

# Introduction to the Parent Handbook

Dear Parents,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Williamstown Youth Center, I would like to welcome you and your family to the After-School Program. For your convenience, we've put together this handbook as a guide to our program's policies, procedures, and goals. Please keep it for your reference.

We believe frequent communication between home and the Youth Center is essential to making our program effective. For this reason we will provide regular updates on your child's development, and we invite you to keep us informed of any interests, questions, or challenges you and your child may have outside our building. We also encourage you to come to the WYC to observe our activities, and to offer any suggestions you might have for us.

On the following pages, we provide a detailed description of what we do, as well as how and why we meet our program objectives.

Thank you being part of the After School Program. We look forward to working with you.

David Rempell, Executive Director

# Parent Handbook

## Program's Purpose

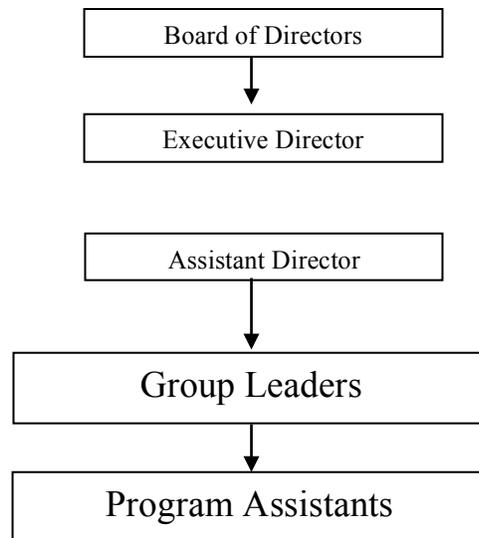
The Williamstown Youth Center provides quality after-school care by engaging children in a variety of stimulating, self-directed, and age-appropriate activities. We are committed to nurturing the educational, recreational, social, and emotional well-being of youth and families through quality programs for all. Children entering grades 1-8 may enroll in the after school program.

After school services include:

- Sports and other gross motor activities
- Academic support, including homework assistance
- Arts programming, including but not limited to a. visual arts using a variety of media b. dance/movement c. drama d. filmmaking e. music creation and performance f. photography

## Organization

The Williamstown Youth Center is a private non-profit (501c) organization governed by a Board of Directors and administered by a staff consisting of an Executive Director, one Assistant Director/ Group Leader, with additional Group Leaders and Program Assistants, creating these lines of authority:



The Executive Director is hired by and reports to the Board of Directors. He or she hires the program staff and is the administrator of the After-School Program (ASP). The Executive Director is the administrator in charge of the building.

All staff members and volunteers must complete a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check and a Department of Children and Families SORI check before being allowed to work with children.

The Youth Center will increase or reduce staff depending on the program's needs. The ASP is licensed by The Department of Early Education and Care. The Department may be reached at 95 Liberty Street, Suite 1124, 3rd Floor, Springfield, MA 01103. The telephone number is 413-788-8401. Parents are encouraged to contact the EEC should they have any comments or concerns about our program, or for information regarding our compliance history.

## **Program**

### *Hours/Days of Operation*

The ASP operates from 2:40 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and from 1:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. Children are expected to arrive at the Youth Center no later than 3:10 everyday except Wednesday, when they are expected to arrive no later than 1:40.

The ASP is closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Columbus Day
Martin Luther King Day	Veterans' Day
Presidents Day	Wed., Thurs., Fri. of
Patriots Day	Thanksgiving Week
Memorial Day	Christmas Eve
Labor Day	Christmas Day

### *Groups*

Children are organized by groups, each staffed by a group leader, program assistant, and (in most cases) a volunteer assistant. Children will determine their activities, and staff will have the flexibility to combine groups as necessary to allow children to enjoy individual activities when possible. Each day, groups will report to their own designated home room space, where their group leader will take attendance before beginning activities.

Children walk directly to the Youth Center from the elementary school. An ASP staff member will supervise this transition from the front door of our building, within sight of both the Youth Center and the school. After snack and announcements, groups will begin their afternoon schedules.

