



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

PARENT HANDBOOK
GASTON COUNTY FAMILY YMCA



DEAR PARENT:

Welcome to the Gaston County Family YMCA! We are for Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility and we work hard to ensure this impact is felt across the county, in each of our YMCAs, and throughout our community. We develop youth through numerous program offerings in our association that are built to serve children from birth through teens. Whether it's character development in Afterschool Care, fostering relationships and a sense of belonging through Day Camp Programs, confidence development and leadership training through Teen Programming and Leader's Club, facilitating a sense of achievement through hard work in Youth Sports, or teaching the life-saving skill of swimming and confidence in the water through Swim Lessons, we take our responsibility to the youth in our community seriously. We will serve your children with compassion, patience, skill and respect, and we strive to be partners with you in your child's development. We encourage feedback from you and always want to hear any ideas, thoughts or concerns that you may have regarding Y programs. The YMCA is a place for families and we want to do everything possible to strengthen and support your family.

All our programs are designed to meet the following goals.

- **Learn to appreciate oneself, gain confidence and build self esteem**
- **Develop character through the values of Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Caring and Faith**
- **Develop skills in leadership and group work**
- **Foster relationships and strengthen friendships**
- **Have fun!**

We encourage all parents to visit us online at www.gastonymca.org for a comprehensive list of all our program offerings and to find additional information about their YMCA.

**In Service,
Gaston County Family YMCA Program Team**

Cherryville YMCA
119 East Main St
Cherryville, NC 28021
704-445-9622

Pharr Family YMCA
208 Main St
McAdenville, NC 28101
704-824-1131

Stowe Family YMCA
196 YMCA Dr.
Belmont, NC 28012
704-822-9622

Warlick Family YMCA
2221 Robinwood Rd.
Gastonia, NC 28056
704.830.9622

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM REGISTRATION..... pages 4-5
Registration process
Required information
Payment information
Scholarship information
Cancellation process

STAFF..... pages 5-6
Training
Ratios
Babysitting

PROGRAM PRACTICES..... pages 6-9
Drop Off and Pick Up
What to Bring / What not to Bring
Behavioral Expectation
Visiting a Program
Swim Testing
Children with Special Needs
HEPA Standards
Inclement Weather
Illness and Injury
Lost and Found

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC POLICIES & PRACTICES..... pages 10-19
Afterschool..... 11-12
Aquatics..... 12-13
Childwatch..... 14-15
Day Camp..... 15-17
Family Programs.. 18
Sports..... 18-19
Teens..... 19



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

PROGRAM REGISTRATION

- **Registration Process**

Some of our programs are drop in (meaning advanced registration is not required), however, most require registration in order to participate.

Registration typically takes place on-line or at the Membership Desk of any branch – whichever is more convenient for you.

- **Required Information**

When you register for any program, please be aware that **email** is our primary form of communication. Therefore, correct and current contact information is vital at the time of registration. A regularly checked email address is a **requirement** for program participation.

In order to be fully registered in any program, ALL the fields on any paper or on-line form must be filled out completely. If a field is not applicable to you or your child, please indicate this with an N/A.

- **Membership Benefits**

Membership is not necessarily a requirement to participate in most program offerings, though members do take advantage of a break on program prices.

- **Waitlist**

We work hard to serve anyone who is interested in participating in a program. Occasionally, a program will fill to capacity and we will start a waitlist. If a program is full at the time of your registration and you are placed on a waitlist, a director from that program area will be in touch with you regarding specific next steps.

Things change for families, and being placed on the waitlist does not necessarily count you out.

- **Payment Information**

Payment is always required prior to participation in any program that has a fee structure. Some of our programs require payment in full up front like sports or swim lessons – and some programs are set up to take multiple payments across a session – like afterschool or dance.

If a payment is declined, our business office representatives will be in touch to collect payment prior to the start of the program. A late payment fee of \$20 will be assessed to all payments received after the due date. If payment is not received prior to the start of the program we reserve the right to cancel the registration and remove the participant. Any unpaid balance not collected in-house will be sent to an outside agency.

- **Financial Assistance Information**

As a **501c3 non-profit charity**, we provide financial assistance to members who would otherwise not be able to participate in programs. Eligibility is determined by the member's income and is administered on a sliding scale. If you would like to explore this process, please visit the Membership Desk and ask for an application. All applications and supporting documentation is reviewed by our Financial Assistance team, and one of them will contact you to let you know the qualifying level of assistance you can receive.

If you do not require financial assistance to participate in programs, but are interested in learning more about how **YOU can give** to support access to quality childcare, the drowning prevention programs we offer across the community, or cancer survivors through our LiveSTRONG program, please visit us on-line or give us a call. We would welcome the opportunity to tell you more about the important and impactful work we do in this community every single day that we can *only* do through the **support of members like you**.



