



## 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ for Tweens/Teens

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What is the platform that we will use for Virtual CommuniCamp™?

We use Microsoft teams. (we will supply you the download and send you meeting invites. This is a user-friendly virtual platform that is HIPPA-compliant, allows for breakout rooms and the use of virtual backgrounds that will supplement our camp activities.

#### 2. How is this different from the 4-Day CommuniCamp™ or individual Intensives at the Smart Center?

- While all of our programs use [evidenced-based S-CAT®](#) concepts, which is a Cognitive-Behavioral and whole-person approach to treatment, our intensive 1-Day group programs are FULL day=7 hours!
- Our 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ Programs are meant to be an intensive kick-start to treatment for new families or an intensive booster session for our already established Smart Center tweens/teens who either attend individual treatment or who have attended a previous CommuniCamp™.
- Similar to our on-site CommuniCamp™, parents will receive parent education and much-needed support.

The 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ is not meant to replace our other programs but to supplement treatment especially by learning and practicing within a group program.

#### 3. Is Virtual CommuniCamp™ or Telehealth appointments really that effective?

YES! We have been doing telehealth for families for over 20 years since so many cannot travel to the Smart Center. We create situations that mock social settings and practice skills virtually. (Wait until you see our cool virtual platform backgrounds!)

Based on our recent 4-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ for children 4-12, parents were thrilled and children made amazing progress and parents learned so much! As a Virtual CommuniCamp™ parent just wrote:

*"I'm just sending a quick note of thanks, you and your team were beyond amazing. [Our daughter] really enjoyed camp and she would love to attend any other virtual programs you might have going on this summer as she said she would love to practice her communication skills with other SM children and the counselors. I think she feels a sense of relief being in the presence (virtually) of other SM children, even though the strategies still take effort and work for her, there is that better understanding coming from the receiving end. Thank you! Sending you big hugs from Switzerland. 🤗🤗"*

For references, [contact us](#)

#### 4. I've attended a past CommuniCamp™. Is this repetitive?

NO! We often have campers who attend multiple CommuniCamp™ Programs. They often present differently from camp to camp. Meaning, a child who may have just been introduced to the [Social Communication Bridge®](#), barely engaging and not overly receptive to treatment at the first program, may now be further across the Bridge® and more willing to receive help, etc. Therefore, our clinical counselors will be working on higher level social communication skills.

#### 5. Our Tween/teen is quite resistant, can she still attend the Virtual 1-Day CommuniCamp™?

We recommend that your child at least be **willing** to receive help and to be present during the program. Campers will be attending without parents for their session; therefore, the need to be somewhat

proactive is recommended. There is no pressure to speak but attending independently is recommended. \*\* For a family who has a highly resistant tween/teen perhaps consider individual treatment as a first step (contact our team at: [admin@SelectiveMutismCenter.org](mailto:admin@SelectiveMutismCenter.org))

**6. My Child is 11 years old and I am not sure whether he will do better in the 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ for children or the 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ for Tweens/Teens. How do I decide?**

For many, it comes down to independence, assuming he is developmentally typical for his age. The children's program includes parents/children throughout the entire day. The Tween/Teen program separates parents/children.

- If your child is more mature, is higher functioning in terms of social communication (able to nonverbally communicate with more ease and possibly verbalizing, even a few words), and is less dependent on parents and has same age or more mature interests, you may want to choose the 11-17-year-old camp.
- If your child is less mature, more dependent, has challenges with separation, enjoys 'younger' activities/games, and plays better with same age or younger children, you may want to choose the 4-10-year-old camp.

For new SMart Center families, we can assist with this decision during your Pre-Camp Meeting (Step 2 in the enrollment process). For families who are already part of the SMart Center, we can assist by speaking to your clinician.