### *Registration Options*

We have two registration options for our afterschool program:

- 1-2 days per week, for \$360, valid for the whole academic year
- 3-5 days per week, for \$720, also valid for the whole academic year

Families must complete a membership and program registration form for each child who participates in Youth Center programming. Registrations can be completed online at [www.williamstownyouthcenter.org](http://www.williamstownyouthcenter.org). We will also make hard copies available for parents without internet access.

### *IEPs*

If a child has special needs, the Youth Center may seek parental permission to review the child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) to determine whether or not the ASP is able to accommodate the child. If, after meeting, the parents and Youth Center agree that a child would be served better elsewhere, the Executive Director will refer the family to more appropriate programs.

Please notify the Youth Center in writing if you are enrolling a child with special needs in our After School Program.

### *Additional Hours*

In addition to after school hours, the Youth Center is open all day (8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.) on Williamstown Elementary School Professional Development days and from 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. whenever WES is canceled due to weather or other unforeseen event. There is an additional fee of \$45 for these full-day services. The Youth Center also operates full-day programs (8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.) during school vacation weeks and for an eight week summer camp program. Parents are responsible for providing their child's lunch on these days.

## **Policies**

Our policies are intended to promote the continued growth and development of our young people. We believe that parent and child involvement in creating policy is essential to achieving our goal. For this reason, we encourage parents to share their thoughts on our program by calling, emailing, or speaking to us personally. Of course, parents are invited to schedule a meeting at any time and on any topic that affects their child.

### *Parent Visits*

The Youth Center encourages parents to visit the ASP, unannounced, at any time that their child is present. All visitors must report to the office upon arrival.

### *Additional Parent Communication and Involvement*

The Youth Center will provide parents with a progress report on their child's development once per academic year. Parents may request a conference with group leaders and/or administrator to discuss a child's progress at any time.

### *Other Communication With Parents*

The Youth Center will provide families with regular updates on programming, as well as other announcements.

### *Child Guidance and Support*

Staff interaction with children will always be consistent with our mission. Guidance will be positive, and provided based on an individual's needs as well as the well-being of the group. The goal of child support is to encourage self control, and improve social, communication, and emotional regulation. To do this, staff will communicate calmly, clearly, and consistently, and include children in developing rules of behavior.

### *Challenging Behavior Plan*

If a child is behaving in a way that is unsafe or otherwise disruptive staff will intervene to redirect the behavior. If the behavior continues the child may be asked to sit quietly until he or she is ready to rejoin the activity. At the end of the “time out,” staff will discuss with the child things he or she could have done differently.

### *Physical Aggression And Other Unsafe Behaviors*

Child safety is the first concern of youth center staff. If a child is aggressive or otherwise using his or her own body in a way that could physically harm themselves or others, staff will:

- isolate the child from other children by standing between the child and his peers, and directing other children to their homerooms.
- calmly but firmly communicate to the child that his or her behavior is dangerous, and must stop.

If the dangerous behavior continues, and presents an immediate threat to the child, other children, or staff, staff will intervene to prevent injury. Intervention will consist of blocking access to the immediate target of the child’s physical behavior, and blocking blows directed at himself or herself. Youth Center staff will work together to surround the acting out child to prevent injury to anyone in the vicinity.

### *Termination and Suspension*

The objective of redirecting behavior is for the child to develop strategies for regulating emotions and improving social and communication skills. For this reason, staff and volunteers will employ other child support techniques (previously described) to avoid escalating situations. Suspension or termination will be consequences of violent or destructive behavior and in the interest of the well-being of the child as well as others in the program.

Deliberately striking another child or adult or vandalizing property will result in an immediate one-day suspension from the program. In this case staff will notify parents of the incident and request that the child be picked up. The Executive Director or other on-site administrator will meet with the parents and child prior to the beginning of the suspension, and agree to a plan for the child’s return to the program.

Repetition of the behavior will result in lengthier suspensions, and, if the behavior persists, the Youth Center will meet with the parents to discuss further options for the child, up to and including termination from the program.

In cases where parents or other caregivers are not available to supervise the child during the time of the suspension, the Youth Center will have quiet space available for the child to serve an in-house suspension.