- **Cancellation**

In the instance that you need to cancel your registration in any program, *we require written notice a minimum of 1 full week prior to the start of the program.* Your program fee is 100% refundable as long as you have met these requirements. If your cancellation falls inside a week's notice, or was not provided in writing, we reserve the right to keep partial or full payment depending on staff time and dollars invested in the program based on your registration. **PLEASE NOTE:** Verbal notification given to *any* staff member who works outside of the business office does not qualify as a notice of cancellation. While you may share this information in passing to a counselor, a coach, a drop off or pick up staff, or a director, it is imperative that you follow up with written notification to our business office. They are the only staff members in our organization who can process this request.

If your program participation required a deposit, your program fee - less the deposit - will be refunded to you. **Deposits are non-refundable**, but may be transferable.

STAFF

Regardless of the program, our staff work hard to create a welcoming environment focused on group cohesiveness and the inclusion of all children. They are expected to lead by positive example, promote caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and faith in each environment, and follow the practices in each program that keep children happy and safe.

- **Who we are**

We feel confident that we have the best staff in town! Our staff is as diverse as our children and comprised of men and women who want to make an impact on their community. We strive to hire staff that are college students, graduates, or working professionals, although we do have some exceptional 16 and 17 year olds too! Most importantly, our staff are people who love kids. They want to spend their time developing, teaching, and working with children. They are good people with good hearts.

- **Training**

Prior to their employment, staff members have been drug tested, had a criminal background check, and have completed 3 reference checks. All of our staff are required to be CPR and basic first aid certified within their first 90 days, and typically go through a minimum of 20 additional hours of program specific training focused on providing quality services in each program area through a child centered approach. Developmental ages and stages, behavior management techniques, positive reinforcement, and quarterly risk management reviews, are just a few examples of the trainings our staff teams go through over the course of a year.

- **Staff to Participant Ratios**

All of our childcare programs (afterschool, day camp, or childwatch) adhere to the following staff to participant ratios:

6 weeks to 11 months – 1:3
12 months to 24 months – 1:6
3 years to 5 years – 1:8
6 years and up – 1:15

Please see the specific program information for group sizes and staff to participant ratios in our other enrichment programs.

- **Babysitting Policies**

YMCA staff are not allowed to fraternize with, babysit, or transport your child outside of the YMCA program. We request that you not ask any staff to care for your child outside of the YMCA. If a relationship exists outside the Y which predates the staff employment with the YMCA, staff should notify their supervisor in writing so that it can be noted in the staff's records.

PROGRAM PRACTICES

Below you can find the expectations and operational practices for all of the youth programs we offer. For additional information relevant to a specific program area, please see the program addendums in the back of this packet.

- **Drop Off and Pick Up**

- **Childcare Programs** (Afterschool, Day Camp, Childwatch, Parents Night Out, etc.)

- Children may not be dropped off before the program begins, and they must be signed in by a parent/caregiver.
 - Children may not sign themselves into a program.
 - Children must be on the roster in order to be signed in.
 - **Code Words/Authorized Pick Up:** When picking up your child(ren), you will be asked to provide the CODE WORD or a photo ID daily. If you are using a code word, it will be selected during the time of registration. Your child will only be released to those who know the Code Word or who's photo ID matches the names provided on the Authorized Pick Up list. This is to ensure the safety of every child. The approved guardian will then initial next to the child's name to sign them out. In order to keep the integrity of the Code Word process intact, children should NOT know their own Code Word. A friend or family member will be permitted to pick up your child provided they know the Code Word, and/or written notification has been delivered to the program director of the pick up arrangements from the parent or guardian. If anyone is ever unable to provide a code word, a photo ID and phone verification will be required. Please know this process can take additional time.
 - **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 times not allowed by court decree. The court decree must also be specific to the rights of visitation on the YMCA property during Afterschool, Summer Camp, or other program. The court document must specify in writing that visitation is permitted by the non-custodial parent. Otherwise, visitation will not be permitted. If there is ever a disagreement between parents on what the custody arrangements are and how it affects our pick up policies, we will call law enforcement to confirm the most recent versions of any court documents. We are not legally allowed to deny a parent access to his or her children without specific documentation, and we can not take a parent's word for it. **Please call the Director if you have any specific custody issues.**
 - **Late Pick Up:** In fairness to our staff and because of subsequent program demands, it is very important that your child be picked up on time. A late fee will be charged for **each child** in our care at close of program. The fee is \$1 per minute per child and must be paid before the child returns to program. After 10 minutes, the YMCA staff will begin calling parents/emergency contacts. If a child is not picked up within 30 minutes, and we have not been able to make contact with a parent, local authorities can be called.

- **Enrichment (non-childcare) Programs** (Sports, Aquatics, Teens, etc.)

- Children may not be dropped off before the program begins.
 - Parents are expected to stay on-site for the duration of the program

- **Impairment**

- If a YMCA staff member believes that a parent is intoxicated or impaired at the time of transport, we will retain the child until an alternate plan can be arranged to get the child safely home. Local authorities can be notified.

• **What to Bring**

All programs have the following “what to bring” requirements for participation. A more detailed program specific list will be emailed to you upon registration and prior to program start.

- Waterbottle
- Appropriate Clothing/Uniform
- Positive Attitude

• **What NOT to Bring**

Regardless of the program, the items below are never necessary.

