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Connecting People and Nature: History, Education and Adventure

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

For Participants on CFI Backcountry Programs

As of June 22, 2020

The health and well-being of participants on CFI programs are a priority. Canyonlands Field Institute is committed to minimizing and mitigating the risks associated with backcountry and wilderness adventure trips and programs. Our programs may involve physical exertion and exposure to the elements, including cold water, hot & cold temperatures, sun, wind, rain, and snow. Due to inherent risks associated with activities on our programs, as well as environmental considerations, CFI programs are open to individuals who meet the following **Essential Eligibility Criteria (“EEC”)**, and who acknowledge their ability to meet these criteria. Factors such as physical and emotional ability, fitness, heart and/or medical considerations, and others are considerations.

Please note that the nature of our programming is such that we operate in locations and environments that are wild and unpredictable in nature, are exposed to outdoor elements, and can be remote enough to be considered far from immediate definitive care (meaning that an ambulance or hospital may take extended time to access). One of the definitions of a “backcountry” location (where we operate) is that it is greater than one hour from definitive medical care.

It is very important that trip participants take an active role in their own safety. Wilderness conditions may be unfamiliar to participants, and can change rapidly. It is critical for participants to be aware of their surroundings, to pay attention at all times, and to avoid taking unnecessary risks. Even non-life threatening injuries can become major emergencies, and can endanger the entire group, in the backcountry. Maintaining proper respect for guidelines and procedures, and following the lead and instructions from guides are an important part of keeping yourself, and your trip-mates safe.

If an individual, or CFI, feels they cannot meet any of the criteria outlined below, they should consider that participating in the program may be inappropriate. CFI reserves the right to restrict individuals from participating on our programs if they cannot meet the criteria listed below. Please consult your doctor if you have health or medical conditions that could impact your ability to meet these criteria and your ability to participate. These criteria exist for the safety of all participants, and they are applied uniformly to all potential program participants, irrespective of the presence or absence of any disability. CFI is committed to making reasonable adjustments and modifications to our programs for any participants with a disability, so long as they do not fundamentally change the nature of the program, or compromise the safety of other participants or staff. Our programs are participatory experiences. CFI guides provide you the information, infrastructure, and teaching to make your trip an enjoyable experience and as safe as possible.

GENERAL ---

1. **Cognitive Ability** - Individual must be able to effectively perceive, understand, and follow direction and instructions independently. The ability to follow emergency procedures is especially important. They must be able to perceive and comprehend inherent risks of the activity, to follow standard risk management protocols, to pay attention during safety talks, and to follow COVID-19 related protocols. They must be able to remain alert and focused for the duration of the activity/program.
2. **Communication** - Individual must be able to effectively signal or notify, to trip leaders and other participants, danger, personal distress, injury, need for assistance, etc. This includes being able to do so in potentially stressful and/or dangerous situations.
3. **Personal/Self Care** - Individual must have the ability to independently* manage all personal care and to perform necessary duties related. This includes, but is not limited to, managing known medical conditions/prescriptions, proper hydration, sufficient food consumption, adequate clothing for environmental conditions (heat, sun, cold, rain, etc.), bladder/bowel control and toileting needs, and knowing their limitations.
(= if a participant is not fully able to manage these on their own (ie: young children, persons with disabilities, etc.) they must be accompanied by a dedicated person to assist them.)*
4. **Physical Activity** - Individual must be able to perform and withstand moderate physical activity, sometimes for extended periods of time. This may include such things as: managing and carrying personal gear/bags of 25 pounds or more, hiking (including uphill) on uneven and/or rocky terrain, etc. *(see more details under specific types of programming below)*
5. **Environmental Exposure** - Individual must be able to withstand, and operate in, challenging and/or changing outdoor/environmental conditions, including but not limited to: hot and/or cold air temperatures, rain/snow/ice, direct sun exposure, strong wind, insects, etc. Any environmental allergen concerns must be properly anticipated and addressed.

CAMPING / OVERNIGHT / MULTI-DAY PROGRAMS ---

6. **Campsite** - Individual must be able to independently navigate the campsite (kitchen/eating area, toilet facilities, group gatherings, campfire circle, etc.). Individual is expected to assist with camp operations (gather firewood, help set up & tear down, transport gear/equipment, etc.), however it is important for them to know their limits, and to be willing to speak up and ask for assistance when necessary.
7. **Tents, Sleeping** - Individual should be able to set up their own tent. They will also be sleeping on the ground in a sleeping bag with a ground pad underneath. If company tents are rented for the trip, a guide will demonstrate the first night and morning on how to set up, take down, and pack the tent. The individual is expected to manage the tent remaining nights with assistance if

needed from guides.

