



AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

Parent/Guardian
2026-27 HANDBOOK



WELCOME

Dear Families,

We are thrilled to welcome you to another exciting year of YMCA Afterschool enrichment! Building upon our rich tradition of serving children and families for over 170 years, we remain committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment for your child to grow and thrive.

Our afterschool program is designed to foster strong relationships between children, staff, and parents. We believe these connections are fundamental to a child's healthy development and social growth. Our dedicated staff members serve as positive role models, guiding children as they learn to cooperate, communicate effectively, and problem-solve together.

This year, we are placing an even greater emphasis on youth voice and choice. Your child will have opportunities to actively participate in program planning, helping to shape their afterschool experience. We will continue to balance structured activities with opportunities for free play, ensuring a well-rounded program promoting both academic success and personal growth.

To support your child's holistic development, we will offer a variety of enriching activities, including STEM exploration, physical fitness, and creative expression. Homework assistance will also be available to help your child stay on top of their schoolwork.

We encourage open communication and partnership between our staff and your family. This Parent Handbook is a valuable resource that outlines our program policies, procedures, and expectations. We invite you to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Together, we can create a memorable and enriching afterschool experience for your child. We look forward to a fantastic year!

Sincerely,
YMCA Youth Development Team



LOCATIONS

JEEP ROGERS FAMILY YMCA

900 Lake Carolina Drive
Columbia, SC 29229
803.451.8439

NORTHWEST FAMILY YMCA

1501 Kennerly Road
Irmo, SC 29063
803.407.8007

DOWNTOWN YMCA OFF-SITE LOCATIONS

1447 Hampton Street
Columbia, SC 29201
803.799.9187

ABOUT AFTERSCHOOL

The Afterschool Program is a fun and safe place to be after a long day of school. We provide positive staff interaction and learning opportunities, as well as a healthy afterschool snack/meal, physical fitness time, homework help and a wide variety of other activities, and time to socialize with friends or play games.

We believe in empowering youth to help design the activities we provide each week. Allowing students to choose what they do each day helps build a student's understanding of making positive choices and also ensures that all students are participating and engaged in that activity.

THE Y AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM CONSISTS OF THESE KEY COMPONENTS:

1. Academic Help

We offer dedicated daily homework time.

Our program is not a tutoring program.

We offer up to 30 minutes of focused, quiet time for students to work on homework or other academically-based work. Our staff will do their best to work with the schools and teachers to help ensure we are a compliment to the work they do in the classroom. Students are responsible for keeping track of their homework each day.

2. Recreation/Physical Activity

The YMCA of Columbia strives to ensure that all those who participate in YMCA programs

live healthy, balanced lives. Designated daily physical activity time allows youth to engage in 30-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity and will take place outdoors weather permitting.

3. Character Development

Through a blend of engaging games, creative activities, and physical play, we help kids develop the Y's core values of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility.. Positive role models from our dedicated staff guide students, fostering social skills like communication and cooperation. It's afterschool fun that builds well-rounded individuals, ready to thrive!

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The YMCA is committed to providing quality programs to all children and families regardless of their financial circumstances. The YMCA strives to not turn anyone away due to an inability to pay and offers financial assistance for members through our Annual Campaign scholarship program. Applications are available at the front desk and at columbiaymca.org.

Downtown/R1 Schools - thanks to an agreement - already run at a reduced rate.



ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION

Enrollment must be completed online for each child participating. Payment of tuition is due in full at time of registration or the setup of weekly draft payments **must** occur for registration to be processed and accepted. **Tuition for each week must be paid prior to student's attendance.** Weekly drafts are processed the Tuesday before the week of attendance. Weekly tuition is not prorated for any reason. **Cancellation for any reason requires a written notice given to the program Director via email two weeks prior to that registered week.**

A \$30 return or late fee will be automatically added to any returns or payments made after the due date.

ABSENCES/REFUNDS

Absences

Please notify the team by 1:00 pm if your child will not be attending that day. Tuition will not be prorated based on daily attendance. Illness, or general absence will not forfeit payment.

Refunds

Refunds will only be given with a two-week written notice of cancellation. ****A phone call or speaking with someone, are not valid methods.** Tuition will not be prorated based on daily attendance.

NON-YMCA EXTRACURRICULAR AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

In the event that your child participates in a school sponsored activity after school, we require you to notify your Director stating the nature and duration of the activity including dates, times, frequency and location. *If at a School-Based program, student may join the Afterschool program in progress. For those that ride a bus, transportation will not be provided, but children may be checked into the program after it has started, by an authorized pick-up person.*

DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Afterschool program operates Monday-Friday from school dismissal until 6pm, except when noted on the service calendar for No School Days and Holiday Breaks.

