

# School Age Parent Handbook



Updated: 8/13/2021

# WELCOME!

Thank you for choosing the Greater Holyoke YMCA's School Age program. We are looking forward to serving your needs for quality child care. This is a Parent Handbook for the Greater Holyoke YMCA School Age program. This program is one of many programs offered here by the YMCA to children and families of the Greater Holyoke community.

We seek your help and cooperation in this process. We ask that you read this Parent Handbook and assist us and our program by following its contents. This handbook will answer many of your questions and may put to rest any concerns. We have an "Open Door" Policy for parents, we encourage you to visit the program whenever it is in session and encourage parental input and communication. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the School Age Director or any member of the School Age staff.

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### **Statement of Purpose and Objectives**

The mission of the Greater Holyoke YMCA is "Helping all in the greater Holyoke community achieve their fullest potential in spirit, mind and body." Our child care program does not discriminate in providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, political beliefs, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

The program serves children ages 5-13 years of age. Programs and activities are designed to allow our youth to develop fully through physical and social interactions. Through curriculum based activities we foster individual growth, self-discipline, independence and self-confidence. We view our programs' objectives to be the following:

- Provide Academic Enrichment
- Grow personally
- Build Character
- Improve personal and family relationships
- Appreciate Diversity
- Become better leaders
- HAVE FUN!

### **Staff**

The School Age program places primary emphasis on the selection of staff quality by skill, personal warmth, humor and experience to help achieve personal growth. Carefully selected staff serve as Directors, Supervisors, and Counselors. All staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. All YMCA child care staff undergo background checks.

### **Registration**

Parents and guardians must register their child through the YMCA. All necessary paperwork must be completed and undated at least one week prior to enrollment. Registration forms are available at the front desk and on our website [www.holyokeymca.org](http://www.holyokeymca.org). Please speak to the School Age Director or any member of the School Age program for further information.

### **School Year Site Locations and Hours**

#### **Holyoke:**

YMCA After School: 3:00-5:30pm

#### **South Hadley:**

Plains After School: 3:25-5:30pm

Mosier After School: 2:55pm-5:30pm

Michael E. Smith Middle School After School: 2:25pm-5:30pm (children are walked from the middle school to Mosier at dismissal)

### **Summer Program Locations and Hours**

Y-Holyoke is located at the Greater Holyoke YMCA and runs from 8:00-5:00pm.

Y-South Hadley is located at Plains School and runs from 8:00-5:00pm.

### **Children's Files**

The children's files, which provide important information about allergies and other medical concerns, are kept on site. The following forms must be filled out completely by the parent/guardian to be placed on file prior to the child's first day:

- Child's completed registration packet
- Medical consent form for any medications, Epi-pens, or inhalers
- Current copy of physical and immunizations (for summer program only)

All information in your child's file remains confidential and will not be released to anyone not directly related to the program without written consent from the guardian/parent.

### **Program Content/Progress Reports**

Programs and activities are designed to allow our youth to develop fully through physical and social interactions. Our objective is to provide youth the opportunity to discover and enhance their talents and abilities in a safe, caring environment. Through curriculum based activities, the use of sports, swimming, nature and outdoor activities, arts & crafts and field trips we allow each child to develop his/her interests in a fun-filled, age appropriate, energetic atmosphere. We foster individual growth, self-discipline, independence and self-confidence. Written progress reports, addressing the child's growth and development within the program, will be prepared at least once per year during the school year for all enrolled children. A copy of this report will be given to the parent and a copy will be kept in the child's file. Each parent will be given the opportunity to meet with a School Aged Staff to discuss the content of the report. There shall be a schedule posted daily or weekly at the site for families to view.

### **Snack/Lunch-WE ARE NUT-FREE!**

A nutritious snack will be provided each afternoon to all children. For all full day programs children will need a nut free lunch. During the summer all Y-South Hadley children are required to bring a lunch in and all Y-Holyoke children will be provided with a nutritious lunch through the Holyoke Public School. No microwavable lunches are allowed. **Please notify us if your child has any food allergies.**

### **What to bring and what not to bring**

It is our policy that children leave toys and games at home. This includes cards, electronic games, cell phones and all other items similar to this. If an item is brought to the program, we cannot be responsible if it is lost, stolen, or broken. Over the summer each child should wear sneakers, sunscreen and bring a reusable water bottle, bathing suit, and towel each day. Please mark your child's belongings with their name.