- Phones or Electronics
- Money, Jewelry, Valuables
- Toys from home
- Real or fake Weapons or Drugs of any kind

• **Behavioral Expectations**

We know that kids are kids, & that they are constantly learning & shaping their interpersonal skills. We never expect them to be perfect & are happy to be involved in their development. Our behavioral expectations are as follows:

- Safety First
- Listen and follow directions
- Do what is right
- Be respectful to others
- Try everything and do your best

We make every effort to redirect disruptive behavior through positive reinforcement & reflection, & are committed to working with parents to resolve any issues. Any unruly or disruptive behaviors can be dealt with in the following ways:

- **Verbal notification via parent phone call, or parent conference**
- **Documentation of behavior(s)**
- **1 Day Suspension**
- **3 Day Suspension**
- **5 Day Suspension**
- **Dismissal warning**
- **Dismissal from program**

Please note: Depending on the severity of an issue the YMCA reserves the right to move straight to dismissal for disruptive or unruly behavior, running away, or behaviors that threaten the safety of another participant or staff member in our program.

Parent Code of Conduct: We are invested in your child & want to provide the best experience we can for your family. We welcome feedback & always want to hear your concerns. Our goal is to communicate with you openly, honestly & often. Please know that we will never tolerate foul or offensive language, verbal abuse, or any threatening behaviors aimed at staff members or any other participant in our programs. While these types of issues are rare, they can & do happen. In these instances, membership privileges will be revoked & individuals can be trespassing from any & all YMCA properties.

• Visiting a Program

We welcome parent involvement in our programs and are excited when parents express the desire come and see their children in action. Because we take seriously the safety and security of the children in our care, anyone wishing to have access to the program or program area – and therefore access to the children in our programs – must fill out a volunteer application and complete a background check. Otherwise, visitors must be accompanied by a staff member or director at all times and visits must be less than 15 minutes in duration. If you just want to stop in and have lunch with your child, we will follow our normal procedures for checking children in and out of the program so they can enjoy time with you in a setting that does not involve the rest of the children in our care.

• Swim Testing and Aquatics Rules

When enrolled in a swim lesson program, all children will be accompanied by a YMCA swim instructor and will follow a specific curriculum designed to increase a child's skill and confidence in the water. In any other program that has aquatic access, the following policies and procedures will be utilized.

- Proper Swim attire must be worn at all times
- All children ages 15 and younger will be swim tested in order to utilize the aquatic facility. Once tested, they will be given a band.
 - **Green Band Swimmer** = Can pass all aspects of the swim test including re-surfacing out of water over their heads, floating front and back, and treading water effectively. They have unrestricted access to the aquatics areas which includes lakefront use.
 - **Yellow Band Swimmer** = Can pass a shallow water swim test, but not a deep water swim test. They are restricted to specific areas of the pool. (Warlick = Rec Pool. Stowe & Cherryville = Shallow end of the pool.)
 - **No Band Swimmer** = Non-swimmer who must stay in a designated area. (Warlick = The Beach/ Splash Pad. Stowe & Cherryville = Shallow end of the pool.) Once a child or participant wants to cross the rope or go down the steps into the deeper areas of the pool, they must swim supervised with a parent or approved staff member IN the water with them. Parents or approved staff members must be within arm's reach of child wherever they are in the pool.
 - Anyone refusing swim testing automatically gets the non-swimmer designation.
- Children ages 12-15 who have NOT passed the Green level swim test may not be in the pool area without an adult or approved staff member
- Non-Swimmers must be accompanied by an adult or approved staff member within arm's reach to go beyond the rope in the recreational pool. This applies even if the swimmer is wearing a PFD.

If you have specific questions regarding our aquatic policies and procedures and how they interface with your child's program, please contact the aquatic director at your branch.

• Children with Special Needs

We are committed to making whatever reasonable accommodation we can to be inclusive of children with special needs. Parents or guardians should reach out to the program director, prior to a child's registration or acceptance into a YMCA program, to discuss any special circumstances which may affect the child's ability to participate fully and within the guidelines of acceptable behavior, including but not limited to any **serious behavioral problems or special circumstances regarding psychological, medical and/or physical conditions**. The Director and parents will work together to determine a plan for the child's involvement and/or if involvement is possible depending on the circumstances.

• HEPA Standards

All of our youth programs incorporate the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards of the YMCA of the USA. Through these standards and intentionally designed components of each program, we aim to educate kids about healthy lifestyles, model healthy behaviors and cultivate environments that make it easier for kids to make healthier choices. Be on the lookout for HEPA tips from your child's program via emails or monthly newsletters to learn more about our goal to improve health for youth in every community the Y serves.

• Inclement Weather

When inclement weather strikes, safety is our top priority. Therefore, our YMCA programs are subject to change and/or to cancellation in these situations. We monitor conditions closely – including travel conditions to and from the Y – and will make an appropriate call as soon as we are able.

We follow the Gaston County Schools weather policies for delays or cancellations as it pertains to our childcare programs. If school is cancelled during the school day the Afterschool program will also be cancelled. Please check www.gastonymca.org and our Facebook page for updates. (**Inclement weather cancellations are not subject to refunds.)

