



Lexington Family YMCA

Afterschool Parent Handbook

2011 - 2012

Contact:

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OUR MISSION

The YMCA is a Christian-based organization that strives to "put Christian principals into practice through programs that build *healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.*" Our focus in Afterschool is to provide a loving and nurturing environment that will help children develop and demonstrate the five key character traits of the YMCA of Columbia:

Caring ♥ Honesty ♥ Respect ♥ Responsibility ♥ Faith

OUR PURPOSE

We pride our program on providing an environment where children can learn, grow and thrive. Activities are developed to provide experiences that are safe, fun, creative, and active. Participants are presented with opportunities to grow physically, mentally, and creatively each and every day.

GOALS OF THE YMCA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

1. To provide a safe and nurturing environment for all participants.
2. To provide activities and experiences that develop and support Christian values, build self-esteem, and are creative, active and fun.
3. To create an atmosphere that will serve to strengthen the families of our YMCA community.

STAFFING

Afterschool is directed by a YMCA professional. We recruit our staff through local churches, high schools and area colleges. All staff are processed through a background check and are required to attend extensive training prior to the beginning of the school year. We take pride in the high expectations we set for our staff each year and evaluate them on an ongoing basis. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact your Afterschool Director.

Non Discrimination Clause

The YMCA of Columbia recognizes that individuals, families and communities are diverse. The YMCA values and respects this diversity and chooses to be inclusive through its acceptance of all individuals regardless of race, age, gender, religion, ability, or cultural identity. The YMCA, while not adhering to any doctrine or dogma, is committed to Christian principles. This includes asserting that all individuals, without exception, are intrinsically valuable.

The YMCA strives to:

- Welcome all individuals in its programs and facilities.
- Develop programs that respond to the needs of its membership, participants and community.
- Work to provide hiring and employment practices that are unbiased.
- Hiring and maintaining a diverse staff and corps of volunteers.
- Use resources to maintain a safe environment without discrimination or harassment against individuals.

This Afterschool program is not licensed and regulated by the SC Department of Social Services. The YMCA of Columbia Afterschool Programs adhere to YMCA quality standards.

PAYMENT OF FEES

Payment for services is due before services are provided. We have set up several options for payment- please see Afterschool Payment Agreement Form. Students that are registered will not be able to start on the same day, at least 1 day of notice is needed before a student can begin Afterschool

REGISTRATION / PROGRAM FEES

Registration Fees:

\$25 per child / \$50 per family

Program Monthly Fees:

\$170 per month for members

\$250 per month for non YMCA members

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is available at all branches of the YMCA of Columbia. You must fill out all necessary paperwork to receive the approved discount before you register for Afterschool, otherwise, full fees will apply. Please contact your Member Service Desk for more information.

DECLINED PAYMENTS

All weekly payments that are declined require a \$30.00 charge per child. Past due balances and multiple late or declined payments may result in the forfeiture of a child's spot in the program.

REFUND POLICY

Refunds will not be given if a child is removed from the Afterschool program for failure to adhere to stated policies or guidelines or for consistent discipline issues. An "Afterschool Cancellation Form" can be obtained from the Member Service Desk.

AFTERSCHOOL HOURS OF OPERATION

Afterschool operates Monday-Friday from school dismissal (2:30 PM - 6:00PM, except where noted on the calendar located in this handbook). The Northwest Family YMCA welcomes students from Harbison West Elementary, Ballentine Elementary, Dutch Fork Elementary, H.E. Corley Elementary, Oak Pointe Elementary, River Springs Elementary, Irmo Elementary, Dutch Fork Middle and Crossroads Middle Schools. We must have at least 10 students from a school to send a YMCA bus for pick-up.

**Children may not participate in the following programs or a combination of the following programs for more than four hours in a 24 hour period in a YMCA of Columbia or a combination of Columbia YMCAs: Children's Enrichment Programs, unlicensed Preschool, ChildWatch (drop-in care), and unlicensed Afterschool.

ALL DAY OUT PROGRAMS

Full day programs will be offered on teacher workdays and holidays as noted on the attached school calendar list- monthly rate covers any days out of school, other than Holiday Camp Days. If a child is not normally scheduled to come on that day of the week there will be an additional charge of \$20.00 per child for members and \$28.00 per child for program members. **Parents MAY NOT SIGN UP for All Day Out Programs on the morning of a All Day Out.** Parents are responsible for transportation, lunch and snacks on these days. All Day Out programs begin with staff supervision at 7:15 AM. Participants may not be dropped off for the full day prior to 7:15 AM. This allows the staff to properly prepare for the day without interruption from participants arriving early. Staff will be ready to greet your child promptly at 7:15 AM. Pick up is no later than 6:00PM. Prior to an All Day Out program, a registration form will be given to all parents. Please fill out and return the registration form by the assigned due date so we may be able to properly staff for the full day program, but remember, this day is included in your normal monthly rates and you will not be charged extra for this service.