### **Transportation**

Transportation from the site to home is the responsibility of the parent. In an emergency situation, the parent shall be immediately notified and asked to transport a child for medical care. If the parent cannot be reached, a person designated as such on the child's information form shall be notified. The parent may give permission for a designated staff person to transport the child and meet the parent at the medical facility. In serious or life-threatening situations, the staff person in charge may elect to call for an ambulance or transport the child immediately to a hospital and notify parents and the program administrator from there. Transportation for all field trips shall be provided by school busses.

### **Absences**

If your child will be absent on any day, please contact the program site phone at 413-552-7385 or the YMCA at 534-5631. When leaving a message please include: your child's name and which site they attend.

If we have not received notice your child will be out and they do not show up to After School on a day they are scheduled to attend, a staff will call the contact information provided on the registration form until the child's whereabouts is verified. During the summer, if a child has not arrived before 8:45am they may miss the departure for a field trip and will be unable to join for the day.

### **Authorized Release**

The YMCA program will release a child only to persons authorized and identified on the child's application form and all adults must bring proper identification each day. **ALL CHILDREN MUST BE SIGNED IN AND OUT EVERYDAY BY AN ADULT!** In the event a person not identified on the application needs to pick up a child, parents must provide advance written notification and identification from this person is required before the child will be released. If only one parent has custody of the child and the other is not authorized to pick up the child, the parent must instruct the YMCA of this fact, and must provide the School Age Director with a certified copy of the court order confirming that one parent does not have visitation rights. If a parent or guardian arrives to pick up a child while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, the YMCA reserves the right to refuse release of the child.

### **Fees/Payments**

The fees charged for the School Age program are printed on the registration forms. These fees reserve a space in the program for your child, whether or not your child attends, and pays for the cost of operating and staffing the program. For this reason, parents must pay even though their child may be absent. The fees are not pro-rated for weeks with a Snow or Holiday closure. The full week vacation weeks (December, February and April) are not billed to private pay parents if the child is not registered for that week. Payments are to be made on a weekly basis unless a separate arrangement has been made with the School Age Director. We strongly encourage families to set up an EFT payment schedule

to avoid leaving checks and the delay in the processing of payments. It is the responsibility of the parent to contact the Director to update any expired/changed payment accounts. Parents can contact the Director at any time to ask about account balances and the program will periodically send out invoices. A child may be terminated due to non-payment. Financial assistance is available for qualified families.

### **Vacation/ Full Day Fees**

There are full day programs available in South Hadley and the Holyoke YMCA for when schools are closed for a full day or vacation weeks. These programs run from 8:00am-5:30pm. Children need to bring a nut-free cold lunch but will be provided with a nutritious afternoon snack. Please refer to the registration form for the daily rates.

### **Late Pick-up fees**

**All children must be picked up by the scheduled closing time, no exceptions!** If an emergency should arise and you find you will be late picking up your child, please call the program site/YMCA and let us know ahead of time. DCF will be called if a guardian cannot be reached after 30 minutes of the program ending. Parents will be assessed a late fee of \$1/minute per child past the scheduled closing time. Late fees are payable with the next scheduled payment. Chronic late pick-up is grounds for dismissal from the program. Action taken on this policy is at the discretion of the School Age Director.

### **Tax Letters**

Tax letters covering fees paid for child care services are provided upon request only and any family looking for a letter should contact the Child Care Director.

### **Snow Day Policy**

If the public schools are closed in Holyoke or South Hadley, the Y will have a full day program **at the Holyoke YMCA**. This is available to any child enrolled in the Child Care programs. The program will run from 8:00am-5:30pm. Your child will need to bring a nut-free cold lunch and also a bathing suit and towel (optional) as we may have use of the pool for swimming. If your child requires an Epi-Pen or any other medication please make sure to provide extra for the day as we do not have access to the schools if they are closed. If your child is scheduled to attend the Y program on a day the schools close there is no additional charge to attend the full day program in Holyoke.

If there is an **unscheduled early release** at the school, there will be no After School Programs in South Hadley.

In the case of severe weather please call the Y at 413-534-5631 to ensure operating hours. If there is a State of Emergency there will be no program.

## **Health Care Policies and Procedures**

A full copy of the programs Health Care Policies and Procedures can be obtained from the Child Care Director. Staff will take extra special precautions when children who are ill are diagnosed at the program and when children who are mildly ill remain at the program.

