

Our Philosophy

The philosophy at Youth Center Inc. is guided by our mission of providing educational, recreational and social activities in a safe and supportive environment. Our programing aims to help young people build positive connections with their families, schools and communities.

Statement of Purpose

The Youth Center Inc. is based in Adams, Massachusetts established for the purpose of giving the youth in our communities a safe and supportive environment to be afterschool and during school vacations and teacher in-service days. We service Northern Berkshire County. Our afterschool program is for youth grades K-5. We offer homework time directly afterschool, a snack, educational activities and program, and free time inside and outside.

We believe that mentoring and building strong relationships with youth that attend our program is our core strength. We collaborate with many community organizations to make this all work. One of those organizations is 4-H. Through their Tech Wizards mentoring grant, we receive instructors/mentors and materials for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) related classes. The instructors are provided with two mentor trainings each year. There are 8- 10 classes weekly, that run in 10 week sessions. The kids sign up prior to the classes beginning and have the opportunity to attend every class offered throughout the year. The class instructor ratios are 8 kids to 2 instructors. All instructors and youth participate in two trainings a year about mentoring. Also, included in these programs are family nights, where the kids build stronger relationships with their family by demonstrating what they have been doing at the Youth Center!

As the Youth Center in Northern Berkshire County, we recognize our position as a resource for the families we serve. We offer a school year program, school vacation program, summer programs, community get togethers and fund raisers throughout the year and at all times are willing to offer referral services to the best of our ability for additional services a child or family might need.

As a Youth Center, we welcome and encourage diversity. We do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of toileting status, race, religion, cultural heritage, sexual orientation, political beliefs, marital status, disability, and national origin or any other characteristic protected by Local, State, or Federal laws. Enrollment is based solely on the availability of space for a given age group. The center will provide open access to *all* children and families seeking services on a first come first serve basis until capacity is reached.

Administrative organization of programs

Board of Directors

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Sonia DiSanti, Director

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Amber LaFogg, Enrichment Coordinator/Afterschool Program Site Coordinator

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Gayle Kittle, Youth Sports coordinator/Afterschool Program Site Coordinator

Laurie Meehan, Drop-In Staff/Group Leader

Daunte Sandifer, Group Leader

David Haley Group Leader

Emily Swanson, Group Assistant

Zoila Pineda, Group Leader

The afterschool program is licensed through The Department of Early Education and Care. 1441 Main Street, Suite 230, Springfield, Ma. 01103

Anyone may contact EEC for information regarding the Youth Centers Inc. compliance history by call EEC at 413-788-8401

Intake and Enrollment

Parents interested in learning more about the program may schedule a visit with the Director. Children are welcome to join their parents at this time. The visitors will be allowed to tour the rooms, meet the staff and other children. They will be given a brief overview of a typical day and asked if they have any questions. If space is available, a child may be enrolled as soon as the completed packet and appropriate fees have been submitted. The enrollment packet contains several required documents including authorization and consent forms.

Waiting List

Children are accepted on a first come first serve basis. If there are no spaces available, parents may place their name on a waiting list. Parents may want to call periodically to check on their status and at any time request that their name be taken off the waiting list.

Transitioning

Since starting a new program can be hard on both child and parent, we suggest a visit before the school year or enrollment in a week or two of summer camp to make families comfortable with the center and staff.

Follow Up

A month or so after a child has started school, the parents will be contacted by the Director. The Director is interested in finding out whether families' expectations are being met and he/she will discuss how the child has transitioned thus far. In cases where the child is showing difficulty adjusting to our program, we will ask parents to come in for a meeting in an attempt to assuage the problem.

Hours of Operation For after school program

The Youth Center is open Monday through Friday from 2:00 p.m. to 6 p.m. with various programs available (half days and afterschool). On Holidays and School vacations we are open 8am-5:30pm, with aftercare until 6pm.

Holiday Closings

Independence Day

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

New Year's Day

Memorial Day

WE CLOSE EARLY ON CHRISTMAS EVE AND NEW YEARS EVE

Fees: The cost of the Afterschool Program is \$50.00/week. An addition \$10.00 per week if you need care until 6pm. There is a late fee of \$1.00 per every 1 minutes after 5:30pm, unless you are registered to stay until 6pm. Where the late fee will apply for every 1 minutes after 6pm. The late fee needs to be paid on the day of service. If payment is not received for two week the child may be suspended from the program.