EARLY RELEASE DAYS

1. On-Site Programs

Early Release Days are considered a part of the weekly tuition for participants in our Jeep Rogers and Northwest YMCA programs, all-day weather day outs are not included. The Y will provide care from the time of dismissal until our normal closing time of 6:00 pm. Children will be checked in and out of the program as they would on a normal day.

2. Off-Site Programs

- **Richland 1:** Provided if able to safely staff. Determined semesterly.
- **Lexington 1/Lexington-Richland 5:** \$15 fee added

RIDES OUT

Regular pick up is from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. A staff person will be waiting to greet you, then radio for your child to be sent to the car line. For programs based at a school location, parents may need to park and come into the school to sign out their children.

Please remain patient while we retrieve your student from their group, we use the entire facility for programming and it may take a few minutes.

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 automatically charged for each child not picked up by 6:00 pm. The fee of \$10 will be assessed for the first 1-10 minutes and \$1 per minute after 10 minutes.
- If a child is not picked up at dismissal time. We will begin calling parents and/or emergency contacts.
- If the child is not picked up by 7:00 pm, local authorities will be called.
- If a Y 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.

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 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.

Call the Director if you have specific custody issues and the non-custodial that we need to be aware of.

FAMILY TRANSITIONS

Children's actions in our program often reflect what 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 Director. This will enable us to better support and meet the needs of your child.





**“The YMCA afterschool program provides a perfect balance of fun and learning, with my son making friends and improving teamwork. We’re grateful!”
– John H.**

TRANSPORTATION

Drivers of all YMCA vehicles are thoroughly screened and authorized by the YMCA based on experience and good driving records. Each driver has a current qualifying license and participates in YMCA driver training. The YMCA ensures all our vehicles are regularly maintained and that drivers conduct daily inspections before being driven. Upon registration, you have given the YMCA permission to transport your child from their school to the appropriate YMCA program.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please mark all belongings with your child’s name. The YMCA is not responsible for any personal items lost, stolen, or damaged at our programs. **Please make sure your child leaves toys, trading cards, and video games at home.** If a child is sent to the Y with these items, they must remain in their book bag during program hours. If items cause an issue, item may be held in office until Parent/Guardian picks it up.

MEDICATION

Prescription medications must be in their original labeled with the child’s or youth’s first and last name, the date the prescription was filled, the name of the licensed physician or licensed nurse practitioner who wrote the prescription, the expiration date of the medication, and specific and legible instructions for administration and

storage of the medication. YMCA staff will administer the medication according to the instructions.

Non-prescription medications can be given by permission and directions from child’s physician. YMCA staff will administer non-prescription medication from the original container labeled with the first and last name of the child or youth and according to the instructions on the label.

All medicine must have a medication authorization form completed. *Medications will be held in a locked box, supervised by Senior Staff only.*

YMCA COUNSELORS

Our counselors receive extensive hours of professional development training that meets state licensing requirements. All counselors are CPR and First Aid certified. We meet or exceed state staff-to-child ratios. We perform background checks on all YMCA Staff.

Your Director is your primary contact for information about our programs or any questions you have. We strongly encourage and invite parental participation and communication. All programs

have an open door policy and we hope you take an active roll in your child's day.

RATIO AND SAFETY

All of our programs provide a lower staff to child ratio that exceed the minimal ratios and supervision requirements, as defined by Section 114.504 of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) Regulations for Private and Public Child Care Centers.

Average Staff-to-Child Ratios:

- Ages 3–4: 1 staff per 8 children
- Ages 4–5: 1 staff per 10 children
- Ages 5–11: 1 staff per 12 children
- Ages 12–15: 1 staff per 15 children
- All off-site programs maintain a 1:12 ratio at all times

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

If a child cannot participate in the program due to illness, the child must be kept at home. Children who are ill may not return until they are symptom-free for 24 hours. They must also be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducers.

If your child becomes ill during program hours, you will be notified and requested to pick up your child immediately.

Our associates will administer first aid for minor injuries.

You will be notified if your child needs prompt medical care.

Children with lice must use a doctor-approved treatment and be free of nits (un-hatched eggs) before returning to the program.

Please help us keep a healthy environment for all our children.

Physical Activity – We ensure that children engage in at least 30–60 minutes of physical activity per day, including a mix of moderate and vigorous physical activities that promote bone and muscle strengthening. Play will take place outdoors whenever possible.