• Illness or Injury

Illness:

We will notify you if your child becomes ill while in our care, and you should arrange to have your child picked up as soon as possible. He or she may not be re-admitted to the program until he or she has been fever and symptom-free for 24 hours OR you have a note from the child's physician showing he or she is free of symptoms. For contagious illnesses, our YMCA works side by side with the health department to stop the spread of illness and communicate appropriately with parents.

Injuries:

While safety is top priority for us, scrapes, cuts, bumps and bruises *do* happen in our programs. When an injury occurs, our staff are trained to provide appropriate care.

- In the case of a non-emergency/minor injury, we will treat your child and notify you at pick up. However, we will notify you immediately by phone call for a non-emergency injury if the injury resulted in significant bleeding, or if the injury was to the head or face.
- We will always notify you by phone call if we feel that a non-emergency injury should be followed up with more advanced medical care.
- In the case of an emergency, we will always notify EMS or 911 first, and then immediately notify the parent(s). The emergency contact will be notified if a parent cannot be reached.



• Lost and Found

While we do our best to help children keep up with their belongings, it is impossible to keep track of every single item for every child that spends time in our programs. And as any parent knows, children are prone to losing things now and then despite best efforts. Please label your child's belongings when sending them to a program. While not a fool-proof guarantee, it does help with the process of reuniting children and families with missing items.

Because of the volume of lost and found, we cannot hold items beyond a week from the time they are found. Any item not claimed within a 7 day window is disposed of or donated to charity. If you have questions about where lost and found items can be located, please ask at the membership desk.

**PROGRAM SPECIFIC
POLICIES &
PROCEDURES**

Afterschool

Weekly Schedule –

Your child's afterschool day will typically run from the time the bell rings until 6:00pm and will regularly be comprised of 4 major components: Healthy Snack, Homework Time, Outdoor Physical Play, and Enrichment Activities. We work hard to make sure that sending your children to us in the afterschool program means better quality time at home for all of you in the evenings. More time for dinner and relaxing evening routines, and less time wrangling any homework that still needs to be done.

Contacting Afterschool –

At the start of your session, you will be provided with the contact information you will need to get in touch with someone at your afterschool site. Due to the nature of an afterschool director's job, he or she is often at an afterschool site, or dealing with daily logistics, and is not often at a desk. However, we take communication seriously and work very hard to make sure your phone calls and emails are returned. You should expect to have your call/email returned within 24-48 hours. Association-wide we have upward of 500 children in our programs on a given day, so please keep in mind the volume of important phone calls/emails we receive and do our best to return in a timely manner.

In the case of a true emergency, please contact the main YMCA line for immediate assistance.

The Afterschool Day

What to wear

Afterschool participants should plan to come to the program dressed appropriately for the weather. We DO make it a priority to go outside – even if it's cold – for their physical activity, and children should be dressed to do so. Hats and coats in the colder months are necessary. Children should always wear close-toed shoes and should be following the Gaston County Schools dress code.

Design of Day – Physical Activity, Enrichment and Play

The afterschool experience is designed to foster relationships, build confidence, nurture social skills, facilitate teamwork and encourage personal growth. And for kids – all of those things happen through play and hands-on activities.

The physical activity guidelines we follow are relevant to all children, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, or the socio-economic status of the family. Through the HEPA focus of our afterschool program children and youth are encouraged to live an active lifestyle and participate in physical activities that support their healthy development. In our program, we will limit sedentary behaviors (especially screen time), and regularly schedule a range of physical activities for children to participate in. Following these guidelines is associated with better body composition, cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness, academic achievement and cognition, emotional regulation, pro-social behaviors, cardiovascular and metabolic health, and overall quality of life.

We design our weekly or monthly enrichment activities knowing that kids learn best when it's disguised as interactive, hands-on fun.

Transportation

Some afterschool sites are at your child's school. Others are transported by the YMCA to a specific afterschool site – either at another community school or at the YMCA. If your child will be a car rider for the day, or is out of school for any reason, please notify your afterschool director. Children who are on the bus roster, but not accounted for at the end of the day, result in longer wait times while our staff verify the child's status prior to leaving the school. This slows down our transportation process and can result in late pick ups from other sites.



All children who are being transported by the YMCA will be expected to follow these rules:

- Children will remain in their seats with their backs and bottoms touching the seats at all times.
- Children will keep their voices at an appropriate level.
- Children may not put anything (including body parts) outside the bus windows.
- Children will behave respectfully and use appropriate language.
- No eating or drinking on the bus.
- Children will show respect to the bus by leaving it clean and not defacing seats/walls.
- Children will wear seatbelts where applicable.
- All children must follow the directions of the driver and Y staff at all times.

Failure to follow bus rules could result in suspension or termination from the program.

Snacks

We provide a daily afterschool snack for all our participants. We put a priority on serving fruits or vegetables and stay away from snacks that contain partially hydrogenated oils (trans fat), are fried or pre-fried. We also serve whole grains when grains are served, and provide foods free of sugar as one of the first three ingredients or that have less than eight grams of added sugar per serving.