Fees for vacation Fun Weeks are \$20 a day for members and \$30 a day for non-members.

Fees for summer after camp are the same as the afterschool program.

Additional Fees

\$25.00 holding fee for vacation fun weeks and summer after camp. This fee must be paid **before** the actual program.

On occasion there may be an additional fee for field trips

Return check fee is \$25.00.

Late Pick Up Policy

The Youth Center after School Program closes each day at 5:30 p.m. When an occasion arises that a parent is going to be late the Youth Center has established these firm policies:

Parents must call the Youth Center to let us know what time they will be picking up their child, or to inform us of other pick up arrangements that will be made.

If late pick up is on a constant basis, a meeting will be set up with the Director and the parent to discuss further enrollment of their child in the program.

In the event that the Youth Center **DOES NOT** receive a prior phone call from the parent, these policies will be immediately implemented:

Youth Center Enrichment staff will contact parent for instructions. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff member will call emergency contact person to arrange pick up for the child.

By 6:15pm if contact has not been made to either parent or emergency contact, a call will be placed to the Director and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Emergency Unit to report an abandoned child. The staff member will then follow instruction by DCF as to where to bring the child. The parent will be informed upon arrival as to where his/her child may be found by the Director.

A LATE FEE OF \$1.00 PER MINUTE WILL BE CHARGED AFTER 5:30 PM.

Parent visitation and communication

A parent may visit unannounced at any time while their child is present.

Parents are welcomed to communicate any problems, concerns or suggestion with the site coordinator or director at any time, by phone or in person.

We believe that good communication with families is key. We communicate through notices sent home, newsletters and verbally during pick up.

Children's records

Each child enrolled in afterschool, vacation fun weeks and after camp will be expected to fill out a new registration packet prior to school starting regardless if a packet was fill out for a vacation or summer program.

Parents may also amended by adding or deleting information at any time.

Progress Reports

The Enrichment Coordinator/Site Coordinator will complete progress reports in February for the children enrolled in the after school program and during the first week in August for children that attend the summer program, who were not enrolled in the afterschool program. A copy will be kept in the child's folder and a copy will be given to the parent/guardian. Parents may request a conference to discuss the progress report.

Plan for Child Guidance

One of our important goals is to teach the children in our care self-discipline, control, and responsibility for their own behavior. We expect that children understand that rules are in place for several reasons including the safety and happiness of everyone involved in the program. We seek to combine caring with fair and consistent limits.

Basic rules and expectations include:

- *Following safety rules (established with the children's input)
- *Listening to the staff, or person in charge
- *Being respectful to others
- *Trying to help others

Children are taught skills from the very beginning to help them have positive interactions with others. Using “their words” is a very empowering tool for those who learn to use it. They are taught that words can be used to compliment others and be a friend but also can be used to express anger or displeasure with someone’s treating them inappropriately.

Acceptable behavior is praised and encouraged. Inappropriate behavior such as hitting, name-calling, or excluding others is approached in the following ways:

1. the inappropriate behavior is addressed and the staff explains why it is unacceptable in words the child can understand.
2. if at all possible, children are encouraged to talk out their frustrations with each other with a staff standing by to encourage negotiations.
3. if a teacher intervenes, she will suggest a new “choice” be made or she re-directs the activity to discourage the inappropriate behavior.
4. some types of behavior require a short period away from the activity for the child to calm down, re-focus and then make a choice to re-join the group and behave appropriately. This time away from the activity will be for one minute for each year of their age.

No child will ever be subjected to corporal punishment at the Youth Center Inc., including spanking; humiliation, verbal abuse or any other type of cruel or demeaning punishment is strictly prohibited. Food will not be denied as a form of punishment.