### *Rules*

To ensure the safety and enjoyment of everyone who participates in the after school program, the Youth Center will develop rules of conduct, with input from children and families. Rules include:

- No hitting, pushing, kicking, slapping, tripping or any other form of violence
- Running in gross motor areas only (typically, the gymnasium and outdoor spaces.)
- No inappropriate language. The rule of thumb is “if you wouldn’t say at home or in school, don’t say it at the Youth Center.”
- Respect for selves, others, and surroundings, through kindness, consideration, and patience.

Staff will discuss these rules with children in the group setting, where they will also invite their groups to offer suggestions, comments, and concerns. Rules will be reviewed regularly and revised as necessary.

### *Snacks*

The Youth Center serves snacks at approximately 3:15 daily. A monthly snack menu is posted on our bulletin board immediately outside the administration office.

Parents may also provide children with a snack from home. All snacks should follow basic nutritional guidelines and include whole grains, low-sugar, low-fat, low or no caffeine, and low sodium items.

Candy, soda or other sugary drinks (including energy drinks,) potato chips, Doritos, etc., are not permitted in the Youth Center.

### *Nuts*

For the safety of our children with allergies, nuts are not permitted in the Youth Center.

### *Late Pickups*

It is expected that parents will pick up their child(ren) by 5:30 p.m. If a parent is going to be late, we ask that the parent contact the Youth Center to alert staff of the situation. There will be a late fee for children picked up after 5:30 of \$ 5.00 for each ten minutes or increment of that time period.

### *Computer Use Guidelines*

The Youth Center has Mac computers, with internet access, in the learning center and in the new technology room. Learning center computers are to be used for homework or other school activities only. The computers in the technology room are to be used for creating art and music, or other creative activities.

The Youth Center adheres to the same computer policy as the Williamstown Elementary School. Adult or otherwise inappropriate content will be blocked from all machines. Children will not be allowed to access the internet without supervision.

### *I Pods, I Phones, I Pads, And Other Mobile Digital Devices*

The After School Program will incorporate the use of technology into many of our activities, including art and academic support. In this context the use of individual mobile digital devices can be an important tool in learning. We also recognize that many children use these devices to communicate directly with their parents.

However, using them to play games, or to access online content (including social media and video sites) is generally incompatible with our program's goals. We therefore discourage their use for these purposes.

### *Referral Services*

We recognize that our after school program may not be the best option for every child. For this reason, the Youth Center is prepared to advise parents and refer families to more appropriate programs.

Staff will notify an administrator if a child is having observable difficulty in the program setting. Observable difficulty may include conflicts with other children, disruptive behavior, or other manifestations of unhappiness with the setting. The administrator may decide that a conversation with the parents is necessary, in which case a review of options will be discussed. Options may include adjusting child support practices within the After School Program, or referral to another agency.

The Youth Center has a list of a variety of referral services.

### *Prohibited Child Guidance Practices*

Children will be treated with respect at all times. Corporal punishment will not be used under any circumstances. Language that denigrates a child, including but not limited to comments about a child's race, religion, physical appearance, personality, family circumstances or living conditions, is also strictly prohibited. The goal of all staff/child interaction is to nurture the growth of our ASP attendees.

### *Safe Building Guidelines*

The Williamstown Youth Center is a child-safe building. Two adults must be in the building when children are present. Adults will avoid being alone in a closed room with a child, except when necessitated by the needs of the child.

This two adult policy is designed to prevent potential abuse, and to ensure that if one adult has a medical or other emergency someone responsible will be present to contact emergency services and care for the children.

### *Reporting Abuse and Neglect*

Youth Center staff are mandated by law to make a report to the Department of Children and Families if they have cause to believe a child is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. Parents will be notified of allegations of abuse and neglect involving their child while in the care of the program.

### *Implementation Plan*

The administrators of the After School Program are responsible for training all staff and volunteers in these policies and procedures. Staff and volunteers will meet at least every two weeks to review challenges, opportunities, and practices, and to reinforce proper program implementation.

#### *Late Arrivals*

Parents should contact the Youth Center if a child will be late.

#### *Pick Up*

Children will leave with parents or guardians only, unless the Youth Center has permission from the parent to allow their child(ren) to leave with another adult, or to walk on their own.

#### *Affordability*

The Williamstown Youth Center will never deny its services to any child for financial reasons. With low regular fees and a robust financial assistance program, our programs will remain affordable for every family.