THINGS TO BRING FOR A FULL DAY PROGRAM:

Lunch ♦ Two Snacks and extra drinks ♦ Swimsuit and Towel

TRANSPORTATION/ PICK UP AT SCHOOL DISMISSAL/ABSENTEES

If for any reason your child will not be attending the program, please send a note the previous day and/or call the **Member Service Desk**. If we do not receive this notice we will be looking for your child, first at the school office (for absent notice or sick/early pick up notice) then we will begin calling the child's parents and emergency contacts until we know where the child is or run out of options. A \$5.00 fee will be charged for each failure to notify the Afterschool Program of absences. If your child is going to be absent from the Afterschool program, **please call the office by 12:00 PM the day he/she will be absent** to avoid the \$5.00 fee.

AT THE SCHOOL

Attendance will be checked before leaving the school to be sure your child is present. If your child is not at a pick up, we will check with the school personnel to see if your child was in attendance at school that day. If the child was not at school, no further follow-up will be made. If your child was in school, but did not appear at the pick up point, and has not been found after a reasonable amount of time, you will be called. Please call the Member Service Desk if your child will be absent from the Afterschool Program.

RELEASING PARTICIPANTS:

DESIGNATION OF INDIVIDUALS AUTHORIZED TO PICK UP:

On the registration form you will be asked to choose a code word for your child. This word will serve as a code which all persons designated to pick up your will need to know. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to give code word to those individuals authorized to pick up your child from Afterschool. Participants will not be released to anyone who does not know your code word. If you are sending someone to pick up your child who is not on the authorized list, please call or send a note and make sure that person knows the code word.

EARLY PICK UPS

We understand that there will be times when you need to pick up your child early. When this occurs it is extremely important that you call or email the Director or leave a voicemail with the details of the early pick up. If you have called ahead and given ample time, we will attempt to have your child ready when you arrive. In the event that you come to pick up early and we do not have prior knowledge of the early pick up, we will try to get your child ready for you in a timely fashion as you wait.

Please understand that we use many areas of our facility and children may be participating in an activity away from the building. We have a hand-held radio system that allows us to communicate effectively.

However, it may take a few minutes to retrieve the child from the program area. Your patience is appreciated. Please sign your child out at the MEMBER SERVICE DESK in the lobby of our YMCA if picking up before 4:30 PM. **For the convenience of others and the safety of the children, all early pick-ups need to park in the parking lot and not in the lane in front of the building.**

PICK UP

Regular pick up is from 4:30 – 6:00 PM at the far parking lot. There, a staff person will be waiting to greet you, access your code word and radio for your student to be sent to the car line. You do not need to park, a staff person will put your student in your car for you to allow for speed and ease. Please remain patient while we retrieve your student from their huddle, we use the entire facility for programming and it may take a few minutes.

LATE PICK UP

In fairness to our staff and because of subsequent program demands, it is very important that your child be picked up on time. A late fee will be charged for each child not picked up by 6:00PM. **The fee will be assessed at a rate of \$1.00 per minute per child starting at 6:01 PM.** If a child is not picked up by 6:15PM we will begin calling parent's and/or emergency contacts. If the child is not picked up by 7:00 PM local authorities will be called.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

The health and well being of your children is essential to YMCA Child Care. The YMCA has developed a policy on the prevention of child abuse that includes the following provisions:

- Parents are encouraged to visit program sites at any time and do not need to make an appointment to do so.
- Staff and volunteers will be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children. When any sign of injury or suspected abuse is detected, the Director will be notified immediately.
- YMCA staff and volunteers will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter.
- YMCA staff and volunteers will not verbally abuse, emotionally abuse or punish children.
- The hiring process includes drug testing, reference and background checks. Once on staff, training will include information about recognizing the signs of child abuse and the approved procedures for responding to the suspicion of abuse.
- The YMCA is mandated by state law to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

CUSTODY ISSUES

In cases of separation or divorced parents where visitation rights are denied to one parent, we cannot deny releasing the child to such parent unless a court decree or separation documents are in our file expressly forbidding such parent to pick the child up from our program, or from pick up at times not allowed by the court decree. The court decree must also be specific to the rights of visitation on the YMCA property during Afterschool. The court document must specify in writing that visitation is permitted by the non-custodial parent. Otherwise, visitation will not be permitted. Please call the Director if you have specific custody issues that we need to be aware of.