**7. Are parents involved ALL Day with their tween/teen or do we have separate sessions?**

We are aware of the importance of parent education/support and we are aware that parents need to support their child. Parents WILL receive parental education/support during the day program (almost 3 hours!) and part of that time will include time with their campers; however, our years of experience working with this population shows us that tweens/teens often act differently when their parents are present. In fact, most have developed a learned helplessness and actually do LESS when parents are nearby. They are used to relying on parents for their needs and parents are used to helping their child to minimize their child's anxiety. As a result, tweens/teens tend to 'look towards their parents for assistance in most social situations. We understand this is not always the situation but it's very common. We have found, during our in-person CommuniCamp™ programs and our individual intensive sessions at our Center, that MANY (not all!) tween/teens make greater strides when not with their parents.

We will be addressing the tween/teen dynamic in our parenting sessions to help parents learn to 'step back' and encourage a more independent tween/teen (we know this is scary for many parents).

In rare situations, we can allow a parent to attend the tween/teen sessions. This is something you can speak to your clinician about (this is why the enrollment process includes the *Step 2: Meeting*. It is needed to learn about your child's individual presentation.

**8. What are some things that my tween/teen will learn at 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ for Tweens/Teens?**

Your child will learn about his/her stages on the Social Communication Bridge® in all social settings, identify their feelings, and gain greater skills in expressing their feelings. In addition, they will be exposed to and practice strategies to help with: making/keeping friends, conversation starters, responding to questions and initiating their needs.

In addition, your tween/teen will connect with others they can relate to which will help them feel less isolated/alone and more understood since others are going through a similar experience. This concept is called: Social Identity, the need to feel connected, which is a key element to success, motivation and in our experience, PROGRESS.

**9. Will this be the last of our tween/teen's treatment?**

Think of the 1-Day Virtual CommuniCamp™ as the beginning of a life-altering journey or continuation of your path... You and your tween/teen will receive information you haven't heard before, and feel more

understood than ever. Our counselors work diligently to help your tween/teen cross the Social Communication Bridge® at their pace and motivate them to continue this success outside of the program. This program introduces and reinforces skills that translate into social settings and provide a great foundation to move forward. It may not be the last of your tween/teen's treatment, but it's a giant step towards the finish line.

**10. Do I (parent) have to be involved in the tween/teen program?**

YES, you will receive 3 hours. A structured agenda will be sent upon confirmation of your enrollment. The tween/teen program is more independent experience for your child.

- The start of the day includes a parent only workshop session, led by Dr. Elisa Shipon-Blum. She will review KEY Grab 'n Go S-CAT® strategies that will be used throughout the day, discuss the unique aspects to treating the tween/teen with Selective Mutism and have a Q/A session.
- During the meet/greet lunch, led by a SMart Center clinician, you will receive much needed support and meet fellow parents.
- At the end of the day, you will join your tween/teen with Jennifer Brittingham, LPC where you will receive a recap of their activities so everyone is on the same page as to what was learned and next steps. This will give the family a chance to develop goals together and ask Jennifer questions.

Know that throughout the day, your tween/teen will participate with their fellow campers and counselors on a virtual platform. This is a wonderful opportunity for your tween/teen to receive group treatment, meet others who are going through a similar experience and gain independence.

**11. I have an 18 or 19-year-old. Can they attend?**

Virtual CommuniCamp is geared for tweens/teens 11-17 years old who are developmentally age appropriate; however, we are aware that 18 and 19 year olds may benefit as well, especially an older teen who functions a bit younger for their chronological age and would be comfortable knowing he/she is on the older range of the group.

**12. Do you offer financial assistance?**

YES! To learn more and apply, please visit <https://selectivemutismcenter.org/financial-assistance-program/>

**13. What is the process to sign up?**

Visit [www.SelectiveMutismCenter.org/1-Day-Virtual-CommuniCamp](http://www.SelectiveMutismCenter.org/1-Day-Virtual-CommuniCamp) to learn the simple 3-step enrollment process, unique to the Smart Center and CommuniCamp™!

**14. Are we able to receive insurance-coded receipts to submit to our insurance company?**

YES! Due to travel prohibited by Covid-19, we can provide treatment with coded receipts across state lines and internationally.