#### *Non-Discrimination*

No person will be excluded or subjected to discrimination in enrolling children or adult users of the Williamstown Youth Center on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, marital status, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual preference, toileting habits, or cultural heritage.

### **Health Care and Other Child Record Policies**

#### *Plan for Administering Medication (Prescription and Non-Prescription)*

Each child will have a separate Prescription Medication Record Form completed, and signed by the parent or guardian for each medication needed. These forms will be kept, in a binder, in the administrative office.

Whenever medication is dispensed, the staff member administering the medication will sign a log noting that the child has received his or her medication.

Medication prescribed for children will be kept in original containers bearing the pharmacy label, which shows the date of filling, the pharmacy name and address, the filling pharmacist's initials, the serial number of the prescription, the name of the patient, the name of the prescribing practitioner, the name of the prescribed medication, directions for use and cautionary statements, if any, contained in such prescription or required by law, and if tablets or capsules, the number in the container.

All medication prescribed for children will be kept in a storage cabinet used exclusively for medication. Medications requiring refrigeration will be stored at temperatures of 38o to 42o F in a box used exclusively for medications and clearly labeled in the refrigerator.

Medication will only be administered by the Executive Director, Assistant Directors or by a licensed health care professional authorized to administer prescription medications. Only staff members who have completed medication training are allowed to administer

medication. Medication prescribed for children brought from home will only be administered if it is from the original container and there is written permission from the parent/guardian. The Youth Center will not administer the first dose except under extraordinary circumstances. Over the counter medications also require a physician's orders and written permission from parents.

When no longer needed, medications will be returned to a parent or guardian whenever possible. If the medication cannot be returned, it will be destroyed as follows:

Destruction of prescription medication will be accomplished by the health care consultant, witnessed by a second person and recorded in a log maintained by the youth center for this purpose. The log will include the name of the child, the name of the medication, the quantity of the medication destroyed, and the date and method of destruction. The health care consultant and the witness will sign each entry of the medication destruction log.

#### *Over The Counter Medications*

All over the counter medications for children will be kept in the original containers containing the original label, which will include the directions for use. Over the counter medications will be dispensed by train staff only, and only with a physician's orders and written parental permission.

#### *Log*

The medication log will be maintained for at least three years following the date of the last entry.

#### *Care of Mildly Ill Students*

If a child becomes mildly ill during the day and is not able to participate in an activity, the Executive Director will notify the parent/guardian and/or the Health Care Consultant to discuss whether the child should:

- Return home (transport by parent or guardian is required).
- Transport to the appropriate medical treatment facility by staff or parent/guardian.
- Continue at the program, not engaging in activities which may aggravate the condition.

The final decision as to whether or not a child can continue at the Youth Center rests with the Executive Director or designated administrator.

#### *Procedures for Identifying and Protecting Children with Allergies and/or Other Emergency Medical Conditions*

The Executive Director or designated administrator will note from registration information of all children any allergies and/or other emergency medical conditions. This information will be compiled.

The Executive Director will inform staff of the children's medical conditions, and will discuss the control measures for special cases.

### *Management of Infectious Diseases*

If a child has a special condition, the Executive Director and parents, with the assistance of the health care consultant if needed, will determine what precautions must be implemented by the child and staff to protect the health of the child. A plan will be constructed by the director and parent to address this need.

The following information will be provided by the child and the child's parent/guardian:

- Prior history of the condition
- Any medication regularly taken
- Any medication should a reaction occur

In order to minimize exposure to inappropriate chemicals, the Youth Center will only use insect repellants that are recommended by the Department of Public Health and/or Williamstown Board of Health.

### *Exclusion Policy for Serious Illness, Contagious and Reportable Diseases*

Any child suspected of carrying a communicable disease or serious illness should be isolated from the rest of the group. The Health Care Consultant and Executive Director will be notified to take charge of the child and to administer the appropriate treatment.

The proper reporting and notification procedures will be implemented. The Executive Director will notify the Department of Public Health (617-983-6800) and the Williamstown Board of Health (413-458-9344) after any serious incident.

In addition, the Executive Director will notify parents immediately in writing when a communicable disease has been introduced into the Williamstown Youth Center.