Health Information

Completing the medical and behavioral information section of the registration process is one of the most important parts of your child's registration. This is the only information the YMCA has regarding any medical or behavioral needs of your child. If you have specific strategies to help your child be successful and make good choices, and/or if your child has allergies, asthma, seizures, ADHD or any other medical condition that we need to know about, please describe it in detail during the registration process. Our goal is to work alongside you as parents to help and support your child.

Medications at Afterschool

We prefer that all medications are given at home when possible. If it is necessary to administer medication to your child in our program, you must fill out a medication consent form and deliver it, along with the medication, to the afterschool site coordinator at your child's site. Medications must be in their original prescription bottles with clear directions for administration. We cannot accept medications in a plastic baggie or any other temporary container.

Payment Schedule

Once you register for afterschool, your registration is on-going and you will be drafted accordingly until written notification of cancellation. Upon registration, you can choose to have your payment drafted on the 1st of the month, on the 1st and the 15th, or every Friday.

- Payments can be drafted from your checking account, your savings account, or from a credit card on file.
- Returned or declined payments are subject to a \$25 late fee and must be paid in full to avoid removal from program.

Aquatics

Design of the Program – Staged by Skill Development

The YMCA uses a developmental series of specific steps that are mastered in a natural progression. Those skills are: Water Adjustment, Buoyancy, Body Position, Arm and Leg Development, Forward Movement, and Stroke Technique. When you register, you will be asked a series of "yes" or "no" questions concerning your child's skill level. This will help us dictate where to place him or her. In order to achieve the highest level of success, your child will be placed in a class that meets his or her developmental needs at the time of the assessment.

There is no “standard timeline” for your child’s development in the water. It is not unusual for a child to repeat a class until they have mastered the skills necessary to move ahead to the next stage. In general, your child’s readiness is influenced by physical development, their previous experiences, and their behavioral maturity. For this reason some classes are restricted by age as well as specific developmental skill.

At times you may see your child sitting on the side of the pool, or “playing”. Part of being safe in the water includes children knowing how to get themselves up on the side, and utilizing play as an important part of learning. Games and “play” allow your child to gain confidence and skill while staying engaged.

Most of our swim lessons are provided in a group setting, however, private and small-group sessions are available.

Behavior

Rest assured that it is not unusual to see tears and hear crying when children are first exposed to swim lessons. It is important to trust our staff in helping your child overcome his or her fears. Even if they are scared to get in the water, continuing to come is important. The more your child is exposed to the swim lesson environment, the more likely they are to gain the confidence they need to participate. And participating helps them overcome their fears. Please understand that we may ask you to step out of sight if your child is having difficulty adjusting so that he or she can start to develop a trust relationship with their instructor.

If your child is misbehaving, our instructors or the swim lesson coordinator will address it. We use positive reinforcement to encourage appropriate in-class behavior.

What to Wear

Most bathing suits or swim trunks are acceptable. Make sure that the swimwear you choose fits snugly so that it will not hinder any movement. Make sure your child’s swimwear does not include any sort of built-in flotation. If your swimmer feels that he or she needs goggles, they are welcome to bring and wear them. However, a portion of the lesson will always include encouraging your child to get comfortable without wearing them.

Communication

You will receive an email prior to your swim lesson that details what you can expect in your class. We also highly encourage you to introduce yourself to your child’s instructor so that they can keep you informed of your child’s progress. We do ask that you limit your time speaking with an instructor to before or after class, as talking with them during class leads to distraction and a potential safety issue when the instructor can not focus solely on his or her students. Typically, a swim lesson coordinator is on-deck and immediately available to address any concerns or questions you may have.

Cancellations

Occasionally, due to factors beyond our control like weather or pool contamination, we have to cancel lessons. On those occasions, we will offer make up sessions to ensure you get your entire session. No make up sessions will be offered if you can not make a scheduled class.

In the case of private lessons – which are scheduled by appointment only – your cancellation must be received in writing more than 24 hours in advance in order to be provided with a make-up lesson. Because we schedule individual instructors to spend one-on-one time with your child, more than 3 cancellations/reschedules will result in the loss of the lesson.



Childwatch

Our Childwatch areas are considered “drop in” and no advanced registration is required. It is a “members only” service and we provide childcare for members as young as 6 weeks through 12 years old. For the safety of all our participants, we do enforce maximums in each room or area. Please know that we understand the commitment it takes to work toward and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and it is our goal to accommodate you and your children when you arrive. We will always do what we can to avoid a waitlist situation. Please see the specific hours of operation at your branch, along with the timeframe of care each location offers. Due to the volume demands, they are not the same in all locations.