INTOXICATION

Your child's safety is our priority. At times we are called to make judgment concerning their safety. If a YMCA staff member believes that a parent is intoxicated when they arrive to pick up their child, we will detain the child until an alternate plan can be arranged for the transportation of the child and his/her parent. We will first try to contact another family member or spouse. If one cannot be reached, then one of the emergency contacts listed on the child's registration form will be contacted. If those means are unsuccessful, a cab will be called at the parents' expense. If the parent is suspected of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and is unruly, uncooperative, or out of control physically, for the safety of the child and staff person, the staff may have no choice but to contact the police.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

Evaluations- We need your comments, input and ideas on how to make our Afterschool Program better to serve you and your child (ren). Evaluation cards will be handed out several times during the school year. Please take time to fill out the card and return it to the YMCA Afterschool Program promptly. This allows us to make the necessary changes in the program and to recognize staff that is providing outstanding service to you and your family through the Afterschool Program.

Parent Panel- We will be using a volunteer Parent Panel this year in order to better evaluate and improve our program. This group will meet on a regular basis to make recommendations to the Director for the betterment of the program. If you are interested in serving on this volunteer committee, please contact the Afterschool Director

Family Involvement- One of our goals is to strengthen families whether single parent, two parents, or other legal guardian. During the school year, we will offer special Family Nights and other Parent Programs that will start after normal programming hours. The children get the chance to showcase their afterschool track activities during this time. It's a wonderful evening and provides great fun, great food, and great fellowship. All family members are invited to attend!

What's Going On At Home- Children's actions in our program often reflect problems they are experiencing at home (i.e. pet's death, parent divorcing, fight with sibling, etc.) If any such disruptive or traumatic experience should occur, please inform your child's counselor or the Director. This will enable us to better meet the needs of your child.

Can Afterschool Staff Baby-sit For My Family? - We strongly encourage staff to refrain from babysitting for participants they meet in the program. Staff work diligently with children throughout the day and need time to renew energy in the evening and on the weekends.

PARENT UNDERSTANDING

1. I understand that YMCA staff and volunteers are not allowed to transport children in personal vehicles at any time outside the YMCA program.
2. I understand that I'm not to leave my child at the YMCA or program site unless a YMCA Staff or Volunteer is there to receive and supervise my child.
3. I understand that the YMCA is mandated, by state law, to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

LOST ARTICLES

Label Everything! This will minimize the opportunity for your child to lose an item at the Y. Lost and Found is kept in the Afterschool Program. Periodically, staff will have a lost and found "auction" to try to reunite children with their belongings. After 2 weeks, lost and found items are donated to a local shelter. We are not financially responsible for children's losses, but will make every effort to locate the lost item. **Please clearly label all items.**

MEDICATION

Medication is not dispensed by YMCA staff other than life threatening emergencies.

OTHER YMCA PROGRAMS

The NorthWest Family YMCA offers many exciting programs during afterschool hours. We will provide a runner to take children to any activity on NorthWest YMCA campus between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00 PM. Parents are responsible for picking children up from programs after 6:00 PM. **You may sign up for the service by notifying us of your child's commitment in writing at least one day prior to the start date.**

DISCIPLINE

Parents, please encourage your child to follow the instructions of counselors and other Afterschool staff. The YMCA has established two levels of behavior classifications, Type I and Type II, with consequences for each. It is not our intention to alarm parents, but rather make everyone aware of our policies.

Type I- Type I behavior includes, but is not limited to: serious infractions such as damage or theft of property, assault (biting, hitting, pinching, kicking, or throwing objects at another child or at staff), possessing weapons, tobacco or tobacco products, alcohol, narcotics or illegal drugs, gang-related activity, sexual misconduct, repeated Type II violations, and any conduct that may be detrimental to the best interests of the other members of the program. Type I behavior can result in immediate dismissal from Afterschool. Parents will be responsible for any transportation to return the child home. **No refunds will be issued.**

Type II- Type II behavior is less serious, but disruptive and therefore unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to: profanity, verbal abuse, tardiness, and uncooperative behavior. Children who engage in Type II behavior will be told of their unacceptable behavior and asked to correct it. Further problems will result in a written reprimand with appropriate consequences, and viable alternatives for future behavior will be discussed. Continuing problems may result in a meeting with the Afterschool Director, and the parent will be contacted to discuss behavior or special circumstances. Our goal is to guide children in becoming happy, responsible and cooperative participants through positive teaching techniques. In the event that behavior requires discipline:

- Staff will not damage the child's self-image or embarrass the child.
- Staff will help children learn self-control, choose alternatives, identify feelings and develop an understanding and respect for the feelings of others.
- Every effort will be made by staff to enlist the cooperation of the child and parent to solve problems.

- A discipline form (Documentation of Behavior) is provided to parents as a tool to communicate problems that arise. Please remember that this tool is in place to foster communication between the family and the YMCA so that we can work together to better serve each child's needs.

Consistent disciplinary problems may result in suspension or removal from the program!