8. **Leave No Trace** - Individual must be able to follow and adhere to best practices and Leave No Trace principals in order to minimize and/or eliminate any impacts we have on the wild places that we operate in.

RIVER PROGRAMS ---

9. **Safety Gear** - Individual must wear a CFI-issued, and Coast Guard approved, personal floatation device ("PFD") when required by the guide, and have the ability to use it appropriately. Maximum chest size of the individual must be no more than 56", and minimum weight must be no less than 50 lbs. They may also be required to wear a properly fitted helmet in some situations.
10. **In the Water** - Individual must be able to assume and maintain "defensive swimming position" (which they will be instructed on) if and when they are in moving and/or "swift" water. They must do so while wearing a PFD. They must be able to keep their head above water using swimming or floating techniques. They need to be able to maneuver independently, and listen to and follow instructions from the guides. They must be able to tolerate being immersed in cold, sometimes very cold, water, and be willing to wear insulated clothing for cold water that the individual brings or that CFI provides (ie: splash tops, polypro layer, wetsuits, etc.)
11. **Self Rescue** - Individual must have the ability to maneuver/swim in swift currents while wearing a PFD, and to be an active participant in their own rescue. This includes, but is not limited to: keeping your airway passages sealed while underwater, regaining control of your breathing during repeated submersion under waves/currents, orienting yourself "in-river", getting out from underneath an overturned raft/boat, swimming/moving aggressively to a boat and/or shore, react to and receive instructions and assistance from guides, etc.
12. **Enter/Exit Boat (on the water)** - Individual must be able to get in and out of the boat independently, or with minimal/reasonable assistance, while on the water.
13. **Enter/Exit Boat (on shore)** - Individual must have the ability to get in and out of the boat up to ten times a day from the shore. This may require safely maneuvering around gear and other passengers, in slippery/wet/muddy conditions, from challenging/uneven terrain such as rocks, mud, steep slopes, vegetation, etc.
14. **In the boat** - Individual must have the ability to remain seated and properly balanced while the guide/raft navigates whitewater, and to hold and brace themselves with at least one hand.
15. **On shore** - Individual must have the ability to independently navigate shoreline terrain, including safely maneuvering around and across mud, rocks, slippery and uneven surfaces,

around vegetation, and under low branches, as well as the ability to maintain balance on ledges and/or cliff edges.

CLASS IV WHITEWATER / OTHER PROGRAMS DESIGNATED “CHALLENGING” ACTIVITY LEVEL ---
--SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS--**

Note that on designated “Class IV” stretches of river and other more challenging environments or conditions, all the above considerations are heightened and require greater levels of ability. River currents are more swift and erratic, hazards are increased, and the consequences of inability to manage them are greater. Higher levels of ability and tolerance to conditions are required.

River trips, and in particular those that involve whitewater (“rapids”) are inherently risky. While that risk is part of what makes for an exciting adventure, proper respect of that risk is essential. It is important for participants to be confident in their swimming ability, and in their ability to remain calm in the event of becoming a “non-voluntary swimmer”. The likelihood of becoming a non-voluntary swimmer **increases** at higher whitewater classifications involving rapids such as Class IV and with other factors. Swimming in whitewater is much more difficult, and physically draining, than doing so in flatwater. Swimming in cold water often causes respiratory stress resulting in gasping, which can be dealt with by focused breathing and active calming. Furthermore, swimming in cold water can sap energy, and decrease muscle function. CFI guides are trained and will do their absolute best to affect a rescue, but success in that rescue is significantly hampered by a swimmer who is unprepared to swim in these conditions, who is not able to follow directions under stress, and who fails to actively participate in their own rescue.

**** - Activity Levels- Certain CFI programs and trips have been given broad activity levels as general guidance.**

EASY - Up to a half mile walk, and little to no elevation gain per day.

MODERATE - Hikes up to one mile per day on relatively flat trails with up to 250 feet of elevation gain per day. River stretches with scenic floating and small to medium rapids, varies seasonally.

ACTIVE - Hikes up to four miles per day on uneven, rocky trails with occasionally scrambling and 250-400 feet of elevation gain or drop per day. River stretches with periodic large rapids, varies seasonally.

CHALLENGING - Hikes up to six or more miles per day with elevation changes of 400 feet or greater gain or drop per day. May encounter rough terrain and require scrambling. River stretches with larger technical rapids, varies seasonally. Very remote locations.

PHYSICIAN’S RELEASE - In certain circumstances, such as medical or physical conditions, recent procedures, pertinent history, and others, CFI may require an individual to consult their physician regarding the program/activity and their potential participation, to obtain a signed/written “release” indicating that they understand the risks involved and are judged as having the ability to meet the demands and requirements of the activity. Physician’s Release forms must be completed and returned no later than seven days prior to the program start (unless specific permission otherwise has been granted).