Communication

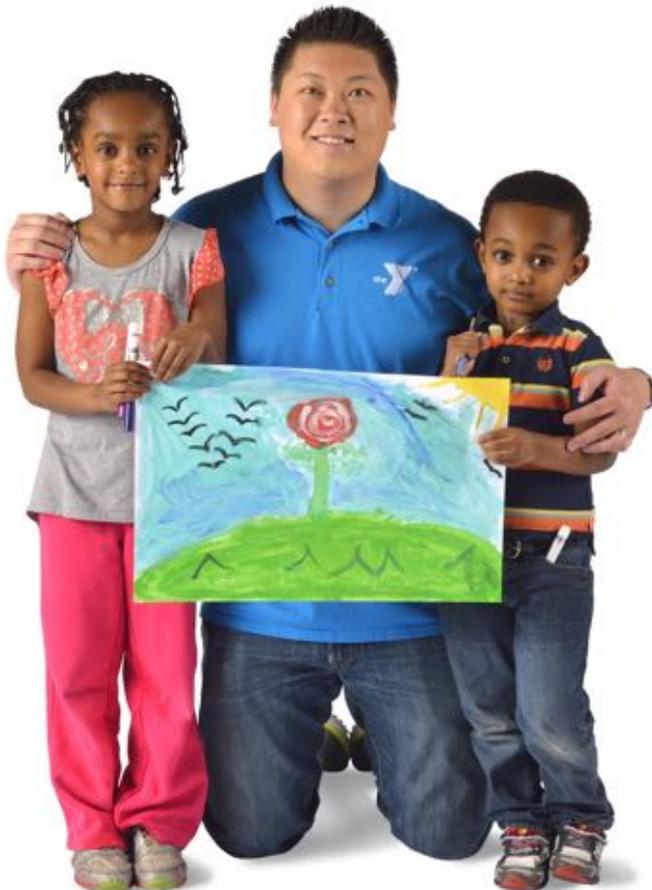
We want you to feel comfortable leaving your child in our care. If your child has any special needs, is toilet training, or if you have any other concerns or updates regarding your child’s care, please share those with staff upon drop off. Additionally, our staff are always happy to provide an update on how your child did while he or she was in our care. Please speak with someone when you pick up.

What to Bring

Please bring extra diapers and wipes for non-toilet trained children, a change of clothing for toddlers and/or children who are potty-training, and comfort items for young children like a pacifier or a small blanket. Parents can pack a leak-proof cup for their toddler, and/or a pre-mixed bottle for infants. Toys, phones, electronics, trading cards, stuffed animals, money and other similar items are not necessary and should stay at home.

What to Wear

Children should be dressed appropriately for active play. Girls in dresses should wear a pair of shorts underneath, and all participants should be wearing socks, or should bring a pair of socks with them. Seasonal clothing, like a coat or a jacket and a hat, is necessary for outdoor play.



Diapering / Toilet Training

Our staff members will change diapers as needed. The YMCA staff will apply diaper cream provided the cream is supplied by the parent and a medication consent form is on-file with the staff.

Please let us know if your child is in the process of toilet training. We will gladly work with you on this process. We will take him or her to the bathroom on a regular basis. If your child has an accident while in our care, we will locate you and have you change them into their change of clothing. Once they are clean and dry, they are welcome to stay with us.

Snacks

Outside food and snacks are not permitted in our childwatch areas. We are happy to feed very young babies on demand as needed, but please plan to bring toddlers and older children with full bellies.

Excessive Crying

It is normal to see some tears when a child is transitioning into a new environment, and our staff is committed to helping your child adjust quickly and easily. However, if a child is inconsolable for more than 15 minutes, we will come and get a parent for assistance.

Biting

Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between 13 and 24 months of age. If a biting incident occurs, the following steps will be taken:

- The biting will be interrupted (if possible) with a firm, "NO. We don't bite people. That hurts."
- Staff will remain calm and not overreact.
- The bitten child will be comforted and have the bitten spot cleaned and cooled with an ice pack.
- Staff will remove the biting child from the situation. The child will then be isolated from the group for time out (either in a regular chair or high chair based on their age).
- Both parents will be notified of the biting incident and appropriate documentation will be filled out.
- Confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained.

CONSEQUENCES — 35 months and under

Children ages 35 months and younger will be:

- isolated from the group if they bite.
- After three biting occurrences where skin is peeled, broken, or bleeding in a 30 day period, the child will be suspended for 1 day.

CONSEQUENCES — 36 months and over

Children ages 36 months and older will be:

- Isolated from the group if they bite
- Be required to leave the YMCA immediately and will not be able to return the following day (24 hours)
- Suspended for 1 day on the first day\instance of biting. After the second bite occurs, the child will be suspended 2 days.
- After the third bite occurs, the child will be removed from the childcare program for a period of time based on the Director's discretion.

Day Camp

Daily/Weekly Schedule –

Your Day Camp Director will email you a Welcome Letter prior to the start of each session that will provide you the specific information for the upcoming week of camp. (Please see "Registration Requirements regarding providing a current and frequently checked email address.) This will include a daily or weekly schedule and pertinent information about swim days, field trips, and any other details you'd want to know for the upcoming week. Each week of camp is a little different from the last, so it will be important to read the letters from the director each and every week-- even if you are a repeat camper.

Contacting Camp –

At the start of your session, you will be provided with the contact information you will need to get in touch with someone IN camp. Due to the nature of a Camp Director's Job, he or she is often "in the field" at camp with the campers and is not often at a desk. However, we take communication seriously and work very hard to make sure your phone calls and emails are returned. You should expect to have your call/email returned within 24-48 hours. It is not unusual to have hundreds of children in our programs in a given day, so please keep in mind the volume of important phone calls/emails we receive and do our best to return in a timely manner.