Termination or Suspension of Enrollment

The center’s staff and administration are committed to the health, happiness and well-being of all children in our center. We do not ever want to bar a child from continuing enrollment at our center; however:

1. Under the following circumstances it may be necessary to *suspend* a child’s enrollment at the Youth Center Inc.:
 - a. Failure to provide health information as mandated by EEC.
 - b. Any other issue that may compromise the health and safety of students/staff or that disrupts the effectiveness of the program.
 - c. Being more than 2 weeks behind in payments.
2. Under the following circumstances it may be necessary to *terminate* enrollment:
 - a. The continued enrollment of the child would risk physical danger to himself/herself, to the other children and/or staff.
 - b. Excessive lateness in payments, with no attempt to explain or rectify the situation with the center.
 - c. Inappropriate or abusive behavior on the part of the child or the parent.

The Youth Center Inc. will provide parents with an opportunity to meet with the Director, and discuss other options other than termination or suspension. Also the center will

provide support to the families by advising them on services in our area that may be helpful.

If you choose to withdraw from the program, we require at least two weeks written notice

Situations Requiring Referrals

On occasion we encounter patterns of behavior (i.e. compulsive hitting) that we are not able to address using typical behavior modification techniques. In such cases we will take the following steps:

1. Staff will record such incidents and report them to the Enrichment Coordinator
2. Parents will be notified and made aware of such behaviors in an incident report.
3. A meeting will be held between the Enrichment Coordinator and parents to discuss the behavior, the possible reasons for it occurring (if known), and a plan for curbing and diminishing it. At the time of the meeting, referrals will be provided to the parents if necessary.
4. The center will have on hand the phone numbers for social and mental health services, education services, and medical and health service referrals.
5. Within one week following the meeting, parents will receive a letter reviewing the meeting.
6. A one-month period will be set up during which the discussed behavior management plan will be instituted, and the observations will be recorded. During this time, the Youth Center Inc. reserves the right to suspend if necessary.
7. After the one-month period, the parents and the Enrichment Coordinator will meet again to discuss evaluations or recommendations of referral services.
8. In the event that it is determined by the evaluators that the child is not in need of services, or ineligible to receive services, the center shall review the child's progress at least every three months to determine if another referral is necessary.

Mandated Reporting of Abuse and Neglect

The Youth Center staff are mandated reporters and must by law report suspected abuse or neglect to the department of children and families and EEC only if the allegations involve a child while in care of the program.

Parents will be notified of allegations of abuse or neglect involving their child while in the care of the program.

Medication 7.11(2)

The Youth Center Inc. shall not administer prescription or non-prescription medication to a child without written authorization from the parent and physician. The physician may

give a standing order listing the medication(s), dosage, and criteria for administration. This order will be valid for no more than one year from the date it was signed. For non-prescription medications, Youth Center Inc. may accept as the written parental authorization a signed statement authorizing the center to administer non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician.

Youth Center Inc. may accept a written parental authorization for specific non-prescription topical medications to be administered and the criteria for administration. This statement will be valid for no more than one year from the date it was signed. If topical ointment is applied to broken skin then doctor's permission is required. Topical medications are such as petroleum jelly and antibacterial ointments that are applied to wounds, rashes, or broken skin must be stored in the original container, labeled with the child's name and used only for the individual child. Topical medications such as sunscreen, bug spray, and other ointments that are not applied to open wounds, rashes, or broken skin may be generally administered to children with written parental authorization. The time, dates, dosage and signature will be logged for each application of the medication and entered into the child's file. A new form will be required each time a child comes in with medication. New medications must be tried first at home in case of an allergic reaction.

For ongoing medications we strongly suggest having a second prescription bottle that can be left at the Youth Center. This minimizes panic over forgetting the medicine and having missed or skipped doses.

In Case of Serious Illness/Emergency

In the case of serious illness or emergency, **the Director will dial 911 immediately** or Enrichment Coordinator and the child will be transported to BMC by whatever method suggested by the **911** operators. The parents will be contacted by a staff member and asked to meet us at the emergency room. If a parent is unavailable, the emergency contact will be notified. A member of the staff will accompany the child and remain with him/her until the parent(s) arrive at the hospital.

If an accident occurs while on a field trip, First Aid will be administered by one of our staff trained in First Aid and CPR. A full report will be made upon returning to the center and parents will be notified of the incident within 24 hours. If the injury is serious enough to require transport to a local hospital, the emergency call will be made and the above procedure for transport and notification to parents will follow the emergency call.