## **Emergency Procedures**

### *Evacuation Procedure (Fire, Natural Disaster, Other Emergency Situations)*

In the event of evacuation, all persons will exit the building by either the front or rear exits, using the closest exit.

All persons will gather on the far side of the basketball court to the northeast of the building. No one is to leave the area so that everyone can be accounted for.

If the need to evacuate occurs when the building is occupied (during the after-school program or during all-day programs), the following tasks must be completed by the directors:

- Executive Director will set off the alarm; Lee Audio will automatically receive notification. Executive Director will also call 911, reporting nature of the emergency, location of building and fire, call-back telephone number. The Executive Director is responsible for contacting local authorities of an evacuation. (Note: If the Executive Director is unavailable, these jobs will be performed by the Assistant Director (or Head Counselor during the summer).

- Assistant Director will check all the rooms to make sure everyone is evacuated.
- The Director will take the following out of the building
  - Check In List from the front desk
  - Membership list with emergency contact information
  - Cell phone, for contacting local authorities, 911, etc.
- Executive Director will account for children and staff in the gathering area
- Assistant Director will determine the whereabouts of any children who are missing from the area
- All staff will escort children to gathering area and remain with them. As they leave the building, staff will close doors.
- If necessary, children will be escorted into the Williamstown Elementary School.

#### *Loss of Power, Heat, Water, or Hot Water*

Children will be led to their homerooms whenever any of these services is lost. If the loss continues, or otherwise presents a danger to children, Group Leaders will account for their children, and escort them to the elementary school cafeteria, where they will report to the Executive Director or other designated onsite administrator.

#### *Other Emergencies Not Requiring Evacuation, or When Evacuation Is Dangerous Or Impossible*

If children remain in the program during an emergency, administration will have First Aid kits and other items to keep the children comfortable. If necessary, the administration will shutoff all power sources for the building. Shutoff valves are located in the system room towards the southeast corner of the building.

#### *Following An Evacuation*

If the building cannot be reoccupied, children will be brought to the cafeteria in the elementary school. Children will be checked out by Executive Director when a parent or guardian arrives.

If a child walks home regularly, a parent will be contacted as soon as possible to explain the situation. If the building can be reoccupied, all persons will gather in the common room upon re-entry to the building. In situations other than a drill or false alarm, the director will send notice home explaining the occurrence.

#### *Missing Child*

If a child is not accounted for when his or her group meets at a designated spot, the Executive Director, with the assistance of an Assistant Director, will check every room and other area of the Youth Center. If the child is still missing, the Executive Director, or other designated administrator, will notify emergency services, including law enforcement, that a child is missing.

*Preparations*

Fire Drills will be held regularly throughout the year. During staff training, the evacuation procedure will be reviewed.

### *Child Record Policies*

The Youth Center maintains individual records for each child. These records include membership form with contact information and health information, consent forms and progress reports. To maintain accuracy, the Youth Center will ask parents to update this information on an annual basis. Please let us know if important information changes during the year.

Additional registration materials include a parental consent for trained staff to administer first aid/CPR to a child and for the Youth Center to transport a child to the nearest medical facility for emergency medical treatment. It is also noted on the registration form that a child's medical records are available in the child's school.

Please provide the Youth Center with copies of restraining orders that affect a child's contact with other adults. Parents are also requested to supply a list of the names of others who have permission to pick the child up from the Youth Center. If it is necessary for someone else to pick the child up, a telephone call must be received for us to release the child.

Children's records are available to parents upon request. The Youth Center will make these records available within two business days. In addition, if a parent wishes to have a child's record shared with another individual, a written request is required. Upon each release of information, the Youth Center will note in the record who released the record, to whom the information was released, the purpose of the release, the date of the release, and the signature of the person to whom information was released. This log is available only to the parent and personnel responsible for record management at the Youth Center. When the child leaves the After-School program, the Youth Center will transfer the child's record to the parent or any other person the parent identifies.

Parents may add information to the child's record and request that particular information be deleted.

### *Progress Reports*

Once per year, the Youth Center will share a progress report with parents. Parents may request a conference to discuss this report. A copy of this report will be kept in the child's record folder.

## **Finally**

For over a century, the Williamstown Youth Center has been an integral part of our community, providing services for generations of young people. We continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our families, and we invite you to be part of our continued growth.

Thank you.