Water Bottles Go in Laundry Basket – Pick it Up at the Top.***

Loading and Unloading

- *Approach the Loading Area When the Lift Op Instructs you.*
- *Follow the Chair in Front of You – Please Keep Your Hands Off It.*
- *Stand On the Red Line and Wait for the Chair.*
- *Use Your Hands to Pop Yourself On.*
- *Sit Down and Sit Back.*
- *Hop Off at the Red Line at the End.*

Riding

- *Bar Stays Down the Whole Ride.*
  - ***Lift Ops will Lower and Raise It for You.***
- *Sit Down and Face Forward.*
- *Do Not Throw Anything from the Lift.*
- *Sit Still.*

Counselor Reminders

- *Backpacks need to be Off your Shoulders – In Lap or On Seat.*
- *Place One Kid on Left and 2 Kids on Right.*
- *Help the 2 Kids Next to You Load – Ask Lift Op for Help with the Outside Kid".*

Upon review, the revised rules did not include keeping the Day Campers together in a single group on the lift without interruption in the line from mountain bikers until all Day Campers reach the summit. Furthermore, the rules must be reiterated to the Day Campers each time chair the lift is used as a fresh reminder of appropriate safety precautions on the high adventure activity. Therefore, additional safety precautions were put in place. I discussed additional safety precautions that must be integrated into the high adventure statement in order to resume operation of the chairlift.

- **"*With the addition of the new rules, the chairlift may resume operations on Monday, 7/21/2025.***
- ***Day Campers must ride consecutively up the chairlift with no non-Day Camp participants mixed in with the Day Campers.***
- ***'Outside groups/mountain bikers may only load after the last Day Camper and Day Camp staff are off of the ride at the top of the hill.***
- ***All chairlift rules will be reviewed with the campers at the loading area just prior to each time the chairlift is to be ridden."***

APPLICABLE RULE	
R400.11401	**High adventure activities; definition; written statement; adult activity leader.**
FOR REFERENCE	**(1) For high adventure activities identified in subrule (1) of this rule, and for any activity identified by the licensee as a high adventure activity, the licensee shall develop and assure adherence to a written program statement that covers all of the following:** **(a) Activity leader training and experience qualifications.** **(b) Specific staff-to-camper ratio appropriate to the activity.** **(c) Classifications and limitations for camper participation.** **(d) Arrangement, maintenance, and inspection of the activity area.** **(e) Appropriate equipment and the inspection and maintenance of the equipment.** **(f) Safety precautions.**
FOR REFERENCE	
R400.11401	**(1) As used in this rule, "high adventure activity" means a camp program that requires specially trained staff or special safety precautions to reduce the possibility of an**

	accident. Programs in this category include, but are not limited to, the following: **(a) Target sports** **(b) Aquatics** **(c) Trail sports** **(d) Adventure challenge course** **(e) Climbing and or rappelling.** **(f) Horseback riding and equestrian activity.** **(g) Traveling groups.**
ANALYSIS:	Interviews and records reveal the camp did not have a high adventure statement that included detailed safety precautions suitable for the age of participants, arrangement of the participants on the ride activity, and riding procedures for campers. Though the accident could not have been predicted by the camp staff and lift operators, chair lifts are a unique high adventure activity where campers are at increased risk without more specific safety precautions addressing the pre-lift instructions and procedures, on-ride behaviors and arrangement, and unloading.
CONCLUSION:	**VIOLATION ESTABLISHED**

On 11/13/25, lead camp consultant, James Vanden Heuvel conducted an exit conference with Ms. McGinn by telephone. He reviewed the findings of this report. Ms. McGinn stated she understood the report and will complete the corrective action plan within the timelines established.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Upon submission of an acceptable written corrective action plan, I recommend no change in licensing status.

David R. Martin 11/13/2025
David R. Martin Date
Licensing Consultant

Approved By:

D. S. Ramsey 11/13/2025
Deondra Ramsey, Manager Date
Out-of-School Time Learning and Camp
Licensing