Illness

We cannot provide care for a child who have a diagnosed communicable disease, nor who is not well enough to participate in a normal activities. Communicable disease includes but is not limited to:

Chicken pox	Meningitis	Viral Hepatitis	Tuberculosis
Mumps	Rubella	Rabies	
Giardiasis	Whooping Cough	Measles	

When the child returns he/she must bring a certificate of health form his/her doctor or health service. The state of Massachusetts requires that a certificate be obtained from the child's doctor or health service and be placed in the child's records stating that the child is free of disease and able to return to school.

In the case of lice, the child may return after receiving treatment, but will be checked for lice upon returning. If lice or eggs are present the child may not return.

In order to minimize the spread of infection to others, we cannot accept a child who has demonstrated the following symptoms in a twenty-four hour period:

A constant fever of 101 degrees or higher

Two consecutive episodes of diarrhea (unless caused by antibiotics)

Two episodes of vomiting

Discharges from the eyes (e.g. conjunctivitis)

A rash or open sores on the body

Any symptoms of communicable disease including flu, strep throat, and those already mentioned above.

If a child appears to be feeling poorly, the Youth Center will contact the parents. While waiting for the parents to arrive, the child will be made comfortable. The parents will be asked to come as quickly as possible. If they are unable to be reached we will notify an emergency contact from their file to come and pick up the child. Any child placed on antibiotics because of an illness must remain at home for the first 24 hours on medication before returning to the center.

If any of the above requirements are in direct conflict with the parents' religious beliefs, we ask that the parent provide the center with a written statement to that effect which will be placed in the child's file.

Chronic Illness and Allergies

Children with chronic illness or allergies will need to have an individual Health Care Plan signed by the doctor. The plan must describe the chronic condition, symptoms and treatment that may be necessary while in care.

Transportation

Staff will arrive at CT Plunkett elementary school at 2:25pm. Kindergarten and first grade are met in the school cafeteria and attendance is taken. They then walk upstairs with Youth Center staff to the gymnasium where they play. Second grade through 5th grade reports to the school auditorium and attendance is taken. They then work on their homework. The CT Plunkett staff gives the Youth Center staff the absent list and if a child who is not on the absent list is not there the staff will communicate with the school to find out where that child is located. Between 2:55pm-3pm the children go down the back stairwell to the Bus. Children will be transported from school with Youth Center Staff via school bus (Plunkett with staff & Saint Stan's without staff) or Berkshire Rides 7D

Van(Savoy & Cheshire). When children arrive at the Youth Center, they are escorted into the building to hang their bags, wash hands and have snack. **Parents** are responsible for picking up and transporting their child from the Youth Center to home. The Youth Center cannot assume the responsibility for taking children home.

For local field trips, staff and children will walk to and from their destination. When the destination is beyond walking distance, the Youth Center will transport by renting a bus or a 7D Berkshire Rides van through BCAC.

Parents will need to sign a written transportation plan.

All vehicles and drivers have the appropriate licenses and inspections according to the law. A copy of the full transportation plan will be provided upon request for parents to review.

IF THERE IS A CHANGE IN THE REGULAR PICK UP PLANS, THE CENTER MUST BE NOTIFIED ON THAT DAY OR IN ADVANCE IN WRITING! YOUR CHILD WILL BE RELEASED ONLY TO THOSE PERSONS WHOM YOU MAY HAVE AUTHORIZED.

Emergencies and Evacuation

Children will walk with staff from the building. All will follow a predetermined evacuation route. Attendance will be taken to assure that all children are accounted for.

Programs & Activities

There will be a monthly calendar and newsletter given out each month with planned activities, field trips and programs. Some of the activities we offer are:

- Gardening
- Nature Exploration
- Survivor
- Minute to win it
- Silly Science
- Architectural Legos
- Photography
- Wood Burning and trail marking
- Geocaching
- Dynamic Dance
- Sewing Creations
- Cooking with Equation
- Fishing
- Book Worm reading group

Arts and Crafts
Board games and card games
Group Games inside and outside

Daily Routines

Sign Out

The enrichment staff will sign-in/ take attendance of the afterschool program students at pickup from the schools. At the end of the day, please remember to sign the attendance sheet that you and your child are leaving.