Screen Time – *Digital device use is restricted to homework or programs that actively engage children in activity.*

BABYSITTING/FRATERNIZATION

YMCA associates are not allowed to fraternize with, babysit or transport your child outside the YMCA program. We request that you not ask any YMCA Associate to care for your child outside of the program. If a relationship exists outside the YMCA which predates the staff employment with the YMCA, staff should notify their supervisor.



Our programs are balanced with designated homework help, physical activity time, and enrichment activities.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS & DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our discipline policy is youth-centered and designed to achieve a positive outcome to misbehaviors and conflicts. We acknowledge good behaviors.

We respond to misbehaviors and conflicts in an appropriate manner. We have zero tolerance for violence and bullying (see 'Is It Bullying' on page 9)*. We follow the school/district policy in which the program is held. We have the right to suspend or expel children from our programs if they or their family threatens safety or interferes with the sustainability of a quality program.

The YMCA makes every effort to help parents and children understand clear definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

The YMCA does not condone and will not permit:

1. Corporal punishment
2. Ridiculing, threatening, using an inappropriate loud voice
3. Leaving children unsupervised
4. Use of profanity

A child's behavior is expected to be consistent with the following:

1. Use appropriate language at all times
2. Cooperate with staff and follow directions

3. Respect other children and staff, equipment and facilities, and yourself
4. Stay in the program areas
- running away is not acceptable

Discipline Policy

1. If a child is unable to comply with behavior expectations, child will be redirected and expectations will be reviewed by a counselor. Depending on severity, child will be given a consequence.
2. If child continues to be unable to comply with the behavior expectations, or redirection takes longer than 5-10 minutes, behavior will be documented and the parent(s)/guardian will be notified in writing.
3. If the child is still unable to comply with the behavior expectations after several redirection attempts and/or documented incidents, the Director will set up a conference with the parent(s)/guardian, Site Supervisor and child. An individual behavior intervention and/or behavior contract will be established and signed by the child (if appropriate), parent(s)/guardian, Site Supervisor and Director.



If the child's behavior continues to be disruptive and/or unsafe, the child will be subject to suspension or dismissal. **Failure of the parent(s)/guardian to attend conference(s) and cooperate will subject the child to suspension or dismissal.**

Behaviors that may result in immediate dismissal include but are not limited to:

1. Any action that could threaten or pose a direct threat to the physical/emotional safety of the child, other children or staff
2. Fighting (includes shoving, pushing and/or any intimidating act towards a counselor or program participant)
3. Possession of a weapon of any kind
4. Vandalism or destruction of Y property or property of others
5. Inappropriate conduct
6. Swearing or Cursing
7. Possession of or use of alcohol or controlled substances unless under the prescription of a doctor
8. Running away
9. Biting

IS IT BULLYING?

When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's...
RUDE.

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's...
MEAN.

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it – even when you tell them to stop or show them you're upset, that's...
BULLYING.

HOLIDAYS & WEATHER CLOSINGS

NO SCHOOL & HOLIDAYS

'No school' days and student holidays are included in the regular fee for our Jeep Rogers and Northwest Family locations. However, participants must still register for these days by the Friday before so that staff can prepare.

'No School' Days and Holiday are not included for off-site programs. Downtown children can register for the All Day Outs at the normal fee. Space dependent upon availability.

WINTER AND SPRING BREAKS

Winter Break and Spring Break are registered and paid for separately. Tuition must be paid in full for the duration of the break and will not be prorated based on daily attendance.

Fall, Winter & Spring Break Camp is offered from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. Types of camps and fees can be located online at columbiaymca.org.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS/BAD WEATHER POLICY

School based programs will follow School District in regards to being provided, on weather days.

If school is CANCELED due to weather-related situations...

- There will be no care available at school-based programs but Full Day Care will be available at the YMCA as long as the YMCA is open and staff can get to work safely. The YMCA will communicate with parents.
- There is an additional cost for program participants for Full Day Care on weather days. Please check columbiaymca.org or the YMCA of Columbia Facebook page for updated information.

If school is on a DELAY due to weather...

- No morning care will be available.
- The YMCA will provide care at the end of the day as normal.

If school CLOSES EARLY due to weather...

- After school will try to open early as long as the site building remains open (safe travel conditions for staff pending).
- YMCA staff monitor conditions and will communicate with parents as to the status of the program.





OUR MISSION

To put Christian principles into practice
through programs that build healthy spirit,
mind, and body for all.

 **columbiaymca.org**