In the case of a true emergency, please contact the main YMCA line for immediate assistance.



The Camp Day

Outdoor Environment

Camp is primarily an outdoor environment. While there are specific day camp programs that are designed to be indoors, overall, camp programming is held outside. Outdoor time is a **vital** part of a child’s healthy development. Studies show that playing outdoors builds physically healthier children, contributes to better cognitive and social/emotional development, improves sensory skills, increases attention spans, boosts immunity and results in better overall happiness. In short, outdoor experiences are important to the work of youth development and healthy living.

What to wear

Parents often ask “Why is my child so DIRTY when they get in my car?” Camp is a lot of dirty, messy, creative, active FUN! Play is serious business and your campers will look like it when they climb into the car at the end of the day. Campers need to wear play clothes that can get dirty or messy without issue. Shoes should be sneakers that can be worn inside & outside and that are allowed to get muddy from time to time. Clothing should be light colored and light fabrics that are comfortable in summertime temperatures. A hat or a visor is also recommended.

Design of Day – Learning through Play

The camp experience is designed to foster relationships, build confidence, nurture social skills, facilitate teamwork and encourage personal growth. And for kids – all of those things happen through play. We design our curriculum and plan our activities knowing that kids learn best when it’s disguised as fun. We know that mastering a skill, working together with other campers in their group, problem solving through an activity, or just feeling comfortable being silly with other campers builds the foundations of kids who can lead others, show empathy, navigate difficult and challenging dynamics, value the differences in others, and give their best. To a kid, a camp day just looks like fun. And it is! But we know that it’s also so much more.

Managing the Heat – How to be cool when it’s hot.

We know first-hand how hot summer can get. But when weather reports include heat warnings, we’re prepared – adjusting our camp day to safeguard campers from dehydration and overexposure to sun and heat. We provide cool, shaded places for camp activities, provide frequent water breaks, keep water available at all times, and monitor sun exposure.

When it’s extra hot, here’s our plan:

HEAT INDEX	RISK LEVEL	ACTION
Below 80° F	None	It’s warm but we’ll do everything as planned, with plenty of water breaks, as usual.
80° - 89° F	Low	It’s steamy out but we’re still OK to play as planned! Water is available at all times every day. Today we’ll add more shady time, take plenty of breaks, and maybe even add some water fun!
90° - 104° F	Moderate	It’s a bit hotter than normal. Today, camp leaders will monitor daily activities, with more outdoor activity in the cooler hours of the day, and rotations inside in the heat of the day. We’ll take lots of breaks to chill out, make sure kids stay hydrated with plenty of water, and play games that keep us comfortable.
Greater than 105° F	High	WOW! Now that’s a hot day! A day this hot is certainly no joke. We’ll significantly adjust our day to minimize heat and sun exposure.

Sunscreen

Protecting skin from the sun's damaging rays is important. Always apply sunscreen to your child at home before arriving at camp — we can assist in reapplying as needed throughout the day. Send your preferred sunscreen labeled with your child's name on it in his or her backpack every day. Spray sunscreen is required if your child needs counselor assistance to reapply.

If you have specific questions about sunscreen application or if you have a child with a sunscreen allergy, please contact your branch camp director.

What to bring

Campers will always need a re-usable, re-fillable water bottle (sports style, NOT disposable), 2 snacks, and a backpack.

A specific "what to bring list" will be emailed to you prior to your child's week and will clearly lay out what days require a swim suit, a towel, and any other item specific to the activities of the week.

Meals and Snacks

For many of our camp programs, Gaston County Schools provides breakfast and lunch for our campers. You will be notified as a part of your Welcome to Camp email if your child's specific camp program participates in this service, or if you will be required to pack your child's lunch daily.

If you are planning to participate in breakfast, your child must be on campus no later than 8:00am. Breakfast is not served past 8:30am.

You should plan to pack a morning snack and an afternoon snack daily for your child.

Health Information

Completing the medical and behavioral information section of the registration process is one of the most important parts of your child's registration. This is the only information the YMCA has regarding any medical or behavioral needs of your child. If you have specific strategies to help your child be successful and make good choices, and/or if your child has allergies, asthma, seizures, ADHD or any other medical condition that we need to know about, please describe it in detail during the registration process. Our goal is to work alongside you as parents to help and support your child.

Medications at Camp

We prefer that all medications are given at home when possible. If it is necessary to administer medication to your child at camp, you must fill out a medication consent form and deliver it, along with the medication, to the day camp director. Medications must be in their original prescription bottles with clear directions for administration. We cannot accept medications in a plastic baggie or any other temporary container.

Payment Schedule

When you register for camp, you can choose to have your payment drafted on the 1st of the month, on the 1st and the 15th, or every Friday. Or you can choose to pay in full at the time of your registration.

Payments can be drafted from your checking account, your savings account, or from a credit card on file.

Deposits are required to hold your child's spot, and are non-refundable. They may be transferable depending on the circumstances.