If a child becomes ill while at the child care program, the child's parent/guardian will be called, and depending on the severity or the symptoms, may be asked to pick up the child as soon as possible. If you are unable to pick up your child, then the emergency numbers will be used to contact those on the child's information sheet. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report any contagious disease, condition or serious illness. Please understand that the identity of the child will remain confidential. Specific cases may require a doctor's note before re-admission to the program. Children must be clear of a fever for 24 hours before returning to the program. Children that contract head lice must be treated with the appropriate shampoo to kill lice and must show no active infestation before returning to the program.

### **COVID-19 Policy**

A parent must immediately report to the YMCA if their child or anyone is diagnosed with COVID-19. If any child tests positive for COVID-19, we will follow protocol from the state and local Board of Health departments and close the site for the required length of time designated by the Board of Health. We strongly encourage families to be prepared with a back-up plan in the event this occurs.

### **Medication Policy**

Any medication, whether prescription or non-prescription, will be administered only under the following guidelines:

#### **Prescription Medication**

- A. Prescription medication must be brought to the program in its original container and include the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the number of times per day, and the number of days the medication is to be administered. This prescription label will be accepted as the written authorization of the physician.
- B. The parent must fill out the Medication Consent Form before the medication can be administered. This form can be found on our website at [www.holyokeymca.org](http://www.holyokeymca.org) and is valid for one year from the date it was signed.
- C. A child over the age of 9 who has asthma and uses an inhaler may administer his/her own medication upon written authorization by parent/guardian.

#### **Non-prescription Medication**

- A. Non-prescription medication will be given only with written consent of the child's physician and if it is in the original manufacturer's packaging. The Y will accept a signed statement from the physician listing the medication(s), the dosage and criteria for its administration. This statement will be valid for one year from the date that it was signed.
- B. Along with the written consent of the physician, the Y will also need written

parental authorization. The parent must fill out the Medication Consent Form, which allows the program to administer the non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician. This form can be found on our website at [www.holyokeymca.org](http://www.holyokeymca.org) and is valid for one year from the date it was signed.

- C. The program will make every attempt to contact the parent prior to the child receiving the non-prescription medication unless the child needs medication urgently or when contacting the parent will delay appropriate care unreasonably.

#### **All Medications**

1. The first dosage must be administered by the parent at home in case of an allergic reaction.
2. All medications must be given to the Site Supervisor directly by the parent.
3. Educators cannot administer any medication contrary to the directions on the original container, unless so authorized in writing by the child's licensed health care practitioner
3. All medications will be stored out of the reach of children (in a container or in the refrigerator if refrigeration is necessary). All medications that are considered controlled substances must be locked and kept out of reach of children. Emergency medications such as Epi-pens must be available for immediate use as needed.
4. The site will maintain a written record of the administration of any medication which will include the child's name, the time and date of each administration, the dosage and route of administration, and the name of the staff person administering the medication. This completed record will become part of the child's file.
5. All unused medication will be returned to the parent.

There are no exceptions to this policy. If there is no written authorization from the parent, we will not dispense any medication to any child. Each medication form must be filled out completely, including parent/guardian signature and date, prior to medication being given to the child. If any medications or medication forms are missing prior to your child's first day, their enrollment will be paused until all required documents and medications are turned in.

#### **First Aid and Emergency Transportation**

In the case of an emergency or illness (such as a seizure, a serious fall or serious cut), the staff person in charge will begin administration of emergency First Aid while other staff takes the children to another area or room. A staff will contact the parent to come and pick up child or, if response time is a factor, have the parent meet the child and accompanying staff at the emergency room of the hospital utilized in emergencies. In the event a situation arises that is life threatening or the child cannot be comfortably restrained in a car, an ambulance will be called immediately. The parent will be called to meet the child and staff at the hospital. The Director or other designated staff will go with the child in the ambulance. The child's file will be taken,

including permission forms and pertinent insurance information. If the emergency is non-life threatening and the child is transported to the hospital by the Y, one of the staff will drive and another staff will be accompanying the child for comfort. The child will be properly restrained in a seat belt. The child will not be carried on the staff member's lap. The child's whole file will be taken, including permissions forms. If the parent comes to pick up the child and needs assistance, the Director may offer to drive to the hospital or to accompany the child. When parents cannot be reached, those listed as emergency contacts will be called as a further attempt to reach parents. In the event a parent cannot be reached immediately, a designated staff person will continue to attempt to reach parents.