Time-Out: "time-out" is the removal of a child from the activity for a short period of time – 1 minute for every year of the child's age. Time-outs are used only in a situation in which the child is misbehaving and has not responded to a verbal warning. The time-out is located away from the group activity, but within the counselor's sight. During this time, the child has the opportunity to think about the actions which led to his/her removal from the group. After the time-out, the counselor will discuss the incident and appropriate behavior with the child. When the child returns to the group, the incident is over and the child is treated with the same respect and affection shown to the other children.

Format of Consequences

Step 1: Verbal communication by staff to child and time-out

Step 2: Written documentation of behavior by staff. A copy will be given to the parent/guardian at pick-up.

Step 3: Second written documentation by staff. A copy will be given to the parent/guardian at pick-up and the behavior will be discussed at this time.

Step 4: Third written documentation. This will result in a one (1) day suspension from the Afterschool program. Parents will be called at the time of the write-up and given notice of the suspension. A parent conference will be requested.

Step 5: Fourth written documentation. This will result in a five (5) day suspension from the Afterschool program. Parents will be called at the time of the write-up and given notice of the suspension. A parent conference will be required.

Step 6: Fifth written documentation. This will result in the permanent removal of the child from the Afterschool program.

INJURY

If your child is injured, the Director will take the necessary steps to care for him/her. If necessary, we will call parents to let them know what has happened (i.e. hit in arm and ice pack applied, small scrape on knee and band aid applied).

If your child is more seriously injured, the Director will take whatever steps are necessary to obtain emergency medical care. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Attempts to contact parent or guardian.
- Attempts to contact parent or guardian through emergency contact listed on registration form.

If we cannot contact the parent, 911 will be called.

Please Note: In the event of a serious emergency, 911 will be called first.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICIES

In the event of school closing due to bad weather, the YMCA will open when possible and safe for our staff to report to work.

In the event of an early school dismissal due to bad weather, the YMCA provides care until the students parents can arrive.

PROGRAM CONTENT

Daily Devotions and Prayer

In the context of our program we will have a daily devotion. This devotion will generally take place at the beginning of our Afterschool day and will be geared toward teaching the YMCA character development traits (Honesty, Caring, Respect, Responsibility, and Faith). This will be followed by a prayer or blessing for the day. Staff may encourage children to lead the daily devotion and prayer.

Homework Room

Parents have the opportunity to register their child for the Homework room. The Homework room is a separate space (for our 1st – 8th grade students) designated as a quiet area where children can complete their homework. We have staff members who are there to assist children with any needs that may arise while doing their homework. The staff does not have the ability to tutor students, but will do their best to answer questions from your child if needed. Children understand that this is a quiet area and appropriate behavior is expected. If the children cannot cooperate in the Homework room, their privilege to attend will be suspended. If you would like your child(ren) to attend the homework room, please fill out the registration form at the end of this handbook.

Tracks (K – 5th Grades, Separate Tracks for 6 – 8th Grades)

Tracks are a unique opportunity for children to choose one of many specialty programs that operate in monthly sessions. Parents are informed of the choices through a monthly sign up form. All children participate in Tracks. These are a great opportunity for children to learn new skills and experience new activities, which include (but are not limited to):

- **Cheerleading**
- **Dance**
- **Music**
- **Cooking**
- **Arts and crafts**
- **Indoor and Outdoor Sports**
- **Indoor and Outdoor Group Games**
- **Physical Fitness Training**

SERVICE PROJECTS

We may do several service projects throughout the school year. These projects are a great opportunity for us to encourage your children to help others and to be more aware of needs in our community. You will be notified of all service projects in the monthly newsletter.

SNACKS

An afternoon snack will be provided for your child each day (with the exception of full days). Snacks usually consist of fresh fruit, granola bars, baked crackers, cereal bars, fruit cups, etc. We are making great efforts to help support and teach a healthy lifestyle and eating habits. Lessons on nutrition and healthy eating habits may be taught periodically throughout the year.

Homework Room Registration:

I would like my child to participate in the Homework Room:

Child's Name: _____

Grade for 2011-2012 School Year: _____

The Homework Room will operate Monday – Thursday (with the exception that it is not open on the day before a full day). Staffing consists of a Homework Room Coordinator and another counselor whom are available to assist the children with their homework. The 1st – 8th Graders will have the opportunity to utilize the Homework Room (Kindergartners will not use the Homework Room as they need one on one parent attention while doing homework). We will provide 45 minutes per day of structured homework room time. All children are required to attend once signed up for this service unless we receive a note from the parents stating otherwise. All Afterschool rules must be followed during homework time or the child could lose the use of the room.

Parent Acknowledgement

I have been given a copy of the 2011 - 2012 Afterschool Parent Handbook and I have read and fully understand the content of the Handbook. Any questions related to the Afterschool Program have been answered to my satisfaction. I also understand that my child (ren) and I are responsible for following these policies and guidelines.

Parent Signature

Date