Healthy Habits

In order to promote the children's learning of good health and disease prevention, they are taught to wash their hands frequently, before and after meals, after toileting, and after coming inside from the playground. Healthy snacks and nutrition are stressed as part of the ongoing curriculum and precautions such as sunscreen and hats are strongly encouraged for the children and their parents.

Parents are requested to provide their child with a healthy lunch on ½ days and vacation weeks. Below is a list of nutritious suggestions to send in for lunches:

Carrot/Celery sticks	Rice and vegetables	Chicken slices/fingers
Yogurt	Green Salad	Tuna salad/sandwich
Cheese sticks	Bagels	Pizza with vegetables
Fruit	Pasta and Vegetables	
Applesauce	Granola Bars without candy	

In order to prevent an unanticipated allergic reaction, please try any new foods at home before sending them in, especially shellfish and nuts.

If at all possible please try to stay away from sending in sugary snacks and drinks. Food not eaten will be sent back home or disposed of by the staff.

Cold packs in their lunch boxes will keep foods cold until lunchtime. A microwave is available for re-heating foods and cooking foods like Mac and Cheese.

Health Care Policy

Our health care policy has been developed based on guidelines outlined in the Department of Early Education and Care Regulations and the Massachusetts Department of Health to ensure that each child is kept as healthy and safe as possible in our care. A copy of our full health care policy is available upon request. A list of referrals for general health, vision, hearing and dental services is also available to all parents.

Visitors

On occasion, we have visitors come to the Youth Center. These visitors could include student interns from the local colleges and/or high schools, volunteers.

Emergency Plan

All evacuation plans are posted at all exits. During an emergency evacuation all staff will be responsible for taking the attendance clip boards and for leading the children to safety, checking for stragglers. The last staff out will make sure that all rooms are empty; including bathrooms and the attendance list and first aid kit is taken. The children and staff will meet up on the hill under the pavilion. The staff will make sure that each child is accounted for and safe. The Director will call the Authorities. Staff will call the families of the children that are on their list.

Heat

In the event that the heat should go out and the temperature falls below 65 degrees, the center will close and remain close until the heat is repaired.

Water

In the event that the water supply cannot be used and toilets cannot be flushed, the center will close until the problem is corrected. If it is only the drinking water involved, bottled water will be supplied until the problem is corrected.

Fire

In the event of fire, a designated staff will grab first aid kit and we will follow the fire evacuation procedure in each room. In the event that the primarily exit is blocked, we will use the secondary exit. Maps for each are located in each room. If we are unable to return to the building, we will walk the children to the First Congregational Church, Park St. in Adams. After congregate in their hall, the staff will begin to call the parent/guardians to come and pick up their children.

Loss of Power

In the event that the Youth Center loses electrical power, the children will remain in the large downstairs room with the staff until the power is back on. Should a child need to use the bathroom, emergency lighting lights the halls and a staff will accompany that child. Should the power remain out for a long period of time, and the temperature in the building goes below 65 degrees, parents/guardians will be called to take their children home for the day. Staff will remain until all children have been dismissed to their parents/guardians.

Natural Disaster

In the event of natural disaster (i.e. flood, twister), the Director or person in charge will contact the Adams Police Dept. to advise the program on the conditions. The number for the police dept. is 743-1212. The staff will remain calm and with the children until they can be returned safely to their parents. This could mean congregating in the down stair hallway in the event of a twister or staying on the second floor in the event of a flood. If enough warning is given, parents will be called and children will be sent home. The Enrichment Coordinator or person in charge of program on this day will be responsible for contacting parents. Staff will remain with any children who are not dismissed to their parents/guardians.

The Center will maintain a daily attendance list that is accurate. It is the responsibility of Enrichment Coordinator to know how many children are in attendance each day. All of the staff is responsible for signing children in and out of the center by arrival and departure. The attendance list will be kept directly with the staff readily accessible in case of an emergency evacuation. Periodic counting of the children throughout the day is required.

Missing Child:

Once it is known that a child is lost, staff will immediately split up to do a search of the area. One staff will also alert the Director that a child is missing, Director will place a call with the local police office to notify them that a child is missing, and the location of the group. The Director will also notify parents after contacting the police. EEC and DCF will also be notified by the Director.



Parents Handbook