Family Programs

We have many diverse, often seasonally rotating, family program options available across our branches. Our most consistent program offerings are:

- Parent's Night Out (PNO)
- Kid's Night Out (KNO)
- Parent's Morning Out (PMO)
- Homeschool Wellness

The PNO, KNO and PMO programs are designed to be enriching and engaging experiences your child can participate in while you run errands, enjoy a date night, go to an appointment, or just RELAX! Advanced registration is required. What to bring, what to wear and additional program details will be emailed to you prior to the start of the program.

Homeschool Wellness is a fun and engaging hands-on program that covers topics such as aquatic safety, nutrition, and importance of active play in a fun game-based environment. Advanced registration is required and space is limited.

We encourage you to regularly check out our comprehensive list of program offerings on-line under "Family Programs".



Sports

Program Design

The Gaston County YMCA Youth Sports Program is dedicated to serving youth and their families by providing affordable sports programs in a non-competitive environment, improving children's athletic skills while emphasizing fun, sportsmanship, teamwork, and the development of confidence and positive self-esteem. The foundations of our program are as follows:

- **Everyone plays.** We do not use "try outs" or cut children from teams. Everyone who registers is assigned a team, gets equal practice and game time, and is welcome to try any position regardless of skill level.
- **Inclusivity.** Children of all skill levels and abilities are welcome, and modifications will be made when necessary. We believe in appreciating and encouraging the diversity of all the children in our program.
- **Teamwork.** We focus on cooperation and development; not competition.
- **Fun.** Sports are naturally fun for most children. They love mastering skills, and playing with their friends. Our goal is to create and maintain an environment that supports sports for fun and fosters a life-long love of the game.
- **Fitness.** Sports are a great way to develop the life-long habit of regular cardiovascular exercise – key to leading a healthy life.
- **Safety.** We know that bumps, bruises and the occasional injury do happen in any sports program. However, we work hard to prevent injuries and make modifications when necessary in order to run the safest program possible.

Leagues are offered year round, and include options like Basketball, Soccer, Flag Football, Indoor Volleyball and Sand Volleyball. Many of our leagues are available for children as young as 3, and as old as 17. Visit our website for the specific age requirements of the sport you are interested in.

Team Formation and Special Requests

For our youngest players, teams are formed through friend request, coach request, practice night availability, or any combination of those factors. While we will **always** do our best to accommodate special requests, please know that we can never guarantee them. A request is just that.

Our athletes ages 9 and up will participate in a player draft to help ensure balanced teams and a more successful and robust sports experience. Details of the draft process will be emailed to you upon registration.

Practices and Games

Practices typically take place for one hour, one night a week. Games typically take place on Friday evenings or Saturday mornings. Practice times, locations and days of the week are all determined by the number of teams in the league, how many players are registered, and coach availability. You can expect to have a practice schedule emailed to you once registration has closed and all the team logistics have been finalized.

Uniforms and Equipment Requirements

Jerseys are typically provided as a part of any sports program. Any equipment that you may be required to provide (like shin guards or cleats) will be communicated to you as a part of the registration process.

Communication

Email is our primary form of communication for all sports programs. You can expect a Welcome email after the close of registration. This will include your team placement, your coach information and your practice schedule. League rules will be delivered to you through your coach, and you can also access them on our website.

Game schedules will be emailed to you after the first week of practice.

Coaching

Almost all of our coaches are volunteers and must have successfully completed a background check, a volunteer application, and our on-line Child Abuse Prevention training prior to coaching. Coaches must adhere to the Coaches Code of Ethics which incorporates our Youth Sports Philosophy, and be able to fulfill their commitment as a coach by consistently attending practices and games during the season.

If you are interested in coaching, please contact the Sports Director at your YMCA.

Inclement Weather

In the event of rain, inclement weather, or conditions that leave fields unplayable, we will notify you of the cancellation no later than 1 hour prior to game or practice. We will do our best to make up every game. Cancelled practices will not be rescheduled.

Team Sponsorship

If you are interested in sponsoring your child's team – or ANY team – please contact the sports director at your specific branch.

Teens

Somewhere between being a kid and becoming an adult, a teen is discovering who they are and who they want to be. At the Y, we know that teenagers will rise to meet expectations set for them, so we set our expectations high. Mentors, staff and other role models value our teens' individuality and guide them toward becoming responsible and engaged adults. Please check us out on-line for more teen program offerings.

Saturday Night Live/Middle School Madness

A safe space for your teen to hang out with friends, engage in age appropriate activities, build confidence and gain independence. Appropriate dress is required and Gaston County School dress code is followed. Gang related paraphernalia is not permitted. Students not following dress code will not be admitted to the program. Check with your specific branch for registration details.

Leaders' Club

This nation-wide leadership service based program helps teens discover their full potential as leaders. It's a safe place where local teens can gather and simply be themselves. Our goal is to challenge teens to serve the community and to help them grow into their best selves. The program includes:

- Leadership training
- Teaching on social responsibility and service to others
- Once a week meetings
- Social events and service projects
- Blue Ridge Leaders' School

GASTON COUNTY FAMILY YMCA

Strengthening the foundations of community.

gastonymca.org