**The program will immediately report to the Department of Early Education and Care any injury to, or illness of, any child which occurs during the hours while the child is enrolled in care and which requires hospitalization or emergency medical treatment.**

### **Water Safety/Personal Floatation Devices**

All bathing beaches utilized by children will have the proper permits. All children will be assigned a buddy prior to leaving for any water trip and their counselor will explain their role as buddies. Throughout the trip, "buddy checks" will be called by the Director/Supervisor at which time all children need to immediately evacuate the water/play area, locate their counselor, and stand with their buddy. No children will be allowed back in the water until all children and groups are accounted for and dismissed by the Director/Supervisor. According to the Christian's Law, all camp participants under the age of 18 must take a swim test at the beginning of each camp season, regardless of if they took it the previous year and passed. This swim test will determine whether or not a child must wear a PFD (personal floatation device) when swimming in marine or freshwater beaches. The swim test will be administered by a lifeguard or certified Swim Instructor and will be consistent of the following: Swim the length of the pool forward, the next length backwards and tread water for 45 seconds. If a child opts out of a swim test or does not pass the swim test they will be required to wear a PFD. There are no exceptions to this policy. The Y maintains records of all swim tests and will clearly identify which children must wear a PFD and those who can swim freely. Please understand that the Y must strictly enforce this law. The Y will provide PFDs; however, if a parent/guardian would like to provide their child with their own PFD it must be Coast guard approved and fit the child properly. Please be sure the PFD is clearly marked with your child's name. For more information on Christian's Law please visit [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov).

### **Sunscreen Policy**

Our YMCA programs spend a great deal of time outdoors and children are thereby exposed to the sun's harmful rays. Although the groups take frequent water breaks and utilize the shade as much as possible, we require all children to wear sunscreen. Parents/guardians are expected to apply sunscreen (SPF of at least 30 is recommended) to children before coming to the Y each morning and provide sunscreen labeled with your child's first and last name for your child to reapply after lunch. If your child requires sunscreen more often,

parents must provide written instructions to the Director on how often it should be applied. Please provide a t-shirt and hat in addition to sunscreen for your child to wear while swimming if burning is a concern. All labeled sunscreen containers can be given to a YMCA staff who will store them for your child to use daily or kept in your child's backpack. Aerosol containers should not be stored in a child's backpack and should be given to a counselor at the beginning of their session and retrieved at the end. We encourage self-application and teaching your child how to apply their own sunscreen but YMCA staff will assist children, while in direct eyesight of another YMCA participant, as needed. The staff will make every effort to watch children for sunburns, but cannot be held responsible for children who do not have sunscreen, have a fair complexion, or forget to apply their sunscreen. The YMCA reserves the right to disallow a child to participate in any outdoor activity if they feel it will pose a threat to the health of the child. We strive to prevent sunburns and appreciate parent/guardian support in ensuring all children are sent to the Y prepared so everyone can have both a safe and fun time outside!

### **Ticks/Tick Checks**

Children will be spending a lot of time outdoors, thus being exposed to places that ticks live. Staff will conduct a quick tick check upon returning from a trip, but we highly suggest checking your child upon returning home. If a child gets a tick, the staff will do their best to remove the tick, document it, and call a parent/guardian. Upon request, informational sheets are available on how to conduct a tick check and properly remove ticks.

### **YMCA Behavior Management**

It is the goal of the YMCA to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for our before and after school participants. The YMCA teaches the core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Children who attend the program are expected to follow the behavior guidelines and to interact appropriately in a group setting.

The YMCA After-School program has the following behavior guidelines:

- People are **RESPONSIBLE** for their actions, their belongings and the supplies/space we use while participating in YMCA programs.
- We **RESPECT** each other and our surroundings.
- **HONESTY** will be the basis for all relationships and interactions.
- We will **CARE** for ourselves and those around us.

When a participant of the program does not follow the above guidelines, we will take the following steps:

- 1.) Staff will redirect the child to a more appropriate behavior.
- 2.) If the behavior occurs again, the child will be reminded of the behavior guidelines as well as rules of the site. When necessary, further discussion will take place between the child and staff handling the situation.
- 3.) If the behavior persists, the staff person will document the situation and the parent/guardian will be notified and asked to pick up their child within 30 minutes. This written documentation will include what the improper behavior was, what provoked the problem (when possible), and the corrective action taken.

- 4.) If the behavior continues, a meeting will take place between the educator and the parent/guardian to discuss how to promote positive behaviors from the child in order to avoid suspension/termination. This may include reassessing classroom environment, developing a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program, giving out literature regarding methods of improving behavior, offering referrals for evaluations, diagnostic, or therapeutic services, or reducing the amount of days the child is in the program.
- 4.) If there is no change in behavior, a suspension may occur. When a suspension has been issued, contact between the parent/guardian and the Site Supervisor must happen before the child can return to the program. Schools will be notified if a child is suspended; therefore he/she will not be allowed to take the bus to the program or to walk to the program for programs that are held at the child's school.
- 5.) If at this time the participants behavior does not improve, the child will be subject to termination from the before and/or after-school program.
- 6.) If at any time the child's behavior threatens the immediate safety of that child, other children or any staff, the parent/guardian will be notified and expected to pick up the child IMMEDIATELY. In this situation the child will be expelled from the before and/or after school program.

### **Suspension and Termination**

The following behaviors are not acceptable and may result in the immediate suspension of the participant for the remainder of the current day and up to two days afterwards at the discretion of the Director of Child Care Services:

- Endangering the health and safety of children and/or staff members.
- Stealing or damaging property of the YMCA, school, or other program participants.
- Leaving the program space without permission.
- Continuous use of profanity, vulgarity, or obscenities.
- Acting in a lewd manner.
- Threatening children, staff, or other participants.

If any of these behaviors persist, staff may suspend the child a second time before termination. Extremely violent/threatening behavior or behavior wherein a child is seriously injured or YMCA property is damaged can result in **immediate termination**. It is the YMCA's goal to help children find ways to express and deal with difficult situations and to function well in group settings with their peers. If the staff feel a child cannot remain in our program, they will work with parents to find a more suitable program for their child as well as give referrals to outside agencies that may be able to help through an evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services. Parents/guardians will be given a specific termination date that will allow them an adequate amount of time to seek alternate child care. The given termination date is dependent on the risk of that child to other children's safety.

### **Caring for Children with Special Needs**

The Holyoke YMCA is committed to meeting the needs of all children, regardless of special health care needs or disabilities. As the number of children with chronic health conditions such as asthma, allergies, and diabetes increases, as well as the number of children with emotional or behavioral issues, the ability of programs to plan for and include all children is critical. Inclusion of children with special needs has been shown to enrich the child care experience for all staff, children and families of enrolled children.

1. Children with special needs will be accepted into our program under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
2. All families will be treated with dignity and with respect for their individual needs and/or differences.
3. The YMCA will be responsible for ensuring that confidentiality about special needs is maintained for all families and staff in the program.
4. The YMCA will ensure that when a child with a special need is identified, a staff member will meet with the family to ensure any special training necessary for childcare personnel to protect the safety and children with disabilities during high-risk activities (such as swimming) is met.
5. Children with special needs will be given the opportunity to participate in the program to the fullest extent possible. To accomplish this, the YMCA may consult with parents to come up with a plan to provide the most supportive environment possible.
6. All staff will receive general training on the benefits of inclusion of children with special needs and training on specific accommodations that any child in their classroom may need.
7. The individual written plan of care for children with special care needs will be followed in all emergency situations.

### **Expectations of Parents**

It is our goal to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this goal is the responsibility of the staff, but also of each adult who enters the programs. Parents of enrolled children are asked to behave in a manner consistent with the Y values; with decency, courtesy, and respect.

Parents are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use appropriate language when in the programs - no swearing/cursing
- Treat their child, the staff, and other children with respect – no physical/verbal punishment
- Parents are responsible for any child that accompanies them to the program for pick up or drop off and are expected to follow all policies and procedures while on the premises.

Disrespectful behavior from a parent can result in the termination of any enrolled child(ren) from the YMCA program.

### **Child Abuse Policy**

This policy is made available and explained to all parents, staff and volunteers who interact with children of the YMCA programs. It is the intent of the program to protect children from abuse and/or neglect. Our staff is mandated by the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts to report any cases of abuse/neglect to the School Age Director, who has the responsibility to notify the Department of Children and Families. This includes reporting parents who appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The School-Age Director will always attempt to discuss a report personally with parents.

**Licensing Authority**

The Dept. of Early Education and Care is our state licensing agency which ensures quality programming. EEC stops into our programs throughout the year to make sure we are meeting or exceeding all state regulations. The contact information to our local EEC office is (413)-788-8401, address: 1441 Main Street #230, Springfield, MA 01103.